

Warsaw 2007 - Background papers

EIN Summer University and European Ideas Fair

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EIN POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON

TERRORISM AND SECURITY

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Background

Coinciding with the sixth anniversary of the September 11th attacks, Osama bin Laden has returned to the public eye in his first video appearance since America's 2004 presidential election. Two large bombings in Algeria earlier this month, pre-dawn raids resulting in the arrests of terror suspects in Denmark, and the recent arrest of three suspects believed to be plotting attacks on American targets in Germany, are further reminders of violent jihadism inspired by Al-Qaeda. Since first meeting at the 2003 Summer University in El Escorial, the EIN working group on Terrorism and Security has studied how best to counter this terrorist threat facing Europe, and how to address underlying factors that may fuel Europe's home-grown terrorist threat.

America's latest National Intelligence Estimate states that al-Qaeda has "protected or regenerated" much of its ability to attack the United States, by recreating a safe haven in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt. British intelligence agencies have also revised their view after recent attacks in the UK appear to have direct links back to al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan. Other European governments are concerned by the Algerian-based GSPC group's self-portrayal as al-Qaeda's branch in the Maghreb. Al-Qaeda's ideology, if not the movement itself, has clearly become more globalised, with an increasing capacity to strike across national boundaries. The calculated exploitation of improved communications and globalisation in a 'borderless world', mean that terrorism has become a transnational activity ever alert to media opportunities.

The working group believes that the centre-right should be at leading the fight against terrorism and crime, alerting the public to the dangers and providing practical answers: delivering security through sensible and effective measures under the rule of law. Europe must not let a fear of Islamist fundamentalism corrode European values. For example, the right to express views freely in accordance with the law is a core democratic right. At the same time, the centre-right needs to promote dialogue and to work with the often silent majority of Muslims who want nothing to do with terror. Yet at the 2006 EIN summer university in Lyon, the policy roundtable considered Europe's cultural history and Christian heritage as 'non-negotiable'. Appeasement is not a cure for extremism, but an encouragement to it.

The current terror threat is different from previous ones. The aims of today's terrorists are global, not simply centred on issues of regional or national self-determination. The centre-right needs to diagnose and define the problem. Whilst the terrorists' tactics may be hard to predict, their goals are clear: the destruction of the west and of our democratic values. The plans of the 'radical Islamists' are totalitarian - they are certainly not true followers of Islam. To tackle properly this significant threat, participants urged the EU to develop swifter exchanges of information, invest in new technologies, back effective intelligence-led policing and support greater cooperation on EU borders.

In March 2007, the working group held a seminar with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Berlin. Participants highlighted the need to examine the economics and finances of terrorism, with ideas such as a public-private initiative to make insurance against terror a practical possibility. At a further meeting in June 2007, organised in association with FAES, the working group assessed the nature and strategies of modern terrorism. The global dimension to terrorism requires a global response. Before 2025, the EU should play a major role alongside the United States in fighting terror. By then, Europe may need to consider further measures such as the control of the internet, along with spending more on defence.

In preparing for the Warsaw summer university this year, five areas could benefit from further analysis:

- ? Would the defeat of al-Qaeada and the capturing of bin Laden end the 'war on terror'?
- ? Is it possible to sustain public support over a number of years for the fight against terrorism?
- ? Does the EU have an adequate 'homeland security' strategy?
- ? What can EU member states do to ensure that young Muslims are properly integrated?
- ? Should NATO be enlarged by 2025 to include countries such as Australia?