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Preface

Dear Readers,

Welcome to a very special edition of the FP6-project Transnational Terrorism Security and the Rule of Law (TTSRL) newsletter. As our project will shortly come to an end, we wanted to give an update on the results of the final conference which took place on February 5-6, 2009 in Brussels.

Held at the Berlaymont Building of the European Commission, the TTSRL conference assembled prominent researchers, academics and practitioners in the field of counter-terrorism and security. Opening the conference, Prof. Dr. Alex P. Schmid, director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, delivered the keynote address.



Hosted by the European Commission, the conference benefited significantly from the opening comments of Jean-Michel Baer, Director of Science and Society Directorate, and Angela Liberatore, Scientific and Programme Coordinator.

During the two day event, experts from around the world took part in seven plenary and discussion sessions, providing relevant insights on the current state of affairs. Topics covered included media and terrorism, radicalization and counter-radicalization, security and ethics of counter-terrorism measures, among others. Presentations based on TTSRL research and outside expert insights led to fruitful and thought-provoking discussions among participants and general guests.

In this newsletter, we present the general overviews of the (plenary sessions) workshops and will provide key conclusions of the discussions.

A comprehensive final publication of the research findings will officially mark the end of this project and is currently scheduled for release in March 2009.

We invite you to regularly check our [website](#) for updates and a complete collection of our research reports, contextual papers and policy briefs.

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions which can be emailed to transnationalterrorism@cot.nl.

On behalf of the entire TTSRL-consortium,

Polyna Berlin

Researcher / TTSRL Conference Coordinator





Summary of Workshop I: Discourse analysis and threat perception

5 February 2009

Members: Tomáš Weiss, *TTSRL researcher at IIR (Chair)*; Erik Frinking, *TTSRL researcher at TNO*; Rafael Benitez, *Head of Protocol with the Council of Europe*; Paulo Botta, *TTSRL researcher at FRIDE*

In this panel, questions of usability and practicability of discourse analysis in terrorism/counter-terrorism research were discussed. Particular attention focused on text mining as an approach to scan and analyze large amounts of text. As pointed out by one of the panellists, text mining differs from data mining in that it is able to analyze more abstract pieces of text. To do this, TTSRL developed an exclusive text mining tool tailored specifically to the research requirements of the project. The instrument was designed as a way to overcome the limitations of other programs with the objective of understanding how the media in eleven sample countries designated terrorism. For complete research results and conclusions, please see [The Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Policy and Media](#) (Workpackage 2, Deliverable 2).

Some of the research findings revealed that despite the transnational nature of contemporary terrorism in Europe, separatist terrorism continues to prevail as the dominant form. This leads many countries to maintain a national perception of terrorism and is particularly prevalent in those countries that have struggled against separatist movements for decades. Thus, EU member states regard terrorism as transnational in theory, but as a domestic problem in practice. It is perhaps not surprising then that discourse analysis reveals that the media retains a strong focus on the domestic aspects of terrorism.

With regard to threat perception, the discussion also focused on what has been done at the EU level. Since 2005, the EC has shifted away from repressive to more preventive measures in counterterrorism. This includes focusing on issues like radicalization and recruitment. Promoting and engaging in intercultural dialogue is also illustrative of this new direction.





Summary of Workshop II: Measuring the impact of terrorism & counterterrorism

5 February 2009

Members: Vidal Martin, *TTSRL researcher at FRIDE (Chair)*; Teun van Dongen, *TTSRL researcher at TNO*; Arjen Ronner, *executive director at Aon Risk Management*

Terrorism impacts society in many different ways. In addition to the direct consequences of terrorist activities, which include injuries and loss of human life, the impact of terrorism extends into the economic and political sphere. To bring light to the issue, this panel focused on two central themes: the economic costs of terrorism and counterterrorism, and the effects of counterterrorism policies.

As discussed during the plenary session, TTSRL developed a matrix to analyze and compare counterterrorism measures in 11 sample EU countries. Four different types of counterterrorism policy were identified and the implementation of such policies in the sample countries were mapped on a radar chart to further examine the results. See [The Negative Economic Impact of Terrorism](#) (Workpackage 5, Deliverable 9) and [Mapping Counterterrorism](#) (Workpackage 6, Deliverable 11) for additional insights.

Great variance is evident in the approaches used by the sample countries. Additionally, as highlighted during the workshop, the matrix is not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the policies. Rather, it is used to illustrate the ability to compare such seemingly different concepts. While best practices in terms of effectiveness could not be directly derived, the research helped put forth new questions and opportunities for further research.

The impact of terrorism concerns not just the public but also the private sector. As an external risk, terrorism can pose a significant danger to the everyday processes of business operations. From this perspective, measuring risk is important for business continuity and can be done, for example, by benchmarking reports to other organizations. In general, as argued by one of the panellists, it is extremely important for businesses to assess the risk and remain prepared.





Summary of Workshop III: Media & Terrorism

5 February 2009

Members: Uri Rosenthal, *founder and chairman of the COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management, an Aon company (Chair)*; Flemming Rose, *cultural editor at the Jyllands-Posten*; Rens Vliegthart, *assistant professor in Political Communication at the University of Amsterdam*; Ybo Buruma, *professor of criminal law at the Radboud University of Nijmegen*; Meryem Aksu, *professor at the Radboud University in Nijmegen*; Henri Beunders, *chair History of Society, Media and Culture at the Erasmus University Rotterdam*

The symbiotic relationship between media and terrorism was discussed at length during the conference. In addition to the change in terrorism policies, the evolution of new media was presented as a catalyst for the change in this relationship.

In 1900, there was an enormous amount of terrorist actions, however, during this time, there was no public panic, no international conventions and no mass media to cover it. Today, due to rapid acceleration of social networking sites and prominence of personal uploading capabilities, the extravagant and otherwise spectacular acts of terrorism lead the headlines of many magazines and newspapers. In order to find a solution to combat terrorism one has to stop terrorists from uploading, but it seems unrealistic. Therefore, as argued by one panellist, it is important to use the 'old media' in order to undermine development of the 'new media'.

In addition to media coverage, freedom of expression was discussed at length in this panel, particularly as it concerns the boundaries of journalistic work. Introducing the controversial issue of the Muhammad cartoons led to a discussion of whether or not limitations should be placed on freedom of expression. According to one panellist, a person has many rights in a democracy, including freedom of religion, speech and so forth. However, the only right one does not have in a democracy is the right to not feel offended. A multicultural society is characterized by the coexistence of many groups: to limit freedom of speech and expression in order to safeguard the interests of one such group, is to constrain the whole multicultural society.

Several discussion points were offered with regard to how coverage of terrorism has changed and how this may have affected politics. This becomes visible with regards to agenda setting. For example, after a terrorist attack issues related to immigration policies receive greater coverage from the media and thus also become part of the political agenda. The apparent link between threat perception and media coverage was presented as the research results of a study conducted after the murder to Theo van Gogh. The general conclusion of the discussion pointed to a need to assess what media coverage actually means in terms of shaping public opinion.

A detailed research report entitled [Terrorism and the Media](#) (Workpackage 4, Deliverable 6) offers additional information and analysis on media attention and threat perception in 11 sample countries.





Summary of Workshop IV: Radicalization and de-radicalization

6 February 2009

Members: Edwin Bakker, *head of Clingendael Security and Conflict Programme (Chair)*; Marco Zannoni, *senior researcher/advisor at COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management*; Tore Bjørgo, *senior research fellow at the Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute*; Jørgen Staun, *TTSRL researcher at DIIS*; Atef Hamdy, *research fellow Clingendael*

Various aspects of radicalization were the central theme of the discussion. In addition to the TTSRL research findings, processes of radicalization were discussed in terms of theory and practice. The participants in this panel approached the issue of radicalization and de-radicalization in different ways. Whereas the academics and researchers perceive radicalization in terms of determining phases and processes, individuals involved with actually bridging the gap between academic knowledge and social reality tend to focus more on how this knowledge can be translated to policy options.

The theoretical framework holds that there is no single explanation or determining factor for radicalization. For example, there are ideological activists primarily motivated by political issues, 'drifters and fellow travellers' that are seeking an identity and protection, and socially frustrated youth looking for greater answers. Moreover, the difference between violent and non-violent radicalization makes it difficult to devise an overarching counter strategy.

Presenting a different perspective, radicalization was discussed as inherently connected to migration. As such, the phenomenon was seen as the beginning of the integration process in societies. According to this view, a strong strategy is required to help radicals – particularly salafis as mentioned in this case – understand the basic values of the societies they live in.

Religion, and Islam in particular, was discussed as it relates to radicalization. Several questions were raised regarding this issue and the common consensus of the panel seemed to be that while religion is certainly not irrelevant, it is wrong to conceive of it as a determining factor.

Combating radicalization involves translating academic knowledge into practical policies. Because processes of radicalization are always embedded in the social context and social relations, communities can be of great help in combating the phenomenon. Using the Dutch experience as a practical example, the Amsterdam model was discussed in terms of intervention and repression. Increasing resilience, countering negative developments and looking at general problems in cities prior to determining whether they can be labelled processes of radicalization, are what comprise the Dutch approach.

Additional information on processes of radicalization and policy options is available in [Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy](#) (Workpackage 4, Deliverable 7).





Summary of Workshop V: Decline of Terrorism

6 February 2009

Members: Veronika Bílková, *TTSRL researcher at IIR (Chair)*; Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, *PhD candidate and researcher at DIIS*; Tore Bjørgo, *senior research fellow at the Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute*

Factors of terrorism's decline and the range of available options were analyzed in this panel. It was argued that different groups referring to the same ideology may not be as similar as one would think. And since the processes of radicalization vary per individual, possible disengagement programs should reflect this reality.

In terms of research, there is currently little interest in disengagement. The process is thought of mostly in terms of imprisonment or physical force. As such, de-radicalization is often understood in terms of preventing the phenomenon rather than providing exit options. This sometimes causes confusion when it comes to policy making. According to one panellist, de-radicalization focuses mostly on ideas whereas counter-radicalization centers on action.

Several insights were presented on how to facilitate disengagement. Where repressive actions are extremely costly and imprisonment tends to breed more radicalization, promoting collective disengagement may help to end terrorist campaigns. Encouraging exit strategies for individuals contemplating defection, for example, can reduce the impact of the group. Defectors from terrorist groups may further serve as credible opinion builders with their personal stories.

Finally, since acts of terrorism are only successful if they are perceived in a certain way, staying focused on the reaction of society and political leaders is of the essence. Reducing panic among the population and having a calm and clear political reaction to terrorism are practical ways that a government can stay prepared in the event of a terrorist attack.

For a comprehensive study on the concepts of terrorism, including factors of decline, see [Concepts of Terrorism: Analysis of the rise, decline, trends and risk](#) (Workpackage 3, Deliverable 5).





Summary of Workshop VI: Security and Ethics of Counterterrorism

6 February 2009

Members: Hans-Otto Sano, *TTSRL researcher at DIHR (Chair)*; Bibi van Ginkel, *TTSRL researcher at Clingendael*; Peter Burgess, *research professor at PRIO*; Iain Cameron, *professor in Public International Law at the University of Uppsala*

In this panel security and ethics were discussed in terms of legitimacy and values. While some focused on the results of TTSRL, others had a more philosophical approach to the issue of ethics and legitimacy.

Presenting the research findings of a TTSRL report on the issue of ethical justness, ethical bottlenecks were identified in a number of fields. As a trendwatching study, the report distinguishes different concepts that are hindering the development of clear counterterrorism policies. For complete findings, see [Ethical Justness of European Counterterrorism Measures](#), (Workpackage 6, Deliverable 12b).

The issue of legality and ethics was also considered from a more philosophical perspective. Legality, it was argued, has nothing to do with ethics, as lawyers can rely on a written documents that might not be of any ethical standards. As one panellist asserted: obeying the rules makes you the good guy; breaking the rules and still remaining a good person is impossible. In the end, however, three areas were mentioned in which ethical justness is essential for the proper functioning of law. They are: 1) recruitment of informers, 2) international contacts, and 3) coping with the diffuse nature of current threats.

The intersection between ethics and security remains a highly sensitive area of counterterrorism. As it was presented by one panellist, the notion of security is social under all circumstances and is about values and people, not technology. To this extent, in order to think about security, one needs to reflect upon the ethical connotations of this security.

Furthermore, effectiveness in security measures entails raising questions of what values are being assumed and projected by such measures. In organizing counterterrorism policies, a monopoly on ethics cannot be assumed. Terrorists use ethics too, argued one panellist. At their core, a jihadist is utterly convinced of the ethical rightness of his cause and its coherence. Thus, it was argued, TTSRL or any other terrorist research cannot take values for granted. It needs to address the question of where they come from and how they are configured in society.

In addition to the aforementioned report, detailed country studies are available as part of the "Contextual Papers" section on our [website](#).





Summary of Workshop VII: Counterterrorism in Practice

6 February 2009

Members: Bibi van Ginkel, *TTSRL researcher at Clingendael (Chair)*; Rob de Wijk, *director of the HCSS*; Gilles de Kerchove, *Counterterrorism Coordinator*; James Kirkhope, *vice president of research, development and planning of the Terrorism Research Center*

The last panel consisted of individuals from a variety of disciplines and organizations, and with a range of varying views regarding counterterrorism. Aiming to present how counterterrorism currently takes place from three different perspectives, EU level, national and international, the panellists drew upon their own experiences.

From an EU perspective, the current Counterterrorism Coordinator, Mr. Gilles de Kerchove, presented a number of points for consideration. Highlighting past achievements in legislation, he reiterated the adoption of a common definition of terrorist offence (2002) and the modification of a Framework Decision in 2008 that adds recruitment and training for terrorism as new offences. Data collection and data sharing were discussed in terms of difficulties in interlinking of systems. Of interest also was the concept of using development assistance to develop security, as is already being discussed in some Nordic countries.



Radicalization was considered with regard to home-grown terrorism. To this end, it was suggested that while the EU is able to explore best practices in countering radicalization, the policies need to come under the competence of Member States. Thus far a method was developed for identifying lead Member States with best practices in this area. However, additional work is required since a radicalization strategy is the most difficult aspect.

With regard to national and international perspectives, interesting insights were presented on the research of successful and failed terrorist plots. According to the panellist, a quarter of the studied plots in some way involved Al Qaeda. Furthermore it was revealed that while home-grown terrorism is indeed rising, the phenomenon is certainly complemented by 'fly-in' terrorists. Finally, the research confirmed that most terrorist attacks are inexpensive and can be executed with improvised weapons.

The recommendations for future action included focusing on intelligence and disruption, evaluation of policies, and creating bridges between intelligence agencies and relevant industries.

Additional recommendations and policy proposals are rendered in the TTSRL research report titled [*Towards a comprehensive, coherent, and ethically just European counterterrorism policy*](#) (Workpackage 6, Deliverable 13).





Closing Remarks

On behalf of the entire TTSRL consortium we would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to the individuals who helped shape the debate by contributing thought provoking insights and questions to the topics covered during the conference. We particularly appreciate the perspectives and contributions of our panellists. Finally, the project management team responsible for organizing the conference would like to thank TTSRL program officer, Angela Liberatore, for assisting us in making this event possible and the EC for providing the facilities.

While we work on the final publication of this research project, we encourage you to visit our [website](#) for the most comprehensive collection of TTSRL research reports, contextual papers and policy briefs. Additionally, a complete collection of the PowerPoint slides presented at the conference are now available on the conference page of our website. You can [click here](#) to go directly to the document.

As always we welcome your questions and suggestions which can be submitted to transnationalterrorism@cot.nl.

