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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**Counterterrorism discourses and  
practices in Western Europe: institutions,  
societies, and citizenship in the shadow of  
new security threats**

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Ph.D. Dissertation

Ph.D. Programme in Politics, Policies, and International Relations

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*Al meu pare, in memoriam*

*When we are confronted with an image of that deep horror which underlies our well-ordered surface, we should never forget that the images of this horrible vortex are ultimately a lure, a trap to make us forget where the true horror lies.*

Slavoj Žižek, *The fragile absolute*

*Es una de las lecciones del World Trade Center: nuestros inmuebles son muebles. Lo que creemos estable es inestable. Lo que imaginamos sólido es líquido. Las torres son móviles, y los rascacielos rascan, sobre todo, la tierra.*

Frédéric Beigbeder, *Windows on the World*

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# **List of acronyms**

9/11 – September 11 attacks

11M – 2004 Madrid train bombings

AAA or “Triple A” – Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista

AD – Action Directe

ALN – Armée de Libération Nationale

ANPA – Armée Nationale du Peuple Algérien

AANES – Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria

BVE – Batallón Vasco Español

CCIR – Centro de Coordinación de Información sobre Radicalización

CCT – Security Council - Counter-Terrorism Committee

CISPDR – Comité interministériel de prévention de la délinquance et de la radicalisation

CITCO – Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado

CPIC – Centre de prévention, d’insertion et de citoyenneté

COVITE – Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo en el País Vasco

EAW – European Arrest Warrant

ECHR – European Court of Human Rights

ECTC – European Counter Terrorism Centre

EDU – Europol Drugs Unit

EICTIR – Estrategia Integral Contra el Terrorismo Internacional y la Radicalización

ENCOT-2019 – Estrategia Nacional Contra el Terrorismo - 2019

ENCOT-2023 – Estrategia Nacional Contra el Terrorismo - 2023

ETA – Euskadi Ta Askatasuna

EU – European Union

Europol – European Police Office

FATF – Financial Action Task Force

FIPD – Fonds Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance

FRAP – Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota

FTF – Foreign Terrorist Fighters

GAJ – Groupe Action Jeunesse

GAL – Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación

GRAPO – Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

Interpol – International Criminal Police Organization

IRA – Irish Republican Army

JHA – Justice and Home Affairs Council

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OAS – Organisation de l'Armée Secrète

RAF – Red Army Faction

PDT – Political Discourse Theory

PEN-LCRV – Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha Contra la Radicalización Violenta

PFLP – Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

SDF – Syrian Democratic Forces

SIS – Schengen Information System

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

US – United States



## **Abstract**

In the last decade and a half, counterterrorist discourses and practices have transformed in Western Europe. Although the phenomenon of terrorism has been widely studied, the study of counterterrorism in Europe remains poorly studied and theorized. The present doctoral thesis by compendium seeks to fill the gap in the literature on the effects of counterterrorist policies and practices both at the institutional level and on societies and their citizens. This doctoral thesis defines terrorism as any violent action aimed at instigating political, social, ideological, or religious change as well as the preservation of the status quo or its regression. Similarly, counterterrorism means those decisions, actions, speeches, and practices aimed at combating terrorism and its effects. The objective of the thesis is to analyse how counterterrorist discourses and practices have changed in Western Europe in the last decade and a half. To answer this question, this thesis uses discourse analysis in the French case (2012-2023) and on the foreign fighter's issue, as well as the case study methodology in the Spanish case (2011-2023). For the French case and on the issue of foreign fighters, we have chosen discourse analysis as a methodology because it allows us to capture how certain phenomena, subjects, and objects are constructed, silenced, or maintained as problematic by certain actors. Regarding the case study, it allows us to study a critical case such as the Spanish one, characterized by a long counterterrorist history and with important changes since 2011. Data collection has relied on semi-structured interviews and supplementary primary and secondary resources. The thesis concludes by highlighting the growing importance, both at a theoretical and empirical level, of the relationship between citizenship and security. This doctoral thesis has shown how the Western European counterterrorism field has reorganized and adapted to the threat of jihadist terrorism. Faced with this threat, Western European counterterrorism individualizes the terrorist subject and constructs him/her as someone violently radicalized. This turns citizens, especially certain groups, into objects of

individual surveillance and supervision (including medical and psychological treatments) given their violent potential. At the same time, counterterrorism is increasingly displaced and decentralized to the local level, and new actors are included to address the threat of 'radicalization'.

## **Resum**

A la darrera dècada i mitja, els discursos i pràctiques antiterroristes s'han transformat a Europa occidental. Tot i que el fenomen del terrorisme ha estat àmpliament estudiat, l'estudi de l'antiterrorisme a Europa continua estant poc estudiat i teoritzat. Aquesta tesi doctoral per compendi busca omplir el buit en la literatura sobre els efectes de les polítiques i pràctiques antiterroristes tant a nivell institucional com a les societats i els seus ciutadans. Aquesta tesi doctoral defineix el terrorisme com qualsevol acció violenta encaminada a instigar un canvi polític, social, ideològic o religiós així com la preservació de l'estatus quo o la regressió. De la mateixa manera, per antiterrorisme s'entén aquelles decisions, accions, discursos i pràctiques encaminades a combatre el terrorisme i els seus efectes. L'objectiu de la tesi és analitzar com han canviat els discursos i les pràctiques antiterroristes a Europa occidental en l'última dècada i mitja. Per donar resposta a aquesta pregunta, la tesi utilitza anàlisis del discurs en el cas francès (2012-2023) i sobre la problemàtica dels combatents estrangers, així com la metodologia de l'estudi de cas en el cas espanyol (2011-2023). Pel cas francès i sobre els combatents estrangers, hem triat l'anàlisi del discurs com a metodologia perquè ens permet capturar com certs fenòmens, subjectes i objectes són construïts, silenciats o mantinguts com a problemàtics per certs actors. Pel que fa a l'estudi de cas, ens permet estudiar un cas crític com l'espanyol, caracteritzat per una llarga història de lluita antiterrorista i amb canvis importants des del 2011. La recopilació de dades s'ha realitzat a través d'entrevistes semiestructurades i, de forma complementària, a través d'altres fonts primàries i secundàries. La tesi conclou subratllant la importància creixent tant a nivell teòric com empíric de la relació entre ciutadania i seguretat. Aquesta tesi doctoral ha mostrat com el camp antiterrorista de l'Europa occidental s'ha reorganitzat i s'ha adaptat a l'amenaça del terrorisme gihadista. Davant d'aquesta amenaça, l'antiterrorisme europeu occidental individualitza el subjecte terrorista i el construeix com algú radicalitzat violentament. Això converteix els ciutadans,



especialment de determinats col·lectius, en objectes de vigilància i supervisió individual (inclosos tractaments mèdics i psicològics) atès el seu potencial violent. Alhora de manera creixent es desplaça i descentralitza la lluita antiterrorista al nivell local i s'hi inclouen nous actors per abordar l'amenaça de la 'radicalització'.

## **Resumen**

En la última década y media, los discursos y prácticas antiterroristas se han transformado en Europa occidental. Si bien el fenómeno del terrorismo ha sido ampliamente estudiado, el estudio del antiterrorismo en Europa sigue estando poco estudiado y teorizado. La presente tesis doctoral por compendio busca llenar el vacío en la literatura sobre los efectos de las políticas y prácticas antiterroristas tanto a nivel institucional como en las sociedades y sus ciudadanos. La presente tesis doctoral define el terrorismo como cualquier acción violenta encaminada a instigar un cambio político, social, ideológico o religioso, así como la preservación del estatus quo o su regresión. De la misma forma, por antiterrorismo se entiende aquellas decisiones, acciones, discursos y prácticas encaminadas a combatir el terrorismo y sus efectos. El objetivo de la tesis es analizar cómo han cambiado los discursos y prácticas antiterroristas en Europa occidental en la última década y media. Para dar respuesta a esta pregunta, la tesis utiliza análisis del discurso en el caso francés (2012-2023) y sobre la problemática de los combatientes extranjeros, así como la metodología del estudio de caso en el caso español (2011-2023). Para el caso francés y sobre los combatientes extranjeros, hemos elegido el análisis del discurso como metodología porque nos permite capturar cómo ciertos fenómenos, sujetos y objetos son contruidos, silenciados o mantenidos como problemáticos por ciertos actores. En lo que respecta el estudio de caso, nos permite estudiar un caso crítico como el español, caracterizado por una larga historia de lucha antiterrorista y con importantes cambios desde 2011. La recopilación de datos se ha realizado a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas y, de forma complementaria, a través de otras fuentes primarias y secundarias. La tesis concluye subrayando la creciente importancia tanto a nivel teórico como empírico de la relación entre ciudadanía y seguridad. Esta tesis doctoral ha mostrado cómo el campo antiterrorista de Europa occidental se ha reorganizado y adaptado a la amenaza del terrorismo yihadista. Ante esta amenaza, el antiterrorismo

europeo occidental individualiza al sujeto terrorista y lo construye como alguien radicalizado violentamente. Esto convierte a los ciudadanos, especialmente de determinados colectivos, en objetos de vigilancia y supervisión individual (incluidos tratamientos médicos y psicológicos) dado su potencial violento. A la vez de forma creciente se desplaza y descentraliza la lucha antiterrorista al nivel local y se incluyen nuevos actores para abordar la amenaza de la ‘radicalización’.



# **1. Introduction**

Over the past decade, discourses and practices surrounding counterterrorism have transformed in Western Europe. The attack on the French weekly Charlie Hebdo in January 2015 triggered increased governmental attention to the terrorist phenomenon. This attack and terrorist attacks in Germany, Belgium, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK) positioned jihadist terrorism as the primary threat in Europe and produced interest in enhancing the coordination of counterterrorist policies and practices both domestically and within the framework of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> The new measures were created to increase the exchange of information and operational support among domestic law enforcement agencies and their European counterparts, as well as to contain the spread of explosives, firearms, recruitment, and online propaganda. In parallel, a significant debate has emerged regarding radicalization and jihadist terrorism in many European societies due to the phenomenon of thousands of foreign European fighters who travelled to Iraq and Syria in the last decade to join the conflict led at the time by Daesh. This growing concern regarding the phenomenon of terrorism and the establishment of counterterrorist measures has translated into increased interest in theorizing and researching these counterterrorist actions and discourses. While the phenomenon of terrorism has been extensively studied, the study of counterterrorism in Europe has remained “under-theorized” (Byman, 2019, p. 623). This gap in the literature has contributed to a demand for systematic studies that map out the effects of counterterrorist policies and practices at both the institutional level and on societies and their citizens. Also, it is of great relevance to study the discourses and practices of counterterrorism in Western European countries, as they arise in very particular circumstances such as jihadist terrorism and the hyper-visualization of social

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<sup>1</sup>Although we can highlight some concerns about jihadist terrorism since those attacks in Madrid in 2004, London in 2005, or cases of individuals violently radicalized.

groups like the Muslims exposed to governmentality techniques by certain governments to “conduct their conduct” (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Abdel-Fattah, 2019, Johansson-Nogués and Bonsoms in this thesis). In this sense, further in-depth research is necessary on the link between (in)security and citizenship in the realm of counterterrorism practices and discourses.

This doctoral thesis aims to address the following research question: How have counterterrorist discourses and practices changed in Western Europe over the past decade? To answer this, we will focus on two issues. Firstly, the adaptation of the counterterrorism response from an ethnonationalist terrorist threat—and to a lesser extent, from far-right and far-left ideologies—to a diffuse global-local (glocal) terrorist threat ideologically linked to the jihadist radicalism, although not always directly derived from it. This has led to changing institutional responses in terms of counterterrorist discourse and practices in Western Europe, as well as the incorporation of new concepts and issues such as violent radicalization or “lone wolves”, the expansion of counterterrorist legislations, and the inclusion of new actors in counterterrorist action. On the other hand, the thesis focuses on the effects generated by new counterterrorist policies and practices on citizenship and the conception of the citizen. It aims to explore how these new governmental policies and practices shape our conception of “society” and “citizenship”, creating new limits on fundamental rights, implementing repressive policies targeting vulnerable groups (such as Muslims), and establishing regimes of “normality”. This doctoral thesis will address these issues by combining literature on terrorism studies with a critical analysis of counterterrorist policies, discourses, and practices. This approach allows us to reflect on which counterterrorist discourses and practices are articulated by various Western European governments and how these discourses and practices shape our societies.

This doctoral thesis consists of a compendium of three papers, accompanied by a framework document comprising an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction is divided into four sections. In the first part, we find definitions of key concepts, historical, and political background on counterterrorism in Western Europe, as well as an academic review of recent literature on the topic. In the second section, we will present the theories upon which this doctoral thesis is based. The third section will outline the methodology and sources used to compile this compendium thesis. In the fourth section, we will provide a summary of each of the three papers of the thesis. Following this introduction, we will reproduce the three papers in their complete format. The last part of this compendium thesis is dedicated to the general conclusions of the doctoral thesis. In the first section of the conclusions, we will detail the most important empirical findings of the papers. In the second section, we will highlight the theoretical contributions of the present thesis. Finally, we will offer a reflection on the inherent limitations of the research efforts supporting this doctoral thesis, as well as a discussion of potential new avenues for future investigations.

## **1.1. Definitions, background, and literature review**

The present section is divided into three subsections. In the first, we will briefly define the key concepts of this doctoral thesis. In the second, we will contextualize and provide a brief modern history of counterterrorist measures in Western Europe from the 1970s to 2010. Finally, in the third subsection, we will review previous academic literature on counterterrorist discourses, policies, and practices in Western Europe from 2001 to 2023.

### **1.1.1. Definitions**

The “war on terrorism”, the wave of attacks inspired by violent jihad and the phenomenon of foreign fighters<sup>2</sup> have placed the phenomenon of terrorism in the foreground in the 21st century. In this context, it is important to note that neither in the realm of security agencies nor in the existing literature, is there a consensus definition of “terrorism”. There is a prevailing tendency in most Western democratic states to politicize the term terrorism. Instead of being regarded as a socially neutral phenomenon discussed “dispassionately and objectively”, it has evolved into a highly politicized or contested concept (Coady, 2004; Jarvis, 2009; Neumann, 2013; Phillips, 2015). The present doctoral thesis define terrorism as any violent action aimed at instigating political, social, ideological, or religious change, preservation of the status quo, or regression. Legitimate use of force by the state within the framework of the rule of law is excluded here. In this sense, it is important to note that the diversity and contention among definitions of the term also pose challenges when defining and formulating counterterrorism policies and practices.

In this doctoral dissertation, counterterrorism is understood as those actions aimed at combating terrorism and its effects. The definition encompasses those decisions, actions, practices, and discourses that seek to address the phenomenon of terrorism. It is a broad field which, in the last decade in Europe, according to Crelinsten (2019; see also Schmid et al., 2021) has incorporated a wide range of measures, both intelligence, rule of law, police work, and military action, and —increasingly— political, social, and economic intervention measures. In line with critical public policy studies, the formulation and support of these policies are not the results of a process of inputs with objective outputs, but rather the product of interests, values, and normative assumptions —political and

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<sup>2</sup> In this doctoral thesis for foreign fighters, we primarily focus on individuals from foreign countries who travelled to participate in or provide support for various warring factions in conflicts, such as those in the Syrian Civil War and Iraqi territories affected by them (2012-2019).



social— that shape and inform these processes of public policy formulation and support (Fisher et al, 2015).

The literature has classified and defined counterterrorism measures into five typologies. The first type is coercive counterterrorism, which seeks to pursue terrorism through criminal justice, the rule of law, and the use of police force. This type may also view terrorism as war, and so may use methods of warfare, counter-insurgency, and equate terrorist groups with states (Crelinsten, 2002). The second model, proactive, aims to gather information for intelligence services and their counterterrorism operations, often as a prelude to these. The third, persuasive counterterrorism, focuses on countering the messages of terrorist groups and shaping public perceptions of these groups. Defensive counterterrorism aims to prevent and mitigate attacks (e.g. protecting critical infrastructure or promoting citizen resilience). Finally, long-term counterterrorism creates actions to develop and promote social and economic rights to address the root causes of terrorism and violent radicalization (Crelinsten, 2019). In this last category, we could also situate the counter-radicalization policies and programs that in the 2010s have become increasingly important in counterterrorism policies and practices.<sup>3</sup> Thus, counter-radicalization actions aim to prevent individuals from carrying out violent acts by intervening in the triggers of these violent radicalization processes, such as avoiding social and economic exclusion, a biased interpretation of certain ideologies or religions, the entry into vicious circles of crime or the dissemination of hate speech.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of radicalization has emerged in the context of Islamic terrorism since 2004 and refers to the prior and necessary step toward the use of terrorist violence (Heath-Kelly et al., 2015).

<sup>4</sup> In parallel to these measures, we can find counterterrorist financing initiatives linked and subordinated to anti-money laundering and asset recovery.

### 1.1.2. Background

From a historical point of view, modern terrorism in Europe is understood to be terrorism after 1970 (Bossong, 2013).<sup>5</sup> For decades, several European countries such as West Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and the UK had to deal with a wave of domestic terrorism. For example, the Red Army Faction (RAF) in West Germany, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, the Red Brigades in Italy, and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the UK (Chalk, 1996). Cooperation between European states remained extremely limited because terrorism was an expression of violence against each of the states concerned, struck unevenly and rarely outside state borders. Parallel to this, the effects of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Europe should be highlighted, such as the counterterrorist struggle against Black September or the West German struggle against the RAF and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the “German autumn” of 1977. It is relevant to mention that, although no attack from the 1970s to the 1990s matched the number of injuries and deaths of 9/11<sup>6</sup> or the Madrid bombings of 2004, this period was not exempt from mass murder, as exemplified by the shooting down of Pan Am Flight 103 by Libyan agents over Lockerbie in 1988. During the 2000s, the Madrid bombings of 2004, the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004, the London bombings of 2005, the Glasgow bombings of 2007, and the Stockholm bombings of 2010 stand out.

On the other hand, we can name several examples of counterterrorism measures before 2011. In terms of military counterterrorism and counter-insurgency actions, we

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<sup>5</sup> Following the classic classification of modern terrorism by David C. Rapoport (2011), we can identify four waves. The first is the “anarchist wave” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The second is the “anti-colonial wave” that began in the 1920s and lasted for forty years. The third is the “wave of the New Left” which lasted twenty years, although, in countries such as Spain and the United Kingdom, it lasted until the subsequent dissolution of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) respectively. Finally, the fourth wave is the religious one, which began in 1979. Given the extension of the activity of terrorist groups belonging to the third wave until the 2010s, in this background, we will also refer to the events of the third wave that began in the 1970s.

<sup>6</sup> The terrorist attacks of the 11 of September, also known as 9/11, were four jihadist suicide attacks coordinated and carried on by Al Qaeda against the United States in 2001.

highlight the imposition of martial law and a state of emergency, search and destroy missions against suspected terrorist training camps or terrorist territories, or the deployment of troops to monitor targets. For example, the actions of the Soviets and their allies in the Afghan War (1978-1992) against mujahideen insurgent training camps are noteworthy.

At the judicial level, historically, European democratic states have developed a series of models for combating terrorism, whether through the criminal justice system, special legislation, or the laws of war (Benavente and Porto, 2014). For instance, Spain, since its democratic period (1978-present), has been characterized by the use of the criminal justice system.<sup>7</sup> Spanish anti-terrorism legislation has been marked by prolonged police detentions, special powers to search premises (including private homes), aggravated and longer sentences, and special modifications to penitentiary legislation. Initially, following 9/11, no new anti-terrorism legislation was enacted as ETA continued to pose a greater threat than international jihadist terrorism. Thus, Organic Law 6/2002 on the prohibition of political parties focused on the political connections between certain parties and terrorist actors, leading to the banning of Batasuna, the alleged political wing of ETA. In 2003, terrorism sentences increased considerably (up to 40 years), and access to penitentiary benefits for imprisoned terrorists was made contingent upon their active collaboration with the authorities. Moreover, through Organic Law 15/2003, the maximum duration of incommunicado detention was extended. In 2005, in response to the March 2004 Madrid bombings, penalties for violations of security regulations regarding explosives were tightened.

On the other hand, it wasn't until 1986 that France approved its first counterterrorism law, having previously relied on a model of special legislation. Thus, in the

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<sup>7</sup> Even during the illegal actions and state terrorism of the 1980s through the GAL, Spain has preferred to use the penal model to combat terrorism.

context of the Algerian crisis, exceptional legislation was enacted—including the creation of the Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat— before which state security offenders were tried in secret summary proceedings with no right of appeal granted. The Tribunal was not abolished until 1982. Unlike Spain and in a line very similar to other countries in its environment, France made a series of profound legislative changes after 9/11. In this context, police powers were expanded, along with the approval of a series of laws aimed at increasing internal security. For example, provisions were introduced allowing for the searching of vehicles and photographing their occupants, or provisions were passed allowing for police infiltration. In 2005, riots erupted in the French banlieues, and a state of emergency was declared. In this general climate of unrest, another counterterrorism law, Law No. 2006-64, was adopted. This followed the example of the United Kingdom in the counterterrorist struggle, increasing CCTV surveillance in public places and the monitoring of movements, as well as telephone and electronic exchanges of individuals suspected of involvement in abortion actions. Police custody was also extended to six days, and penalties for terrorist offenses could reach up to thirty years in prison.

Similarly to France, Italy, following the abduction and assassination of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978, embarked upon a series of reforms in its counterterrorist actions. For instance, the Parliament amended the Penal Code on two occasions to delineate terrorism, impose stricter penalties, and further empower law enforcement agencies. Components of this new legislative package against terrorism included provisional detention of suspects, mandatory arrest warrants for terrorist offenses, extension of pretrial detention limitations, authority to conduct warrantless searches of buildings, and mandatory identification for bank transactions exceeding twenty million liras. Concurrently, prosecutors and investigating judges emerged as pivotal players in the counterterrorist endeavour, entrusted with gathering substantial amounts of information.

In contrast to these countries, it is noteworthy to highlight the United Kingdom's long history of counterterrorism through judicial mechanisms. Before the enactment of the Terrorist Act of 2000, there existed specialized emergency legislation in the form of Emergency Provisions Acts for Northern Ireland, and Terrorist Prevention Acts for the United Kingdom as a whole. These laws were regularly renewed, and many provisions initially intended as temporary became permanent. Some distinctive features of the United Kingdom's counterterrorist legislation included the proscription of terrorist organizations, the use of informants, the introduction of exclusion and deportation orders (which, in some cases, were deemed by the European Court of Human Rights to constitute violations of Article 3 of the ECHR), and the reduction of special procedural rights. This situation underwent significant change in the late 1990s when the Human Rights Act of 1998 emphasized the value of European human rights within the British and Irish justice systems. In 2000, the Terrorist Act was adopted, reconciling previous legislation, and accommodating new requirements established by the Human Rights Act. Following the events of 9/11, new counterterrorist legislations were swiftly enacted, with particular prominence given to the Counterterrorist, Crime and Security Act of 2001, subsequently overturned by the House of Lords in 2005 and replaced by the Prevention of Terrorist Act of 2005. This anti-terrorism law of 2005 applied to a broad spectrum, including house arrest, restrictions on gathering with others, or travel bans. One year later, in response to the London terrorist attacks of 2005, new offenses related to hate speech and incitement ("incitement to terrorist") were introduced through the Terrorist Act of 2006.

Beyond conflicts with human rights, there are various shadows in the judicial measures undertaken by European democratic countries between 1970 and 2010. For instance, the counterterrorist legislation of West Germany in the 1970s was characterized by limitations on the rights of defence (for example, allowing for the exclusion of defence attorneys, controlling communication between the accused and their attorney, or

restricting the number of defence counsels to three). Consequently, the Federal Constitutional Court overturned some of the laws adopted for unduly limiting basic constitutional rights. On the other hand, the 1980s in Spain were marked by a “dirty war” carried out in French territory, involving paramilitary groups such as the parapolice group Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (GAL) and the terrorist band ETA. While many members of the GAL were subsequently convicted for their illegal actions, the conviction hesitated to categorize their actions as “terrorist”, simply because they were not committed against the state but rather purportedly “to protect” it.

Other counterterrorist measures worth highlighting pertain to the financing of terrorism. Before 9/11, virtually no country had established any code against the financing of terrorism, and there was little international commitment to cooperate in this matter. Apart from the aforementioned case of Italy, the United Kingdom implemented measures against terrorism financing as early as 1989. In this endeavour, its diplomats sought, albeit with limited success, to garner allies in the field and thus expand measures against terrorism financing, particularly that of the IRA (Walker, 2018). Meanwhile, the United Nations (UN) initiated an asset freeze regime with RCSNU 1267 of 5 October 1999 against the Taliban and extended it to Al Qaida with RCSNU 1333 of 19 December 2000 (Ibid.). Following the events of 9/11, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1373 of 28 September 2001, urging member states to “prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism” and to promptly freeze the assets and resources of those who “commit, attempt to commit, or facilitate” terrorist-related acts. A notable feature of this resolution (and its associated Resolution 1377) is the requirement for states to report on progress made in its implementation to the Committee against Terrorism of the UN (CCT) and the invitation for states to request technical assistance in the implementation process. Additionally, the UN plays a crucial role in the global process of blacklist compilation through its Sanctions Committee 1267, established under RCSNU 1267 in 1999 to oversee sanctions against Al

Qaida and the Taliban, which gained substantial importance following 9/11. The regime of inclusion in the list was expanded in 2014 with Resolution 2178, aiming to target Daesh and those who recruit, facilitate, and financially support it. Parallel to the framework of the UN, in late October 2001, an extraordinary plenary meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was held in Washington, reaching an agreement on what became known as the Eight Special Recommendations on Terrorism Financing. Among other things, it called for the criminalization of terrorist financing, notification of suspicious transactions related to terrorism, and increased supervision and regulation of alternative remittance networks, bank transfers, and non-profit organizations. Several European countries, as well as the EU (European Union) itself, supported the expansion of FATF's mandate and, more generally, the adoption of comprehensive security measures in the financial domain. The EU's Framework Decision on combating terrorism in June 2002 offered a broad definition of what constitutes terrorism and criminalized the provision of material resources and the financing of terrorist activities. Subsequently, the EU has adopted two Directives on money laundering, with the explicit purpose of incorporating terrorism financing and FATF's special recommendations into EU community legislation.

In addition to measures against terrorism financing, the EU has established a wide range of measures since 9/11. The Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA) met on 20 September 2001 and agreed on a package of measures approved by an extraordinary European Council held the following day. In 2001, the European Council launched an ambitious "Action Plan to Combat Terrorism", which involved "close cooperation among all EU member states" and the adoption of a "coordinated and interdisciplinary approach to all Union policies". Another remarkable measure is the European Arrest Warrant (EAW). The EAW is an example of European integration in the EU's counterterrorist actions following 9/11. With the introduction of the principle of mutual recognition, the EAW replaced all previous international legal instruments among the different member states

with an EU legal instrument subject to the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union and applicable to 32 different categories of offenses. In parallel, the Council agreed in December 2001 on the Framework Decision on combating terrorism. The Framework Decision defines a terrorist act in three parts: (1) the context of an action; (2) the objective of the action; and (3) the specific acts committed. The definition also encompasses behaviours that may contribute to the commission of terrorist acts in third countries. Thus, the Framework Decision ensures that terrorist offenses are punished with more severe penalties than common offenses. The Framework Decision also favoured cooperation between the EU and the US (United States) insofar as terrorism as a criminal category gained specific recognition on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 became a point of normative definition for European integration. Following the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 (11M), the European Council adopted the Declaration on the Fight against Terrorism on March 25, emphasizing that “the fight against terrorism requires that the measures adopted by the Council be effectively and exhaustively implemented by the member states” (2004, p.3). Also, following the events in Madrid, the EU decided to appoint its first EU Coordinator for the Fight against Terrorism. In this context, the European Strategy for Preventing Violent Radicalization of 2005 was approved, focusing for the first time on violent radicalization as a precursor to terrorist actions. In a more general sense, we can also mention various European documents on security such as the European Security Strategy (2003), Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (2008), European Security Strategy - A secure Europe in a better world (2009) or the EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five steps towards a more secure Europe (2010).

It is important to also mention the tasks of the European Police Office (Europol), whose objective is to coordinate and harmonize the member states. Europol was provisionally organized de facto for the first time in 1993 as the Europol Drugs Unit (EDU) in Strasbourg, commencing its full activities on 1 July 1999, under the legal framework of the



Europol Convention signed on 26 July 1995 which entered into force on 1 October 1998, after being ratified by all member states. Europol serves as a central hub for coordinating criminal intelligence and supporting EU member states in their efforts to combat drug trafficking, human trafficking, cybercrime, money laundering, and terrorism. The role was reinforced after 9/11 and has continued to increase ever since. Their activities have comprised: (a) analysing the information gathered from strategic, tactical, and operational perspectives; (b) conducting threat and risk assessments and, based on their findings, devising and implementing awareness-raising activities; (c) upon request from stakeholders, supporting operational investigations in member states; (d) monitoring, tracking, and preventing all forms of illicit trafficking of nuclear material, potent radiological sources, weapons, ammunition, explosives, and weapons of mass destruction; (e) and maintaining regular contacts with experts in terrorism and fight against proliferation.

### **1.1.3. Literature review**

Academic literature in recent decades has followed in the wake of changing counterterrorism discourses and practices. We can point to six themes addressed by the literature between 2001 and the present day. First, the literature examining debates around counterterrorism measures and their effects on human rights, civil liberties, and the separation of powers. Second, literature that examines the impact of counterterrorism policies and actions on civil society and aid, development, and cooperation programs. Third, literature that addresses the use of military force as a counterterrorism tool. Fourth, the literature that studies the phenomenon of foreign fighters and the conceptualisation and generation of a research agenda on the subject. Fifth, the extension and growing importance of the concept of violent radicalisation and the academic discussion around government measures to address it, as well as its clashes and effects on citizenship,

“communities at risk” and the racial biases of these measures. Recent studies on multi-agency or interagency collaboration and diverse actors in the field of preventing violent radicalisation and counterterrorism should also be added here. Of these five literatures, it is worth noting that the most central and the ones that have received the most attention are those in the first and fifth groups.

Firstly, the literature on the response to terrorism and violent jihad has focused on the debates surrounding how the set of counterterrorism measures following 9/11, the Madrid bombings of 2004 and the London bombings of 2005 may have affected human rights, civil liberties, and the separation of powers (e.g., Gearty, 2003; Windsor, 2003; Schulhofer, 2004; MacKinnon, 2007; Ross, 2008; Beyer, 2010; Shor et al., 2017; Wagner & Kneip, 2018). In this classic debate, we find, on the one hand, the empirical literature that has shown the regression of certain civil rights and liberties in certain Western countries in the 1990s and especially in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent implementation of counterterrorist measures (Baker, 2003; Haubrich, 2003; Wagner & Kneip, 2018). This literature has pointed out, for example, how the “right of self-determination over personal data, the right to freedom of expression, the right to free movement, and the competencies of the secret services were affected” in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (Haubrich, 2003). Similarly, other authors have pointed to similar deteriorating trends in the “freedom of religion, the strength and impartiality of the legal system, equality before the law and habeas corpus rights (Political Terror Scale), and the right to physical integrity (torture)” in Central and Southern Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom) and especially in countries such as Spain, France, and Italy (Wagner & Kneip, 2018, p.291). Thus, this literature repeatedly mentions three factors that are affected by counterterrorist legislation: (1) institutional checks and balances (federalism, second chambers, constitutional courts), (2) the rule of law and civil liberties culture, and (3) previous experience with terrorism and ‘traditions’ of counterterrorist legislation

(MacKinnon, 2007). In terms of the degree of impact, there is some general agreement that experience with domestic terrorism and past legislative reactions would make it easier for political elites to react to new threats with tougher laws (MacKinnon, 2007; Wagner & Kneip, 2018). In this sense, several Western democracies have seen an increase in the power of the executive while blurring the distinctions between police, secret services, and military, as well as increasing uncontrolled data exchanges between authorities in different countries (Busch in Wagner & Kneip, 2018). On the other hand, this literature has made normative recommendations following its empirical analyses. Thus, it has been pointed out that a strong rule of law is associated with a reduction in support for and participation in terrorism, recommending that legislators should not erode the rule of law in response to terrorist threats, given that it is precisely a quality legal system that deters disaffected people from taking up arms (Choi, 2010). For example, Western European states, and particularly the EU “appeared interested in highlighting the concrete relevance of funding principles of human rights and lawful use of force –which represent those unnegotiable values to uphold while developing counterterrorism responses” (D’Amato & Terlizzi, 2022, p. 553). In this sense, safeguarding the rule of law has been crucial to EU counterterrorism policy-making (Ibid.).

Secondly, prior literature has also focused on the impact of counterterrorist policies and actions on civil society and aid, development, and cooperation programs (e.g., Howell, 2006; Keohane, 2008; Howell & Lind, 2009; 2010; Colás, 2010; Sitter & Parker, 2014; Savun & Tirone, 2017). On one hand, while it has been noted that foreign aid through economic assistance has not yielded results, a consolidated body of literature demonstrates how support for governance, assistance to civil society, and the promotion of education and healthcare reduce terrorist activity (provided the country is not experiencing civil war) (e.g., Young & Findley, 2011; Savun & Tirone, 2017). On the other hand, significant attention has been directed towards the important role that NGOs play in

challenging the narrative of violent extremism and terrorist groups, as well as in creating counter-narratives to their discourses through a language rooted in international criminal law (Sitter & Parker, 2014). In this regard, a growing body of literature has indicated that opposition to counterterrorist measures has primarily originated from NGOs, Muslim groups, human rights organizations, and lawyers. In contrast, mainstream civil society, (i.e., the part of civil society funded by the government or external donors and primarily engaged in service provision) has remained inactive in the face of these counterterrorist measures (e.g., Howell & Lind, 2010; Colás, 2010).

Thirdly, 9/11 and the subsequent declaration of the “war on terror” have shaped the discourse surrounding the use of military means in combating terrorism. The declaration of the “war on terrorism” marked the militarization of counterterrorism actions, prompting many states to align with the United States in declaring war against Al Qaeda and other affiliated groups (Boyle, 2008; Kohn, 2009). This has intensified a longstanding debate in the literature regarding whether counterterrorism should be understood as a police or military issue. Advocates of the police perspective argue that only the police are capable of sustaining a presence over time that effectively prevents terrorist actions. They also argue that the police are better equipped than the army in creating trust-building within society (Trager & Zagorcheva, 2005; Bayley & Weisburd, 2009). Moreover, they argue that a very small percentage of terrorist threats—specifically, seven percent—have decreased due to military action (Jones & Libicki, 2008). On the contrary, proponents of a military-based approach argue that militaries are highly trained, possess greater economic and material resources, and can gather intelligence faster than the police. For instance, proponents of a military approach to counterterrorism contend that judicious use of force can alter the cost-benefit calculations inherent in terrorist attacks (Ganor, 2018 [2012]).

Fourthly, the phenomenon of foreign fighters has garnered significant attention in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq (2012-2019), particularly due to their threats to security and the ensuing debates surrounding the rights of these fighters. While the phenomenon of foreign fighters is not new, its conceptualization and academic study by terrorism and counterterrorism studies are recent developments. Before the terrorist attacks in Europe involving foreign fighters trained in Yemen, Syria, or Iraq, this phenomenon had not been studied within this literature, nor was there a designated label for individuals who had been fighting and returned to their countries to engage in attacks or revolutionary acts. Academic literature has examined this phenomenon, particularly since the 2010s, prompted by the problematization of this phenomenon by national and international authorities who observed citizens from their countries traveling to fight in Syria and Iraq. Although the literature has extensively focused on foreign fighters motivated by jihadism, there are multiple historical examples of other ideologies such as far-right, far-left, or nationalism that have subsequently been linked to revolutionary or violent actions in their country of origin (Hegghammer, 2013; Malet, 2013). On one hand, the lack of a common definition for the phenomenon has been noted, as well as differences in the approach and perceptions of the threat for each European state, the lack of consensus on the causes of violent radicalization and terrorism, or the differences between governments regarding the criminal prosecution of foreign fighters (Asal and Malet, 2021). Other previous research has pointed out how Western European governments have leveraged the phenomenon of foreign fighters to securitize migration and their borders while legitimizing themselves as an emerging security actor through the adoption of preventive security practices (Entenmann et al., 2015; Baker-Beall, 2019; Bures, 2020; Brown and Mohamed, 2022). Less critical perspectives in this literature have highlighted the need to expand interest in the governance of the phenomenon of foreign fighters beyond intelligence areas and cooperation between departments. This literature has shown how in Europe the perception

of threats by institutions has affected policy regarding foreign fighters, while legislating on them serves to offer ontological security to both states and European legislators (Tammikko, 2018; Leduc, 2021). Thus, responses to foreign fighters of diverse ideologic or religious motivations are not only different because the threat itself is different (for example, far-right or violent jihad), but also because the dynamics of internal politics of a state play an important role in framing what is a threat and what is not (Tammikko, 2018).

In the fifth place, starting from the 2010s, there has been an extension and growing importance of the concept of violent radicalization and measures to address it. In recent years, both at the academic and governmental levels, the idea has been increasingly incorporated that before addressing terrorism, its precursor, violent radicalization, must be tackled in a multidisciplinary manner. On the one hand, literature rooted in terrorism and counterterrorism studies, such as theories of social movements or network analysis theory, have adapted their findings on ethnonationalism and far-right or far-left terrorism to the new threat of jihadist terrorism. These theories have highlighted how, within violent radicalization, social connections and pressure from small peer groups facilitate the adoption of extremist views, as well as a sense of acceptance, belonging, and community (e.g., Wiktorowicz, 2004; della Porta, 2018; Bonelli & Carrié, 2020). However, the majority of literature understands radicalization as a scale and defines it as an individual process towards violence, terrorism, or the desire for “radical social change” that is not caused by a “single influence” (Neumann, 2013; Gemmerli, 2015; see also Malthaner, 2017). Within this same literature, other authors have debated counter-radicalization measures, disengagement, and reintegration and their clashes and effects on citizenship, “at-risk communities”, and the racial biases of these measures and “soft” counterterrorist fighting programs (Entenmann et al., 2015). Thus, a concerning trend has been pointed out in counter-radicalization measures and deradicalization programs in working with the assumption that fragile and vulnerable individuals (mostly Muslims) could become

subjects of risk for society if they adopted violent radicalized positions (Lindekilde, 2015; Abdel-Fattah, 2019; Bonelli & Carrié, 2020). Simultaneously, much has been discussed about the dangers of certain deradicalization measures and programs that can confuse security with social cohesion, as well as pointing out “suspicious communities” and securitizing certain vulnerable groups (e.g., Bigo & Guittet, 2011; Hickman et al., 2012; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Lindekilde, 2012; 2015; Ragazzi, 2016; 2017). Under this assumption, such measures and programs have been constructed, something that has equated counterterrorism to ordinary crime prevention programs, epidemiological languages, psychological intervention actions, or moderate religious reforms (Aggarwal, 2013; Lindekilde, 2015; Heath-Kelly, 2017; Johansen, 2019). In parallel, literature has studied and criticized the gender stereotypes existing in counterterrorist and disengagement programs, such as the perpetuation of women as “nurturing and caring” individuals (Andrews, 2020; Schmidt, 2020).

Also, an expanding body of literature in the last half-decade has directed its focus toward the involvement of new actors entering the domain of counterterrorism (e.g., healthcare professionals, social workers, or citizens alerting to instances of violent radicalization), and the coordination among these emerging and traditional actors (referred to as multi-agency or interagency collaboration in the literature). On one hand, some authors have scrutinized how and to what extent education professionals or citizens at large have alerted to and collaborated with authorities in combatting violent radicalization, emphasizing that citizens are more inclined to engage with authorities when they perceive counter-radicalization policies as legitimate. On the contrary, if deemed illegitimate, individuals may prefer actions at an individual level without informing authorities (e.g., Gøtzsche-Astrup et al, 2023; Pearce et al, 2023). On the other hand, a vigorous debate exists between two conflicting perspectives, sometimes positioned in contention: the more securitized vision and the more health-oriented perspective (Gøtzsche-Astrup et al, 2023;

Sizoo et al., 2022). Authors focusing on the securitized pole have indicated how this viewpoint has evolved towards epidemiological approaches, risk analysis categories, and a deterritorialization of the surveillance space (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007; Heath-Kelly, 2017; Johansen, 2019). In contrast, scholars centered on the social or health pole have observed different trends. This literature has raised the question of whether measures against violent radicalization should be separated from anti-terrorist actions or if prevention should be extended to other activities such as promoting democracy and democratic attitudes (Wimelius et al., 2023). Simultaneously, this literature has advocated for greater dialogue and exchange of viewpoints between law enforcement bodies and health and social work professionals (e.g., Sestoft et al., 2017; Sizoo et al., 2022). This body of literature underscores the necessity of collaboration among multiple agencies, not solely addressing violent radicalization and terrorism from a securitized perspective, with increasing involvement of private actors in European countries (Phelps, 2020; RAN H&SC, 2018a; RAN H&SC, 2018b). However, within this literature, some differences and disagreements exist. While some authors underscore trust as an essential element among the various collaborating agencies and actors (e.g., Solhjell et al., 2022; Sizoo et al., 2022), others emphasize the importance of forums for cooperation and communication (e.g., Sestoft et al., 2017). It is worth mentioning that there is also a significant gap in research regarding multidimensional and multi-actor European cooperation in counterterrorist efforts at both domestic and external levels of the European Union (for exceptions see, for example, D'Amato, 2021).

In summary, the literature review presented above has addressed existing gaps in the study of counterterrorism following the events of 9/11 up to the present day (2023). We will further emphasize some of the bibliographic gaps, as they have largely informed the purpose of the study and the objectives of the thesis. Firstly, the relationship between counterterrorist measures and their effects on citizens has been described, for instance,



measures such as nationality withdrawal or expatriation as counterterrorist measures (Esbrook, 2016; Zedner, 2019; Bolhuis and van Wijk, 2020). While the literature has analysed the relationship between rights and counterterrorist measures or the degree of the terrorist threat and the effectiveness of measures to counteract it, less attention has been given to the interplay between human rights, civil rights, security threats, and measures to counteract these threats (Gearty, 2003; Chen et al, 2009; Wagner & Kneip, 2018; Aolain, 2019; Nyadera and Bincof, 2019). In this regard, the doctoral thesis raises doubts about whether these issues can be analysed separately without overlooking or diminishing the importance of any of these dimensions. The doctoral thesis contributes here to an emerging field in the literature that has combined critical research on security and counterterrorism with discursive approaches and citizenship studies. Finally, from a human rights and societal perspective, this doctoral thesis directs its interest to how discourse and practices produce the exceptional and the problematic.

## **1.2. The theoretical approaches of the thesis**

This doctoral thesis analyses the discourses and counterterrorist practices in Western Europe during the 2010s and early 2020s. On the one hand, this thesis examines how discourses produce objects and subjects, as well as the effects within the various counterterrorist subjects under study. Discourse, as will be explained further, is understood not only as a means of communication but also as an exercise of power. On the other hand, this thesis also incorporates elements of practice theory to determine their impact on the development and implementation of public policies in the counterterrorist field. Practice, as will be elaborated below, is understood not only as a set of actions but also as a structure that delimits and constrains the possible actions of the actors.

### **1.2.1. Language and discourse**

This thesis partly follows the path of the “linguistic turn” in International Relations and Political Science. The interest in language and its effect on society originally emerged in the late twentieth century within the discipline of Philosophy. The linguistic turn in International Relations and Political Science has a more recent origin, and although its precise date has been widely debated in academia, for most authors, it is situated from the late 1980s onwards. Influenced by thinkers including, among others, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, John Austin, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, or Julia Kristeva, various disciplines within the social sciences have increasingly incorporated research on the role of language in shaping meanings, perceptions, actions, and social and political reality in general. This linguistic turn has had a significant impact on the evolution of International Relations and Political Science as social science disciplines, as well as generating new approaches to study such as the emotional/affective, the visual/aesthetic, the historical/temporal, the practical, or the queer.

One of the central premises of language theory is that discourse produces reality. In other words, language serves as a vehicle through which reality is constructed and mediated by various subjects. The entirety of the social system, along with its social and political reality, is thus shaped by language, including its silences and omissions. Although in principle any subject could contribute to the creation of such social and political reality, linguists acknowledge that not all subjects are equal. Language theory posits that there are more influential subjects in the discursive production of the social-political realm. Subjects who speak from positions of social, political, economic, scientific, or cultural authority, among others, wield the most power in terms of reality production. Thus, according to language theorists, reality is not neutral but rather socially produced and highly political. The combination of power and discourse, as well as the factors that render certain speech

acts as truthful assertions, are topics that have concerned generations of linguists and philosophers (Foucault, 1970; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001 [1985]). Therefore, the task of the discourse analyst is to describe the heterogeneous systems of utterances produced within a historical field of discursivity, as well as the implicit or explicit exclusions that give coherence to a discourse. In the words of Foucault (1970, p. xiv), “explore [...] discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse”. These utterances are historically contingent formation rules and are not necessarily readily accessible to those users who articulate them.

Discourse analysts tend to inquire into how specific systems of meaning production have been generated, circulated, internalized, and/or resisted, whether at a particular moment in history or over longer temporal epochs (Salter and Mutlu, 2013, p.113-114). Through discourse, they describe systems of meaning that shape the identities (*subjecthood*) of both subjects and objects (Foucault, 1972). Discourse produces both the subject of the speaking “I” as well as that of its audience and/or the object of discourse (“other”). This creation of subjecthood through discourse can result in the construction of antagonisms through the establishment of divisive boundaries between the “self” or “us” versus the “other” or “them”, or through references to security and threats (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001 [1985]). The construction of antagonisms implicitly or explicitly formulates that the “other” prevents someone from being fully themselves, hindering the formation of complete identities and even posing a threat to a particular identity or community (Ibid.). Thus, for the construction of an identity, there is a requirement for opposition to a certain “constitutive exterior” through the creation of political boundaries that antagonize the “other” and position it as an “outside” (Staten, 1986). An example of antagonization can be seen in public discourses that position a portion of the population as outside the norm,

either because they do not share civic values or because they engage in violent behavior. Such discourses serve to characterize the “good citizen” or “normal citizen”. It is worth mentioning that discourses are contingent and historical constructions, always vulnerable to political forces excluded from their formation, as well as to the dislocating effects of events beyond the control of political forces (Laclau, 1990, pp. 31-36).

Following in the footsteps of language theorists, this thesis understands that the formulation, design, and evaluation of counterterrorist public policies are not the result of a process of inputs with objective outputs, but rather, as advocated by critical studies of public policies, the outcome of interests, values, and normative assumptions—both political and social—that are expressed through discourses. Consequently, it follows that the analysis cannot be neutral or entirely disconnected and detached from interests and values. On the contrary, critical studies of public policy seek to detect and examine existing commitments to normative criteria such as social justice, democracy, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. In this thesis, we acknowledge the central role of metaphors and discourse in the construction of the terrorist subject or the use of language for the construction of specific *subjecthood*, such as the figure of the “terrorist”, the “terrorist-citizen”, as well as the “normal” citizen of a country. Our research also reveals discursive fields that produce subjects and objects with the aim of “deliberately manipulating public anxiety” and justifying the rise of more punitive European counterterrorist public policies (Jackson, 2005; Hülse and Spencer, 2008). In our research on France, as well as in the context of foreign fighters, we have observed how discourse not only channels power and disciplines citizens but also legitimizes extraordinary measures in the realm of counterterrorism, while reframing notions such as freedom or human rights in contemporary European democracies. In our papers on France and on foreign fighters, we demonstrate how the normalizing effects of discourse on terrorism and violent radicalization have resulted in the hyper-visualization of social collectives such as Muslims

and their equating with violent and terrorist acts. Discursive normalization presents these collectives as an “other” within the larger social collective of the nation-state, even as a “foreign body” that society must neutralize or expel (e.g., Kassimeris and Jackson, 2012; Ragazzi, 2016; Rivera-Escartín and Johansson-Nogués, 2022). For instance, it is common in counterterrorist policies such as the Spanish one to characterize these policies as instruments against “terrorist barbarism”, or as in the French case, as tools against those opposed to republican values. These characterizations of terrorists as barbaric or amoral are not only observed in certain nations but also in dozens of countries that have defended and implemented mechanisms to prevent the re-entry of citizens to their countries if they have fought or travelled to territories susceptible to radicalization. In sum, the combination of discourses, policies, and practices allows these subjects to be presented as others, strangers, and even mobilize imaginaries that perpetuate the “health” of the social body and “safeguarding vulnerable adults” in Western countries (e.g., Heath-Kelly, 2017).

### **1.2.2. Practise theory**

Apart from the discourse described in the preceding subsection, this thesis is further informed by the literature on practices. The theory of practice primarily developed from studies conducted in the field of Sociology, particularly the work of Pierre Bourdieu towards the end of the 20th century. Since the first decade of the 21st century, the theory of practice has become a source of inspiration for numerous scholars in International Relations and Political Science (Schatzki et al., 2001). Influenced by authors ranging from Pierre Bourdieu, Iver Neumann, to Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, International Relations and Political Science have increasingly conducted research on the role of practices in shaping social and political behaviours and actions. This focus on practices in the social sciences has had a significant impact across various disciplines, albeit less

compared to what was described earlier regarding language theory. The theory of practice has helped shed light on the constitutive relationship between social space and the actions of the individuals inhabiting it.

Practices are matrices of behaviour with social significance, which the agent simultaneously embodies and acts upon. These matrices of behaviour stem partly from the individual's desire to “fit in” within a social context and partly from sedimented and socially significant discourse (background knowledge). Just as routines produce regular actions, practices are repeated or reproduced behaviours (Doty, 1996). However, unlike an individual's daily routines, practices are actions arising from a social context and representing acceptable behaviours for the actor based on their position in that social context. The practitioner is thus understood as an actor deeply embedded in social structures acquired through education and upbringing. The theory of practice posits that action arises from the confluence of, on one hand, dispositions – patterns of perception, thought, and action, inclinations, and mostly unarticulated tendencies accumulated through personal exposure and the collective history of agents in a social context – and, on the other hand, positions in the “field” – defined by the distribution of valuable resources within a social game. Dispositions – or what can also be called “habitus” – are mutually constitutive of the field or social structures (Bourdieu, 1990). The two spaces are strongly interconnected, creating each other, yet they still operate according to their logics. Similar to language theory, the social world is a discursive field and forms a structure within which agents operate. However, theorists of practice place greater emphasis on how social structure shapes agents' social behaviour.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, political or security practices – such as counterterrorism policies – acquire their expression through the habitus of the authority

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<sup>8</sup> Although there is a divergence of opinions in the literature regarding practices, between those who maintain that such a world exists independently of the consciousness and desires of the agents (based on material foundations), and those who do not.

figures in the field, as well as through the discourses and knowledge disseminated within the structure that gives meaning to the material and institutional resources of counterterrorism technologies. In this thesis, we argue that sometimes practices go beyond what language theorists maintain. For the latter, practices are merely expressions of ideas and, as such, constantly transform. The theory of practice, on the other hand, argues that some ideas may sediment and solidify over longer periods, creating a social structure within which the agent acts according to their disposition and position in the field.

In the fields of International Relations and Political Science, the focus of studying practices is often situated in a relationship between agent and field in a more restricted format compared to the broader social contexts studied by sociologists. The interaction between agent and field typically arises within institutionalized or informal collective contexts of practices. These groups of agents act within a socially significant context, which some analysts refer to as a “practice community”. A practice community can be a network of agents working in the same sector or field, or within domestic or international agencies. A practice community is defined as “like-minded groups of practitioners who are informally as well as contextually bound by a shared interest in learning and applying a common practice” (Adler, 2008, p.196). Such a community can serve as a space for teaching and training a new agent in a field or for an agent seeking to change or renew an existing social or political practice. Adler and Pouliot (2011, p.8) argue that new agents learn from practices that are “both structured and acted out by communities of practice, and by the diffusion of background knowledge across agents in these communities, which similarly disposes them to act in coordination”. Practice communities, therefore, as Adler and Pouliot (2011, p.16) maintain, “frame actors, who, thanks to this framing, know who they are and how to act in an adequate and socially recognizable way”. Lastly, it is noteworthy that within practice communities, there are certain natural asymmetries in power among the agents comprising them. Asymmetric intersubjective relationships arise due to the

perception within the community that some agents are more competent or possess greater authority in performing the practice. This subjective allocation of performance of competencies gives them more political capital or power within the group. Faced with this, new agents or agents seeking to reform their political practices may seek to emulate these established agents with political capital within the practice community to increase their status within the community or in the eyes of the public.

Following the theory of practice, this thesis argues that the formulation, design, and evaluation of European counterterrorist public policies have increasingly been generated through common spaces and legislation among practitioners and political representatives in the European sphere over the last two decades. These individuals share interests or similar viewpoints and engage in both informal and formal spaces. In Western Europe, counterterrorist practices have a distinctly European imprint. Thus, within the theory of practice, some currents relate to the frameworks and the concept of “Europeanization” Europeanization refers to the impact of the EU on the nation-states that comprise it, as well as the influences of the states and their particular interests on European institutions and policies. The establishment of EU governance structures has affected the behaviour of national actors, their context, as well as institutional arrangements within states (Sedelmeier, 2012). However, this is not a unidirectional process, and member states have also shaped the EU through decisions made at the national level that are subsequently transferred to European and intergovernmental spheres (Reinares, 2006; Lee-Ohlsson, 2009). In this regard, the theory of practice is very useful in shedding light on the interaction processes among representatives of member states in a formal working group and committee meetings of the European Union, in official communication channels such as the Coreu network, as well as in informal discussions (e.g., Juncos and Pomorska, 2008; Bicchi and Carta, 2010; 2012; Pomorska and Wright, 2013). These communities of practice at the European level, following the pooling, negotiation, and convergence of the mental



frameworks of all participants, are transferred to the national level not only through directives and other documents but also through ways of doing things, practices, mental frameworks, or approaches to a certain issue in a certain way. An example of a practice community that performs an important Europeanization task in the counterterrorist field and is highly relevant to this doctoral thesis is the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN). RAN is a European Union-wide umbrella network that connects frontline professionals and experts on the ground in the fight against radicalization leading to violent extremism. These include social and healthcare workers, teachers, exit workers, prison staff, civil society organizations, including victim groups, as well as representatives of local authorities, law enforcement agencies, counterterrorism specialists, and academics. At the state level, our research on France and Spain has illustrated how the state no longer appears as unitary but as de-essentialized and immersed in a network of alliances through the practice community (see also MacDonald and Hunter, 2013 for the British case). This has diminished the role of the state and especially law enforcement agencies as sole actors in counterterrorism. Thus, private actors (e.g., families or private security companies) have been included to detect violent radicalization, which is a case of governmentalization of the state (Huysmans, 2004; İşleyen, 2014; Wittendorp, 2016).

### **1.3. Methodology**

In this section, the methodology of this doctoral thesis by paper compendium will be presented. To study these social phenomena, such as counterterrorist action, three papers have been conducted.

The first and third papers on France and foreign fighters, entail a discourse analysis of the various governmental measures deployed around the issue of counterterrorist action. Discourse analysts map out discourses and investigate how representations are

articulated within a particular discourse, how they are articulated to achieve discursive stability and sedimentation, where the dislocations and instabilities of these constructions occur, and how competing discourses construct representations and position objects and subjects (Hansen, 2006). Methodologically speaking, every discourse is subject to a double reading. The first is descriptive and aims to map and identify the boundaries of the discursive terrain, the construction of nodal points, and the hierarchical organization around these nodal points. Secondly, a dialogical reading can be situated through which the analyst questions the supposed fixation, structure, and naturalization of things in discourse, as well as exploring alternatives that said discourse implicitly hides (Shepherd, 2008).<sup>9</sup> In the case of France and foreign fighters, we have chosen discourse analysis as a methodology because it allows us to capture how certain phenomena, subjects, and objects are constructed, silenced, or maintained as problematic by certain actors. This methodology enables us to grasp the political dimension of social phenomena, as well as the disputes over constructing reality. This is particularly relevant in the case of France and the phenomenon of foreign fighters since they are highly contested fields among various actors and utterances.

The Spain paper in this thesis by compendium has employed a case study. A case study entails the analysis of a phenomenon, country, or sociopolitical object within a real-life context or contemporary setting, given that the object of study cannot be detached from its context (Yin, 2003). In the present doctoral thesis, the case study refers to a type of qualitative research design that may constitute an object of study or a product of inquiry. The case study delves deeply into a single unit (a relatively confined phenomenon) to elucidate the characteristics of a broader class of phenomena applicable to other cases

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<sup>9</sup> Here, one can also apply the symptomatic reading proposed by Louise Althusser. Symptomatic reading examines the absences in texts, that is, how that which is not possible to see or perceive in a text is instead revealed through the consultation and comparison of other texts.

(Gerring, 2004, p. 341). Two major strategies have been identified for selecting cases for study: random selection and information-oriented selection. Our research is grounded in information-oriented selection, which seeks to maximize the utility of information derived from small samples and unique cases, with these cases being chosen based on expectations regarding their informational content (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Put differently, the selection of the case under investigation is predicated on the researcher's argumentation, which must demonstrate the representativeness of the case concerning a phenomenon, as well as the case's greater relevance compared to other potential cases for analysis (Gerring, 2008). In the case of Spain, we have chosen the case study methodology because it enables an in-depth examination of a specific unit within its context, isolated from other cases with which parallels could be drawn, such as the case of the United Kingdom. Employing the case study methodology in the Spanish case has allowed us to position it as an extreme case, given that, unlike most other EU member states, it has a long history of threats from highly active terrorist-related groups. Concurrently, we can position it as an extreme case of vital importance because, unlike the United Kingdom, it remains a member of the Union and plays an active role in formulating practices and discourses at the European level, while also being influenced by the Union as a member state. Lastly, it is a state that has undergone a profound transformation in the counterterrorist field in the last decade, a fact that makes it particularly useful for addressing the research question of this thesis.

In terms of data collection, this doctoral thesis predominantly relies on documental research in the form of document analysis. Documental analysis has been applied as the central method across all individual publications within the thesis. It is understood as a systematic review and evaluation guided by the research questions of documents within a particular context of use (Bowen, 2009; Davie and Wyatt, 2021). The type of documental analysis conducted follows a qualitative approach, wherein documents such as speeches,

laws, or public policies were read to uncover the primary signifiers, and underlying meanings, and to comprehend the context of these documents and their authors (Altheide et al., 2008). Reading and interpretation during the analysis of the documents have been an iterative process (Bowen, 2009). During an initial reading, themes and discourses are identified, and subsequent rounds of reading serve to detect repetitions in themes, discourses, or signifiers. These repetitions demonstrate the importance, perception, and meaning that the issuers attribute to the sociopolitical phenomena under study. Manual coding of the material has been conducted, considering the context of the speaker or the document. Simultaneously, marginal notes have been taken during readings, and themes and repetitions have been hierarchically categorized into three categories based on the researcher's criterion.

We have studied over a hundred documents, including, among others, laws, institutional reports and public policy documents, parliamentary debates, speeches by political authorities, security and counterterrorist strategies, or secondary literature (such as policy papers or expert reports). These documents have been primarily obtained through open sources on the internet, for example, websites of Ministries of the countries under study, the European Commission, international institutions, or, in the case of secondary literature, research centres or think tanks. Other documents have been provided by interviewees either in printed or digital format (in some cases, the document itself has not been provided but only the internet link where it has been published). A small portion of these documents provided by interviewees are for internal or operational use by the governments and organizations interviewed. The languages of the analysed documents have been English, French, and Spanish.

In addition to the documental analysis described earlier, 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted for the paper on France, and 12 semi-structured interviews

were conducted for the paper on Spain. These interviews were carried out in the French and Spanish cases due to the complexity of actors, debates, and counterterrorist policies. These interviews served both as a means of orientation in the field (exploratory function) and to complement and deepen the knowledge extracted through the analysis of primary and secondary literature (systematizing function) (Bogner et al., 2009; Döringer, 2021). Before the interview, a baseline questionnaire was developed, to which additional questions were added depending on the field of knowledge and work, and space was provided for interviewees to discuss topics they deemed pertinent or for the interviewer to pose specific questions about something mentioned by the interviewee. The interview questions covered a wide range of topics related to terrorism, counterterrorism, violent radicalization, and counter-radicalization, or the memory of victims. These questions included, among other things, the interpretation provided by public servants, psychologists, law enforcement agencies, experts, social workers, or NGO workers through inquiries such as: “How does the link between counter-radicalization and counterterrorism operate in the French institutional context?” or “How do you evaluate the coordination between the CISPDR and the Prefecture, the Judiciary, the prison system, the board of education? Beyond the institutional level, how does cooperation with civil society function?” or “How do you think victims have experienced the shift from the main terrorist threat of ETA to jihadism? How have victims experienced the emergence of a new jihadist terrorist group such as Daesh?”

Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, twenty interviews were conducted via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or mobile phone calls. Also, the analysis considered the context of the interviewees. Particularly, interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours and concluded with an open-ended question, thus allowing interviewees to add or clarify any information or introduce any topics not addressed. The interviews were transcribed manually. An anonymized list of interviewees, including their professional background and

gender, is provided in the annex. Data were stored strictly by the guidelines of the Doctoral School of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) regarding data protection. All information and personal data were securely stored. Printed copies were kept in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Computer files containing personal data, such as interviewees' names, were encrypted or password-protected. Anonymised computer files were not necessarily encrypted or password-protected but were stored securely. The data storage policy follows the “Code of Good Practices” of the UAB Doctoral School.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1.4. Summary of the papers**

The present work follows the structure of the doctoral thesis as a compendium of papers. The research papers that constitute it aim to answer the general research question by exploring different dimensions of the counterterrorist response in France, Spain, and to the phenomenon of foreign fighters in Europe. Each of the papers addresses a part of the central research questions; however, they can also be read in isolation. The common thread of all the publications is to understand the discourses present in the counterterrorist field in Western Europe through some of its dimensions, such as the French and Spanish cases and the phenomenon of foreign fighters.

##### **Paper 1: On the “citizen-terrorist”: the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism (Author: Aitor Bonsoms)**

*Publication status: Work in progress*

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<sup>10</sup> Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. (2013, January 30). Code of Good Practice in Research. Retrieved from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Web site: <https://www.uab.cat/doc/Bones-Practiques-Recerca-en>

France has been coping with terrorism for decades. However, after 2012, terrorist activity has increased significantly. Attacks like those of Charlie Hebdo, in Paris on 13 November 2015 (in the Stade of France, Bataclan, and several cafes and restaurants) or the assassination of Samuel Paty in 2020 have been revindicated in the name of violent jihad by “radicalized” French citizens or residents. Unlike previous forms of terrorism, there is the impression that these terrorist actions are an attack on fundamental French values rather than aggressions against the French state. In response, the French state has deployed a set of counterterrorism and counter-radicalization actions and discourses. Based on discourse analysis of official documents, speeches, and 16 semi-structured interviews with actors in the French counterterrorist action, this paper focuses on how the French Republic—in response to these debates—portrays certain values, practices, and subjectivities as abnormal and dangerous to republican values. In this sense, the counterterrorist discourse is a key moment in the representation of “the national” or the national “we”. Thus, the following research questions are intended to be answered: how are the political differences between an “I” and an “other” drawn in the French institutional discourse on counterterrorist action? How does the wave of French citizens involved in terrorism impact this discourse?

The central argument of the paper is that the discourse on French counterterrorism offers a clear moment of national construction, revealing those who are partially or excluded from the “community of citizens” or who do not share French republican values. We argue that just after the terrorist attacks of Toulouse and Montauban in 2012 and until the end of 2014, the institutional discourse on counterterrorism understood terrorism as an external threat, highlighting the international dimension of terrorism, the effects of foreign conflicts on French citizens, as well as the psychosocial characteristics of terrorists. During this period, the terrorist subject is constructed as someone who is strongly influenced and acts in response to international issues—particularly those from

the Arab world— and is classified into three types: lone wolf, group type, and/or with “psychological problems”. Moreover, institutions perceive that the best solution to deal with terrorism is the military path, as they understand that military actions abroad would stop the spread of foreign motivations and ideologies affecting French citizens and encourage participation in terrorism in France. The deployment of French soldiers abroad and on the streets of some French cities occupied a prominent place in the institutional discourse on the fight against terrorism. However, after 2015, we observed that terrorism began to be constructed as an external threat with internal manifestations, with the “radicalization” of national citizens and residents being the main concern. Thus, since 2015, the terrorist has abandoned the position of “pure other” and appears as someone who has deviated from the French Republic and its values. This subject can return to the “national self” after a process of deradicalization. In this sense, it is noted that ideology has no borders. In other words, globalization merges activists beyond borders, with the consequent conceptual change of terrorism and terrorists, who are no longer purely “foreigners” but actions of nationals (citizen-terrorists). However, we can point out elements of continuity between both periods such as the central place in French society, policies, and discourses of the signifier “Republic”, which also influences the discourse of French elites on the fight against counterterrorism.

The main findings and theoretical and empirical contributions of the paper are several. In general terms, this paper reveals how the mobilization of citizenship senses and institutionalized values interact with security domains such as the fight against terrorism. More specifically, firstly, the distinction between the threatening “other” and its manifestation is problematized through the notion of radicalization, opening the door to the figure of the citizen-terrorist. This citizen-terrorist is discursively described as influenced by an ideology against French values and primarily influenced by a violent jihad ideology. This citizen-terrorist does not share the “republican values” of French institutions and society,



thus representing the polar opposite of the French republican citizen. In both periods, the French institutional discourse on the fight against terrorism forms a chain of equivalence with the main values of republicanism, secularism, and tolerance. This chain of equivalence, formed through a logic of equivalence between various values, is represented by the nodal point of the “Republic”. Thus, the terrorist is constructed as an “other” who threatens and antagonizes the “republican values” of French society and institutions. The figure of the citizen-terrorist also generates a parallel discourse on the “goodness” of the French Republic and its values. In other words, counterterrorist discourses and practices imply a definition of the subjects and ideologies to be combated. Therefore, in the background, there is an implicit (and sometimes explicit) debate about the meaning of “normality” or what it means to be French. Secondly, this citizen-terrorist triggers an expansion of the counterterrorist discourse beyond the realms of external and security (2012-2014) towards social, educational, or local sectors (post-2015). Thirdly, after 2015, the counterterrorist domain increasingly incorporates a broader range of professionals (for example, medical, social, and educational services) to work on the detection and fight against radicalization and its “final step”: terrorism. Finally, it should be emphasized that the paradigmatic case of France could be an empirical and theoretical starting point to be contrasted with other countries and to trace a general relationship between the counterterrorist discourse and the discourse on citizenship. On another note, recent political initiatives —such as the inclusion of racism and anti-Semitism as threats to national security— have weakened the link between terrorism and jihadi violent actions. However, an effort is needed to broaden concern about terrorism beyond violent jihadism and include other forms of terrorism (for example, far-right). Evading this task could lead to a dangerous securitization of Muslim communities, hiding other forms of insecurity and terrorism.

In sum, we can find that in the first period studied, terrorism is influenced by international affairs and is combated through the police force and, especially, the military. In contrast, in the second period, it appeared as an external threat with internal manifestations such as the extension of cases of French citizens violently radicalized. This also signifies the antagonization of these citizen-terrorists as contrary to republican values. This finding helps us to expand studies on the relationship between citizenship and security, which, as pointed out by some authors, is still scarce. At the same time, we show that these counterterrorist discourses also affect discourses about the French Republic, the sense of a “normal citizen”, or the actors involved in counterterrorism.

**Paper 2: Changes and continuities in Spanish counterterrorism discourses, policies, and practices: a greater Europeanization of Spain? (Author: Aitor Bonsoms)**

*Publication status: Work in progress, sent to an academic journal.*

In the past decade, the primary terrorist threat in Spain has shifted from a domestic one, primarily represented by ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, 1958-2018), to one inspired by violent jihad. This variation has also entailed a transformation in Spanish counterterrorist discourses, policies, and practices. In this regard, numerous previous studies have examined this threat, with fewer focusing on Spanish counterterrorist actions and practices, especially following the end of ETA, or the processes of Europeanization associated with these discourses and practices. Furthermore, studying a key actor in counterterrorist discourses, practices, and policies at the European and international levels can elucidate how this terrain has changed over the past decade and what future scenarios may exist in national, European, and international counterterrorism. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of Spanish counterterrorist discourses, practices, and policies in the post-ETA scenario. The study started in 2011 for

three reasons. Firstly, in 2011, the terrorist band ETA announced the cessation of terrorist activity, culminating in its definitive dissolution in 2018. Secondly, Law 29/2011, of September 22, was passed, recognizing and providing comprehensive protection to victims of terrorism. Finally, at the European level, the European Commission established the RAN, a key platform for disseminating knowledge and best practices in various areas of combating violent jihad. To analyse Spanish counterterrorist discourses, practices, and policies, a series of documents are examined, complemented by information extracted from 12 semi-structured interviews with actors in the Spanish counterterrorist sphere. I interviewed officials, members of associations of victims of terrorism, counterterrorism experts, and professionals in terrorism victim support and memory, including psychologists and social workers. Thus, we may inquire: What elements of change and continuity exist in Spanish counterterrorism policy following the dissolution of ETA? Similarly, the shift in threat to one of international origin may indicate that Spain has also incorporated international discourses, ideas, policies, and practices to address it. Moreover, through European directives and initiatives, we may ask: There is a growing Europeanization of Spanish counterterrorism, importing foreign elements into counterterrorist matters, as well as an influence of Spanish experience on the EU and its member states?

The central argument of the paper is that the rise of foreign fighters and the emergence of self-radicalized individuals have led to changes in counterterrorist practices and discourses in Spain, which were previously focused primarily on domestic terrorism until 2011. The paper asserts that the perception of the threat, the description of its typology, and the potential scenarios in which the threat may materialize shape counterterrorist policies and practices. Thus, a change in the terrorist threat would necessarily entail a corresponding adjustment in the response to that threat. Although Spain possesses experienced counterterrorist institutions, it must adapt and be influenced

by the process of Europeanization. Moreover, Spain plays a crucial role in shaping the counterterrorist policies and agenda of the European Union. In other words, the paper argues that Spanish counterterrorist practices and discourses have undergone an increased process of Europeanization. However, Spain remains a key actor in counterterrorism practices, decisions, and discourses at the EU level.

The main findings of the paper are multifaceted. Firstly, the Europeanization of Spanish counterterrorism policy has involved a redefinition of terrorism influenced by neighbouring European countries, the adoption of a framework against violent radicalization, improved coordination among member states, enhanced collaboration and learning among states, as well as the transposition of European counterterrorist directives and actions. This has led countries like Spain, habituated to combating third-wave terrorism, to benefit from a heightened problematization of terrorism at the European level and increased awareness among its European partners, who were until recently less exposed to terrorism. Secondly, in contrast to the Europeanization process, Spain has historically been a normative entrepreneur in counterterrorist matters, using the European and international stage to disseminate and demand greater actions on counterterrorism issues. Thirdly, Spain has implemented a degree of decentralization in its counterterrorism policies. For example, non-state actors have been incorporated into counterterrorist actions, which were previously reserved for state actors until 2019. This has led to a public-private collaboration involving new actors such as family members, coworkers, or educators of radicalized individuals, the general public, victim associations, and private organizations and institutions. This decentralization is also reflected in the involvement of municipalities and local police in counterterrorism action, regional laws recognizing and commemorating terrorist victims, and awareness-raising talks in schools and universities. However, there is a lack of reflection and implementation of actions that better integrate counterterrorist measures with democratic principles, a phenomenon observed in other EU

members as well. On the other hand, the extension of counterterrorism efforts to social, political, and psychological actions may lead to anti-democratic effects such as limiting public space and what is thinkable and discussable in the political sphere, as well as censoring ideas that deviate from the norm.

In conclusion, the end of the ETA terrorist threat and the intensification of jihadist-inspired terrorism have impacted the Spanish counterterrorist response. In this regard, there has been an increase in convergence in threats at the European level, which has influenced Europeanization processes. The Union has impacted nationally through the extension of the counter-radicalization framework, but Spain has also shaped European initiatives by being perceived as a key and experienced actor in the counterterrorist field.

**Paper 3: The Politics of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Europe: the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of citizens? (Authors: Dr. Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués and Aitor Bonsoms)**

*Publication status: This paper is coauthored with Dr. Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués and is accepted for publication in 2024 in the academic journal International Political Sociology.*

After the collapse of the “Caliphate” of Daesh in 2019, the international community has been confronted with the fact that thousands of displaced individuals are detained in Iraqi and Syrian detention centres. While the majority of them are Syrians or Iraqis, there is also a significant number of third-country nationals. The issue of European foreign fighters and their dependents in Iraq and Syria has become a dilemma for many Western European countries. The former fighters and their families have posed a significant legal, political, and moral challenge in terms of how to respond to them. As citizens or long-term residents, they have a set of rights such as the right of return and consular protection. Also, Western European countries are legally obligated to uphold democratic values and ensure

fundamental human rights for all their citizens and residents. However, most European countries have been reluctant to fulfil such obligations, especially after some returning foreign fighters have planned or carried out terrorist attacks in their home or country of residence. This paper interrogates the imaginaries of ten Western European countries — Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom— that experienced the highest numbers of departures of nationals and residents to the conflict in Syria during the period 2014-2019. The research question of this paper is: How do Western European countries deterritorialise and reterritorialize their citizens involved with foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq? This contributes to thinking about the relationship between territory and citizenship. We employ discourse analysis to examine the various governmental measures deployed to address the issue of foreign fighters.

The central argument of the paper is that Western European governments are engaging in discourses and practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to exclude the citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter from the political body and normalize them as a feature of the Middle Eastern reality. The article challenges the governmental policies of Western European governments towards their members detained in penitentiary facilities and refugee camps in Iraq and Syria. To do so, we analyse the deterritorialization and reterritorialization measures of the state regarding European citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter and the link between territory and citizenship. Territory is understood here as an intersubjectively produced space comprising both physical and human geography. Territory is also performative of the state, in that the state gains its *raison d'être* and functions through the physical and human landscape of the territory. In this sense, with the aid of the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, we analyse the discourse and justificatory practices that allow a state to alter, or even attempt to break, the social relations between the “normal” citizen and the citizen-fighter-terrorist-foreigner. Thus,

detritorialization and reterritorialization shed light on the exceptional policies that a state can adopt to target a specific segment of society and work to undermine their rights as citizens and/or human beings.

The main findings of the paper are manifold. Firstly, the discourse and practices of detritorialization and reterritorialization by Western European governments reveal deviations and potential repression within the liberal state. Thus, the trope of “terrorism”, and more specifically the rhetorical recourse to the new citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter, has been produced and subsequently invoked by political actors to justify security practices in a manner that contradicts the spirit of liberal democratic values and principles. Secondly, this discourse and practices hyper-visualize a collective such as the citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter based on risk, biology, and supposed “natural” belonging to the territory intersubjectively produced in the Middle East. Specifically, the detritorialization movement serves to deny the right to return or consular service, thus serving governmental discourses presenting the citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter adult and even their children as a serious security problem for the political body of the country of origin. This is based on the underlying subtexts of the citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter as a radicalized, emotionally deranged, and dehumanized subject. Thirdly, and closely related to the above, we point out that this discourse and the various associated practices exhibit all the traits of exceptionalism and enhance extreme right-wing and/or xenophobic populism. This would imply a racialized state, where biological and cultural markers become determinants for legitimate membership in the state, either as a citizen or as a legal resident. Thus, the liberal state's ambition to achieve multiculturalism as a basis for a “good life” socially has been abandoned as liberal and progressive political parties increasingly adopt the logic and rhetoric of the extreme right and chauvinistic populism. The denial of basic human and legal rights of citizens and residents to the citizen-foreign-terrorist-fighter may seem like a harmless and insignificant practice in the name of societal security. However, if citizens do

not hold their governments accountable for the lack of respect for such rights, this will eventually cause erosion in terms of state protection and guarantees for other sectors of society, risking that other individuals may be condemned to statelessness and civic death or be unable to exercise their fundamental civil and socio-economic rights. The danger is, therefore, that if allowed to continue unchecked, the deterritorialization and reterritorialization movements of Western European countries could undermine the foundations of democracy and state protection even for the “valuable” citizen, as arbitrariness in the rule of law and the treatment of citizens diminishes legal and basic human rights for the entire community, especially at a time when liberal democracy is eroding worldwide.

To conclude, the foreign fighters and their descendants in Syria and Iraq represent a multifaceted issue encompassing ethical, legal, political, diplomatic, and security themes. In this regard, the imaginaries of the ten Western European countries studied show a general tendency to not fulfil certain legal obligations due to the security threat these citizens may pose. However, such practices may pose a larger problem to society as a whole as they could be exported to other domains and jeopardize the legal frameworks of citizenship and coexistence in a liberal democratic space.



## **2. On the “citizen-terrorist”: the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism (Author: Aitor Bonsoms)**

*Publication status: Work in progress*

### **Abstract:**

Since 9/11 public debates and a major body of academic research have considered that the concept of “terrorist” is opposed to the concept of “good citizen”, attributing a clear negative connotation in comparison to previous 9/11 (e.g. “terrorist” as “freedom fighter”). However, few studies shed light on the mechanisms and relations that holds this opposition. A relevant case of this opposition is present in most of the discourses of French institutions, which have been active leaders in counterterrorism in the last decade at national and international levels. Terrorism deeply changed aspects of French life and sparked public debates on French official values. Based on discourse analysis of official documents, speeches, and sixteen semi-structured interviews with actors of French counterterrorism, this article examines the main elements of the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism after 2012. We conclude that this discourse creates the

concept of “citizen-terrorist” and the implicit “good French citizen”. Therefore, “the terrorist” passes from being an external other (before 2015) to an internal other (after 2015).

**Keywords:** Counterterrorism; France; Citizenship; Self-Other; Discourse; Terrorist

## **2.1. Introduction**

France has dealt with terrorism for decades (Beauchamps, 2017).<sup>11</sup> During the 1960s, France suffered the violence of terrorist groups related to the Algerian war, whether independentist or colonialist. During the 1970s and 1980s, terrorism was mainly conducted by far-right groups and especially far-left ones. In addition, active separatist groups with Breton and Corse nationalist motivations, as well as groups related to the Basque conflict, effectuated attacks on French territory between the 1960s and 2010s. However, after 2012, a different form of terrorist activity in France has been on the rise. Attacks such as the Charlie Hebdo, the November 2015 Paris attacks (in Stade de France, Bataclan, and several cafes and restaurants), or the murder of Samuel Paty in 2020 have been claimed in the

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<sup>11</sup> Four types of terrorism have operated in France after the World War II: groups active in the Algerian war, as well as far-right, far-left, and separatist terrorist groups. Examples of groups active in the Algerian war are the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN by its acronym in French), the Armée Nationale du Peuple Algérien (ANPA), the colonialist Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS, 1961-1962) and the Charles Martel Group (1973-1983). On the far-right side, we include the Groupe Action Jeunesse (GAJ, 1973-1978) and the recent violent acts against the Muslim community. Concerning far-left groups, Maoist and autonomist movements were the dominant terrorist actors, being Action Directe (AD, 1979-1987) the most active one. Regarding separatist movements, Breton and Corse nationalists were especially active between the 1970s and the 2000s, while Caribbean and Neo-Caledonian separatists were dominant during the 1980s. Finally, those terrorist groups related with the Basque conflict were active between the 1960s and 2011, the year of the dissolution of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA).

name of violent jihad by “radicalised” French citizens or residents. Thus, terrorism linked to violent jihad committed by nationals and residents has come to occupy a central position in domestic public discourses. French public discourse defends the idea that these aggressions are more against fundamental French values rather than an attack against the French state.

To answer this, the French state deployed a set of counterterrorism and counter-radicalization actions and discourses. Counterterrorism discourses and practices imply a definition of the subjects and ideologies to combat. Consequently, in the undertext, there is an implicit (and sometimes explicit) debate on the sense of “normality” or what it means to be French. The mobilization of French republican values (e.g., laicism or tolerance) is commonplace in the French counterterrorism debate in opposition to those of the terrorists or “radicalised”. This was intensified after the 2015 attacks, when discussions on the reasons why some French citizens feel detached, reject the “republican values” and attack their fellow citizens and institutions reached their highest point. Most of those public discourses point to the main concern a sector of the French Muslim population considered as “radicalised”. Regarding the French Muslim population, for instance, polls in 2021 point that one-third of French Muslims situate their religious convictions above “republican values”; this figure reaches 75% in the case of Muslims under twenty-five years of age (Choquet, 2020). In the same poll, 26% of young Muslims refuse to condemn the Charlie Hebdo attack (8% in the case of French of non-Muslim confession) (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the debate is not on who is French but on how certain subjectivities and values are prosecuted and rejected in the counterterrorism discourses and actions. In other words, the focus is on how the French republic—as an answer to these debates—portrays certain values, practices, and subjectivities as abnormal and dangerous for the republican values, being the counterterrorism discourse a clear moment of this portrait. The French State promotes republican values as described in the first article of the French Constitution: “The

French Republic is indivisible, secular, democratic and social”. Among those key values for the Republic, our article is particularly interested in the value of secularity given that it is the value that relates the French Republic and public sphere with religion (and forms of it such as violent jihad). This value is understood in the French Republic as religious freedom, the principle of equality of all citizens before the law (no matter which religion these citizens have), and the State’s neutrality toward all religions.

France is a critical case given that clearly shows the link between senses of citizenship and counterterrorism. In this sense, counterterrorism in France has become a foil against which debates on French identity, religious symbols, and integration play out. Despite the magnitude of this debate, there is a lack of studies on how the French state understands and discursively constructs the terrorist threat and sense of citizenship of those who commit terrorist attacks after 2012. We start from 2012 given that between 9/11 and 2012 no jihadist attacks were registered in France (see Global Terrorism Database), as well as the issue of jihadist terrorism was almost totally absent in the public debate. Our contribution in this regard is twofold: empirical and theoretical. At the empirical level, we study the evolution of the institutional discourse on counterterrorism from 2012 to the present date, how it affects debates on French national identity and state construction, as well as how the discourse constructs subjects/objects. Also, this article aims to fill the limited attention devoted to exploring the figure of the “terrorist” in counterterrorism discourses (for notable exceptions see, for instance, Hellmuth, 2015; Bogain, 2017; 2018; Faucher & Boussaguet, 2018; D’Amato, 2019a; 2019b). At the theoretical level, the empirical contribution is based on the idea that the French counterterrorism discourse creates a chain of equivalence between counterterrorism, the French Republic, and their senses of citizenship and values (excluding the “terrorist” and “radicalised” in this chain). This article also aims to address what the scholars noted as a void in the literature on in-depth studies of the link between security and citizenship (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2013).

Thus, studying the case of France could reveal how the mobilization of senses of citizenship and institutionalized values interact with security areas such as counterterrorism.

For this purpose, the research questions we employ to investigate the topic are: how are political differences between a self and other drawn in the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism? How does the surge of French citizens engaged in terrorism affect this discourse? The present article is divided into four sections. The first section briefly introduces our conceptual and methodological framework. The second part analyses the collection of documents and speeches, as well as shows the main elements of the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism. In this section, we illustrate how this discourse creates the concept of “citizen-terrorist” and the implicit “good French citizen”. The third section analyses the impact of the elite discourse on counterterrorism and the emergence of the citizen-terrorist on the French Republic. The article concludes by explaining the main elements and possible effects of this discourse.

## **2.2. Counterterrorism, citizenship, and Methodology**

After 9/11 the literature devoted to terrorism in security studies has focused on the effects of counterterrorism measures and the societal impact of terrorist acts. The “War on Terror” discourse and agenda have decidedly moulded terrorism and counterterrorism studies. Numerous publications have been related to the cognitive role of perceptions among policymakers of the terrorist threat or the societal construction of such a threat, pointing out that constructing terrorism as a crime, a disease or a war makes acceptable some policies such as military or judicial measures while excluding others like negotiations (Katzenstein, 1996; Jackson, 2005; 2016; Gunning, 2007; Spencer, 2012). Another important set of literature has scrutinized the various measures that states adopt for counterterrorism (Nohrstedt & Hansén, 2010; Weithman, 2002). Previous literature classifies counterterrorism measures into five types, most of the time not studied all

together but rather focused on one of them. Coercive counterterrorism aims to prosecute terrorism through criminal justice and may also consider terrorism as a war, therefore using war methods and equalling terrorist groups to states. The second model, the proactive one, aims to collect information for intelligence purposes while persuasive counterterrorism focuses on countering the messages of terrorist groups and shaping public perceptions of these groups. The third one has focused on countering the messages from the terrorist groups and shaping citizens' perceptions of these groups. Finally, defensive counterterrorism aims to prevent an attack and mitigate them (e.g., protect critical infrastructures or promote citizens' resilience), while long-term counterterrorism creates development actions to tackle radicalization and promotes social and economic rights (Crelinsten, 2019).

Much attention here has been drawn to the fact that, in the wake of international terrorist networks, counterterrorism since 2001 has undergone a steady, but stealthy militarization, whereby military means, including military intelligence technology, appear increasingly to be one of the preferred means by states in their fight to control and combat terrorist activity whether inside or beyond a country's borders (Shapiro & Byman, 2006). In parallel, through the notion of "radicalization", counterterrorism has taken a new route of anticipating terrorism where "radicalization" always precedes violence and, as a consequence, new actors as social, psychological, or medical services are included to understand, tackle and avoid terrorism (Baker-Beall et al., 2015). However, although counterterrorist studies have yielded important insights into the construction and the combat of terrorism as a phenomenon, only limited attention has been devoted to specific state counterterrorism discursive measures and, particularly, as a first step to understanding the counterterrorist response (for notable exceptions see, for instance, D'Amato, 2019a; Jackson, 2007; Jarvis & Lister, 2013). Exploring what a democratic state as France has defined as a terrorist and terrorist action makes it necessary to look at the

debates on citizenship and which senses of “normality” have been constructed around the notion of the citizen. Previous research on what duties are incurred by citizenship and what constitutes citizenry and civic behaviour have given way to scrutinizing citizenship as a discourse and how that discourse moulds and disciplines citizens into appropriate modes of public engagement by sanctioning certain practices (Asen, 2004; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Bauböck, 2009). While most of the Foucauldian studies concentrate on the governmentality of criminality or sexuality, some of them focus on the disciplinary effects of government on citizenship and citizenship tests, showing how these tests are relevant elements to studying the state’s perception of how subjects should be produced as citizens (see, for instance, Löwenheim & Gazit, 2009). Other critical kinds of studies focus their attention on the colonial emergency regulations as a source for counterterrorism laws as well as the way that counterterrorist actions shape citizenship and target certain populations through, for instance, emergency laws, mobility restrictions, surveillance, or political control (Volpp, 2002; Berda, 2020). Finally, other pieces of literature that explore citizenship regimes pay attention to the role of values (i.e. religion-secularity, ethnicity, or linguistic diversity), what obligations have those citizens that do not conform to the “standard” as well as it shows that the senses of citizenship are different among generations of the same community (e.g., the first generation have experience of citizenship marked by migration while the second generation marked by growing up in the country that their parents moved) (Weithman, 2002; Hussain & Bagguley, 2005). These works are especially relevant because they point out that violent jihad is a youth movement in Europe where the second and third generation of migrants break with their families and become estranged from their surroundings (Roy, 2008).

By focusing on this interrelation between counterterrorism and senses of citizenship, the present article seeks to clarify the contingency of citizenship constructions and how counterterrorism discourses and practices have become yet another relevant

producer of citizenship and non-citizenship. Our study here focuses on France in which citizenship discourses have been shaped and moulded by frequently heated exchanges over French secular, Christian, and French Muslim values and how such values constitute the French national self today (see, for instance, Scott, 2007; Laborde, 2008; Bowen, 2009). Our focus on the French discourse on the citizen-terrorist can be seen as a distinct subset of the broader French citizenship discourse, alongside other such delineation of citizenship as could be immigration. It is at the fertile crossroads of security and citizenship that the scrutiny of the French counterterrorist discourse becomes interesting to explore. It is fair to say that French discourses on counterterrorism are an understudied field, even though France has a relatively long trajectory of suffering terrorist acts. So, our argument here in part addresses a void in the literature on how French political elites and institutions understand, frame, and tackle one of the main contemporary security issues, and how they draw political frontiers of inclusion and exclusion of citizenship since 2012. Moreover, France is an interesting case to explore as its terrorist discourse has taken a different route than other countries affected by contemporary terrorist acts. In France, the experience with international terrorism has been mixed in with the history of domestic secessionist or far left/right violent acts against civilians. This has led to, as some studies have highlighted, that the state reacts to international terrorism at par with domestic terrorist acts through military actions generating a vivid public debate ensues. For instance, in France, the military operations against terrorism abroad have been wildly debated and framed as an attack against the enemy and as an action to train local armies to regionalize the conflict (i.e., ensure that the conflict does not spread beyond the region) (D'Amato, 2019a). At the domestic level, terrorism is also equated with any other type of criminal action, hence susceptible to prosecution in civilian courts (Shapiro & Byman, 2006; Bures, 2010). Also, previous research points to the discoordination, problems of mistrust, and informal organizational routines among counterterrorist actors and security agencies in France



(Foley, 2013). Nevertheless, these studies do not include the effects of 2015's attacks and how changed (if it has) the coordination and visions of the French counterterrorism actors and security agencies (Foley, 2019). This is something that this article also aims to fill with the help of the semi-structured interviews with French counterterrorist actors. This is where our analysis is original because we are primarily concerned here to analyse the subjectivity/subject position which is created about the terrorist in French institutional discourse and the different visions among the counterterrorist actors.

At the theoretical level, feminist, constructivist, and postmodern perspectives stress the constitutive character of discourses and study their effects on the subject positions produced via the representation of difference. Previous research draws on the self/other dichotomies for studying the construction of subjectivities. Those authors highlight the necessity of constructing and excluding "others" for creating subjectivities (see, for instance, Neumann, 1999). Therefore, the state produces through "exclusionary practices" a discourse of "danger" to secure the subject's position as a "self" against a dangerous "other" (Campbell, 1992). This "discourse of danger" is based on various threats that are created or reinforced by the governing elite to produce and represent an "us" (French governing elites and "normal" citizens) in opposition to a dangerous "other" ("abnormal" citizens). Subjectivity and nation-building are never-ending processes. Thus, the characteristics and existence of states are permanently linked to the "discourse of danger". The institutional discourse on counterterrorism is a remarkable example of nation-building and self-creation, because it highlights the traits of a given society — particularly its national self— against an "other", sometimes locating the "other" well inside the physical borders of the state (Jackson, 2016; Margulies, 2013). Ultimately, the discourse on counterterrorism and the subjects/objects that it creates help justify actions of an "us" against a specific "other". Hence, it is relevant to focus on concepts that study

different subjectivity constructions to understand the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism.

In terms of our source material, we analyse a series of official documents and speeches since 2012. We also conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews in 2022 with actors and stakeholders in the French counterterrorist field. The interviewees were French experts, frontline or grassroots practitioners registered in the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) participant database from the European Commission. The participants were chosen using a snowball sampling technique and at the end of every interview, we asked if s/he could provide other contacts. This expanded our initial sample to a range of participants not registered in the RAN database. Due to the sanitary constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, 15 out of 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom videocalls, or mobile calls. The sample consisted of 9 females and 7 males working on countering violent extremism NGO's, public administration, psychiatric, psychological, and medical services, social work, policy and security forces and research universities and institutes. We did not conduct more interviews given that we reached the point of saturation. In other words, in the last interviews, we reached a moment where a new semi-structured interview only showed data already discovered previously and we did not discover new actors to interview.

To analyse this data, this article uses a methodology based on Political Discourse Theory (PDT), which provides us with a grammar for understanding social and political phenomena and discourses. PDT offers two logics for understanding discourse: the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference. The logic of difference expands “the number of positions that can enter into a relation of combination and hence of continuity with one another” while the logic of equivalence extends “the elements that can be substituted for one another —thereby reducing the number of positions which can be combined” (Laclau

& Mouffe, 2001 [1985], p. 130). Related with these two notions is that of “chain of equivalence”. A chain of equivalence is the product of the union of differential elements “given either by a positive determination underlying them all or by their common reference to something external” (Ibid., p.127).

### **2.3. Deconstructing the evolving French institutionalized discourse on the terrorist**

The signifier “Republic” occupies a central role in French society, policies, and discourses, influencing also the French elite discourse on counterterrorism. Although it is fair to say that violent jihad<sup>12</sup> started its activity in France in 1985, most of the attacks occurred after 2012.<sup>13</sup>

#### **2.3.1. The French elite discourse on counterterrorism between 2012 and 2014**

The dramatic acts of Mohammed Merah in Toulouse and Montauban in 2012 ended two decades of low terrorist activity on French soil. The discourse on counterterrorism progressively gained importance in various French institutions since 2012. This discourse was, between 2012 and 2014, centred on the international dimension of terrorism, the psycho-social characteristics of the terrorists, and the use of military means.

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<sup>12</sup> Jihad is not violent by definition. Jihad is understood as an inner spiritual fight for pure faith, protection of the Muslim faith against aggressions, and gain Muslim preponderance over non-believers. The use of the adjective violent aims to capture those actions based on the third interpretation of jihad. See Sohail H. Hashmi. “Jihad.” *In The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, by Robert Wuthnow, 425-26. Abingdon: Routledge, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Several authors affirm that the problematic of radicalization and deradicalization emerge in 2012 with the attacks of Merah. See Alex Alber, Joël Cabalion, and Valérie Cohen. *Un impossible travail de déradicalisation*. Toulouse: Éditions érès, 2020.

In this period, the discourse on counterterrorism identifies the “international” as a key location and explanation for terrorism. It was a time that coincided with the Arab Springs, the escalation of the Syrian Civil War, and the longstanding but ever-current repercussions Israeli-Palestinian conflict beyond the Middle East. The outlook from the French institutional actors was that the threat was not directed against any particular country as it appeared “to be evolving and spreading geographically” with entities cropping up in many different countries (Ministère des Armées, 2013). The French state thus appeared to locate both terrorists and the phenomenon of terrorism beyond France’s borders. The French institutional discourse portrayed the main terrorist locations of radicalization and operations as emerging in “fragile or failed states” located at some distance from France (Ibid.). In those locations, the terrorists are depicted as individuals acting to radicalise local conflicts and desirous to “achieve a global impact by directly targeting Western interests” (Ibid.). These Western interests targeted were linked to conflict management and/or military intervention of the West in such locations.

Terrorists and terrorism were consequently understood as external to the French society and motivated by causes and submitted to forces of radicalization of foreign origin. Even when attacks on French soil begin to take place in 2012 and 2014 and all of the terrorists during this period were French citizens, the discourse attributes these attacks to isolated incidents and/or largely motivated by reasons “foreign to France”. This goes much in line with the Western discourse on the war on terror as being self-referential and delinked from domestic contexts. This is a discourse that points to terrorism as an act of an external actor with foreign motivations that aims to target the West for international publicity or “punish” Western acts in third countries (particularly in the Middle East). For instance, this is the case of the attacks in Toulouse and Montauban, the French state attributed the acts to the consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a foreign cultural identity question as to the French ban on the full veil in public.

Secondly, the institutional discourse constructs the terrorist subject around two groups: individual and group-instigated terrorism. Individuals that subscribe her attachment to a foreign terrorist group do not receive material support from them, just “inspiration” and a “foreign ideology” through the internet. The internet has a role of connect “national” and “foreign” terrorists, as well as spread grievances (e.g., against “Western countries”) and knowledge on terrorism and violent jihad from abroad to France:

It [internet] encourages the self-radicalization of isolated individuals who are attracted by the idea that their actions will have a global impact reflecting the extent of the resentment that they harbour. The role of the Internet should be stressed here: it enables these individuals to join virtual communities with which they can identify, thus providing terrorist organizations with an effective recruitment channel (Ibid., p. 42).

In this sense, the internet connects foreign ideologies and motivations with French citizens that are detached from the territories where those grievances and terrorist groups are born. Those individuals inspired do not possess contacts beyond internet communities.

The second category of the terrorist subject is the group-based type, exemplified by subjects such as Mohammed Merah. For instance, the Minister of Interior Manuel Valls rejected that he was a “lone wolf” and described him in the following way:

Mohamed Merah's action was the result of careful preparation, of a real learning process made up of numerous contacts. [...] Merah is alone, but not isolated. It is not the same thing. There is an environment, which can be that of the family, the neighbourhood, the prison. Contacts, in France or abroad, who forged this process of radicalization that led him to kill (AFP & 20 minutes, 2013).

Thus, the group-instigated type differs from the individual because the former has certain links with people that helped her to carry on actions.

At the same time, both diverge from the terrorists constructed as subjects with “psychological issues” (e.g., La Défense, Dijon, and Nantes attacks). For those subjects, any socio-psychological intervention is planned, neither for reinserting them nor for avoiding future attacks of subjects of this type. For instance, Alexandre Dhaussy —the terrorist of La Défense— was legally declared “criminally irresponsible” due to psychological reasons (“paranoid attitude” and “severe depressive state”, among others) (Gonzalez, 2015). Meanwhile the authorities declared that the attack of Nacer B. —the “terrorist” of Dijon— was an “event of an unbalanced” (“le fait d'un déséquilibré”), as well as the public prosecutor declared that Sébastien Sarron behavior’s —the terrorist of Nantes— “had become ‘unstable’ for several months” (“était devenu ‘instable’ depuis plusieurs mois”) (Daniel, 2014). Thus, excluding two cases (Toulouse and Montauban shootings and Tours attack), the three other events were carried on by this subject with “psychological issues”.

Thirdly, the institutions perceive that the best solution to tackle terrorism is through military means. The deployment of French soldiers abroad and in the streets of certain French cities occupied a prominent position in the institutional discourse on counterterrorism. The armed forces are one of the reasons why France suffers the terrorism of violent jihad but also its main means of countering the terrorist threat. The French military operations in Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, Libya, and Mali are framed as “an important part of our security efforts”, as well as those in the Sahel and Equatorial Africa for “combatting all forms of terrorism” (Ministère des Armées, 2013, p. 10 & 63). In those operations, the army would be forced “to engage in crisis management operations” that include “irregular adversaries using asymmetrical operating methods (suicide-attacks, ambushes, hostage-taking, improvised explosive devices, acts of piracy, etc.)” (Ibid., p. 81). These pull-effects of foreign conflicts and military deployment “may incite radicalised individuals present on our territory to turn to action and join them in their efforts” (Ibid., p.42). Therefore, military

actions abroad would stop the spread of foreign motivations and ideologies that affect the French citizens and encourage engagement in terrorism in France.

In sum, the terrorist subject is constructed as someone who is heavily influenced and acts in response to international affairs, particularly from the Arab World (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or Daesh's propaganda). Nevertheless, those reasons — sometimes expressed by “unbalanced” subjects, others by ideologically motivated subjects— are mentioned in passing by the authorities. To combat these, the French institutional discourse considers that the best to tackle terrorism is through military actions abroad that stop the foreign motivations of violent jihad.

### **2.3.2. The French elite discourse on counterterrorism after 2015**

Two changeovers appeared in the discourse after the Charlie Hebdo attacks of January 2015. First, the realization that ideology has no borders. In other words, globalization fuses activists across borders, and the consequent conceptual shift of terrorism and terrorists as no longer purely “foreign”, but actions by nationals (citizen-terrorists). Second, the increasing importance of the idea that the terrorist is a radicalised individual and/or a socially marginal subject-position inspired by ISIS and “radical” ideas. This displaced the previous central idea that the terrorist is someone mentally deranged, but without completely deleting it from the discourse. This second changeover opened the door to new actors, generating two opposing visions on counterterrorism: social and sanitary vs. security approaches. Thus, rather than military means like in the 2012-2014 period, the terrorist should be tackled with socio-psychological tools together with security ones. This is also a difference from the previous period: while in 2012-2014 subjects with “psychological issues” were present in the discourse but without socio-psychological intervention, now the institutions highlight the importance of these kinds of actions while

erasing from the discourse those subjects. Both changes can be summarized in the words of President Emmanuel Macron:

We had faced imported terrorism. We have what is called endogenous terrorism whose forms have hybridized, and which is on the borders, for some, of the excesses that come from radical Islam, for others, on the borders of psychiatry and politico-religious radicalization, sometimes with individuals, as we know they are very isolated, who can radicalise in few hours (Macron, 2020b, pp. 4-5).

Firstly, the deterritorialization of ideology weakens the idea that the terrorist is exclusively an external other. As a consequence, the erstwhile clear-cut distinction of foreign versus national has become blurred.<sup>14</sup> It was remarked that —despite the Islamic State’s lost territory— “homegrown terrorism” had become “a reality in France” (SG-CIPDR, 2018, p. 5). The 2018 “Action Plan Against Terrorism” describes terrorist attacks inspired by violent jihad as actions carried out by “essentially endogenous actors” with the power to convince others and the “ability to inspire endogenous actors, due in particular to the dissemination of propaganda in the Internet” (Secrétariat Général de la Défense et de la Sécurité Nationale, 2018, pp. 7-8). Since 2015, debates on the citizen-terrorist construct a situation of “diffuse and omnipresent endogenous threat” (Ibid., p. 8). Therefore, the sharp distinction between an exogenous/outside/international threat and the endogenous/inside/national manifestations of this external agent has lost conceptual distinctiveness. Excluding some mentions in the “Plan d’Action contre la Radicalisation et le Terrorisme”, it is significant that almost none of the French institutional documents embraces the terminology “foreign [terrorist] fighters”, a term which has been used extensively by other countries hit by terrorism of returnees from war zones. This is arguable a salient, if silent, recognition of the fact that French citizens participating in terrorist

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<sup>14</sup> See for instance the use of endogenous in speeches of Édouard Philippe.



activity become radicalised in multiple ways. Thus, the motivation behind terrorism is no longer exclusively a foreign ideology but also “a mental and ideological break with our society” (Assemblée nationale, 2015, p. 9). Here is where we find the role of “radicalization” in the discourse on counterterrorism: “with radicalization comes the insertion of the individual into a new group [mainly online violent communities] which gives him a substitute identity and a sense of increased dignity” (Ibid.). Now, “the double challenge for France [...] is not to cut itself off from the Muslim community and to integrate Islam into the Republic” (Ibid.). In sum, the endogenous citizen-terrorist is not the result of exclusively foreign motivations and ideologies but especially the product of a radicalization process that makes the subject cut ties with the French Republican institutions, society, and values.

Second, the French institutional discourse on the citizen-terrorist frames the terrorist as someone object of radicalization or de-socialized from French society. In other words, violent acts are the end stage of a process of radicalization, being gradually displaced by the use of the term “terrorist” for the term “radicalised” (Premier Ministre, 2022; Interviewee #9). Thus, especially between 2015 and 2018/2019, the issue of radicalization substituted the previous discourse focused only on terrorism/security (Interviewee #1; Interviewee #13; Interviewee #14). Here the SG-CIPDR wanted to occupy a central role in the fight against radicalization, desiring to establish a “moral policy” orientation rather than a security one (Interviewee #13). Now, with the term “radicalised”, all the citizens can be potentially dangerous and suspects of radical views and conduct future violent acts. Consequently, the terrorist subject is increasingly individualized since 2015. The institutional discourse states that “we are now witnessing a real individualization of enrolment [in terrorism]” (Assemblée nationale, 2015, p. 40). French citizens and residents are produced as individuals who could engage at any moment and without much notice with violent jihad, even they can act violently without connections with armed groups in conflict zones. In this second period, the signifier “radical” or “radicalised” gains

importance given that terrorism is developed almost entirely within the borders of France. Now, the “radicalised” is almost as important as the terrorist in the French institutional discourse on counterterrorism and s/he is someone to be watched over, for instance, after being released from prison (Secrétariat Général de la Défense et de la Sécurité Nationale, 2018). Now, with the notion of “radicalised”, the person that could be a citizen-terrorist is wider because the “radicalised” is not simply the individual who carries out the violent act, but it also includes a wide range of typologies (e.g., terrorist, those that spread propaganda, young or women who do not commit violent acts but hold jihad ideology) (SG-CIPDR, 2018; Sénat, 2017). Consequently, the act of terrorism is individualized: now the terrorist is a “radicalised” subject without necessary connections with a group and s/he is an object of individualized surveillance and supervision (including medical and psychological). This individualization opened the door to new actors in the French counterterrorism field, broadening the perspective from only repressive to a combination of repressive and preventive actions (Interviewee #10).

Finally, documents like “Prevent to protect” understand the citizen-terrorist “radicalised” as someone displaying pathological or other mental health issues.<sup>15</sup> Contrary to the previous period, this subject is endogenous, and the French state not only condemns them as someone with “psychological issues” but creates a set of socio-psychological actions to reinsert them and avoid future cases. The equation of the terrorist-radical and mental instability has not been uncontroversial, as recognized by Edouard Philippe in the presentation of “Prevent to Protect” (Philippe, 2018, p. 4). The then Prime Minister objected to the use of the terminology “de-radicalization” as to him it appeared to imply the

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<sup>15</sup> At page 19, the document establishes a “long-term social, medical, and psychological care for child returnees from terrorist combat zones by mapping out the child psychiatric resources available for use under the supervision of the Juvenile Judge”.

“deprogramming dangerous software”. However, he still went on to argue “we want to ensure that everyone has access to long-term care, and in particular psychological follow-up, to promote their reintegration” as well as means for socio-educational re-socialization (ibid.).<sup>16</sup> The terrorist is someone who is displaying a “rejection and flight from the real world”, rejection of his/her previous French “individual identity”, and “feelings of persecution and paranoia” but also in some cases:

[t]he taste for adventure, the call of an idealized heroic destiny, the need to embrace a cause in order to give meaning to an uninspiring existence, and the quest for an ideal, probably play a role at least equal to that ideology among the youngest aspiring jihadists (Assemblée nationale, 2015, p. 40).

The image of the citizen-terrorist as a mentally deranged and/or asocial individual also emanates from other French institutions in the discourse on measures on how to “reinsert” the “radicalised” into the French society.<sup>17</sup> Exemplary of these are the practices for “reinserting” the radicalised locked up in the Centre de Prévention et d’Insertion à la Citoyenneté (CPIC):

They would follow a ten-month disengagement, civic and professional integration course in a semi-open boarding school, with close psychological monitoring provided by a team of researchers from the University of Paris VII, training courses dedicated to developing their critical sense, and, finally, support towards professionalization to prepare for their exit. Their daily life would be strongly framed and subject to various integrating routines dedicated to strengthening their link to the Republic (weekly flag raising, singing of *La*

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<sup>16</sup> See also “Prevent to protect” document at page 20: “Improve how we detect and treat the psychological problems of radicalised inmates, using specialist two-person support teams (psychologists and educators), in keeping with the national strategy for prisoner health”.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance Art. 6 of the law no. 2021-998 du 30 juillet 2021 relative à la prévention d’actes de terrorisme.

*Marseillaise*). This program was inspired in part by closed educational centres (CEF) and to a larger extent by EPIDEs initially designed by the Ministry of Defense to reintegrate young people losing their social connections. [...] The image was firm but a public “humanist” response, consisted in diverting young French people from jihadist channels, by giving them a chance to return to the fold of the Republic (Alber et al., 2020, p.11).

In a similar line, the Fonds Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance (FIPD) in 2015 and 2016 devoted seven hundred thousand euros for among other things, funds for “psychological care”, for “remobilization and re-socialization to the people reported”, and with “the final objective” of “reintegrate them socially and professionally” (Sénat, 2017, p. 33). Nevertheless, government’s actions and understanding of the role of social and health in counterterrorism and counter-radicalization have been perceived with scepticism by the social and health workers. In this line, a child psychiatrist and referring doctor in a regional project to prevent radicalization affirms:

So, I am not sure that the government is clearly understanding what it means health issue in the radicalization process, they just see it as binary. On one hand it could be just a mad guy and we don’t have to be interested by that and s/he can be in a psychiatric, or [on the other hand] it is just a terrorist and we have to be clear, as psychiatrists, as psychologists have to explain to what they [government] want, to help us [the government] to see the difference between mad people and terrorists but actually that’s... I am not sure that could be working, I am not sure (Interviewee #4).

To conclude, the figure of the terrorist started to change from an external actor with foreign motivations and ideologies to someone endogenous that suffered a process of radicalization that separate her from the French Republic. As a result, the French discourse on counterterrorism expanded to include those citizens who sympathize with terrorist ideas (mainly violent jihad ideology). Thus, the discourse changed from conceiving the issue as military-centred and exterior to France (pre-2015) to increasingly individualized

and with interior and exterior manifestations that should be addressed through security but also medical, social, and educational means (post-2015).

## **2.4. Discussion: La reconquête républicaine? The effect of citizen-terrorist discourse on the French Republican values**

Between 2012 and 2014, the terrorist was located in foreign countries (e.g., Iraq or Afghanistan) and the French institutional discourse was concerned about the possible effects of foreign terrorism on the French self. Neither the French self nor its official values seem to be portrayed as endangered, despite the emergence of certain debates related to the incorporation of Muslim symbols into public spaces (e.g., schools). Therefore, we find that this discourse before 2015 was situated on foreign, defence, and military areas of the State. At the same time, the French discourse on counterterrorism seemed to portray the French Republic as powerful, not questioned, and passive. In other words, there was nothing that the French Republic needed to do because it was seen as an effective actor and even a role model to follow. This changed in 2015. Since then, the French Republic and its values started to appear as more weakened, endangered, as well as in need of promotion and protection. Thus, the institutional discourse on counterterrorism emerged beyond the foreign, defence, and military sectors: it became present in social, medical, educational, sports, and local policies. In parallel, the figure of the terrorist started to change from an external actor to someone from within, especially given that French citizens committed most terrorist attacks after 2015. As a result, this discourse expanded to include those citizens who sympathize with terrorist ideas (mainly violent jihad ideology). Simultaneously, certain ideas started to be framed as forerunners of terrorism (e.g., hate speech, communitarianism).

Institutional discourses on counterterrorism and the citizen-terrorist have, as we have seen, evolved since 2012 to the present date. However, they still preserve the idea

that the “Republican values” of the French institutions and society are common elements that citizens engaging with terrorism do not share. The French institutional discourse on counterterrorism forms a chain of equivalence with the main values of republicanism, secularism, and tolerance. This chain of equivalence, formed through a logic of equivalence between several values, is represented by the nodal point of the “Republic”. The underlying idea of this discourse —sometimes it is explicit, while others less so— is that institutions and society must promote republicanism, secularism, and tolerance (for instance, *Assemblée Nationale*, 2015). For instance, this is defined through a link together of different exclusions:

In the Republic, we cannot accept that we refuse to shake hands with a woman because she is a woman. In the Republic, we cannot accept that someone refuses to be cared for or educated by someone because she is a woman. In the Republic, one cannot accept dropping out for religious or belief reasons. In the Republic, one cannot require certificates of virginity to get married. In the Republic, we must never accept that the laws of religion can be superior to the laws of the Republic. It is as simple as that (Macron, 2020a, p. 2).

We can infer the terrorists do not support or share those values. Thus, terrorists do not share the elements that conform the French Republic such as gender equality, equality of all citizens, or laicity. In this way, terrorists are portrayed as antagonists to French society and institutions. While between 2012 and 2014 terrorists were considered almost as foreigners (despite being French citizens or residents), in the post-2015 scenario they are understood as someone within and outside the French society, they are radicalised citizens far from the values of the Republic (they are citizens but at the same time in an otherness position with different values). In this line between the citizen and the citizen-terrorist in post-2015, we find the concept of separatism. This concept was coined in 2020 and reached its main development in the “law No. 2021-1109 of August 24, 2021, confirming

respect for the principles of the Republic”. The difference between the citizen and the citizen-terrorist is that the citizen-terrorist has:

a desire to leave the Republic, to no longer respect its rules, of a withdrawal movement which, because of beliefs and belonging, aims to get out of the field Republican and that is not acceptable (Ibid.; see also Macron, 2020b).

This “desire to leave the Republic” is not yet an active engagement with terrorism but a distance from the French Republic, society, and values. As a first step to engaging with terrorism, the citizen-terrorist must “no longer respect” and reject the French Republic and its elements, and, after rejecting them, embrace the terrorist and radical beliefs. This promotion of French Republican values and fight against separatism have not been unpolemical. For instance, a project coordinator of a prevention of radicalization and violent extremism project at city level affirmed:

In 2014, 2015, 2016, the issue of prevention of radicalization was such a hot topic that we had no choice but to open the door to a wide range of new actors and these days since we have less cases of radicalization in a narrow sense, we tend to go back to a...a...a...a...a...narrow perspective but on the other hand something else came on the agenda which is the issue of separatism based on the assumption which is quite questionable in my view that separatism is the real ground for radicalization. And the question is also that [...] in the case of separatism, it is not very easy to actually clearly explain what you want to...to... prevent or to...to... fight because what you want to prevent is not just acts that are forbidden under the penal code... it is also basically ideas and behaviours that are not against the law but that some people think that are against of...values...but the question is to what extent can you...impose...and force people to respect values because values, as you know, are not legally binding. You have to respect the law but we do not necessarily have to shift the same values from a legal point of view (Interviewee #1).

Thus since 2014/2015, debates on the citizen-terrorist construct a situation of “diffuse and omnipresent endogenous threat” (Secrétariat Général de la Défense et de la Sécurité Nationale, 2018, p. 8). Now, values are also a matter for counterterrorism and counter-radicalization. This also goes in line with the discourse of Edouard Philippe in the presentation of the national plan “Prevent to Protect”:

Article 1 of our Constitution reminds us, if we were tempted to forget it, that the Republic is “indivisible, secular, democratic and social”. [...] Yet there are internal borders in our country today. Invisible or ostensible. In the apparent calm of silent segregation or in the violence and fear of terrorist attacks. [...] This Islamist radicalization threatens our society. Not just when it leads to violence. It challenges us, in truth, whenever the laws of the Republic are weighed against religious precepts, when some do not agree to conform to the former unless they are compatible with the latter (SG-CIPDR, 2018, pp. 1-2).

Therefore, the French Republic is “indivisible, secular, democratic and social”, must act “without distinction of origin, race or religion” and aims to promote peaceful coexistence or gender equality. This description of the French Republic and its elements implicitly means that the terrorist and radicalised do not share those values and through their actions threatens those values and the French society. Similarly, Edouard Philippe affirms in 2019 that his priority is “to fight step by step against” radicalization and “those who drive them” with a “spirit of republican reconquest” and “take back its [French] internal borders” to promote Republicanism and combat radicalised visions (Philippe, 2019, p. 2). However, this discourse has been polemic. For instance, a project coordinator of a prevention of radicalization and violent extremism project at city level expressed his concerns in the following way:

Just because you don't like something doesn't give you the right to forbid something. In theory, in a democracy, you accept that other people don't share the same ideas, the same



values, and don't share the same principles just as long as they respect the law. And really, this notion of separatism brings us really to the edge of this conception (Interviewee #1).

On the contrary, more moderate positions in the debate understand that highlighting the role of values and separatism is something at the heart of democracy:

I think that, on the contrary, you see separatism must be seen as something that can undermine living together, citizenship and everything that is in any case next to them (Interviewee #10).

Beyond the “reconquête républicaine” (republican reconquest), we find the figure of the “réfèrent citoyenneté” (citizenship referent) in the chain of equivalence of the “Republic”. This figure, in most of this post-2015 period, is the actor in charge of promoting the Republican values to those citizens at risk of radicalization or engagement with terrorism. This citizenship referent is linked with the fight against terrorism and radicalization through a demarcation between the inside and the outside of the French Republic:

These figures [citizenship referents] are unprecedented, as is the effort we have made to drive outside our borders and expel from the national territory those who have come to bring these ferments of hatred and division here. [...] This strategy must be consistent with other public policies supported by the Government, the public security policies carried out primarily in “the districts of republican reconquest”, but also with the strategies to fight against poverty, as well as to protect children and mental health. The reason for this is that the dropout of a child or adolescent can be explained by multiple factors —family, social, and psychological— and they must be understood in their entirety if we want to be able to provide a credible and lasting response (Philippe, 2019, p. 3)

Here, “republican reconquest” refers to public actions to fight against economic and socio-psychological difficulties, and to prevent engagement with violent jihad. Similar

to this figure we also find the “réfèrent laïcité” (laicity referent) defined in Article 3 of law No. 2021-1109 of August 24, 2021, as:

The laicity referent is responsible for providing any useful advice on respecting the principle of secularism to any official or head of department who consults him. It is responsible for organizing a day of laicity on December 9 of each year (République Française , 2021, p. 2).

This is another actor in charge of the fight against radicalization and promoting the Republican value of laicity. Also, as explained by a senior civil servant of a Prefect's office of a French Department, other programs are implemented in this desire to promote the French Republic, for instance, the promeneur du net program:

In this pursue objective to prevent radicalization in 2018 a plan for prevention of radicalization reinforce the role of Ministry of Education which has to prevent the young minds to radicalization and to allow them to detect fake news, conspiracy. In France, new device has been introduced, I don't know if you know it, called the promeneur du net. The promeneur du net is a dispositive coordinated by family allowances agency [Caisses d'allocations familiales – CAF] and this practice has been developed as well in Sweden. The promeneur du net program was created in response to the increase in internet and social network usage among young people and the need to provide young people with trustworthy online presence. [...] It is a big program and the professional community workers and the educator working engage themselves with young people on internet and social internet. Actually, their design by their own project to link up with young people on social network and each promeneur du net, each promeneur du net professional has a facebook profile which his or her picture and the name of the employer and they become friends online with the young people and the promeneur du net worker can share information with them, answer their questions, worries, questions or worries and give them advice...through social network. [...] This is like citizen referent in social network...and...they can give for young some support when they are suffering from isolation, of fear and by conversing with them they built up social link and cultivate the critical thinking of them and their action also

enhances expression, creativity, and senses among them. Actually, we have also a citizen person which acts also in some parts of the district where is needed. There are some programs like these. It is like adult...confident adult in the streets (Interviewee #3).

This long but illustrative quote exemplifies the extension of the counterterrorist action to other fields such as education. Moreover, illustrates the role of values and internet on prevention of radicalization and terrorism. But the action is not only on internet. As the same interviewee agrees, figures as the citizen referent are sent it to neighbourhood if it is detected certain problem of lack of convivence or attacks against the Republican values (Interviewee #3).

Also, these actions are not only at the level of social work but also there are economic actions to promote Republican values. For instance, this law also proposes the “contrat d'engagement républicain” (Republican contract of engagement) to any association or foundation requesting a subvention. This contract specifies in Article 12 of law No. 2021-1109 of August 24, 2021 “to respect the principles of freedom, equality, fraternity and dignity of the human person, as well as the symbols of the Republic”, “not to call into question the secular character of the Republic, and “to refrain from any action that undermines public order” (République Française , 2021, p. 4). The citizen-terrorist and its organizations do not share those Republican values and to combat them more social actors and institutions of the French State are included in this counterterrorist and Republican fight since 2015.

Consequently, ideas such as the republican reconquest, initiatives such as “les quartiers de reconquête républicaine” (Republican reconquest districts), the figure of the citizenship and laicity referents or the “contrat d'engagement républicain” point that (according to the French institutions) the official values and social integration perform worse now than before the 2015 terrorist attacks given that previously were not necessary

such actions. Despite some previous warnings (such as the 2005 French riots), since 2015 the institutions and society perceive that French values are not guaranteed: after 2015 — with the appearance of the citizen-terrorist—the French “self” appears to be endangered and contingent. In other words, the French “self” could be otherwise. To combat these, the French state for instance created the figure of the citizenship referent, who is destined to raise awareness of radicalization within sports. This figure shows that the French Republic should play an active role in the integration of certain citizens and prevent them from deviating from the “official” values. The current problem is not caused by a terrorist perceived as a foreigner or “pure other” —the pre-2015 scenario— but by citizens who deviate from the French “self”, being needed to “reintegrate” into the French Republic ideal of citizenship due to her condition of a French citizen. Therefore, the citizen-terrorist should embrace again the French Republican values and senses of “normal citizenship”. In sum, terrorism passes from being situated mainly outside the French borders and as a foreign policy task, to someone who all branches of the French Republic should take care of and actively promote Republican values to them.

These findings have several important implications. Firstly, the evolution of the discourse from locating the terrorist as someone totally “other” to being someone “other” but within the French self. Hence, the terrorist appears to be an abnormal citizen that deviates from the French Republican values and sense of citizenship. Secondly, this institutional discourse on counterterrorism expands to other areas of the French Republic such as those of education (e.g., detecting behaviours and ways of dress of students that indicates radicalization) or social policies (e.g., working with communities “at risk”). Thus, the concepts of self and other help to understand the increasingly common rhetoric on the “benefits” of the French Republic and its values. This rhetoric serves to return the citizen-terrorist to the French Republican self. Finally, this self-other framework provides a starting

point to study de-radicalization programs and discourses, as well as how they are mobilized to “reinsert” citizen-terrorists into the “community of (full) citizens”.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, terrorism has occupied a central role in policymaking and public debate. In France, citizenship and republican discourses have been mobilized historically but not linked until recently with security issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism. The discourse on counterterrorism offers a clear moment of national construction, revealing those that are partially or totally excluded from the “community of (full) citizens”. The study of this discourse illuminates the structural components of the French institutional narrative on counterterrorism, how it constructs the “other” and how this construction marks the boundaries of (non-)belonging to the “French Republican self”.

Just after Toulouse and Montauban attacks in 2012 and until the end of 2014, the institutional discourse on counterterrorism understood terrorism as an external threat, highlighting terrorism’s international dimension, the pull-effects of foreign conflicts on French citizens, as well as the psycho-social characteristics of the terrorists. In this period, the terrorist subject is constructed as someone who is heavily influenced and act in response to international affairs — particularly from the Arab World— and classified into three types: lone wolf, group-based type, and/or with “psychological issues”. After 2015, terrorism started to be constructed as an external threat with internal manifestations, being the “radicalization” of national citizens and residents the main concern. Thus, since 2015 the terrorist has left the position as a “pure other” and appears as someone who deviated from the French Republic and its values. This subject can return to the “national self” after a de-radicalization process. As a result, the distinction between the threatening “other” and its self-manifestation is problematized through the notion of radicalization, opening

the door to the figure of the citizen-terrorist. This citizen-terrorist is the result of the grip of the exogenous violent jihad ideology against the French citizens. This citizen-terrorist sparks an expansion of the discourse on counterterrorism beyond the foreign and security areas (2012-2014) to social, educational, or local sectors (post-2015). Thus, after 2015 the counterterrorist field increasingly incorporates a wider range of professionals (e.g., medical, social, and educational services) to work to detect and tackle radicalization and its “final step”: terrorism.

However, some elements remain in the French elite discourse on counterterrorism. In both periods, the citizens that engaged in terrorism do not share the “republican values” of the French institutions and society. The French institutional discourse on counterterrorism forms a chain of equivalence with the main values of republicanism, secularism, and tolerance. This chain of equivalence, formed through a logic of equivalence between several values, is represented by the nodal point of the “Republic”. As a result, the terrorist is constructed as an “other” that threatens and antagonizes the “republican values” of the French society and institutions. The transformation of the terrorist into someone from within generates a parallel discourse on the “benefits” of the French Republic and its values.

The importance of studying this institutional discourse on counterterrorism —and the inclusions/exclusions that it produces— is that it is central in the political debates and public opinion of contemporary France. We think that studying the elite discourse on counterterrorism offers a clear moment of national construction and reveals those that are partially or totally excluded from the “community of (full) citizens”. Also, some elements of this discourse are “exported” to other social debates such as on education, freedom of expression or serve to justify the closure of six border crossings with Spain. The paradigmatic case of France could be a departure point to be contrasted with other

countries and trace a general relationship between the discourse on counterterrorism and citizenship. In another vein, recent policy initiatives —such as the inclusion of racism and anti-Semitism as threats to national security— have weakened the link between terrorism with violent actions inspired by jihad. However, an effort is needed to expand concerns with terrorism beyond violent jihad and include other forms of terrorism (e.g., far-right). Avoiding this task might result in a dangerous securitization of Muslim communities, concealing other forms of insecurity and terrorism.

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**3. Changes and continuities in Spanish  
counterterrorist discourses, policies,  
and practices after ETA: a greater  
Europeanization of Spanish  
counterterrorism? (Author: Aitor  
Bonsoms)**

*Publication status: Work in progress, sent to an academic journal.*

**Abstract:**

The ceasefire of the terrorist band ETA in 2011 had varying degrees of impact on Spanish social and political life. This event generated significant changes in Spanish counterterrorist policies, practices, and discourses. This article analyses the changes and continuities within the Spanish counterterrorist domain, as well as the impact of European initiatives on counterterrorist matters and the effect of the Spanish experience on the European stage. Drawing upon the concept of Europeanization, document analysis, and 12 semi-structured interviews with actors in the Spanish counterterrorist domain, it is argued that the Europeanization of Spanish counterterrorism has been bidirectional. On one hand, this implies that Spain adopted frameworks from the European domain, such as those



related to the concept of violent radicalization or incorporated local aspects into national counterterrorist actions and discourses. However, on the other hand, Spain has been a reference point in counterterrorism issues, such as support for and commemoration of victims of terrorism.

**Keywords:** counterterrorism; counter-radicalization; Spain; Europeanization; violent jihad; ETA

### **3.1. Introduction**

In the past decade, the primary terrorist threat in Spain has shifted from a domestic one, primarily represented by ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, 1958-2018), to one inspired by violent jihad. This variation has also entailed a transformation in Spanish counterterrorist discourses, policies, and practices. Since the 1980s, Spain has been a key actor in European counterterrorist policies, having been one of the most active and essential member states in proposing responses to the phenomenon for decades (Closa, 2004). This article aims to analyse the changes that have occurred in Spanish counterterrorist discourses, policies, and practices following the cessation of ETA terrorism in 2011. Previous studies have extensively examined the determinants and phenomena of terrorism, with Spain being a relevant case having experienced ETA terrorism for over five decades (e.g., Alonso, 2013; Jordan, 2014). Thus, numerous studies have analysed this threat, with fewer focusing on Spanish counterterrorism practices, especially following the end of ETA, or the processes of Europeanization associated with these practices (see

exceptions such as Reinares, 2009; Serranò, 2015). Additionally, studying a key actor in counterterrorist discourses, practices, and policies at the European and international levels can demonstrate how this terrain has changed in the last decade and what future scenarios may exist in national, European, and international counterterrorism.

Our study aims to contribute to a better understanding of Spanish counterterrorist discourses, practices, and policies in the post-ETA scenario (2011-2023). The study starts in 2011 for three reasons. Firstly, in 2011, the terrorist band ETA announced the cessation of armed activity, with its definitive dissolution in 2018. Secondly, Law 29/2011, of September 22, was approved, providing Recognition and Comprehensive Protection to Victims of Terrorism. Finally, at the European level, the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) of the European Commission was established, a key platform for disseminating knowledge and best practices in various areas of combating violent radicalization. To analyse Spanish counterterrorist discourses, practices, and policies, a series of documents will be studied, supplemented with information extracted from 12 semi-structured interviews with actors in the Spanish counterterrorist field.<sup>18</sup> We interviewed civil servants, members of associations of victims of terrorism, counterterrorism experts, and professionals in assistance of victims of terrorism, including psychologists and social workers. Thus, we can inquire: What elements of change and continuity exist in Spanish

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<sup>18</sup> Interview #1, Ministry of Interior. General Directorate for Support to Victims of Terrorism. Subdirector General for Support to Victims of Terrorism, face-to-face, 18 April 2023; Interview #2, Ministry of Interior. General Directorate for International Relations and Immigration, face-to-face, 24 April 2023; Interview #3, Fernando Buesa Blanco Foundation, zoom call with the author, 25 April 2023; Interview #4, Asociación de Ayuda a las Víctimas del 11-M, zoom call with the author, 27 April 2023; Interview #5, Asociación 11-M Afectados del Terrorismo, face-to-face, 28 April 2023; Interview #6, journalist and political scientist specialising in National Security and Terrorism, 4 May 2023; Interview #7, Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo en el País Vasco (COVITE), phone call with the author, 5 May 2023; Interview #8, expert in violent radicalisation, terrorist recruitment and, disengagement and deradicalisation processes, face-to-face, 9 May 2023; Interview #9, Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre. Education and Exhibition Area, zoom call with the author, 9 May 2023; Interview #10, Pacto de Convivencia, face-to-face, 11 May 2023; Interview #11, psychologist with extensive experience in care for victims of terrorism, face-to-face (16 May 2023) and zoom call with the author (1 June 2023); Interview #12, Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado (CITCO), face-to-face, 28 November 2023

counterterrorist policy following the dissolution of ETA? Similarly, the shift in threat to one of international origin may indicate that Spain has also incorporated international discourses, ideas, policies, and practices to address it. Furthermore, through European directives and initiatives, we can ask: There is a growing Europeanization of Spanish counterterrorism? Have foreign elements in counterterrorism matters been imported, while Spanish experience has influenced the European Union (EU) and its member states?

This article is organized as follows. In the first section, we briefly outline the history of terrorism in Spain, followed by the main theoretical contributions to the study of counterterrorism and Europeanization, as well as the methodology and materials used. In the second section, we describe the main discursive, political, and practical innovations of Spanish counterterrorism post-ETA (2011-2023). In the third section, we analyse these innovations, as well as the processes of Europeanization to which they belong. Finally, we conclude with the main findings, possible concerns generated by these changes, and future research avenues.

### **3.2. Europeanization, the terrorist threat in contemporary Spain, and the counterterrorist discourses, policies, and practices in Spain and beyond**

The Basque separatist group ETA was the main terrorist threat in Spain from its first attack in 1968 until it ceased armed activity in 2011. ETA's definitive dissolution occurred in 2018. Alongside ETA during the late Francoist period, there were other domestic terrorist groups, such as GRAPO, FRAP, Terra Lliure, the Anti-Communist Apostolic Alliance (AAA or "Triple A"), and the Basque Spanish Battalion (BVE). In the context of violent opposition to

ETA, it is worth noting the violent paramilitary actions carried out by the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL), created to wage a “dirty war” against ETA between 1983 and 1987.

Although domestic terrorism predominated, international terrorism was not absent during the same period. The first Islamist-inspired attack occurred in 1985, specifically in a Madrid restaurant frequented by US military personnel. While radical Islamist groups were established on Spanish territory in the 1990s, it was not until March 11, 2004, known as 11M, that they became active. On that day, members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb carried out various attacks on the Madrid commuter train network, resulting in the deaths of 193 people and injuring thousands. To date, it has been the terrorist attack with the most victims in Spain. A decade later, influenced by the so-called Islamic State (Daesh), attacks occurred on August 17, 2017, in Las Ramblas, Barcelona, and in Cambrils, resulting in the deaths of thirteen people and leaving over a hundred injured. These attacks notably accelerated the change in Spanish counterterrorism practices.

Numerous previous studies have examined how countries have reformed their counterterrorism actions and strategies in response to international terrorist activity. Western liberal democracies, in general, have strengthened their counterterrorism legislation, albeit unevenly following the 9/11 attacks (Epifanio, 2011; Shor, 2016). In this regard, a classic debate in the literature has explored how counterterrorism measures may have affected human rights, civil liberties, and the separation of powers (e.g., Gearty, 2003; Windsor, 2003; Schulhofer, 2004; MacKinnon, 2007; Ross, 2008; Beyer, 2010; Shor et al., 2017; Wagner & Kneip, 2018). This literature has demonstrated the rollback of certain rights and civil liberties in certain Western countries in the 1990s, and especially in the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent implementation of counterterrorism measures (Baker, 2003; Haubrich, 2003; Wagner & Kneip, 2018). Thus, this literature repeatedly mentions three

factors affected by counterterrorist legislation: (1) institutional checks and balances (federalism, second chambers, constitutional courts), (2) the rule of law and the culture of civil liberties, and (3) prior experience with terrorism and “traditions” of counterterrorism legislation (MacKinnon, 2007). Regarding the degree of impact of counterterrorism measures, it seems plausible that experience with domestic terrorism and past legislative reactions would enable political elites to respond to new threats with harsher laws (MacKinnon, 2007; Wagner & Kneip, 2018). It has also been noted that a strong rule of law is associated with a reduction in support for and participation in terrorism (Choi, 2010).

On the other hand, a burgeoning literature has highlighted the effects of the “war on terror” on civil society, its actions, and its relationships with public institutions (e.g., Whitaker, 2007; Howell & Lind, 2009; 2010; Colás, 2010; Eder et al., 2020; Njoku, 2020). These authors first point out that the opposition to counterterrorist measures has primarily originated from musical groups, human rights organizations, and legal advocates (Colás, 2010; Lind & Howell, 2010; Sidel, 2010; Stevens, 2010). Secondly, the mainstream civil society, namely the portion funded by the government or external donors and primarily engaged in service provision, has remained inactive in the face of these counterterrorist measures (Howell & Lind, 2010). For instance, literature has observed how the Spanish government, following the events of 11M, attempted to engage with Muslim communities through dialogue and by promoting inter-coexistence. However, in this latter case, contact between the state and Muslim communities was unsuccessful due to the heterogeneous relational and sociological nature of Spanish Muslims. Meanwhile, in the context of combating jihadi terrorism, the government did not introduce any extraordinary counterterrorist measures, legislation, or policies, and civil society focused on questioning

the discursive construction by media and politicians who asserted that Muslims and Islam are complicit in terrorism (Colás, 2010).<sup>19</sup>

In this line, it is worth noting the key role played by foundations and associations of victims in Spanish civil society. Previous studies have indicated how Spanish associations of victims have played a significant role in influencing both political elites and Spanish counterterrorist policies (Muro, 2015; Alonso, 2017). Similarly, the significant role that Spanish victim associations have played at the European and international levels regarding violence prevention, victim memory, and the “battle of narratives” on ETA violence and its resolution has been emphasized (Argomaniz, 2017). On the other hand, critical studies have pointed out the political use of victimhood, the exclusion of non-violent but anti-Spanish political system discourses, and how certain institutions and actors in civil society have shifted the discourse of the ‘war on terror’ to the Spanish context, especially in the memory of ETA victims and the fight against international terrorism (Tellidis, 2018; Heath-Kelly and Fernández de Mosteyrín, 2020).

Beyond victim associations, Spain has accumulated experience in domestic counterterrorism, historically endowing it with a comparative advantage over other Western nations in counterterrorism matters. This may suggest that it has adapted more quickly and effectively to the threat of international terrorism. On one hand, previous studies have pointed to concerns about dealing with two different terrorist threats (domestic with ETA and an emerging international threat with Al Qaeda), which may have hindered the development of national strategies and a comprehensive plan for preventing violent radicalization (Reinares, 2009). However, with the dissolution of ETA, this has changed, and Spanish counterterrorism has transitioned to facing a single threat:

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<sup>19</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the context of the fight against ETA’s terrorism during this same period, the government implemented measures to combat it, such as the introduction of new terrorist-related offenses and the proscription of political and social organizations linked to terrorist groups. (Alonso, 2019).

international terrorism from Daesh, Al Qaeda, and self-radicalized individuals. Thus, the Spanish case is relevant as it allows us to observe how a country accustomed to combating third-wave terrorism (ethnonationalist terrorism) has adapted to the new threat of fourth-wave terrorism (religious terrorism) and the phenomenon of violent radicalization.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, studying the Spanish case enables us to see changes in counterterrorism and how a different typology of terrorism entails new actions and policies, even though such a country has an experienced counterterrorism apparatus. On the other hand, literature has shown how Spain has adapted its strict regime of repressive measures—for example, it has limited precautionary security, meaning the preventive part of counterterrorism—to a new threat (Den Boer and Wiegand, 2015). Finally, the literature has examined the mechanisms for disseminating such programs to the EU or neighbouring countries, as was the case with the importation of these repentance programs to Spain from Italy (Den Boer and Wiegand, 2015; Heath-Kelly, 2015).

In the Spanish case, the change in counterterrorism practices has a distinctly European imprint. Our analytical framework will be examined with the aid of the concept of "Europeanization." Europeanization refers to the impact of the EU on the nation-states it comprises, as well as the influences of the states and their particular interests on European institutions and policies. The creation of EU governance structures has affected the behaviour of national actors, their context, and the institutional arrangements within the states (Sedelmeier, 2012). However, this is not a unidirectional process, and member states have also shaped the EU through decisions made at the national level that are subsequently transferred to European and intergovernmental domains (Reinares, 2006;

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<sup>20</sup> Following David C. Rapoport's (2011) classic classification of modern terrorism, four waves can be identified. The first is the "anarchist wave" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The second is the "anticolonial wave" initiated in the 1920s and lasting forty years. The third is the "New Left wave", which lasted twenty years, although in countries such as Spain or the United Kingdom, it extended until the subsequent dissolution of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) respectively. Finally, the fourth wave is the religious one, initiated in 1979.

Lee-Ohlsson, 2009). There are three areas where this Europeanization is evident: domestic polity, politics, and policy (Sedelmeier, 2012). Regarding the security domain, previous research has shown how the EU has had effects at the national level, both in large countries (e.g., Spain or France) and small ones (e.g., Scandinavian countries), with Spain being a key actor in this direction of Europeanization (Reinares, 2006; Rieker, 2006a; 2006b; Lee-Ohlsson, 2009; Bazaga & Carrillo, 2019). This has been carried out through a process of national adaptation of norms defined at the European level, through a process of socialization and adaptation that impacts the identity and national interests in security matters of the member states (Rieker, 2006b). The increasing Europeanization of counterterrorism is exemplified by the creation of the EU Coordinator for Counterterrorism or the EU Counterterrorism Strategy, which emerged in the aftermath of the 11M attacks. Another example is agencies like Europol, which, from a perspective focused on the criminal aspects of terrorism, assist in coordinating between police forces, allowing them to carry out counterterrorism operations independently (Deflem, 2006). In this sense, the EU has also played a converging role among countries, for example, with the Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, which led to the adoption of new criminal offenses, or the European Arrest Warrant, which compelled member states to adapt procedural law regarding extradition. Nevertheless, although there seems to be a significant convergence of supranational instruments, the impact of convergence does not appear uniform, although it is very visible in those countries that did not have prior counterterrorism legislation before Europeanization on the matter (Den Boer and Wiegand, 2015).

This article aims to examine the discourses and practices that justify and act in Spanish counterterrorism, as well as its continuities and discontinuities over time. This approach will help us better understand three elements. Firstly, studying patterns of continuity can assist in detecting and understanding the lessons that the Spanish counterterrorist field has drawn from previous experiences (mainly from the third wave of



terrorism) and applied to the new threat (fourth wave of terrorism). Secondly, studying changes and discontinuities allows us to identify elements that have been incorporated from counterterrorism in the EU and neighbouring countries of Spain, and what new actions have been proposed to address the new primary threat of violent jihad. To this end, various documents are studied and complemented with information from 12 semi-structured interviews with actors in the Spanish counterterrorist field. This has allowed us to better understand the mechanisms of Europeanization and diffusion from the EU to Spain, as well as to glimpse the disseminating and reference role that Spain represents in counterterrorist matters at the European and global levels. Finally, studying Spanish counterterrorist practices and discourses after the end of ETA can help to observe the effects of ETA's end, place this new threat in a broader context, and anticipate future scenarios (for example, self-radicalization through the internet, the phenomenon of foreign fighters, or the adaptation of ETA prisoner repentance policies to international terrorism and current violent radicalization processes).

To examine the changes and continuities in Spanish counterterrorism, we will employ a case study method. This method involves the specific study of empirical and theoretical connections that, when combined, will help us delve more deeply into the changes and continuities in counterterrorist discourses and practices and the effects of Europeanization. Case studies allow for a critical explanation of phenomena within a specific context, thus illustrating better the connections and general logic present in a particular case (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). The primary data will be extracted from the National Strategy against Terrorism of 2023 (ENCOT-2023, by its acronym in Spanish), National Strategy against Terrorism of 2019 (ENCOT-2019, by its acronym in Spanish), and the reduced and public version of the Comprehensive Strategy against International Terrorism and Radicalization from 2012 (EICTIR, by its acronym in Spanish). Similarly, 12 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with actors in the Spanish

counterterrorist field. Interviews were conducted with various law enforcement agencies and public servants, members of associations of victims of terrorism, experts in counterterrorism, as well as psychologists and social workers involved in victim attention and memory. Additionally, we consider European directives on counterterrorism, security, and victim attention, Spanish laws and regulations related to terrorism, as well as “grey literature” consisting of institutional reports and guides where institutional counterterrorism knowledge, perspectives, practical proposals, and discourses can be observed.

### **3.3. The main novelties of Spanish counterterrorism after ETA**

The main post-2011 counterterrorism document, the 2019 National Counterterrorism Strategy (ENCOT-2019, by its acronym in Spanish), is embedded in the National Security System and replaces the previous Comprehensive International Counterterrorism and Radicalisation Strategy (EICTIR, by its acronym in Spanish) of 2012. ENCOT-2019 is replaced by the National Counterterrorism Strategy 2023 (ENCOT-2023, by its acronym in Spanish), which broadly follows the positions, proposals, and themes initiated by ENCOT-2019. The EICTIR, ENCOT-2019, and ENCOT-2023 all understand that terrorism and violent extremism are “one of the main threats to National Security and the democratic order, affecting the essential values and principles that govern our coexistence” (ENCOT-2019, p.8). At the international level, ENCOT-2019 and ENCOT-2023 follow the line of the European Union’s Counterterrorism Strategy and that of the United Nations, and are based on four pillars: Prevent, Protect, Pursue, and Prepare the response. Each of these sections includes its general objective, its priority axes and the specific objectives and strategic lines to be followed in the internal, external, and global common spaces. At the national level, these two strategies are related to national strategic plans on

specific issues such as the fight against violent radicalisation and the strengthening of the control of explosives precursors (based on Law 8/2017 of 8 November).

There are five main novelties in Spanish counterterrorism discourses, practices, and policies in the post-2011 period. First, the perception of a more global threat and not just an indigenous one like ETA. Second, the increase and expansion of coordination and collaboration between actors inside and outside Spain. Thirdly, the problematisation and first counter-radicalisation measures, transferring the problem of radicalisation from the European Union and neighbouring countries to the Spanish national level. Fourthly, it is worth highlighting a series of tools and practices to achieve counterterrorist objectives, such as the fight against radicalisation and hate crimes or actions and counter-narratives on the internet and information and communication technologies (ICT). Finally, the fifth new development is the approval of Law 29/2011 and a series of regional laws on care for victims of terrorism, as well as the establishment of Spain as a world reference in the care and memory of victims. Below, we will review all the new elements.

The first novelty is the broadening of the perspective by understanding that terrorism is not only a primarily domestic threat but increasingly a global threat. Although the 2012 EICTIR focused on the fight against international terrorism —noting “the emerging irruption of international terrorism and the consolidation of the decline of indigenous terrorism in our country”— it was not until 2019 that international terrorism was integrated into a strategy that addresses the terrorist threat in its globality without “ascription to a specific terrorist dimension” (Ibid., p.15). International terrorism is mainly characterised by jihadist terrorism. In this regard, ENCOT-2019 and ENCOT-2023 point out that Jihadist terrorism and radicalisation are currently the main terrorist threat to Spain and the international community. In ENCOT-2019, the 2017 Barcelona and Cambrils attacks are cited as a dramatic example of this. These attacks were committed “by a terrorist cell made

up of people radicalised in their immediate social environment, without the need to travel to conflict zones” (Ibid., p.22). Another example of this international terrorism since 2011 is the figure and threat of foreign fighters (Ibid., p.14):

the terrorist organisation DAESH, the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) —Spaniards or residents in Spain who travelled to Syria and Iraq to join the terrorist organisations operating there— and the wave of attacks in neighbouring countries, which dramatically affected Spain in August 2017.

The ENCOT-2023 also follows this line of the ENCOT-2019 and understands that the foreign fighters “represent an increasing risk to national security and international stability, given the possible return to their countries of origin or residence” (ENCOT-2023, p.19). Foreign fighters are identified as a problem for Spain and the EU due to “the training and indoctrination they have reportedly received, the possibility of them carrying out attacks in our country, their potential as recruiters of new terrorists, as well as their possible links to terrorist organisations” (Ibid., p.22). To address this, ENCOT-2023 states that Spain has drawn up a single shared list of foreign fighters with the “updating the necessary police and judicial control measures, as well as sharing data on time following the usual channels for information exchange” (Ibid.).

The second novelty of ENCOT-2019 is the increase and expansion of the coordination and collaboration of actors inside and outside Spain. In the face of this “increasingly global” terrorist threat, it is proposed to act in a common, coordinated, and cooperative manner with actors beyond Spain's borders. Collaboration with intelligence and police services from other countries should be highlighted, as this jihadist terrorism represents an “increasingly globalised threat that maintains financial and logistical networks in dozens of countries on several continents” (ENCOT-2019, p. 28). This also includes coordination “with the EU, UN, NATO, and other international security and

defence organisations or coalitions in which Spain participates” (Ibid., p. 75). In the same vein, ENCOT-2023 consolidates this novelty of ENCOT-2019 and, in a new manner, emphasises coordination and cooperation between EU member states, local institutions, and international organisations to facilitate the voluntary and safe return of foreign fighters to their countries of origin (ENCOT-2023).

The third novelty is the problematisation and implementation of the first counter-radicalisation measures. Although the 2012 EICTIR incorporated the fight against violent radicalisation as one of the backbones of the Strategy, it was not until subsequent documents that the actions were concretised. Radicalisation and the sustenance of violent radical positions are seen as a prior and necessary step to violent activity (for example, see PEN-LCRV; Interview #2). These phenomena, together with recruitment and indoctrination for terrorist purposes, are identified as growing threats in recent years and are mainly carried out by “lone actors and self-radicalised cells in Spanish territory” (ENCOT-2019, p.19). In this sense, the Spanish counterterrorism field understands that, like EU institutions and other member states, fighting radicalisation and violent extremism goes hand in hand with strengthening the resilience of “citizens against violent extremist ideologies and the radicalisation that leads to terrorism” (Ibid., p. 16). Thus, following the approval of the National Strategic Plan to Combat Violent Radicalisation (PEN-LCRV, by its acronym in Spanish) in 2015, and in line with other European countries, the prevention of and response to violent radicalisation ultimately falls to the local level. This Plan envisages the creation of Local Counter-Radicalisation Groups as a fundamental pillar for coordinating actions against violent radicalisation at the local level.

The fourth novelty of the post-ETA period is the development of a series of counterterrorist tools that include counterterrorist actions in prisons, actions against radicalisation and internet monitoring, as well as the use of ICTs to fight terrorist violence

and violent radical ideas. Thus, there has been a change in prison policy: now, not only is the response to the internment of terrorists, but policies have focused on the problem of radicalisation in prisons and, therefore, attention has been paid to what beliefs prisoners hold, who they associate with and whether they proselytise and radicalise other prisoners. Prisons are seen as “an environment conducive to processes of recruitment by radical inmates of people prone to the use of violence, as well as for some to justify their hostility to the prevailing values of democratic states” (Ibid., p.20). This implies a concern with prisons as a new focus for recruitment and radicalisation, as well as, following the experience of domestic terrorism, an area of containment of narratives in favour of terrorist prisoners. Other practices include preventive measures around violent radicalisation. This own practice is especially “targeting vulnerable groups against the processes of violent radicalisation”, “collaborating and involving especially civil society and the youth community”, as well as the local level with social, administrative, economic, or educational initiatives and the promotion of diversity, interculturality and inter-religiosity (Ibid., p.41). This is expressed in the will to coordinate the actions of the actors involved “in the prevention, detection and treatment of radicalisation processes that legitimise the use of violence, as well as the ideologies and resources that sustain them” (Ibid., p.38). In this sense, the aim is to increase awareness and use of communication channels such as the Coordination Centre for Information on Radicalisation (CCIR). In addition, channels for citizen collaboration and radicalisation alerts have been set up in security and intelligence agencies, as well as instruments such as *Stop Radicalismos*, which collects information from citizens and organisations on possible cases of violent radicalisation. Other measures to combat violent radicalisation include preventing the entry into Spain of individuals who are violently radicalised or who incite violence. It is also proposed to develop exit and social reintegration programmes for those involved in violent radicalisation processes. Finally, increasing importance is given to the monitoring of the internet and ICTs, as well as the

ongoing, up-to-date, and multidisciplinary training of the actors and sectors involved in the fight against terrorism and violent radicalisation. Here the borders are blurred by technology, the use of which has increased the capabilities and resources for “financing, recruiting, training and propaganda” of terrorist groups (Ibid., p.18). In contrast, the 2012 EICTIR is reduced to pointing out the need to win the “battle of ideas” and to defeat and technically neutralise websites that propagate radical politico-religious ideologies.

Finally, the fifth new development is the approval of Law 29/2011 and the extension at regional and international level of Spain as a country of reference in the care and memory of the victims of terrorism. The fundamental pillar of this attention and memory is national law 29/2011, of 22 September, on the Recognition and Integral Protection of Victims of Terrorism. The main ideas behind it are those of memory, dignity, justice, and truth, ultimately seeking comprehensive reparation for the victim. This law covers the events that took place since 1 January 1960 and includes three new features such as the recognition of the figure of those under threat, the unification of benefits and an increase in their amount, and the regulation of a compensation system for cases of exceptional aid for damages suffered abroad, thus fulfilling a long-standing demand of the various victims’ associations. This law also laid the foundations for the creation of the Victims of Terrorism Memorial Centre in Vitoria-Gasteiz. This state law is complemented by the laws of eleven Autonomous Communities, which in some cases increase the aid recognised in the national law.<sup>21</sup> Concerning Spain’s role as an international reference in terms of victim

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<sup>21</sup> Law 1/2004, of 24 May, on aid to victims of terrorism in the Valencian Community; Law 6/2005, of 27 December, on measures for the assistance and care of victims of terrorism and the creation of the Extremadura Centre for Peace Studies in Extremadura; Law 4/2008, of 17 June, on measures in favour of the Victims of Terrorism of Aragon; Law 4/2008, of 19 June, on Recognition and Reparation to the Victims of Terrorism of the Basque Country; Law 7/2009, of 2 November, on aid to the victims of terrorism of Murcia; Foral Law 9/2010, of 28 April, on aid to the victims of terrorism of Navarre; Law 10/2010, of 15 November, on measures for assistance and care for victims of terrorism in Andalusia; Law 4/2017, of 26 September, on recognition and care for victims of terrorism in Castilla y León; Law 4/2018, of 10 April, on measures in favour of the victims of terrorism of La Rioja; Law 5/2018, of 17 October, for the protection, recognition and memory of the victims of terrorism of

support and memory and the fight against terrorism, it is worth highlighting its active role at the European and international level in disseminating its experience. For example, Spain is a pioneer in integrating attention to victims within the Ministry of the Interior, as in the case of the Directorate General for Support to Victims of Terrorism, the creation and activities of the Vitoria-Gasteiz Memorial Centre and the recent opening of a United Nations counterterrorism office in Madrid. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the active role played for decades by victims' associations at both national and international level, for example by participating and leading activities in the RAN.

### **3.4. Analysis of the new Spanish counterterrorism scenario**

Our article understands that the perception of the threat, the description of its typology or the possible scenarios in which the threat materialises shape counterterrorism policies and practices. Thus, a change in the terrorist threat will to a greater or lesser extent mean a change in the response to that threat.

The first point of our analysis focuses on the change in attitudes towards terrorism in Spain. Whereas in the period before 2011 the focus was very much on domestic terrorist violence, now, with the rise of Daesh and the new figure of self-radicalised individuals, the perspective and approach to the phenomenon has shifted to several new aspects. This puts Spain on par with neighbouring European countries, thereby modifying Spanish ideas about the phenomenon of terrorism. For example, the EICTIR is the first to unify the response to domestic and international terrorism. While the ENCOT-2019, when referring to the threat of domestic actors, focuses on self-radicalised individuals or groups, while when referring

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Madrid; Law 1/2023, of 5 April, on Recognition, Tribute, Memory and Dignity to the Victims of Terrorism of Cantabria.



to ETA it does so in a triumphalist manner. An example of this is the representation of the end of ETA as “the victory of the rule of law over terrorist barbarity” (ENCOT-2019, p.22). This triumphalist discourse extends to the fight against violent jihad through the idea that the fight against ETA was a particular feature of Spain that endowed Spanish institutions with knowledge that other countries do not possess (Ibid., p. 24):

Our security and intelligence agencies have been able to extend their effectiveness in defeating ETA to the fight against jihadist terrorism. Despite sharing with our partners a high risk of terrorist attack, our country's strengths include the experience it has acquired in counterterrorist investigation.

Thus, if we exclude self-radicalised individuals and groups, the domestic terrorist threat ceases to be a real threat and becomes a source of knowledge and legitimisation of institutions. Similarly, this domestic threat of the past and the resistance of the victims of terrorism and their relatives is presented as an “ethical example” and “dignity” (Ibid., p.22). In short, the domestic threat, and in particular the ETA threat, is a past chapter of Spanish history and a source of knowledge and legitimisation of democratic institutions. This triumphalist discourse persists in the ENCOT-2023, albeit more nuanced and without explicit reference to ETA, and maintaining self-radicalised subjects and “lone wolves” as the main domestic threat.

The second element to be analysed is the Europeanisation of Spain, i.e. the influence of the European Union on Spain. This influence is firstly realised through the transposition and integration of European directives into Spanish regulations and legislation. Spain has previous experience in international cooperation in counterterrorism matters, such as bilateral cooperation with Morocco and France, and trilateral cooperation between these three countries. The beginning of intense collaboration and knowledge sharing at the European level in counterterrorist matters can be traced back to the creation

of Europol in 1998 and, in the case of the fight against radicalisation, to the creation of RAN in 2011. The attack on the French weekly Charlie Hebdo in January 2015 triggered increased EU attention to the terrorist phenomenon and an interest in coordinating counterterrorism policies and practices at the European level.<sup>22</sup> For example, in this context, the European Agenda on Security was adopted in 2015 and the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) was established to improve the exchange of information and operational support between member states, as well as support in areas such as explosives, firearms, intelligence, online propaganda and foreign fighters. A second example of Europeanisation following the impact of recent attacks in Europe is Directive 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism. This Directive, beyond homogenising definitions, has allowed for better European coordination, affecting the practices and policies of member states. Through this Directive, communication between states and counterterrorism operations have taken on a clear European dimension, generating greater fluidity in communication between national authorities by addressing terrorism and violent radicalisation as a problem that is not only national but also European. A third example of the process of Europeanisation of counterterrorism is the requirement for member states to criminally prosecute conduct such as terrorist travel and training, voluntary combat in wars in third countries or the financing of terrorism. This criminalisation of travel for terrorist purposes has only emerged with the threat of violent jihad and after its widespread use in the Syrian Civil War and in certain Iraqi territories affected by this war (2011-present). The Europeanisation of Spain's counterterrorism policy has also been accompanied by increased collaboration with European counterterrorism

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<sup>22</sup> European directives prior to this date that have influenced, for example, the attention to victims is Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA. At the Spanish level, it is worth highlighting Law 23/2014, of 20 November, on the mutual recognition of criminal decisions in the European Union, which represents a further step in the harmonisation and European integration of member states.

networks. This strengthens the legal framework to cover terrorism-related conduct more comprehensively and increases convergence between Member States.

Another clear element of the Europeanisation of Spanish counterterrorism is the increasing use of terminology and frameworks for action derived from the concept of violent radicalisation contained in the latest Spanish counterterrorism strategies.<sup>23</sup> The ceding of sovereignty to the EU and the transposition of the 2003 European Security Strategy and the 2005 European Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Radicalisation open the door to a series of harmonisation measures for member states which, together with a growing blurring between internal and external state security, constitute the Spanish normative bases in this regard. This entails a transfer of the conceptual framework of counter-radicalisation and disassociation of violent radicalisation from the EU and member states to Spain, especially since the creation of the RAN in 2011 (Interview #2; Interview #4). This importation of the framework and problematic of radicalisation from abroad to the interior implies a homologation with other EU member states and is materialised, for example, with the approval in 2015 of the PEN-LCRV. These elements, together with networks for the dissemination of good practices such as the European Commission's RAN, open Spain to a new way of addressing counterterrorism beyond the perspective focused exclusively on repression or prison policies that were the protagonists in previous eras. It is worth mentioning that the problem of violent radicalisation enters Spain from the national to the local level through the 2015 PEN-LCRV when municipalities begin to address violent radicalisation to different degrees. Thus, the local level does not have the initiative in general, but the national level comes in and puts pressure on municipalities to incorporate the fight against violent radicalisation into the local agenda (Bermejo & Sánchez-Sánchez-

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<sup>23</sup> However, it should be noted that the Spanish definition of violent radicalisation follows the European one until the National Counterterrorism Strategy of 22 February 2019. This document uses the concept of violent extremism, a term used by the United States and the UN to refer to this phenomenon (Bazaga & Carrillo, 2019).

Sánchez, 2019; Interview #12). Examples of municipalities that have established measures against violent radicalisation, although with different degrees of design and implementation, are Fuenlabrada, Granollers, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Madrid, Málaga, Mataró, Mollet del Vallès or Rubí (Bermejo & Sánchez-Sánchez-Sánchez, 2019; Síndic de Greuges de Catalunya, 2017).

Therefore, the acceptance of the concept and framework of radicalization violence, the creation of Local Counter-Radicalization Groups and the social policies linked to the fight against violent radicalization, makes actors from the local world enter the counterterrorist field (ENCOT-2019, p.38):

Detect and act on the foci of radicalization in any area in which they manifest themselves, primarily from the local level, applying social, administrative, economic, educational and any other initiatives. Prioritize attention to especially vulnerable groups.

As a consequence, Spanish counterterrorism has been decentralizing certain counterterrorist measures, especially concerning counter-radicalization measures, autonomous legislation on attention and memory of victims or the growing incorporation of autonomous and local police into institutional frameworks and counterterrorist action (for example, in CITCO). At the same time, the incorporation of non-state actors in counterterrorist action is noteworthy. For example, in previous versions of the ENCOT-2019 it was reserved for state actors only, despite the important role that foundations and victims' associations have played over the years. Thus, in the institutional context of Spanish counterterrorism, a growing public-private collaboration has begun in the last decade, and especially in the last five years.<sup>24</sup> For example, to detect these violent radical

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<sup>24</sup> In this regard see for example the creation in November 2022 of the Comprehensive Forum for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Security Culture. This Forum is mainly framed in Law 36/2015, of September 28, on National Security and the Comprehensive Plan for National Security Culture of 2021.

postulates, the first line of action and detection are those closest to them: family members, co-workers, or teachers. As explained in the ENCOT-2019, close relatives and private actors have at their disposal alert mechanisms, such as the alert channels linked to the *Stop Radicalismos* campaign. It is also proposed to improve and integrate the capacities of local police forces in counterterrorism action. In the same way, thanks to the concept of violent radicalization and the actions linked to it, it allows extending the counterterrorist action to citizens, victims' associations and private organizations and institutions. The actions of private actors range from helping to create counter-narratives and giving voice to the experiences of victims to reinforcing private security or combating the financing of terrorism. Thus, public-private collaboration is aimed at creating a counter-narrative particularly aimed at vulnerable groups to combat violent radicalization. In the same way, it is proposed to create campaigns on the Internet and social networks to confront violent extremist discourse, involving civil society and youth groups. In this sense, Spanish civil society, beyond the foundations and associations of victims, seems to be less active than in other neighboring countries (not only in the fight against terrorism but also in the promotion of rights and civic debates). It is worth noting the few platforms or associations dedicated to the creation of civil dialogues between various parts of society—for example, between the scientific and religious spheres—that raise awareness, strengthen the capacity to propose and respond, as well as ensure truth, justice, reparation, prevention, memory, and non-repetition of violent and terrorist acts (Interview #10).

A third point concerns the process of Europeanization in reverse, i.e., from the member states to the EU. In this respect, Spain is a relevant actor in the fight against

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Article 5.1 of said Law states that the “Government shall promote a National Security culture that favors the active involvement of society in its preservation and guarantee, as an indispensable requirement for the enjoyment of freedom, justice, welfare, progress and citizens' rights”. Thus, this Forum is established as a body for public-private collaboration and the carrying out of joint and participative activities between the public, private and civil society sectors.

terrorism, given its long experience in the fight against this phenomenon. Spain has not only been historically an entrepreneur in counterterrorism legislation but has also used the European and international arena to disseminate and demand greater action in counterterrorism matters. On the other hand, Spain is a relevant actor in the matter of attention and memory to the victims, influencing in many cases the actions and decisions of the EU.<sup>25</sup> An example of this is the priority given by Spain to the phenomenon of cross-border victims<sup>26</sup> and how it intends, through the rotating presidency of the European Union, to carry out measures to improve their care and situation at the Union level (La Moncloa, 2023; Interview #11). It is also worth noting the active role of victims' associations and members of these associations, as well as public servants in the presence and leadership of projects on the care and memory of victims in European spheres such as RAN. In this sense, Spain, together with France, is the country with the highest number of victims of terrorism in Europe, and collaboration between associations from both countries is common, as well as with other countries with a lower incidence of terrorism (Interview #3; Interview #4).

However, three obstacles can be pointed out in the process of Europeanization of the Spanish experience. Firstly, although they have been practically totally diluted over time, there are certain differences between the associations of victims of ETA and the associations of victims of jihadism. Thus, while the main members of the ETA victims' associations are military, police, and politicians, the victims of jihadism (especially of 11M) are young people and immigrants so the demands may differ (for example, in the case of

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<sup>25</sup>Main European Directives on the subject are from 2012 (2012/29/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 25 October 2012) and 2017 (2017/541 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 March 2017), although for example on the subject of victim care these two directives are complemented by one from 2004 to form the common European regulatory basis in this area. This article also reports on the growing process of Europeanization of counterterrorism since 2011 and especially since 2015, even in a country with extensive experience and previous counterterrorism legislation.

<sup>26</sup> Cross-border victims refers to those who suffer an attack in one member state but are nationals or residents of another.

ETA not only demands for attention but also political ones) (Interview #1). Unlike the majority of victims of jihadism, ETA victims perceive a process of revictimization in all social spheres (housing, church, institutions, etc. ) with scorn, threats and persecution campaigns (in the times of ETA activity) and, after the end of ETA, they feel revictimization in cases of justification or non-condemnation of terrorist violence and the damage done as well as banners, interventions, demonstrations in favour of prisoners or the armed struggle (Interview #3; Interview #7; Interview #11). Secondly, another possible obstacle to the transfer of the Spanish experience to Europe could be the difficulty of certain front-line professionals and public servants with English, being necessary to improve their command of the language (Interview #8; Interview #10; Interview #11). Finally, the fact that some regional laws of attention and memory to victims provide an extra economic amount to what is received through the national law may create a certain discriminatory effect between victims from different autonomous communities. This may generate comparative grievances that affect the collective action of victims' associations, as well as influence the process of Europeanization of Spain's extensive experience in the care and memory of victims of terrorism (Interview #1).

A fourth element to analyse are some worrying elements in Spanish counterterrorist discourse, policies, and practices after the end of ETA. Most importantly, there is a lack of reflection and implementation of actions that better combine counterterrorism actions with good democratic practices. Although this is not exclusive to Spanish counterterrorism and can also be seen in most EU member states, it is mainly manifested in those actions referring to psychosocial counterterrorism measures. Firstly, in counter-radicalisation action, there is potential for a clash between what is expressed, for example, in ENCOT-2019 and democratic values and political freedom. For example, ENCOT-2019 notes the tendency for terrorists to make abundant use of the internet and social networks to construct "false narratives far removed from social reality" with the aim of recruiting "new

terrorists” to undermine Spain’s democratic society. While this proposal has a democratic will, it does not consider, for example, the stigmatising effects it may generate. Creating a counter-narrative directed especially at certain "vulnerable groups" may create a sense among citizens that they are citizens who represent a risk before they commit a violent act or become radicalised. Related to this, and secondly, naming groups as vulnerable may precisely perpetuate their situation of “vulnerability” and stigmatise them. Such elements, albeit in a more nuanced way, persist in the ENCOT-2023. The reason for this is that ENCOT-2023 follows the path of ENCOT-2019 but does not represent a profound change in Spanish counterterrorism as ENCOT-2019 did in many areas.

In the same vein, members of Spanish civil society have expressed their concern about creating a framework in the public debate that associates Muslim religion with a source of conflict (Interview #10). For these members of civil society, this is a perverse framework that has failed to apply the lessons of ETA terrorism to jihadist terrorism. For example, they point out that the recommendation to speak of Daesh terrorism instead of using the term Islamic State has not been followed for the most part, something that was done previously when speaking of ETA terrorism and not Basque terrorism (Interview #10). It is also pointed out that institutional definitions have excluded Muslim religious associations, which reinforces their exclusion and does not allow for more diverse points of view (Interview #10). These examples illustrate how both communities at risk and securitised, monitored, and controlled communities can be created. In the same way, singling out certain groups can generate social rejection and go against, for example, democratic values and equality among citizens. Finally, counterterrorism has been extended from security positions to other social, political, and psychological actions. This extension can lead to anti-democratic effects such as limiting public space and what is thinkable and arguable in the political sphere, as well as censoring postulates that deviate from the ‘normal’. This tension between, on the one hand, securitarian actions and, on the



other, psychosocial, and civil empowerment actions also materialises in, for example, the expulsion from Spain of leaders of Islamic organisations. Thus, while the Spanish authorities argue that they have embarked on a radicalised and pro-violent jihadist path, social collectives accuse the institutions of persecuting the activism and empowerment of the Muslim community in Spain.

Through this Europeanisation, the 27 EU states and the three more associated with Schengen have a community framework that has made it possible to approximate criminal legislation, police instruments and other types of initiatives such as those developed to prevent processes of Jihadist radicalisation. However, it should be borne in mind that these Europeanisation processes are not linear and systematic. Even traditionally, member states, following their national interests and mistrust, have favoured the bilateral exchange of counterterrorist information to the detriment of multilateral mechanisms such as Europol, the Schengen Information System (SIS) or Interpol.<sup>27</sup> In sum, these four elements allow Spain to reconfigure its counterterrorism policies to deal with a new terrorist threat—international terrorism and self-radicalised individuals—as well as to come into contact with European practices and actors. On the one hand, this has meant that countries like Spain, accustomed to domestic counterterrorism, have benefited from the increased problematisation of terrorism at the European level and greater awareness among European partners less exposed to the threat. On the other hand, the extension of counterterrorism action to actions against violent radicalisation has extended and decentralised counterterrorism and incorporated a growing number of non-state actors. However, the Spanish fight against terrorism has some worrying elements, such as the danger of securitising certain communities or the need to increase the training of civil

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<sup>27</sup> An example of this is the communications between regional police in Belgium and Spain about Abdelbaki Es Satty, the leader of the attack in Barcelona and Cambrils in August 2017. Despite these communications, the attack was not prevented, but it generated debate at the Spanish and European level on improving communications and information exchange between member states.

servants in language skills, especially to increase the internationalisation of Spain's extensive experience in counterterrorism and support for victims of terrorism.

### **3.5. Conclusions**

The rise of Daesh and the new figure of self-radicalised individuals has changed the attitude towards terrorism in Spain, which until 2011 was very much focused on domestic terrorism. This article has tried to show how even those countries with experienced counterterrorism institutions have to adapt and are influenced by the process of Europeanisation and homogenisation of member states. This brings Spain into line with its European neighbours, thus modifying Spanish counterterrorism ideas, discourses, and practices. In this sense, the Europeanisation of Spanish counterterrorism has involved a new definition of terrorism coming from its European neighbours, an import of the counter-violent radicalisation framework, improved coordination between member states, greater collaboration and learning between states, as well as a transposition of European counterterrorism directives and actions. This has meant that countries such as Spain, used to fighting third-wave terrorism, have benefited from the increased problematisation of terrorism at the European level and the increased awareness of their European partners less exposed to the threat. On the other side of the Europeanisation process, Spain has historically not only been a normative entrepreneur in the field of counterterrorism but has also used the European and international arena to disseminate and demand greater action in the field of counterterrorism. Thus, Spain is a relevant actor in the area of attention and memory of victims, influencing in many cases the actions and decisions of the EU and the international sphere. In parallel, Spain has realised a certain degree of decentralisation of Spanish counterterrorism policies. For example, this is done by incorporating non-state actors into counterterrorism action, which in previous versions of ENCOT-2019 was reserved for state actors only. The ENCOT-2023 consolidates this novelty. Thus, in Spain's

post-ETA counterterrorism, a public-private partnership is created that includes family members, co-workers or teachers of radicalised individuals, citizens, victims' associations and private organisations and institutions. This decentralisation is also reflected in the incorporation of municipalities and local police in counterterrorist and counter-radicalisation action, regional laws of recognition and memory of the victims of terrorism or talks on awareness and memory of the victims in schools and universities.

However, there are worrying elements in the changes in Spanish counterterrorism discourse and practices after the end of ETA. On the one hand, there is a lack of reflection and implementation of actions that better combine counterterrorist actions with good democratic practices, something that can also be observed in other EU members. For example, naming groups as vulnerable can perpetuate their situation of "vulnerability" and stigmatise them. On the other hand, the extension of counterterrorism to social, political, and psychological actions can lead to anti-democratic effects such as limiting public space and what is thinkable and arguable in the political sphere, as well as censoring postulates that deviate from the 'normal'.

In short, the new international terrorist threat has impacted Spanish counterterrorism actions while accelerating its Europeanisation process. While previous literature showed concerns about how Spain dealt with a domestic threat and an incipient international threat, with the dissolution of ETA this concern has dissolved, and the focus has shifted to how Spanish counterterrorism has been restructured. New avenues of research on this impact have yet to be explored, such as the possible effects of incorporating the counter-radicalisation agenda or diverse actors (civil society, family members or teachers) into Spanish counterterrorism.

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**4. The Politics of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Europe: the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of citizens? (Authors: Dr. Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués and Aitor Bonsoms)**

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**Abstract:** In the wake of the fall of the Daesh Islamic State ‘Caliphate’ in 2019, the international community has been faced with the fact that thousands of displaced persons are stranded in Iraqi and Syrian detention centers. This article interrogates the governmental policies of ten Western European countries towards their nationals and legal residents held in the prisons and camps. We analyze the discourse and the practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the ‘foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens’. We find that the Western European governments have engaged in different types of deterritorialization and reterritorialization moves which have acted to position their foreign fighter nationals and dependents at the liminars of the body politic in a way which runs the risk of perpetuating the foreign fighters’ and their dependents’ confinement in, what some practitioners have denounced as, ‘Europe’s Guantanamo’. We also argue that the deterritorialization and reterritorialization moves reveal the emptiness of the current-day liberal state project at its core. The discourses and practices place the liberal democratic state at odds with its own declared values and with the basic human rights of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen in a manner which is corrosive to other citizens and to the ideals inherent to ‘good life’ of the political community.

**Keywords:** foreign terrorist fighters; counterterrorism; deterritorialization; reterritorialization; citizenship

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Tens of thousands of former combatants, sympathizers, and their families became trapped in detention centers in Iraq and Syria after the fall of the Daesh (Islamic State)

'Caliphate' in 2019. While the majority of these are Syrians or Iraqis, there are also a significant number of nationals from third countries. Official data in terms of how many persons of foreign nationalities are held in the prisons or open-air camps is difficult to obtain. Some reports place the number at an approximate 11,000 former male foreign fighters, stemming from 60 different countries in Syria alone, in addition to an estimated 13,500 foreign women and children (Renard and Coolsaet 2020; Orozobekova 2022). Out of these, there is a sizeable contingent of Europeans which, although relevant authorities have not been forthcoming in terms of precise numbers, are believed to be numbering in the lower thousands for Iraq and Syria (Renard and Coolsaet 2020). The majority of the persons of European origin detained in the camps are believed to be young children (HRW 2023).

The issue of the European foreign fighters and their dependents in Iraq and Syria has become a conundrum for many Western European countries. The former combatants and their families have caused a powerful legal, political, and moral dilemma in terms of how to respond to them. As citizens or long-term residents, they are entitled to a set of rights, such as the right of return and of consular protection. Moreover, Western European countries are bound by law to uphold democratic values and guarantee fundamental human rights for all their citizens and residents. Yet, most European countries have been reluctant to honour such obligations. The reason, in part, is that a handful of returning foreign fighters have planned or committed terrorist attacks in their home country or country of residence. For example, the assaults on Charlie Hebdo and Bataclan in France (2015), or the Brussels Zaventem, Maalbeek (both 2016) and the Manchester (2017) bombings. For this reason, the entire contingent of individuals in Iraq and Syria with ties to Europe have become associated with extremist violence. Governments have as a consequence been unwilling to assist their stranded citizens and legal, long-term residents as they deem them as having a potential for radical violent acts at home (UNSC (UN

Security Council) 2021). Others have argued that the issue of foreign fighters has come to be closely tied to political fortunes in their home countries. They have as such come to constitute a profound ontological security threat for many Western European elected leaders (Leduc 2021). The situation has thus created a profound predicament, whereby liberal democratic governments are obliged by national law or international conventions to provide assistance to the European foreign fighters, but are reluctant to do so due to concern for public-security or political fallouts. This ambivalence causes them to renege on their obligations to their citizens and legal residents detained in Iraq and Syria, and at times even to actively work to undermine their fundamental rights. The European foreign fighters and their dependents are thus arguably at risk to falling into the cracks of domestic and international law; fissures which their governments at times purposely have created for their “foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens”.

This article interrogates the imaginaries of ten Western Europe countries – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the UK – which experienced the largest outflows of nationals and residents heading for the conflict in Syria in the period 2014-2019. In an attempt to contribute to thinking about the relationship between territory and citizenship, we employ discourse analysis to probe the various governmental measures deployed to address the issue of the foreign fighters. We argue that these Western European governments are engaging in deterritorialization and reterritorialization discourses and practices to exclude the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen from the body politic and normalize him/her as a feature of the Middle Eastern reality. The article proceeds as follows. The first section outlines the assumptions behind territory, citizenship, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The second section analyses the main deterritorialization moves of the governments in question. The third section explores the reterritorialization of foreign-terrorist- fighter-citizens. The article will finish with some concluding remarks.

## **4.2. Territory, citizenship, and de-/reterritorialization**

Critical political geographers have long questioned the assumption that territory is merely a reference to the apolitical, physical infrastructure of the state (Agnew 1994; Brenner and Elden 2009; Elden 2010 and 2022; Shah 2012). For most political geographers, territory is a highly political concept, which is socio-politically contextual and technopolitically contingent. Territory can thus best be conceived as “a regime of practices triangulated between institutionalizations of power, materializations of place and idealizations of ‘the people’” (Ó Tuathail 1999: 140). Following such notions, we understand territory here as an intersubjectively-produced, politicized space which comprehends both physical and human geography (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Territory is in turn performative of the state, in the sense that the state acquires *raison d’être* and function through the territory’s physical and human landscape (Elden 2010). The state’s political authority derives from its ability to exert controlling power over an effective level of exclusive ownership of the territorial space and its inhabitants. With the onset of the postmodern society, globalization and the permeability of borders, the human component of the body politic has arguably become more important in the assemblage of the state compared to the physical. The contemporary state thus derives its principal performativity from its role as a spatialized “people container” (Hirst and Thompson 1992; see also Agnew 1994), in which it acts as the main regulatory agent of human bodies and of social relations within a physical space.

In its function as regulator of bodies and relations, the state carries out the task of patrolling and policing the boundaries of the human collective contained within the territory. On the one hand the state controls processes which are about defining the ‘ins’ and the ‘outs’ of the human geography of the state. Arendt (1973: 293; see also Agnew 1994;

Amoore 2006; Garcés-Mascreñas 2015; Weitzel 2018) has argued that the state produces a “social texture” in which individuals reproduce “a distinct place in the world”, which has profound repercussion for the subjectivity of the individuals residing in the territory and acts to differentiate the in-group from the out-group . One of the classical means by which the state has enforced and continues to enforce in-/exclusionary dynamics inherent to the human geography is by ways of ‘state membership’. State membership, which refers to citizenship or legal residency (Joppke, 2007), becomes a spatially bounded construct whereby members of the polity are differentiated from non-members, i.e., nationals and legal residents are differentiated from their homologues in third states. This dynamic is especially pronounced in contemporary discourses on undocumented migration in most Western societies. On the other hand, and equally central to our discussion here, is the state’s ability to regulate social relations between societal groups within the body politic (Rigo 2011; Altermark and Nilsson 2018). The rights and obligations associated with state membership function as a disciplinary tool whereby the state encourages the ‘good’ or ‘valued’ state member to effectuate a certain behavior (Gilbert 2007). In the liberal democracy, the rights and obligations inherent to state membership are metaphorically presented as a consensual agreement whereby the good citizen’s submission to the sovereign’s norms and rules is rewarded with a measure of protection and access to a package of rights and entitlements (e.g., welfare state). The problem facing most liberal democracies today is, however, that societal diversity in terms of ethnicity, race, or cultural provisos, entails that the state’s valued liberal citizen discourse to police such boundaries has become highly undefined and amorphous (Rosanvallon 2000; Joppke 2007; Van Houdt et al. 2011). There is thus a tendency for the liberal state to actively search for examples of non-liberal or ‘bad citizens’ to act as the needed foil for the valued or model citizen discourse. In the globally-connected, cosmopolitan and liberal democratic European societies, authorities frequently (re)produce members of anti-establishment subcultures –

i.e. those not abiding with the projected good citizen societal norms or those simply out of bounds of the state's ordering practices – as the non-valued or undervalued state members (Rosanvallon 2000; Schinkel 2010). The bad-citizen label thus tends to be assigned to members of non-majoritarian religious confessionals or culturally divergent, minoritarian ethnic groups. The bad-citizen discourse also includes those individuals in society who pursue so-called anti-social behavior such as, for example, substance abusers, criminals, or terrorists (Bigo 1994). Such groups, which are habitually racialized and biologized, become 'a permanent underclass of risky persons who exist outside the normal circuits of civility and control and will therefore require permanent and authoritarian management in the name of securing a [liberal] community against risks' (Rose 2000: 164). The disciplinary and repressive potential inherent to the liberal state-society defines the social relations of the collective. Indeed, Rosanvallon (2000) has drawn our attention to that the liberal state's discourse on bad or undervalued state members risk undermining the ideals inherent to "good life" in many Western liberal democracies, i.e., the society that allows peaceful coexistence among all its citizens and tolerance of difference. There is also a clear risk for a normalization of a culture of illiberal practices which 'weaponizes' citizenship in the name of security and thereby erodes the workings of liberal democracy as a practice (Rygiel, 2008; Neal 2010).

We will interrogate the liberal state's regulatory capacity of the social relations within its territory by ways of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. While in the literature, deterritorialization and reterritorialization are concepts commonly associated with loss of state power over territory and/or abstract social processes creating hybrid cultural or economic identities in social collectives (Lunstrum 2008; Voicu, 2012; Raj, 2015; Moisiu and Kangas 2016; Halvorsen, et al, 2019; Krasteva, 2023; Liang, et al 2023), here we employ the concepts as technologies actively used by the state to regulate social relations within the territory and thereby retain power. Deterritorialization comes into play when



there is a move to lessen the interstice between social organization and its territorial base. Deterritorialization is thus the process whereby the social relations inherent to a territory have their erstwhile organization, social codes, and context altered, mutated, or destroyed (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; see also Ó Tuathail 1999; Liang, et al 2023). Deterritorialization enables us to shed light on the discourses and practices of the state to exclude state members from the spatialized body politics. Reterritorialization, on its hand, refers to the processes by which human activities are rearranged in new spatial configurations outside of earlier geographies. Reterritorialization indicates the (re)production of subjectivities into new assemblages and new social codes which acquire novel functions within a different spatiality (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Reterritorialization helps us grasp the practices of authorities assigning new meanings to human bodies in a different spatialized setting. The concepts deterritorialization and reterritorialization will guide our exploration of the underlying dynamics of the discourses and practices that Western European countries deploy to deal with their foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens and their dependents. We will focus on the deterritorialization and reterritorialization moves by the state to police the boundaries of societal fit and inclusion as well as misfit and exclusion of the body politic with the purpose of reorganizing the social relations linked to the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen at home and abroad.

This article relies on discourse analysis to explore the imaginaries of ten Western Europe countries – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the UK – in terms of their speech acts and practices towards their respective foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens. Discourse analysis allows us to go beyond what is stated in the text and extract the between-text larger societal discourse. It also helps us to uncover and critically interpret the underlying meanings and/or silences behind the Western European governments' rhetoric and action. We have relied on documents and resolutions from the U.N. Security Council, the U.N. Committee Against Torture, the

Committee on the Rights of the Child, the European Court of Human Rights as well as national documents and judicial decisions such as national security and counterterrorist strategies, parliamentary debates, and official statements. We complemented our data collection with recourse to material derived from media and, NGOs, as well as relevant secondary literature.

### **4.3. States, foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens, and practices of deterritorialization**

The first deterritorialization move which most Western European governments have engaged in is linked to the ‘foreign terrorist fighters’ trope. The concept, first introduced in 2014 through UN Security Council (2014) Resolution 2178, was initially intended to be an amalgam of, for the state, already well-known ‘foreign fighter’ and ‘terrorist’ concepts. Yet the evolution of the foreign terrorist fighter rhetorical device since has in essence produced a new, ahistoric concept in most Western states. Hence, the grammar of the foreign terrorist fighter has thus become distinguished from its two root terms. First, the foreign terrorist fighter is divorced from its foreign fighter brethren by the linguistic addendum of ‘terrorist’ to mark a unique category of foreign fighters. This singular, collective-specific, historically disconnected trope signals the greater concern which the activity of foreign terrorist fighters has generated in comparison to the regular foreign fighter. The foreign terrorist fighter has come to be construed as a direct ‘enemy’ to the Western European state for his/her affiliation with by the international community designated terrorist organizations such as Daesh or Al Nusra and their vociferous opposition to the Western state construct and to liberal values. The regular foreign fighter is, in contrast, perceived as having a ‘legitimate’ right to travel to and participate in a foreign war for reasons of ideology or conviction in the name of freedom of expression and assembly. The regular foreign

fighter is thus still considered within the realm of valued citizen, in contrast to the foreign terrorist fighter. Second, the foreign terrorist fighter is also discursively differentiated from the regular terrorist. Both types of collectives are considered by the state as propelled by anti-social, violent approaches to resolving political issues, and assigns both the subjectivity of being bad or undervalued citizen. This places both foreign terrorist fighters and the average terrorist at the margins of society and the polity. However, that Western European governments clearly see foreign terrorist fighters as different from the regular terrorist is evident from the significant legislative innovation and/or expansion their domestic counterterrorist legislation prompted by the foreign fighter phenomenon since 2015 (Baker-Beall 2023). The perceived extremism of the anti-social behavior of the foreign terrorist fighter has prompted the adoption of exceptionalist policies going beyond what is perceived needed for the regular domestic or international terrorist. Consequently, most states across Western Europe have incorporated into their national antiterrorist legislation a very broad and sweeping definition of terrorism, based on United Nation Security Council (2014) resolution 2178, thereby criminalizing

[i]ndividuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.

For example, since 2015, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have revised their penal codes to broaden the definition of what constitutes a terrorist offence to include travel with the intent to join a terrorist organization abroad, to provide or receive terrorist training, and to fund or otherwise facilitate acts of terrorism (Coolsaet and Renard 2018). In Denmark the new counterterrorism legislation mirrors the above, but also includes travels to so-called “no-go zones” as established by the pertinent authorities (Danish Criminal Code 2017). This broader interpretation of what constitutes the terrorist act has stabilized and normalized lowered standards of proof of association

with terrorist organizations, of specific actions, as well as, arguably, by stretching the concept of the terrorist into ambiguity (Geneuss 2020; Rigotti and Zomignani Barboza 2021). According to the new penal codes, a foreign terrorist fighter may include not only active and armed Daesh combatants, but also anyone who travelled to Iraq and Syria, including individuals accompanying their spouse or their parents (Scherrer 2018). For some governments, the family association is sufficient to determine the foreign terrorist fighter. For example, to the United Kingdom Home Secretary the collective of foreign terrorist fighters stranded in Iraq and Syria encompass “some of the most dangerous—including many who supported terrorism, not least those who chose to fight, or raise families, in the so-called caliphate” (emphasis added; United Kingdom Parliament 2019). Along similar lines, a Danish court sentenced a woman to 3 years in prison in 2022 for “acting as a housewife and wife of persons that were active in [Islamic State] IS” (as cited in AFP 2022). The Danish prosecutor declared at the time that “[e]ven if you did not actively participate in the fighting, we assert that you can support the terrorist organization by shopping in its supermarkets, by taking care of the children, [and] by being a housewife” (Ibid.). The figure of the ‘jihadi wives’ and the matter of raising families has thus become an act which a state may see as an active support of a terrorist organization. Minors – frequently derogatively referred to as ‘jihadi cubs’ of the ‘children of the Caliphate’ – are also viewed with suspicion in most Western European states as allegedly “some of these children (aged above 9 years) have undergone military training in conflict zones. This prompts questions about the impacts this might have upon their return on EU soil, the 'threat' this might pose, and the possible social/criminal response” (Scherrer 2018). The Dutch government, which has tended to refer to its foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens as ‘jihadist travelers’, include any minor over the age of 9 (Dutch government 2014). In Belgium the foreign terrorist fighter label is used for anyone age 12 and over.

The distinction made between the foreign terrorist fighter, on the one hand, and the foreign fighter or terrorist, on the other, are deterritorializing moves by which the state intervenes to reorder the social relations of its spatialized body politic. The social codes of the state's human geography are rearranged to differentiate the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen from other groups of society, whether from the valued citizens, or from regular foreign fighters and terrorists. In its hypervisualization of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen since 2015, many Western European governments have engaged in discourses and practices which underline the extreme 'foreignness' or not belonging of the foreign terrorist fighter, compared to other societal good or bad citizen collectives in the body politic. Foreignness, as Honig (2002) has argued in the context of migration, is "a symbolic marker that the nation attaches to the people we want to disavow, deport, or detain because we experience them as a threat". Foreignness thus comes to exceed citizenship or right of residency (Macklin 2006). The deterritorializing move thereby stimulates the notion of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen for his/her excess in foreignness can and ought to be placed outside of the bounds of effective and substantive belonging to the spatialized state. The deterritorialization provides cover and authority for state policies to promote visions of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen as a 'foreign body' in the body politics, i.e., individuals who do not naturally belong and ideally needs to be "amputated" or dislodged from the state body for their alleged lack of fit with or potential for nefarious effects on the collective (Rivera-Escartin and Johansson-Nogués 2022). The state's vision of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen as an individual to be dismembered from the societal body are in some cases extreme. For example, the French policy prior to 2019 to eliminate as many of the French Daesh-associated foreign fighters as possible, or the then United Kingdom's defense minister's position that foreign fighters should preferably be "hunted down and killed", as "a dead terrorist can't cause any harm to Britain" (Reuters 2017; Mathieu 2022).

A second deterritorialization move is the administrative measure to refuse the right of return for the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen. Most Western European states examined here have denied their adult male foreign terrorist fighter nationals and legal residents the right to return to the home country. Both Belgium and the Netherlands have, for example, ruled that the international principle of right to return to one's country does not imply that the state has a positive obligation to repatriate if the state member is deemed to be a threat to national security (Spadaro 2021; Van Poecke and Wauters 2021). In contrast, Italy has made a distinction between citizens and legal residents, allowing repatriation of the former but not the latter. In terms of Daesh-associated women and minors, Western European governments also initially enforced a blanket refusal against their return. However, after several international institutions' rulings in 2022, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Spain, and Sweden have made some effort to repatriate orphans and children below a certain age and, at times, their mothers. France, for example, offered an assisted return of 46 women and 109 children in three waves in 2022 and 2023. Nevertheless, the family unit has not always been respected. The mothers have, more often than not, had to sign away their parental rights, whether to allow the children to be repatriated to the home country alone, or once the mother finds herself in pre-trial custody in the home country. Upon repatriation, Belgian, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Swedish authorities have acted to immediately separate the children from their mothers for longer or shorter periods due to fear of the mother might radicalize the child. This is one of the main reasons also for limiting the child's visitation rights to his/her mother during the pre-trial process or during the subsequent prison sentence. On occasion, European minors' right to assisted return has been revoked on the technicality that their mothers are considered inadmissible in the home country (Van Poecke and Wauters 2021). When national courts have ruled that is better that mother and child stay together, the child will remain in the camps in Iraq and Syria despite the poor conditions in such centers. In terms of voluntary return, different

Western European governments have taken different approaches. Denmark has legally banned its foreign fighters from re-entering the country on their own account, while most other Western European countries have opted to place all voluntary returnees in some form of state custody (e.g., preventive prison or detention centers) for longer time periods. Virtually all Western European governments have denied their citizens trapped in Syria consular service.

The deterritorialization move to deny rights to assisted or voluntary return and consular service relies on governmental discourses which produces the adult foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen and even their children as a grave security concern for the home country body politic. This rests of underlying subtexts of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen as a radicalized, emotionally-crazed, dehumanized subjecthood. In state discourses across Western Europe, it is common to find references to Daesh as a “terrorist sect” and as “an authoritarian death cult”, still able to act and maintain sleeper cells even after the fall of the so-called Caliphate (Swedish Parliament 2022; United Kingdom Parliament 2023). The Daesh-associated men, women and children are held as indoctrinated for automatic, extremist violence, out of reach for logical reasoning or rationality. The probability for a viable reintegration into society is thus held as very low in most Western European countries. It is of no relevance that the foreign fighters and their families have been detained for a number of years, as to many Western European states “[t]hese prisoners remain an active threat to the security of Syria and the western world” (United Kingdom Parliament 2023; see also Baker-Beall 2023). The discourse of risk relates to how rationalities and technologies to deal with social problems have developed and diversified historically (Aradau and Van Munster 2007; see also Christensen 2023). In the global risk society, the onus of decision-making center on government’s ability to prevent bads. Beck (2002, 41) has argued that the central issue for the states is thus contain risks and “to feign control over the uncontrollable — in politics, law, science, technology, economy and

everyday life” that may affect the body politic or in any way undermine the state’s claims to performativity. Christensen (2022) has likened the state’s attempt to control the uncontrollable in terms of the foreign terrorist fighter to the medieval fear and persecution of witches. The liberty, security and rights of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen are offered up on a modern-day, metaphorical witches’ stake, as means for the state to be seen as an effective barrier against risk and as in full control in its role as a manager of the political community’s social relations. The deterritorialization move based on the discourse of risk ultimately acts to police social relations within the body politic and deny the male adult foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen access to the home country’s spatialized political community. For some women and children, the denial of access to the state’s political community is imposed once repatriated. Mother and child returnees are in many Western European countries separated and isolated from each other and/or other family members during prolonged time periods (Mehra and Wentworth 2022). The deterritorialization is thus effectuated within the family unit, as opposed to geographically.

In sum, the phenomenon of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen has prompted Western European governments to adopt discourses and practices which aim to deterritorialize state members and to place them outside the social relations inherent to the physical and, above all, human geography of the home country territory. These deterritorialization moves accentuate the marginality, foreignness and risk of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen in relation to the spatialized human geography at home. It is a deliberate act by the state to weaken the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen’s ties to the home state and to obviate its obligations to provide its national “the right to have rights” (Arendt 1973). The state’s deterritorialization of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen renders the state member’s de facto stateless.



#### **4.4. States, foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens and practices of reterritorialization**

A first reterritorialization move that Western European governments have engaged in is the administrative measure to revoke the nationality and/or legal residency of some of its foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens. The modification of the administrative practices in terms of deprivation of citizenship or legal residency has in most Western European context taken place in the last decade and been a direct reaction to the Daesh-affiliated foreign fighter phenomenon (Bolhuis and van Wijk 2020). The mere suspicion of ties to Daesh has in most cases been sufficient for Western European states to annul an individual's right of continued legal residency in their countries. These administrative measures have often been taken in the absence of the individual in question and rarely provided opportunity for the individual to appeal the decision of exclusion. In addition, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and the UK have engaged in the practice of revoking citizenship. Germany, for example, modified its Nationality Act in 2019 to now stipulate that any German citizen who has "participated in combat operations by a terrorist organization abroad" can have their citizenship removed (as cited in Bolhuis and van Wijk 2020). In the cases of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK no prior due process or conviction on the basis of national security is required for the decision to withdraw citizenship. The act of depriving a national of citizenship has mainly been a factor in cases where the individual has held a second citizenship (dual citizens). Statistics show that the dual citizens most likely to lose their citizenship are citizens of a country of majoritarian Islamic confession. For example, out of the 17 and 16 individuals who lost their Belgian and Dutch citizenship respectively between 2017 and 2020, almost all are of Moroccan, Egyptian, Iraqi or Turkish descent. In the case of France, individuals of Moroccan and Algerian decent are most likely

to be deprived of their French citizenship. The statistics are very similar for the UK. Hence while of the surface legally indiscriminate, policies to deprive citizenship has consistently been directed towards citizens of foreign descent, regardless of how generationally distant they may be from their ancestor's countries of origin. The UK is the only country out of the Western European governments under survey here which has the faculty to remove nationality for non-British born mono-nationals, even in cases when such a decision risks statelessness. The presumption of the British government is that its former citizens would acquire an alternative and new citizenship in a third country. The deprivation of rights to citizenship has also been exercised by some Western European governments in terms of minors, such as Denmark. According to former Minister of Immigration Inger Støjberg, the children born to 'ISIS parents' should not be entitled to hold citizenship as "[t]heir parents have turned their backs on Denmark, so there is no reason for their kids to become Danish citizens" (AFP 2019).

This reterritorialization move reorders social relations and recontextualizes them by a discursive relocation and grafting of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen subjectivity onto a new social reality. According to Tripkovic (2021: 1044) "denationalization is better understood as a sui generis sanction, which seeks to relieve the polity of those members who fail to satisfy fundamental citizenship requirements", by, as we sustain, relocating the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen in a new social setting. The link between the new territory and the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen is augmented by stabilizing and normalizing the discourse of how the state member fits into the Middle Eastern intersubjectively produced territorial space and socio-cultural reality by virtue of their second citizenship or, in the case of legal residents, nationality. This disciplinary practice and relocating discourse-practice reveal the subtext of a racialized and neo-orientalist state attitude toward their foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens. The racialization is a process of inscribing particular attributes to a group because of their physical or cultural traits (Brown 2020). The same

author writes in reference to the foreign fighter phenomenon that the authorities' and societal "racialization of Islam occurs not only through skin pigmentation", but by ascribing sets of stereotyping characteristics, on a way "that religious practices, beliefs and behavior traits become conflated with biology" (ibid.: 298). The social significance of Muslim and non-Muslim bodies is thus one of difference and inequality with the home country, whereby biology comes to mark the limit of state membership. Similarly, the neo-orientalist discourse assumes that the Middle Eastern territory is 'known' to the West as a physical and human spatiality characterized by violence, political instability, extremism, and religious fundamentalism. The suggestion of the Western European reterritorialization discourse and practices is that the foreign fighter belongs to the Middle Eastern territory for the fit between the individual characteristics and the Middle Eastern reality. The reterritorialization move thus acts to equate the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen as a racialized body with more in common with Middle Eastern ethnic groups and/or co-religionists than the legal-judicial state membership of the European home country. Moreover, for Daesh's and allegedly also its followers' defiance of Western liberal values and state project, the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen is portrayed as better located in the societal and religious dynamics of the Middle East. Such racialized and neo-orientalist discourse-practices facilitate a reterritorialized reordering of social relations which effectively inserts the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen in the Iraqi-Syrian-Middle Eastern territories, as their new 'natural' home. The reterritorialization move simultaneously aims to silence and contain the challenge to the Western European liberal states by relocating it to the Middle Eastern spatiality and by excommunicating the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen from their home countries' body politic.

The second reterritorialization move that many Western European governments have effectuated is to prolong and to normalize the presence of their nationals and legal residents in the detention centers. Men, women, and children associated with Daesh are

held in prisons and camps, the majority in centers administered by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). An estimated 5000 adult men, and at least 850 underaged boys are held in a prison known as Ghwayran or al-Sina'a, out of which hundreds are Europeans citizens or legal residents (Reuters 2022). There are also male European nationals held in the Houry and Orkesh Rehabilitation Centers as well as the Alaya military prison. The adult and adolescent women and children under 10-12 are held in the al-Hol and al-Roj camps, together with internally displaced persons affected by the Syrian civil war. The prison as well as the camps for internally displaced persons have regularly been denounced by United Nations agencies and others as completely inadequate in their basic provisions and for their highly deficient conditions. The detainees are held involuntarily and without having access to a competent judicial authority which could determine the necessity and legality of their detention. For the children, detention based solely on family ties or guilt by association, which according to international lawyers constitute a war crime and/or a grave violation of human rights. Still, Western European governments such as France, Germany, Sweden and the UK have used substantial public funds to support the AANES and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to keep the facilities operative, above all to make sure that the Kurdish authorities can fulfill the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh's objective to tackle "the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters travelling to join Daesh or travelling from former Daesh-held territories to other countries" (Global Coalition undated; see also OCHA 2022). For example, the United Kingdom's parliament (2023) has argued that "Turkey's incursion into Kurdish Syria and Daesh operations to free the detainees have underlined the need for continued close co-operation between coalition forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces to keep the facilities intact and impede freedom of movement of the men, women and children associated with Daesh". For this purpose, the United Kingdom approved plans worth 20 million USD to support AANES-administered prisons in 2021, to improve their conditions and build a new detention center

in the area called Panorama (OCHA (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) 2022). Germany has also provided substantial humanitarian assistance to the camps, in particular as regards medical care, and in general deems that for the individuals detained in the al-Roj camp the situation is more or less satisfactory.

This reterritorialization move reveals governmental assumptions about the individuals who remain in Iraq and Syria today and the states' will to perpetuate their situation in the prisons and detention camps. Parliamentary reports have revealed that governments have assumed that the foreign fighter's continued presence in the territory is not a consequence of being physically detained, but rather as an indication that they must be or have been ardent supporters of Daesh since they are still in Iraq and Syria (All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) 2022). This reterritorialization move relies on the discursive creation of camps and prisons in the Iraqi and Syrian (Middle Eastern) territorial reality as a new 'home' for the European foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens. Home is at once a material space and an environment laden with emotional meanings which defines personal subjecthood (Giddens 2004). Home as a spatially delimited discursive production "naturaliz[es] certain person-place relationships" in political projects (Hopkins and Dixon 2006: 175). The state's may thus project ideas about home which come to imbue our thinking about ourselves and the places where 'we' reside. The deterritorialization move rests on governments' discourses and practices to make these prisons and camps into the new, normalized spatial referent for the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen's subjectivity. The reordering of social relations to ensure the belongingness of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen in the new 'home' rests in part on discourses on the link between the alleged deeds and spatiality. The conflict with Daesh was unleashed on Iraqi and Syrian territory, hence the foreign fighter should be held accountable for his/her action in the region. For example,

France's position is constant: all jihadists who have deliberately chosen to join Daesh [sic.] must, regardless of their nationality, be held accountable before the courts, as close as possible to the scene of their crimes, where their victims are, and where the evidence is. This is the reason for our position with regard to the few French nationals held in detention centres in north-eastern Syria (Permanent mission of France to the United Nations in New York 2022).

This is also a position supported by the Netherlands and Sweden. Until such date, the detention camps and prisons must be protected as the substitute 'people containers' for the Daesh-associated men, women and children. Some observers have termed the Western European governmental practice of prolonging the detention of their nationals in the Iraqi and Syrian camps amounts to creating a European-sponsored Guantanamo (United Nation's special rapporteur Fionnula Ní Aoláin, cited in Renard and Coolsaet 2020). The situation is ironic due to the vehement European opposition to the United States' infringements of human rights at the Guantanamo base on Cuba. However, in light of the ontological insecurity which many Western European politicians feel on the matter (Leduc 2022), the longer the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen remain in the detentions centers the better as it conveniently puts the issue off for home governments in the short term, leaving it to their successors (Renard and Coolsaet 2020).

In sum, the phenomenon of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen has prompted Western European governments to adopt discourses and practices which aim to reterritorialize state members into new social realities and/or the creation of new 'homes'. These reterritorialization moves, relying of racialized, neo-orientalist understandings of the figure of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen and understandings of 'home', assumes a need for relocating the social relations of the latter into a new territorial reality of Iraq-Syria-Middle East. The reterritorialization move thus in essence serves to shift the burden of the

individual's 'right to have rights' onto a different intersubjectively understood territory (Arendt 1973). The state's reterritorialization of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen results in a profound transformation of the state member subjecthood, placing it out of bounds of the territory of the country of origin.

#### **4.5. Conclusions**

In the wake of the fall of the Daesh Islamic State Caliphate in 2019, the international community has been faced with the fact that thousands of displaced European nationals and legal residents are stranded in Iraqi and Syrian detention camps. This article interrogated the governmental policies of Western European governments towards their state members held in the Iraqi and Syrian facilities. We have analyzed the state's deterritorialization and reterritorialization moves on the European foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizens.

We have explored the link between territory, security, and citizenship. Territory is understood as revealing less about the physical geography than it is about state performativity and about the legitimacy territory lends to the state in order to govern its human geography. We employed the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to elucidate on how territory becomes performative in Western European state practices to regulate social relations between the average citizen and the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen. We find that the Western European governments have engaged in different types of de- and reterritorialization moves which have acted to undermine the foreign fighters' rights as citizens and/or human beings. States have also actively positioned their foreign fighter nationals and dependents at the liminars of the body politic in way which runs the risk of perpetuating the foreign fighters' and their dependents' confinement in Iraq and Syria. The use of the concept deterritorialization has thus here helped shed further light on

exceptionalist policies that a liberal state can adopt to target a determined collective within society, similar to what has been highlighted in research done on other vulnerable societal collectives, such as migrants and/or religious and ethnic minorities. However, in contrast to other forms of population management policies, the twin concepts de- and reterritorialization allows us to capture a very specific form of bio-politics as it is designed to put physical distance between the average citizen and the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen. Our concepts also helped us to shed light on the contradiction between the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen being reduced to 'bare life' in camps in Iraq and Syria, even when the sovereign has numerous political-judicial technologies to adequately deal with this collective at home. Finally, our analysis based on reterritorialization is also novel compared to existing bio-power studies, as it highlights the sovereign's active shaping of subjectivities located in new social realities and/or new 'homes', even beyond declaring them homo sacer and as out of bounds of the body politics.

The deterritorialization and reterritorialization discourse and practices of Western European governments show the slippages and potential for repression in the liberal state. The discourse on foreign terrorist fighters purports to be about counterterrorism and preventing terrorist acts, but instead it plays a key role in stabilizing this issue in a specific way and empowering determined state performativity in terms of acting as people containers and regulators of body politic. It shows how the trope of terrorism, and more specifically the new foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen rhetorical device, has been produced and then invoked by political actors to justify security practices in a way which runs counter to the spirit of liberal democratic values and the basic rights of the individual. The discourse and practices aimed to hypervisualize a collective such as the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen based on risk, biology, and alleged 'natural' belongingness to the Middle Eastern reality, lamentably bear all the traits of exceptionalism and the potential for the liberal state project drifting in the direction of the far-right and/or xenophobic populism. A far-right- and



anti-immigrant populists-inspired home country utopia would involve a racialized state, where biological and cultural markers become determinants for legitimate state membership, whether as a citizen or as a legal resident. This does not only attempt against the basic human rights of the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen, but also uncovers the emptiness of the current-day liberal state project at its core. The liberal state's ambition for multiculturalism as a basis for societal 'good life' has been abandoned as liberal, progressive political parties have embraced more and more of the logic and rhetoric of the far right and chauvinist populism. The negation of citizen's and resident's basic human and legal rights for the foreign-terrorist-fighter-citizen is thus not an innocuous and insignificant practice in the name of security for the broader society. Such practices could spread to other societal collectives and thus risk other individuals being condemned to statelessness and civic death unable to exercise their fundamental civil and socio-economic rights. The danger is thus that if allowed to continue unabated, the de- and reterritorialization moves of Western European countries could undermine the foundations of a democracy and state protection even for the valued citizen, as arbitrariness in the rule of law and how citizens are treated diminishes legal and basic human rights for the entire community, especially in a time and age where liberal democracy is eroding around the world.

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## 5. Conclusions

The goal of this doctoral thesis by compendium of papers has been to understand the changes, continuities, and adaptations of the counterterrorist discourses and practices in Western Europe during the 2010s and early 2020s. The motivation behind this research is twofold. Firstly, it aims to examine the adaptation of the counterterrorist response from a threat posed by ethnonationalist, far-right, and far-left terrorists to a more diffuse, global-local (glocal) terrorist threat, ideologically linked in many cases to Islamist radicalism. Secondly, it seeks to explore the effects of these new counterterrorist policies and practices on citizenship and the conception of the citizen. The objective of the thesis is to shed light on the actions undertaken by institutions in three central cases during this period: France, Spain, and the issues surrounding foreign fighters in Siria and Iraq. As discussed in the thesis, these cases offer a better understanding of counterterrorism in Western Europe since 2011 and contribute to a deeper understanding of this field in an underexplored area in academic research. This has demonstrated how counterterrorism during this period shapes our conception of the 'citizen' in innovative ways. For instance, creating new limitations on fundamental rights, implementing policies of repression, employing techniques of governmentality by certain governments to 'conduct the conduct' of vulnerable groups (primarily Muslims), or establishing new regimes of 'normality'. Finally, this dimension of citizenship has also been connected in this doctoral thesis with the human rights of foreign fighters' individuals in Europe. These citizens and residents simultaneously occupy a legal, experience-based, and discursive position being at the same time refugees, migrants, prisoners, citizens, and terrorists.

This doctoral thesis has addressed the issue of counterterrorism in Western Europe over the last decade, understanding counterterrorism as the set of actions aimed at

combating terrorism and its effects. In other words, counterterrorism actions include decisions, discourses, practices, and policies that seek to address the terrorist phenomenon. In doing so, we have drawn on a combination of terrorism studies literature and critical analysis of counterterrorism policies, discourses, and practices. This has allowed us to reflect on what counterterrorism discourses and practices are present in various European governments. At the same time, it has allowed us to deepen and investigate the relationship between (in)security and citizenship in the field of counterterrorism. All this has served to contribute to the further development of critical studies in the field of counterterrorism.

Beyond this theoretical contribution, the thesis offers an empirical exploration of the main new issue in counterterrorism in the last decade as it is the foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. Also, studies two of the most experienced counterterrorism countries in Western Europe (France and Spain). This doctoral thesis aims to answer the following research question: How have counterterrorism discourses and practices changed in Western Europe over the last decade? This research question had a twofold objective. On the one hand, the aim was to critically outline how counterterrorism discourses and practices have been maintained, changed, or adapted in this period in France and Spain as well as how the phenomenon of foreign fighters has emerged and governed. Beyond the temporal dimension, this research question allows us to study the elements that make up these discourses and practices, how frequent they are, and what exclusions or silences are present in the phenomenon under study. We also observe how in certain cases the role of European institutions is key in shaping these discourses and practices as well as how these institutions transform and integrate the various countries into more similar and homogeneous counterterrorism regimes. Here we highlight the actions and discourses of civil servants, law enforcement agencies, and social and health workers. Thus, the aim is

to give an account of the plurality of actors involved in counterterrorism practices and discourses in Western Europe.

### **5.1. Empirical results**

This doctoral thesis has demonstrated how the counterterrorist field of Western Europe has reorganized and adapted to the threat of jihadist terrorism. The threat of jihadist terrorism functions in these discourses as an external constituent of national identity (and/or European identity) and as the origin of violent radicalization forces that disturb the 'European' interior. Thus, in France, especially during the period between 2012 and 2014, terrorists and terrorism are understood as external to French society and motivated by causes subjected to violent radicalization forces of foreign origin. Even when incidents begin to occur on French soil in 2012 and 2014, the discourse attributes these incidents to isolated events and/or largely motivated by reasons "outside of France". This aligns with the Western discourse on war on terror as self-referential and disconnected from national contexts. Thus, it is a discourse that identifies terrorism as an act by an external actor with foreign motivations aimed at the West to gain international publicity or "punish" Western acts in third countries (especially in the Middle East). In the same way, in the context of foreign fighters, the imagery of the Middle East plays a key role in the counterterrorist policies and discourses surrounding these subjects. These citizens-fighters-terrorists-foreigners have their social relations reordered and recontextualized through discursive relocation and grafting into the context of the Middle East. This disciplinary practice, and the relocation of discourse-practice, reveal the subtext of a racialized and neo-Orientalist state attitude towards these subjects. In summary, the three papers show how counterterrorist discourses of Western Europe to a greater or lesser extent create a social significance of Muslim and non-Muslim bodies as well as a neo-Orientalist discourse that

assumes the territory of the Middle East is “known” by the ‘West’ as a physical and human spatiality characterized by violence, political instability, extremism, and religious fundamentalism. Consequently, such discourses facilitate practices and policies to govern, monitor, and lead these Muslim subjects that may dislocate the “interior” of the Western European “political community”.

Meanwhile, especially from 2015 onwards, there is a growing notion that terrorists and terrorism are not purely international phenomena but also national or domestic ones. In this regard, both the French and Spanish cases illustrate this shift, as it is noted that those individuals who are violently radicalized or who act violently inspired by violent jihad are no longer considered foreigners but, as described in the French “Action Plan Against Terrorism” of 2018, are carried out by “essentially endogenous actors”. Increasingly, international ideologies and phenomena lose importance, and others such as social marginalization, ideological rupture with society, or phenomena of violent radicalization for various reasons (childhood or adolescent traumas or the desire to belong to a group) gain prominence. Even in the case of foreign fighters, this phenomenon is regulated, and over time it begins to be equated with other forms of terrorism outlined in criminal codes and state laws. Here, we can also situate the Spanish decision to unify, starting in 2012, the response to terrorism into a single strategy that includes both domestic and international terrorism. This fusion and hybridization of counterterrorism discourses and practices around the international and the national allow institutions to justify their actions with decades of experience.

In this new context, the terrorist emerges as an individual radicalized violently due to various causes such as social or economic marginalization, the influence of violent radical ideas, or the effects of mental traumas during childhood and adolescence. These individuals break away from their familial and social contexts and embark on a path toward



radicalization and ultimately violence. This extends suspicion to the entirety of society, as terrorist subjects now act not so much inspired by groups but rather embark on the terrorist path through individual indoctrination and acting violently alone (known as lone wolf). This thesis has shown how, in response to this change, new actors not belonging to the military, or the bodies and forces of security enter the terrorist field. These actors must be vigilant and alert the competent authorities to a possible case of violent radicalization, and these authorities, in a multidisciplinary team, address the case depending on the necessary treatments and diverse solutions required to “reinsert” the individual into society. This type of reaction should not be unfamiliar to us given the context of the global risk society in which we live, where the burden of decision-making rests on the government's ability to prevent harm. Therefore, the individualization of the terrorist subject as someone radicalized violently and without necessary connections to a group makes them an object of individual surveillance and supervision (including medical and psychological treatments). This doctoral thesis has also illustrated how, in this new context, there is a shift of the counterterrorist struggle to the local level, the inclusion of private actors, and progressive decentralization, especially regarding the fight against violent radicalization.

In parallel to this, such counterterrorism actions have effects on values, democracy, the rule of law, and the various groups that constitute society. Both in the French and Spanish cases, values have been mobilized to distance and oppose the “other”, in this case, “the terrorists” or “violent radicalized”. In the Spanish case, we see how the construction of “terrorist barbarism” is frequently used to refer to ETA’s terrorism, accompanied by a triumphalist discourse. In the French case, descriptions of the French state and society as republican are mobilized, meaning a state and society that, among other values, is secular, tolerant, or respects gender equality. However, it is noteworthy that the French discourse is not triumphalist like the Spanish one, but from 2015 onwards, we notice how the French Republic is in danger, and these values must be actively

promoted. Moreover, both cases share that these self-descriptions serve to distance oneself from the “other” and portray it as barbaric (in the case of Spain) or anti-republican (in the case of France). This opens up the possibility and facilitates the adoption of extraordinary decisions or those that construct certain groups as dangerous or vulnerable. Thus, the possibility of establishing measures and policies to help, monitor, or treat these groups and reintegrate them into society is opened. In other words, this discourse around national values implies, on the one hand, the definition of the subjects and ideologies to combat, and, on the other hand, allows for the governance of such dangerous or vulnerable populations and designates what is “normal” or properly national.

These counterterrorist elements also jeopardize good democratic practices. This risk is particularly noteworthy in measures related to actions against violent radicalization. In this regard, state and civil society measures to create counter-narratives may generate stigma, perpetuate situations of “vulnerability”, or label such groups as dangerous before they commit a violent act. Also, counterterrorist discourses and practices have often equated terrorism with Islam and even highlighted their concern about jihadist terrorism over other types of terrorism. This can create a recurring and perverse framework that associates Islam with violence. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, counterterrorism has expanded from security positions to other social, political, and psychological actions. This expansion can lead to anti-democratic effects such as limiting public space and what is thinkable and arguable in the political sphere, as well as censoring propositions that deviate from the “normal”. This tension between, on the one hand, security actions and, on the other hand, psychosocial and civil empowerment actions is also evident, for example, in the Spanish case with the expulsion of leaders of Muslim organizations. Thus, while Spanish authorities argue that they engage in “jihadist” positions, social groups accuse institutions of persecuting activism and empowerment of the Muslim community in Spain. In a similar vein, the article on foreign fighters has shown how the trope of “terrorism”, and

more specifically the rhetorical device of foreign terrorist fighters, has been produced and then invoked by political actors to justify security practices in a manner contrary to the spirit of liberal democratic values and the basic rights of the individual.

Finally, this doctoral thesis has also shown how interested member states shape and influence EU policies and visions decisively. Thus, in the European counterterrorist field, we have shown how Spain, due to its extensive experience in counterterrorist action, is perceived as a relevant actor and has used the European and international arena to disseminate and demand greater action in counterterrorist matters.

## **5.2. Theoretical reflections**

At the theoretical level, this doctoral thesis as a compendium of papers contributes to the emerging field of literature exploring the relationship between citizenship and security, particularly regarding counterterrorism. In this doctoral thesis, this relationship is reflected in three themes and bodies of literature.

Firstly, the gratitude extended to critical, constructivist, and poststructuralist literature on the relationship between an “us” and “the other” has enabled this thesis to explore the construction of antagonisms, chains of equivalences, and exclusions within the discourse of counterterrorism in Western Europe. Through this literature, this doctoral thesis has shed further light on the relationship between citizenship and security. For instance, cases such as the French one examined in this thesis reveal how the mobilization of senses of citizenship and institutionalized values interact with security domains such as counterterrorism, thereby generating senses of belonging and exclusion. This distinction between “us” and “the other” also affects citizens deviating from “normal” and the typically “national”. These discourses have engendered rhetoric concerning the strengths and

benefits of the national values and projects of the studied European states, consequently excluding those not aligned with the state project of each European state. Similarly, the paper on the foreigners-terrorists-fighters-citizens illustrates how these boundaries between an “us” and “the other” are present in the discourse and practices surrounding this phenomenon, emphasizing the foreign or non-belonging status of these individuals within the social collective of other citizens.

Secondly, this doctoral thesis as a compendium of papers aims to contribute to the literature on Europeanization, particularly within the literature on Europeanization of counterterrorism. While previous studies on the terrorist threat in Spain have been abundant, there has been less examination of the counterterrorist practices. For instance, especially there is a lack of studies on Spanish counterterrorism after the ETA’s ceasefire or on the Europeanization dynamics of Spanish counterterrorism. This doctoral thesis has shown how Spain is a key counterterrorist actor in Western Europe and has influenced and been influenced by the EU. Previous studies have indicated how the EU has influenced Spain and other member states through directives, strategies, or various socialization spaces. For instance, in this thesis, we have shown how the process of Europeanization is particularly notable in the Spanish case through the increasing use of terminology and frameworks derived from the concept of violent radicalization. However, there is less research on state influence in European spheres. Specifically, among other agendas, Spain is a relevant actor in the area of victim attention and memory, influencing in many cases the actions and decisions of the EU regarding counterterrorism, especially in the prevention and combat against violent radicalization. An example of this is Spain’s prioritization of the phenomenon of cross-border victims and how it aims, through the rotating presidency of the EU, to take measures to improve their care and situation on a Union-wide scale. Another example could be how public servants from the Ministry of the Interior or victim associations in Spain hold important roles in the Victims/survivors of terrorism Working

Group of the RAN. In conclusion, previous literature has shown the significant influence of decisions and discourses at the EU level on member states; however, as this doctoral thesis also aims to contribute, member states have also exerted significant influence at the individual level on the form and content of decisions, discourses, and practices at the community level.

Finally, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature addressing the liberal state as a regulatory actor of the social body and its relations through legislation, practices, and discourses. Previous literature has examined how the state controls and defines who belongs to the state and who does not, thus forming differences between in-groups and out-groups and impacting individuals' subjectivity. Prior literature has indicated how the label of "bad citizen" tends to be assigned to members of non-majority religious denominations or culturally divergent and minority ethnic groups. This discourse also includes individuals in society who engage in behaviours termed antisocial, such as addicts, criminals, or terrorists. Within this literature, the present thesis has contributed to illustrating how liberal states employ deterritorialization and reterritorialization movements of the foreigners-terrorists-fighters-citizens domestically or abroad. The discourse and practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization by Western European governments reveal the slips and potential repression of the liberal state. The discourse on the foreigners-terrorists-fighters-citizens aims to address the counterterrorism struggle and prevent terrorist acts, but instead plays a key role in stabilizing this issue in a specific manner and empowering a particular state performativity in terms of people containers and regulators of the political body. The liberal state's ambition for multiculturalism as the basis for a "good social life" has been abandoned as liberal and progressive political parties increasingly adopt the logic and rhetoric of far right and chauvinistic populism. Denying basic human and legal rights to citizens and residents for the foreigners-terrorists-fighters-citizens might seem like a harmless and insignificant practice in the name of societal

security. However, if citizens do not hold their governments accountable for the lack of respect for such rights, this can ultimately erode state protection and guarantees for other sectors of society.

### **5.3. Concluding remarks**

The objective of this thesis has been to examine the continuities and transformations in the counterterrorist discourses and practices in Western Europe over the past decade. The incorporation and expansion of the fight against violent radicalization as a preventive measure against terrorism has permeated the security and counterterrorist agendas at the European level. This has led to the emergence of new actors in the security field and highlighted the need for better coordination among the various stakeholders involved in combating violent radicalization and terrorism.

The primary challenge encountered during this thesis was related to the subject of study: counterterrorism. Firstly, many of the documents and resources concerning counterterrorism policies and practices are not publicly available. This limitation may have somewhat influenced the understanding and analysis of these issues, particularly those on security aspects. However, this is a common obstacle faced by most researchers in this field. In this regard, some experienced colleagues in the field have explained that accessing certain documents can be difficult without the appropriate contacts or institutional credentials. Secondly, gaining access to interviews has also proven challenging at times, especially with stakeholders linked to law enforcement agencies and coordination bodies involved in the fight against terrorism. Despite this, through persistent efforts, interviews with these stakeholders have been secured, albeit not all that was desired. Moreover, another factor that affected this thesis was the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent

societal shift to online modes of communication, which necessitated conducting the majority of interviews online.

Concerning the perspectives adopted in the thesis and potential future research directions, it must be acknowledged that more historical perspectives and studies covering longer periods could shed light on the genealogy of these counterterrorist discourses and practices, as well as their precursor practices. Many current practices and certain discourses have their origins in previous decades, such as the 1980s or 1990s. Future research should explore, for example, how projects aimed at disengaging from terrorism in prisons in the 1980s in Italy or the deradicalization of far-right militants in Scandinavia from the 1990s onwards have served as models for current disengagement programs and prevention of violent radicalization. Secondly, but closely related to the above-mentioned, future research could investigate the perceptions of citizens or “at-risk groups” regarding these disengagement programs or counterterrorist discourses and practices. Thirdly, alternative perspectives and future investigations could focus on how and why counterterrorism in Western Europe during this lengthy period has particularly studied jihadist terrorism. Similarly, it is expected that future research will focus on the interrelation and spiral of terrorism and radicalization between jihadist extremist groups and their far-right counterparts.

The current scenario leaves other more general questions that it is still early to try to answer: What will be the new threats? Will a powerful violent ecologist movement emerge? How will the changes that have occurred in the counterterrorist field in Western Europe over the last few years evolve and solidify? What effects will the widespread resurgence of the Arab-Israeli conflict have? How will the threat of far-right extremism and conspiracy theories evolve? Could both of these become the new primary terrorist threats in Western Europe? It is still too early to respond to these questions, but in a climate of

increasing socio-political polarization, climate crisis, the rise of artificial intelligence, or concentration of wealth in the top 1%, new terrorist threats and responses to counterterrorism and counter-radicalization are conceivable.



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