



NATO Foundation  
Defense College

## Emerging Challenges November 2017

### **The challenge of radicalisation and the 10/31 attack in USA confirmed this issue**

Terror returns in New York close to where the World Trade Center used to stand. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 31st of October, a pick-up crashed on a crowded bicycle lane in Manhattan, killing at random: the result shows at least 8 dead and 15 wounded. Since the time of the twin towers, the attack perpetrated on 31/10 is the first prominent attack in New York with several victims. The attacker's name is Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov, a 29 years old male from Uzbekistan. According to CBS, he lived in Tampa in Florida and he entered the USA in 2010. The police neutralized the attacker while he cried "Allah Akhbar". He was ostensibly a lone wolf.

Attackers from Uzbekistan have perpetrated other terrorist attacks:

January 1, 2016, a terrorist named Abdulkadir Masharipov shoots in a nightclub in Istanbul causing 39 deaths. April 3, 2017, a bomb explodes in the metro station of St. Petersburg: 14 wounded. April 7, 2017: an attack on a street in Stockholm's causes 4 deaths. In all three episodes of jihadist terror, the people responsible are all from Uzbekistan, whilst in the St. Petersburg case, the bomber was a Russian citizen born in Kirghizstan in 1995, who transitioned to Uzbekistan. In addition: in June 2016, an ISIS command armed with automatic weapons and explosives attacked the Ataturk airport in Istanbul causing 45 deaths. The command was composed by a Chechen, a Kyrgyz and an Uzbek. Furthermore, according to a recent report by Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, at least 500 citizens from Uzbekistan have joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq from 2015. One thing is certain: Central Asia has become a world cell of the global jihadism. This region includes the ex-soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (in this context we could add the Xinjiang, or also named "Oriental Turkestan").

The Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov's episode is very alarming for the U.S. as its demonstrating how radicalisation is becoming a global threat without boundaries or borders. Saipov was a frustrated man that wasn't meeting his expectations in life, and this factor pushed him to embrace a violent interpretation of Islam. In order to begin his process of radicalization, Saipov didn't need to go back to his country or to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The indoctrination happened online, through social media, showing the transnational and cyber dimension of this threat, and the attack technique was very simple: the "car jihad". The hate he felt towards the U.S.A. shows a level of nihilism in which instrument and purpose are identified: inflict death whilst giving up his life in the act. All of this has been dignified by the black flag of the "caliphate".

The cyber aspect of radicalization is a truly important phenomenon worldwide as it leads to the transformation of some Muslims in terrorists ready to kill. Websites that incite jihad, propaganda magazines, criptated chats and social media are all ways that have significantly facilitated the

radicalisation process. A typical propaganda message is that Islam is under siege and that Muslims have a personal duty to commit violence in defense of Islam. For example, the Spanish indictment of the Madrid train bombers identified more than 50 electronic books that had been downloaded from the Internet and were found on the hard drives of the bombers' computers. Data seized from the Hofstad group contained military manuals downloaded from the Internet and information on how to deal with arrests and interrogation.

The two people who planned to blow up two German trains in July 2006 became radicalised after their arrival in Germany, as a result of propaganda on the Internet. The bombs were primarily made from instructions found online. The Internet is anonymous and serves as a platform for contacts, communication and information sharing for both males and females and propaganda can be circulated widely without any significant contradiction or a third party filter. Furthermore, it is cheap, it's hard to identify and define responsibility, it has a global reach, it allows a rapid dissemination of images and video, direct threats (such as the latest ones on the football World Cup of Russia 2018), and claim responsibilities for attacks.

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