Introduction

Rik Coolsaet

In early 2003 the Belgian Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations organised a major conference in Brussels on international terrorism, under the heading 'Root Causes of International Terrorism'. At that moment the very notion that there existed underlying forces that shaped the context and causes that led to 9/11 looked self-evident to academics, but was still very much a taboo concept in policy circles. One of the main conclusions of the conference was that these 'root causes' were numerous. No single root cause can explain all forms and modes of terrorism. Digging deeper, even today's 'jihadi' terrorism could not be reduced to one single factor. Depending upon the continent and the countries involved, jihadi terrorism is influenced and boosted by very different sources of discontent – but thriving on an enabling global environment.

Today's terrorism is still often labelled as a 'global threat'. By now most European observers, however, view the terrorist threat rather in terms of a 'patchwork of self-radicalising local groups with international contacts, but without any central engine and any central organisational design', as one of the contributors to this book, Glenn Audenaert, the leading Belgian police official in charge of counter-terrorism, once observed. Jihadi terrorism today is a 'glocal' phenomenon: a cloak patched from different sources of local discontent, stitched together by a puritanical and radical interpretation of Islam, and thriving on a global momentum.

The title of this book merits some clarification. Media and officials in the West still routinely declare that terrorists are primarily after 'us', and that Western civilisation is the main target of 'Islamic/Islamist/Muslim terrorism'. Framing today's main terrorist threat in these terms shows a lack of empathy with the many victims of terrorism in Muslim countries. For indeed, how do these words sound when heard in Algiers, Casablanca, Baghdad or Riyadh? Western rhetoric often fails to notice that neither Americans nor Europeans are the prime victims of these attacks. The Western public does not fully realize that the earliest victims of jihadi terror groups did not fall on September 11, 2001. Long before the first victims fell in New York and Washington tens of thousands of Muslims and Arab citizens had been murdered in a wave of terrorist attacks in Arab countries. A very rough estimate puts the number of victims in Muslim countries since the start of jihadi terrorism in the early 1990s as high as forty times the number of victims in Western countries. This pattern has not altered since. Muslims are the ones to suffer the most under these attacks: intellectuals, civil servants, ordinary citizens and security agents in Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Morocco and, now, Iraq.

In 2004 Peter Clarke of the anti-terrorism branch of the London Metropolitan Police was probably amongst the first officials to warn against labelling today's main terrorist threat as 'Islamic', since this is both offensive and misleading. *Al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya* being the closest denomination to describe the terrorists' discourse and ideology, it is appropriate to call them simply 'jihadis' and their brand of terrorism 'jihadi terrorism' – thus emphasising that we are not confronted with a clash between the West and Islam, but with a common threat and challenge for Western and Muslim countries alike. Calling it by this name, we avoid labelling as potential suspects those who already bear the largest share of the burden of terrorism.

Research within the Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations has largely revolved around two questions: first, how exactly the global environment boosts local and regional terrorism, and, second, how does this relate to the radicalisation process, which is occurring within Europe too. This book tries to give answers to both questions. It grew out of a series of public conferences, seminars and informal brainstormings with many stakeholders from diverse horizons involved.

This book is articulated around these two themes. First, it will attempt to establish the state of jihadi terrorism today, almost two decades after it started in the early 1990s. Second, zooming in on Europe, it asks, what do we know about radicalisation as the main root cause of potential jihadi terrorism in this part of the world?

The specificity of the jihadi threat to Europe has been made clear by the attacks in London and Madrid as well as by the murder of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh. These events drew attention to an ongoing process of self-recruitment and self-radicalisation. This is now viewed by many as being the main engine behind the threat within Europe. This home-grown, bottom-up dynamic of the radicalisation process has now become a more important source of potential jihadi recruitment than any top-down internationally organised network of recruiters. This, then, goes to the heart of the European strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment. European countries and the European Union (EU) are increasingly aware of this phenomenon. A number of governments and the EU itself have elaborated national strategies for countering radicalisation, considering that victory will not be achieved as long as the circumstances are not addressed by which specific individuals turn into terrorists, both in Europe and elsewhere. We therefore tend to believe that this collective work – providing both a precise assessment of the state of the threat as well as a thorough analysis of the radicalisation process – is timely. Aiming at an audience of policy-makers, academia and think-tanks, as well as, last but certainly not least, civil society at large, the chapters in this book combine theoretical approaches with novel thinking and practical steps at de-radicalisation.

This book comprises four parts. Part I will provide a worldwide assessment of the jihadi threat in the post al-Qaeda era, an analysis of the figures of jihadi terrorism's lethality and an historical perspective on jihadi terrorism. In Chapter 1 Paul Pillar describes the strength of radical Islamism today. He judges that radicals, in particular the 'descendants' of al-Qaeda, although completely decentralised are still at least as robust as before. For the author the strength of the jihadi movement probably has not yet peaked, but its course over the next several years will depend heavily on events extraneous to terrorism itself. The quantitative assessment in Chapter 2, by Teun Van de Voorde and myself, indicates that international terrorism is more of a challenge

than of an existential threat and that Muslims, and not the West, bear by far the heaviest burden of terrorist attacks in the name of Islam. In the third chapter, Martha Crenshaw assesses the widespread belief that terrorism is associated with religion and particularly with Islam. She questions the novelty of today's brand of terrorism, and compares it with other and older forms of terrorism. Although terrorism has changed over time, the differences represent an evolution of the phenomenon and not a radical break between the past and the future of terrorism.

Part II will compare jihadism in Europe and elsewhere, with specific focus on South East Asia, North Africa, Europe and Belgium. In Chapter 4 Hugh Roberts analyses the history of jihadi movements in North Africa. He argues that the local context – and not ideology – explains what people actually do. More particularly, he emphasises that jihadi terrorism in the Maghreb occurred only since the onset of the 'global war on terror' and has been primarily an emanation of the Muslim diaspora in Europe. Noor Huda Ismail, in Chapter 5, deals with Jamaah Islamiyah (JI). The author argues that JI has survived partly because it is held together by an intricate pattern of kinship – an observation that is worth keeping in mind when analysing the situation in Europe. Generally, people do not gravitate to JI due to some individual pathology. Most recruits look, dress and behave like normal individuals, at least until they are given a deadly mission or are deeply engaged with the JI ideology and group. Once inside the group, JI members tend to cement ideological and other bonds by marrying the sisters and daughters of their comrades-in-arms. This is a unique tool utilised for recruitment and for further engagement in the JI cause, thus limiting disengagement options for JI members and blocking effective counter-terrorism tactics. In Chapter 6 Edwin Bakker aims at contributing to a better understanding of jihadi terrorism in Europe by investigating the characteristics of the individuals that have been behind jihadi terrorist activities in Europe and by comparing them with the characteristics of jihadi terrorists elsewhere. For this comparison the chapter focuses on the research by the American psychiatrist Marc Sageman, who studied the profiles of global jihadis. In the concluding chapter of Part II, Alain Grignard sketches how police forces witnessed the evolution of this particular brand of terrorism from its original 'islamo-nationalist' nature in the 1980s to today's post-Iraq jihadi networks. He uses Belgium as a case-study for assessing a development that occurred elsewhere in Europe too.

Part III will then turn to the root causes of radicalisation in European Muslims and immigrant communities with a Muslim background by analysing the identity-building processes in these communities and the spread of jihadi ideology among the children and grandchildren of immigrants. In Chapter 8 Jocelyne Cesari assesses the reality of the jihadi threat and presents the main factors contributing to a potential radicalisation of Muslim communities, such as socio-economic and political status. She also gauges the influence of salafi and jihadi Islam and of transnational networks in the building of religious communities in Europe. Olivier Roy (Chapter 9) emphasises, for his part, the importance of converts in the jihadi movement. Through a series of examples he presents some characteristics of these 'born again' jihadis and the links or associations amongst them. Ruud Peters (Chapter 10) sketches the ideological development and the radicalisation process of Mohamed Bouyeri, the murderer of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Among the digital material found

on the computers of Mohamed Bouyeri and the so-called 'Hofstad Group', there were about sixty documents written or translated by Mohamed Bouyeri. On the basis of the documents' properties, these could be dated and thus the chronology of his radicalisation could be established.

Part IV will finally put forward policy proposals to de-escalate the radicalisation process, as seen from within immigrant communities, the police and the EU. Tarik Fraihi (Chapter 11) examines why it is so difficult to publicly discuss radicalisation tendencies within Muslim communities themselves. Glenn Audenaert (Chapter 12) addresses two apparent contradictions. The first is the ongoing evolution towards the community policing approach versus the hard-line multidisciplinary fight against extremism and terrorism. The second opposes the role of the police as the armed component of the government policy with regard to radicalisation of the Muslim community and eventual terrorist organisations and the possible task of the police in the process of de-radicalisation. These two contradictions are, for the author, merely apparent, since they form the two law enforcement elements of a multidisciplinary and customised approach to radicalisation. In the final chapter of Part IV Gilles de Kerchove and Ran van Reedt Dortland provide for an overview of European initiatives addressing the factors that contribute to radicalisation and recruitment and subsequently demonstrate the increasing role of the European Union in the implementation of a global strategy. The concluding epilogue, wrapping it all up, surveys some differences of analysis among the contributions and summarises the catalogue of initiatives and proposals aimed at stemming the radicalisation process.

No book can succeed without the help of many people. The Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations has had the pleasure to convene at numerous instances the contributors to this book. I also want to thank the Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders that supported terrorism research at Ghent University through a four year project. My sincere thanks also go to Tanguy Struye de Swielande for the editorial and research support in preparing the manuscript. A last expression of warm gratitude goes of course to the contributors to this volume: Glenn Audenaert, Edwin Bakker, Jocelyne Cesari, Martha Crenshaw, Tarik Fraihi, Alain Grignard, Noor Huda Ismail, Gilles de Kerchove d'Ousselghem, Ruud Peters, Paul R. Pillar, Hugh Roberts, Olivier Roy, Teun Van de Voorde and Ran van Reedt Dortland, and Gijs de Vries, who kindly agreed to contribute a foreword. They represent a fine group of distinguished officials, academics and astute observers that share a common concern of avoiding stereotypes when dealing with such complex issues as terrorism and radicalisation.

Rik Coolsaet
June 2007