



IMMIGRATION AND JIHADIST TERRORISM IN SPAIN. PROFILE OF CONVICTED PERSONS IN SPAIN 2015-2021.

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Abstract

Since the emergence of modern democracies, two elements, among others, have posed a risk and threat to their stability. These risks are migratory flows and terrorism.

After September 11, 2001, with the attacks against the economic and military symbols of the United States by Al Qaeda, the world became aware of the globalization of jihadist terrorism, which, as a good virus, knows how to use different fields to carry out its acts.

One of these fields is immigration, which, since the emergence of jihadism in Egypt in the 1970s, has been used by the two major “multinationals” of jihadist terror, such as Al Qaeda and Daesh, and their franchises.

At the same time, for some years now, a direct relationship between immigration and jihadist terrorism has been established, with the consequent message of hate.

In this paper, we intend to reflect, the data of those convicted of jihadist terrorism in Spain, in the period 2015-2021, to establish a profile of those convicted according to sex, nationality, and age, in order to establish whether there is such a relationship and especially the trends in subsequent years.

Keywords: Immigration, Jihadism. convicted, Spain, profile.

1. INTRODUCTION.

This past June, elections to the European Parliament were held, where two elements such as security and immigration, have played a fundamental role in a new migratory crisis that affects Spain in a special way. Similarly, in a simplistic manner, the migratory phenomenon is related to the real and certain risks posed by jihadist terrorism, both at external and internal borders.

The desire to establish this alleged direct relationship between the two phenomena, such as immigration and jihadist terrorism, is not new. Already in 2019, in the penultimate European elections, they were at the forefront of political discourse.

In 2015, in the midst of the migratory crisis, it is the UN itself who recognizes that the areas under jihadist domination, favors the migratory phenomenon.

As a result of wanting to know if this relationship is direct and true, was the origin of the realization of my doctoral thesis at the University of Almeria, entitled “Immigration and jihadist terrorism in Spain, 2015-2021” and that I was able to

successfully defend at the end of July this year. What data do we have?

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT.

In the face of certain hate speeches, pretending to relate in a direct and simplistic way between the migratory phenomenon and jihadist terrorism,

The present work, a reflection of my research for my doctoral thesis, has two objectives:

- General objective:

Has immigration been used by jihadist terrorism?

A.- YES B.- NO

And in the case of having an affirmative answer, how can this use be catalogued:

Qualitatively or quantitatively?

In view of the detainees arrested during this time, who used the migratory route to enter Spain, either as a final objective, as a transit to other European countries, or as a return route for foreign terrorist fighters (CTE), is immigration or migratory routes used to introduce elements of very high strategic value?



- Specific objective: Profile of those convicted of jihadist terrorism in Spain in the period 2015-2021.

3. USE OF IMMIGRATION BY JIHADIST GROUPS.

If there has been a phenomenon adaptable to the conditions of the place and the moment that has known how to take advantage of the variables of capacity, intention, and opportunity for more than forty years and that at some point has come to believe that it could bend the social, political and economic structures of the West, it has been terrorism of jihadist etiology.

The two major franchises of this type of terrorism, Al Qaeda and Daesh, have not hesitated to use migration as one of the other weapons to recruit followers to their cause on the Internet, social networks, prisons, or even the Covid-19 pandemic. Al Qaeda, since the beginning of the globalization of terror that involved the entry on the scene of these groups in the nineties of the last century, and Daesh from the declaration of the Caliphate in 2014.

The September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States marked a turning point in the vision of Western countries of the security and immigration binomial. As investigations into the attacks progressed and the individuals who made up the various commandos who took control of the planes were studied, it was observed that they had entered the United States using immigration (legal or illegal) to gain access to the country. Camarota examines how in the period 1993 to 2001, 48 foreign nationals belonging to various Al Qaeda commandos had entered and remained in the country. Of these, a quarter were illegal immigrants and a quarter had pending asylum applications (Camarota, 2002). Al Qaeda had discovered the vulnerabilities of the U.S. immigration system. This led to the creation within Homeland Security, in 2003, of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service or "ICE", with the mission of enforcing immigration legislation as well as detaining and expelling from the country any foreign person who represents a threat to the security of U.S. citizens.

Daesh, years later and after declaring the Caliphate in June 2014, by Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, recalled in his speech at the mosque of al Nuri in Mosul (Iraq) that the prophet Muhammad had migrated from Mecca to Medina for his faith. This fact is known as "Hjirab" or hegira. In the words of the new Caliph, every Muslim should "make a similar migration and help in the construction of the Islamic state". His message was received by thousands of men and women who had come to collaborate with the terrorist group. Despite the difficulty of counting them, there is talk of up to six thousand Europeans who have been able to move to conflict zones under the rule of Daesh.

The migration crisis of 2015, after the Arab Spring of 2011, was used by the jihadist terrorist group Daesh to threaten to "flood Europe with half a million refugees from Libya. It also indicated that it would send four thousand terrorists through Turkey". This strategy was corroborated in captured strategic documents of the group, which indicated that they would

infiltrate terrorists among refugees heading to Europe (Paños, 2022).

The Paris attacks in November 2015 showed that two of the nine terrorist attackers had posed as refugees. Other attacks, such as those in Berlin in 2016 or the Ansbach or Wurzburg train bombings, also in 2016, were carried out by refugees on the orders of Daesh (Caballero Díez, 2020).

The United States, through the US Homeland Security Committee, established in 2015, the real risk, although not the one mostly used by this group to introduce jihadists into Europe from Syria and Iraq via Libya through small boats.

Thus, attempting to analyze and quantify the potential direct link between terrorism and immigration in the West has been the subject of academic, political discourse, and terrorist organizations themselves. It seems that immigration is used more than other ways as a way for these groups to achieve their goals of terror and death. In any case, we can conclude that the effects of migration and terrorism on the economy are well established, but the direct links between immigration and terrorism are less so.

Some earlier research, such as that conducted by McAlexander, indicated mixed results regarding the direct relationship between terrorism and immigration. A positive relationship was established for Western European countries during the period 1980-2004, but only for extreme right-wing terrorism. It argues that migration flows increase the risk of right-wing terrorism. This analysis served "to qualify the study of terrorism as a strategic choice by showing that increased antipathy toward an outgroup, rather than a changing strategic environment, explains variation in terrorism levels, at least among liberal democracies" (McAlexander, 2020).

As for the Spanish literature, which does not find a direct relationship between immigration and terrorism, we find the work of Professor Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, in their working paper 11/2013, June 26, of the Real instituto El Cano " Los Jihadistas en España: perfil socio demográfico de condenados por terrorismo o muertos en actos de terrorismo suicida entre 1996-2012" where among other results it is established that between the years 1995 to 2003 jihadist acts were committed by 57.1% by regularized foreigners against 14.3% of foreigners in irregular situation. In the period 2004 to 2012, 66% were committed by regularized foreigners versus 24% committed by irregular foreigners (Reinares, 2013).

There is no direct relationship between terrorism and immigration. It is true that it is an element used by jihadist terrorist groups to introduce troops into the West, but it is no more used than other means to recruit members into their ranks, such as the use of second and third-generation nationals born in Western countries, prisons or the Internet.

Where there is a direct link is between terrorist incidents and the justification by politicians in government or in opposition to spread a message of more restrictive immigration policies, especially in relation to citizens of Muslim countries, as has

occurred in the United States and the European Union, based on the pillars of prevention (Brouwer, 2002) and panic. It can even be affirmed that it should not be cause to qualify as terrorist acts any criminal act committed by citizens of Muslim descent and apply to them the anti-terrorist legislation that emerged after those of September 11, 2001, as has happened on some occasion in the United States by categorizing as terrorist crimes some cases of habitual criminality (Nowrasteh A. , 2016).

Something similar happens with the xenophobic outbreaks, increased since 2018, and which are reflected in the credibility and stability in different member states of the European Union. Italy has refused on several occasions to pick up more migrants and to allow ships of non-governmental organizations that pick up migrants in the Mediterranean to land in its ports. For its part, Hungary penalizes anyone who favors the stay or entry of immigrants in its territory, despite violating fundamental rights established in the normative body of the Union (Seijas Costa, 2019).

Immigration and security policy makers, parliaments, and governments, should consider the cost-benefit of strict immigration policies, especially with regard to skilled migration, which can be an important lever in the scientific and technological development of the receiving country. In addition, it is very important to emphasize the value of scientific research and its use in media coverage (Sirak, 2016). An example of a positive assessment of immigration in the face of terrorism can be found in Nowrasteh, when he states that: “foreign-born terrorism, is a danger to American life, liberty, and privacy, but it is manageable, given the enormous economic benefits of immigration and the small costs of terrorism” (Nowrasteh A. , 2019).

4. RESEARCH DATA.

The data have been obtained through the Judicial Documentation Center or CENDOJ of the Ministry of Justice, which can be consulted at: <https://www.poderjudicial.es/cgpj/es/Temas/Centro-de-Documentacion-Judicial-CENDOJ/Jurisprudencia/Sentencias-de-actualidad/Audiencia-Nacional/>

The period of study has been 2015-2021. From this research, references of 114 sentences have been obtained. As a result of which, 173 people have been convicted for the different offenses reflected in articles 570 to 580 of the Penal Code and that, after the reform of 2015, introduced new figures until then, referring to jihadist terrorism.

The first striking feature of the data is the plurality of nationalities of those convicted. Seventeen nationalities include those convicted during the period under investigation, which demonstrates the globalization of jihadism, although the two most common nationalities are Moroccan and Spanish.

If we continue analysing the data on convicted persons, and in order to try to narrow down the profile, we observe that it is mainly a male phenomenon, although women, despite taking

on an active role later on, are becoming more and more prominent.

TABLE 1.
SEX OF THE CONVICTED PERSONS

PERIOD	SEX PERSON CONVICTED		
2015-2021			
	MAN	151	87,28%
	WOMAN	22	12,72%
TOTAL		173	100%

Source: own production

Regarding the age of the convicted persons, regardless of gender, we note the increasing youthfulness of the convicted persons.

TABLE 2.
AGE CONVICTED PERSONS

AGE	CONVICTED	PERCENTAGE
18-25	42	24%
26-40	109	59%
41-+	22	17%

Source: Own production

If we divide by sex, regardless of nationality, in the case of men, due to the fact that the majority of those convicted are men, the majority age range is between 26-40. In the case of women, on the other hand, the incorporation of women into the jihadist network has been younger and the majority range is 18-25 years old.

TABLE 3
PROFILE OF CONVICTED MEN

2015-2021	
AGE	
18-25	32
26-40	94
41-+	25
TOTAL	151

Source: Own production

TABLE 4
PROFILE OF CONVICTED WOMEN

2015-2021	
AGE	
18-25	10
26-40	9

41--	3
TOTAL	22

Source: Own production

To further shorten the profiles of the convicted persons, with respect to nationality and sex, it is observed that the two majority are the Moroccan and the Spanish male. On the other hand, the majority of those convicted are Spanish, followed by Moroccan.

TABLE 5
NATIONALITY CONVICTED

2015-2021	CONVICTED
MOROCCO-MEN	77
SPAIN-MEN	54
SPAIN-WOMEN	12
MOROCCO-WOMEN	8
OTHERS	22

Source: own production.

5. PROFILE OF THOSE CONVICTED IN SPAIN OF JIHADIST TERRORISM.

In order to delimit the data obtained in this research, to specify the profile of the person convicted in Spain for jihadist terrorism in the period 2015-2021, we can indicate:

- Male, of Moroccan (44.51%) or Spanish (31.21%) nationality, aged 26 to 40.
- Despite being an eminently male phenomenon, in the case of women, the profile of those convicted is Spanish (54.54%) or Moroccan (36.36%), aged between 18-25 years.

6. CONCLUSIONS.

To answer the questions we asked ourselves at the beginning of this work, based on the data obtained in the 2015-2021 research period, which is a snapshot of the profile of those convicted in Spain for jihadist terrorism and with future trends with data on those arrested in the years 2022 and 2023, we indicate:

- Has immigration been used by jihadist terrorism?

The answer must be yes. During all this time, since 2001, there have been frequent cases of its use.

- Has this use been qualitative or quantitative?

Based on the data, and looking at future trends, it has been used quantitatively, to introduce assets of very high strategic value for the two large jihadist multinationals.

One example is the arrest of one of the most wanted foreign terrorist fighters, who was arrested in Almeria in April 2020, in the midst of confinement, and who used migration routes

and routes from Algeria to reach our country¹. Despite the fact that immigration is a key element in the fight against jihadist terrorism, it has been used by the jihadists in the past few years.

Despite immigration being an element used by jihadist groups, along with others such as the internet, to recruit their members, the strategy of increasing the efforts of the recruiting apparatus to work with women and minors has currently become particularly important. This is corroborated by data on police operations and arrests in 2022 and 2023, with a considerable increase in the number of arrests of minors and women. Moreover, in 2023, the first nationality of those arrested is Spanish.

2022

1. 27 police operations
2. 46 detained
3. 18 moroccan nationality, 15 spanish nacionality
4. 15-72 years old
5. 4 women detained
6. 1 underage detainee

2023

- 36 police operations
- 78 detained
- 29 spanish detained. 22 moroccan
- 15-75 years old
- 8 women detained
- 6 underage detainee.

Source: Jihadist Terrorism Yearbooks 2022/2023
International Observatory for the Study of Terrorism

And 2024 has started no better, with the arrest of a minor in Seville with the clear intention of carrying out an attack in his secondary school.

If anything has been learned since 2001 and the beginning of the global fight against jihadist terrorism, it is that it is a real and global risk and that it aims to destabilise those areas in which it has set its sights. It is not only Africa and the East that suffer from its attacks. Spain, the rest of Europe, and the West are also its targets. There are more and more messages in Spanish for a Spanish and Latin American audience.

And therefore nationals (with one or both parents, non-nationals) are already being arrested, which means that special emphasis must be placed on working with the youngest members of the population. Secondary schools, neighbourhood associations, cultural associations, social workers, and family members are the first to be able to detect the first signs of radicalisation.

An example of this is the research project of the University of Almeria on Hate Speech (DIS-ODIO/// PID-2021-1271130B-100). In this working group, 12 researchers, we aim to study how hate speech and violent radicalisation relate to other

¹] Gálvez, J.J. <https://elpais.com/espana/2020-04-21/la-policia-nacional-detiene-en-almeria-a-uno-de-los-yihadistas-del-estado-islamico-mas-buscados-en-europa.html>

areas (family, education, gender, security...) and to analyse how adolescents in Almeria relate to hate speech.

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