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## Moroccans and the second generation among Jihadists in Spain

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### Theme

A large majority of Jihadists in Spain are either Moroccans or descendants of Moroccans. But it is more likely for someone of Moroccan origin to become involved in terrorist activities if living in Spain than if living in Morocco.

### Summary

Global Jihadism in Spain is no longer a threat that comes fundamentally from abroad and is mainly related to foreigners. The nationality and country of birth of the Jihadists who were arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 reveal that the phenomenon's autochthonous component is of similar importance to the foreign one. The latter is essentially made up of individuals born in Morocco and particularly in the geographical and historical region of the Rif. The autochthonous component primarily comprises individuals born in the Spanish North-African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, as well as in Catalonia. But six of every 10 individuals studied belong to the second-generation cohort. To speak today of Jihadists in Spain is primarily to refer to individuals with Moroccan nationality or descent, implying that there is a problem in Morocco that is projected into Spain and therefore requires adequate and appropriate bilateral cooperation. But it is more likely for someone with Moroccan origin to become involved in terrorist activities if residing in Spain than if living in Morocco. And this suggests that there is a problem inside Spain with respect to the accommodation of these second generations and therefore effective radicalisation prevention is of the essence.

### Analysis

Some 233 Jihadists were arrested in Spain over the period 2013-2017, while another eight –from the cell that carried out the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils on August of 2017– died in the country during the period. A large majority (89.6%) of these 241 Jihadists were male and two-thirds (68.1%) were aged between 18 and 38 at the time of their arrest. But the other most common socio-demographic characteristics are national origin and immigrant ancestry. To shed more light on these latter two variables –what are their nationalities, countries of birth and the specific areas of origin of their immigrant ancestors? To what degree are they first- or second-generation immigrants, or individuals with no immigrant ancestry? And what does the evidence reveal about global Jihadism in Spain?– we have analysed data previously gathered in the Elcano Database

on Jihadists in Spain (EDBJS).<sup>1</sup> Our primary sources have included court proceedings and other legally available judicial documents, as well as hearings of the *Audiencia Nacional* (National Court), along with police reports and communiqués from the Ministry of the Interior. On occasion we make use of interviews with police experts and, less frequently, on media sources.

### Nationality and country of birth

Nearly half of the Jihadists who were arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 were of Moroccan nationality, precisely 46% (Figure 1). By contrast, 37.9% of the total had Spanish citizenship. The remaining 16.1% included individuals from 19 different nationalities (other than Moroccan or Spanish), eight of which were other European nationalities, while two were from other Maghreb countries; but five others were Latin American, two others from the Middle East and two from Asia.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, 53% of the Jihadists who are the subject of our study were born in Morocco and 29.5% in Spain. The remaining 17.5% were individuals born in 20 other countries, along with another two from other Middle-Eastern countries (in addition to those already mentioned).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1. Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017, by country of nationality and country of birth (%)**

Country	Country of nationality	Country of birth
Morocco	46.0	53.0
<b>Spain</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>29.5</b>
Tunisia	2.5	2.6
Pakistan	2.1	2.1
Algeria	2.1	2.6
France	1.2	1.7
Syria	0.4	1.3
Others	7.8	7.2
Total	(235)	(234)
<i>Missing data:</i>	6	7

Source: EDBJS.

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to express their gratitude to Álvaro Vicente, Research Assistant at the Elcano Royal Institute's Global Terrorism Programme, for his outstanding work maintaining the EDBJS and for his help with the statistical treatment of the data upon which this analysis is based.

<sup>2</sup> These other nationalities, distinct from Moroccan and Spanish, include French, Danish, Dutch, Belgian, Bulgarian, Italian, Portuguese, Algerian, Tunisian, Egyptian, Syrian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Mexican, Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean and Paraguayan. One of the individuals had two nationalities –Irish and Algerian– and another had both Algerian and French.

<sup>3</sup> To the countries mentioned in the previous footnote must be added Jordan and Palestine.

The percentage of Jihadists in Spain with nationalities other than Moroccan or Spanish comes close to that of those born outside Morocco or Spain: 16.1% and 17.5%, respectively. But that of those with Moroccan nationality remains less than seven percentage points below the 53% corresponding to individuals born in Morocco. In the same way, those with Spanish nationality are some eight percentage points above the 29.5% born in Spain. These small but significant disparities stem from the fact that 12 of the Jihadists who were born in Morocco acquired Spanish nationality over the course of their lives (another acquired Danish nationality and an additional one Dutch nationality).

Nearly all the Jihadists with Moroccan nationality were born in Morocco, as is the case for some of those with Spanish nationality (Figure 2). To adequately understand why such a large majority of those born in Morocco did not have Spanish nationality, it should be considered, as done below, whether they are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Furthermore, it must also be borne in mind that Moroccan nationality is formally un-renounceable, and that there is no dual nationality treaty between Morocco and Spain.<sup>4</sup> There are also other potentially relevant circumstances (such as the expectation of returning home that many of those arriving from Morocco as economic migrants might still harbour) that affect the eventual naturalisation of those who were born in Moroccan but reside in Spain for at least the 10 years required by law to obtain Spanish citizenship.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2. Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017, by country of birth, for different nationalities (%)**

Country of Birth	Nationalities			Total
	Moroccan	Spanish	Other	
Morocco	99.1	15.0	4.7	52.4
<b>Spain</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>29.9</b>
Others	–	–	95.3	17.7
Total	(108)	(80)	(43)	(231)

Note: two individuals born in Morocco did not have Moroccan or Spanish nationality, but rather Danish and Dutch.

Source: EDBJS.

Among the Jihadists in this study who were born in Morocco, some expressly renounced the possibility of acquiring Spanish nationality, even when they legally met the necessary requirements. This was the case with Ayoub Motchou, a Moroccan born in 1994 in

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, to avoid confusion, those individuals who have acquired Spanish nationality are accounted for as only Spanish unless they have a second nationality which is mutually recognised by both of the countries concerned.

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, according to official figures from the *Estadística del Padrón Continuo a 1 de enero de 2015*, prepared by Spain's Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 22% of the residents in Spain who were born in Morocco held Spanish nationality.

(cont.)

Kenitra, arrested at the age of 21 after a rapid process of online radicalisation and convicted in 2017 for terrorist indoctrination<sup>6</sup> Motchou lived in Figueras and Llança, both localities in the Catalan province of Gerona, with his parents and siblings ever since he was a child. But he declined to petition for Spanish nationality (in contrast to what the rest of his family did). Everything suggests that the personal option of this individual – who had a criminal record for violent robbery and illegal drug trafficking– was shaped by the animosity he held towards his host society.<sup>7</sup>

Both Moroccan and Spanish nationals have significantly increased their presence among the Jihadists operating in Spain since the middle of the last decade –just as those born in either Morocco or Spain have also increased–.<sup>8</sup> The decisive irruption of Jihadists either born in Morocco or holding Moroccan nationality became clear from the identified members of the 2004 Madrid bombing network. Although the number of Jihadists related in one way or another to this network could be higher, we can speak with sufficient certainty about 25 of its members, all of whom were foreigners, of which 21 had Moroccan nationality and were born in Morocco, similarly to the individual who was then deputy to al-Qaeda’s external operations commander, who was in contact with the key members of the network from al-Qaeda’s base in Pakistan.<sup>9</sup>

The recent increase among Jihadists in Spain of Moroccan nationals or Moroccan-born individuals has been somewhat less pronounced than that of those with Spanish nationality or born in Spain. According to the figures of Jihadists now convicted or died in Spain during the five-year period from 2013 to 2017, the Moroccan percentages were 10 points higher than in the preceding period of 2004 to 2012, both in terms of country of nationality and country of birth (Figure 3). The figures for Spain as a country of nationality or birth increased four-fold and six-fold, respectively, during 2013-2017, compared with the preceding 2004-2012 period. Differences in the distribution of Jihadists in Spain by country of nationality and birth are remarkable when comparing the two periods with the earlier one from 1996 to 2003.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, *Sentencia 3/2017*.

<sup>7</sup> This hostility stemmed at least in part from the police actions taken against him for his activities as a common delinquent, according to the information obtained during the hearings of *Sumario 5/2016*, held in the ‘Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Cuarta, Sala de Vistas 4, calle Génova, Madrid, 7/III/2017’.

<sup>8</sup> To the detriment of the percentage share of Jihadists convicted or died in Spain from 1996 to 2003 who were either nationals of, or born in, Algeria, Syria and Pakistan. It should also be noted that the considerable percentage of individuals with Spanish nationality during this same period correspond to naturalised Spanish citizens of Syrian and, to a lesser degree, Moroccan origin. See Fernando Reinares & Carola García-Calvo (2013), ‘Los yihadistas en España: perfil sociodemográfico de condenados por actividades terroristas o muertos en acto de terrorismo suicida entre 1996 y 2012’, DT, nr 11/2013, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid, p. 8-10,

[http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_es/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/dt11-2013-reinares-garciacalvo-yihadistas-espana-perfil-sociodemografico-1996-2012](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/dt11-2013-reinares-garciacalvo-yihadistas-espana-perfil-sociodemografico-1996-2012).

<sup>9</sup> Fernando Reinares (2014), *¡Matadlos! Quién estuvo detrás del 11-M y por qué se atentó en España*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Barcelona, p. 119-123 and 129-138.

<sup>10</sup> Reinares & García-Calvo (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 8-10.

**Figure 3. Jihadists convicted or died in Spain, by country of nationality and country of birth, for different periods (%)**

Country	1996-2003		2004-2012		2013-2017	
	Nationality	Birth	Nationality	Birth	Nationality	Birth
Morocco	3.3	6.7	40.7	42.6	50.0	52.4
<b>Spain</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>35.4</b>
Algeria	46.7	46.7	18.5	18.6	1.2	1.2
Tunisia	–	–	–	–	1.2	1.2
Pakistan	3.3	3.3	25.9	27.8	–	–
France	–	–	–	–	3.7	3.7
Syria	16.7	40.0	–	–	–	–
Others	–	–	5.6	5.4	4.9	6.1
Total	(28)	(30)	(50)	(54)	(82)	(82)
<i>Missing data</i>	0	2	0	4	1	1

Source: EDBJS.

Altogether, the data on nationality and country of birth clarify what the two primary components of global Jihadism in Spain are today. On the one hand, there is the foreign component, which is basically Moroccan. On the other hand, there is the autochthonous, Spanish component. The latter shows, first, that we are not witnessing a phenomenon emanating almost exclusively from abroad, as was the case from the initial penetration of global Jihadism in Spain during the first half of the 1990s and up until the Muslim communities in Spain began to feel themselves affected (as did other Muslim communities in Western Europe) by the Jihadist mobilisation that began in 2012 with the unleashing of the civil war in Syria.

On the other hand, it is not surprising that the foreign component (which still constitutes the majority) is essentially Moroccan. This is largely explained by demographic factors, stemming primarily from the migratory flows to Spain from its closest neighbour to the south that is also an Islamic country, namely Morocco. In 2015 67.9% of the foreigners residing in Spain who came from majority Muslim countries were of Moroccan nationality and 67.7% had been born in Morocco.<sup>11</sup> But along with this demographic factor, Morocco is also a country where there is a popular culture with particular, concrete religious beliefs concerning marabout Islam and its legendary warrior-saints who sacrificed themselves and are now venerated in mausoleums. Arguably, the marabout Islam embedded in

<sup>11</sup> The calculations are based on the population that has as its country of either birth or nationality one of the 51 countries in which, according to the *The World Factbook*, Islam is the majority religion. According to the *Estadística del Padrón Continuo a 1 de enero de 2015* of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), 1,106,348 individuals reside in Spain who were either born in, or are nationals of, 28 of these 51 countries. (cont.)

popular culture made it possible for some sectors of the population, particularly among the young, to become especially receptive to Islamist and bellicose interpretations of both jihad and the practice of martyrdom.<sup>12</sup>

At least after the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, global Jihadism came to enjoy substantial social acceptance in Morocco, measured in terms of both popular support for acts of suicide terrorism even inside Morocco and of confidence in Osama bin Laden, the founder and head of al-Qaeda until 2011, when he was still the leader of that terrorist organisation.<sup>13</sup> At that time, approximately a decade before the beginning of the current wave of Jihadist mobilisation, six of every 10 individuals included in this study who had been born in Morocco were between 15 and 40 years old, half of them between 15 and 30, and a third between 15 and 25 years of age.<sup>14</sup> In other words, they were at very important, even decisive stages in their respective life cycles or individual trajectories of political socialisation.

Given the considerable level of social acceptance enjoyed by global Jihadism in Morocco, it is not surprising that the country has been the scene of some lethal Jihadist attacks (such as those in Casablanca in May 2003 and those perpetrated there again in March and April 2007, and in Marrakesh in April 2011).<sup>15</sup> According to data provided by the Moroccan authorities, from 2002 to 2017, 174 terrorist cells were disbanded, 60 of which were linked to Jihadist organisations in Syria and Iraq.<sup>16</sup> By October 2017 more than 1,660 foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) –nearly 50 per million inhabitants– had left Morocco to travel to these conflict zones to join Jihadist organisations such as Sham al-Andalus (of particular interest from a Spanish perspective, because of its name), but principally the so-called Islamic State (IS).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Mohammed Maarouf (2013), 'Suicide bombing: the cultural foundations of Morocco's new version of martyrdom', *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, vol. 25, n° 1, p. 1-33.

<sup>13</sup> In March 2004 a Pew Global Attitudes Survey revealed that 40% of adult Moroccans (making up a representative sample of the Moroccan population, if still disproportionately urban) expressed their support for suicide attacks in defence of Islam, even if perpetrated in their own country. The figure fell to 13% in a further survey conducted in June 2005, although with the Iraq war underway, 56% still saw such terrorist actions against Westerners in Iraq as justified (while the previous years it had been 66%). In May 2003 49% of Moroccans aged 18 or older expressed either very much or at least a fair amount of confidence in Osama bin Laden, although the level of positive attitudes towards al-Qaeda's leader fell to 26% in 2005. Pew Research Center (2005), *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics*, Pew Research Center, Washington, p. 2, 6, 27, 28, 29, 37 and 38.

<sup>14</sup> EDBJS.

<sup>15</sup> Jack Kalpakian (2014), 'Comparing the 2003 and 2007 incidents in Casablanca', p. 498-518 in Bruce Hoffman & Fernando Reinares (Eds.), *The Evolution of the Global Terrorism Threat. From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death*, Columbia University Press, New York; and Scott Stewart (2011), 'Dispatch: terrorist attack in Morocco', *Stratfor Worldview*, 28/IV/2011.

<sup>16</sup> Information provided by the Bureau central d'investigation judiciaire (BCIJ), the Moroccan counter-terrorism agency, and gathered by *Moroccan World News* on 21/X/2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/10/231744/despite-moroccos-success-fighting-terrorism-tindouf-camps-remain-al-qaida-breeding-ground-el-khiam>.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Richard Barret (2017), *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*, Soufan Group, New York, p. 13 y 25; and also the data provided by the *Jihadist Foreign Fighters Monitor* of The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, [https://dwh.hcss.nl/apps/ftf\\_monitor/#section-fff-total](https://dwh.hcss.nl/apps/ftf_monitor/#section-fff-total). According to a public opinion poll undertaken in 2015 in Morocco, only 8% of those surveyed (Moroccan adults) had a positive opinion about the Islamic State. See The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2015), *Arab Opinion Index 2015*, The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, p. 36.

(cont.)

### Foreign and autochthonous components

In addition to determining (as in the previous section) the current foreign and autochthonous components of global Jihadism in Spain, according to the nationality and country of birth of the Jihadists arrested or died in the country between 2013 and 2017, there are further questions that arise: from exactly where in Morocco and Spain do the individuals making up these two components of the phenomenon come from? What is the specific origin of the basically Moroccan component, in terms of birthplace location among those born in Morocco? What is it that can be deduced in this regard from the existing data? What is the specific origin of the Spanish component, according to the geography of birthplace among those born in Spain? How should the available evidence in this regard be interpreted?

Starting with the Jihadists arrested (or died) in Spain who were born in Morocco, that is to say, the essentially foreign component of global Jihadist terrorism in Spain, no less than half come from the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region (Figure 4). In smaller proportions (always according to the total number of cases that it has so far been possible to tabulate), they were also born in the Eastern region and in the Rabat-Sale-Kenitra area. The remainder (up to one fifth of the sub-group) were born in seven other Moroccan regions (but with only very minor percentages in all these cases). In general, those born in Morocco come from the regions from which the largest part of the Moroccan migration to Spain has occurred over the last decades.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 4. Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 who were born in Morocco, by region of birth (%)**

Moroccan region of birth	Moroccan-born Jihadists
Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima	53.1
Rabat-Sale-Kenitra	15.6
Oriental	10.9
Casablanca-Settat	4.7
Fez-Meknes	4.7
Marrakesh-Safi	4.7
Others	6.3
Total	(64)
<i>Missing data: 60</i>	–

Source: EDBJS.

<sup>18</sup> Bernabé López García & Mohamed Berriane (Dirs.) (2004), *Atlas de la inmigración marroquí en España 2004*, Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, p. 128-130, 143-146, 154-158 and 174-176.

The areas from which majority of the Moroccan-born Jihadists included in our study come from are provinces and prefectures located, for the most part, along the Rif, a vast mountainous range in northern Morocco adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea and extending from the cities of Tangier and Tetouan to the Moulouya river valley near the border with Algeria. Although a distinctive geographical and historical region, the area does not correspond to any single administrative entity within Morocco. However, the Rif overlaps broad portions of the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, Fez-Meknes and Oriental regions. This allows us to estimate that at least six of every 10 Moroccan-born Jihadists in Spain come from places located in the Rif, mainly, although not exclusively, from areas within the province of Tetouan, the prefecture of Tangier-Assilah and the province of Nador.

Among the peoples of the Rif –mainly Arab and Berber populations who use vernacular languages to different degrees, depending on the area– there is a widespread contemporary tradition of rebellion. First, against the Spanish colonial presence and, later, even against the Alaouite monarchy.<sup>19</sup> Peoples of the Rif also have in common that they inhabit rugged spaces which are among the most underprivileged in Morocco. Generalised poverty and a lack of state-provided public goods have stimulated illicit trafficking networks and allowed Islamist (and in particular Salafist) movements to take root.<sup>20</sup> This cultural and political background, associated with a tradition of violent insurgency and its particular socioeconomic circumstances, has meant that among the immigrants in Western Europe from the Rif region –and even more so among their descendants, or second generations– a higher incidence of violent radicalisation and terrorist involvement has been seen since the birth of global Jihadism, than among those from other regions of Morocco.<sup>21</sup>

With respect to the individuals making up the autochthonous component of global Jihadism in Spain, i.e., Jihadists born in the country, nearly three-quarters come from the Spanish enclaves (or Autonomous Cities) of Ceuta and Melilla, both located precisely in the same Rif environment in relation to the foreign, essentially Moroccan component (Figure 5). A considerably higher percentage of the Spain-born Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 came from Ceuta (44.4%) rather than from Melilla (28.6%).<sup>22</sup> Catalonia is the birthplace of 14.3% of this same component of Jihadists born on Spanish territory. None of the other seven Spanish Autonomous Communities (regions) where some of the Jihadists were born show significant percentages. Aside from Ceuta and Melilla, only the provinces of Barcelona and Gerona register statistically significant figures.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> David S. Wooldman (1968), *Rebels in the Rif: Abd El Krim and the Rif Rebellion*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, California; María Rosa de Madariaga (2005), *El barranco del lobo. Las guerras de Marruecos*, Alianza, Madrid; also by the same autor (2009), *Abd-el-Krim El Jatabi: la lucha por la independencia*, Alianza, Madrid; and David Alvarado (2007), *Rif: de Abdelkrim a los indignados de Alhucemas*, Catarata, Madrid.

<sup>20</sup> Leela Jacinto (2016), 'Morocco's outlaw country is the heartland of global terrorism', *Foreign Policy*, 7/IV/2016.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> EDBJS.

<sup>23</sup> In the case of the province of Barcelona, these individuals were born in the city of Barcelona, in (cont.)



**Figure 5. Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 who were born in Spain, by Autonomous Community, Autonomous City or province of birth (%)**

Autonomous Community, Autonomous City or Province of birth	Spanish-born Jihadists in Spain	
	Total by Autonomous Communities or Cities	Total by Provinces or Autonomous Cities
Ceuta	44.4	44.4
Melilla	28.6	28.6
Catalonia	14.3	
Barcelona		7.9
Gerona		4.8
Tarragona		1.6
Andalusia	3.2	
Cadiz		1.6
Huelva		1.6
Madrid	3.2	3.2
Castilla La Mancha	1.6	
Ciudad Real		1.6
Galicia	1.6	
La Coruña		1.6
Murcia	1.6	1.6
Basque Country	1.6	
Guipúzcoa		1.6
Total	(63)	(63)

*Missing data: 6*

Source: EDBJS.

In both Ceuta and Melilla there are neighbourhoods –especially *Príncipe Alfonso* in the former and *Cañada de Hidum* in the latter– where particular conditions of spatial segregation and social marginalisation have fostered the penetration over the last two or three decades of Islamic fundamentalist currents (including Salafism in general and

Granollers and in Sant Boi de Llobregat. In the case of the province of Gerona, they were born in the municipality of Ripoll.

(cont.)

Salafist Jihadism in particular) among the population of nearly exclusively Moroccan origin living there.<sup>24</sup> The lack of urban infrastructures, the sub-standard housing (*chabolismo*), unemployment, illiteracy and delinquency are all symptoms of the effective absence of state authority. This is further made evident by the incapacity of Spain's security forces to fulfil their duties due to the hostility and even aggressiveness with which they are received by the inhabitants who tend to perceive the situation in which they live as discriminatory.

On the other hand, it is known that, at the end of 2013, nearly 40% of the (then) more than 800 Moroccan Jihadists who had travelled to Syria as foreign terrorist fighters came from places located in the Moroccan regions surrounding Ceuta and Melilla.<sup>25</sup> Four of the six trans-border Jihadist networks that were the targets of eight of the 11 anti-terrorist operations jointly undertaken by the Spanish police agencies and their Moroccan counterparts, operated in these cities. Three of the networks operated from Melilla and two from Ceuta, but another of the networks was present in both Autonomous Cities simultaneously.<sup>26</sup>

Catalonia has been an area of developing Jihadist activity. There has been Jihadist activity there since the mid-1990s with an active presence in the region –well before the beginning of the current wave of global Jihadism– of individuals and cells linked to organisations like al-Qaeda, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) from Algeria, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) and even Therik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP).<sup>27</sup> Following

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<sup>24</sup> Javier Jordán & Humberto Trujillo (2016), 'Entornos favorables al reclutamiento yihadista. El barrio Príncipe Alfonso (Ceuta)', *Athena Intelligence Journal*, vol. 1, nr 1, p. 22-24; Luis de la Corte (2015), '¿Enclaves yihadistas? Un estudio sobre la presencia y el riesgo extremistas en Ceuta y Melilla', *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, vol. 1, nr 2, p. 1-34.

<sup>25</sup> That is, Tangier-Tetouan–Al Hoceima, and the Eastern region. Based on information provided to one of the authors by senior officials from Morocco's *Direction générale de la sûreté nationale* (DGSN) during a Spain-Morocco police seminar on the common challenge of terrorism, held in Cordoba on 27/XI/2013.

<sup>26</sup> In June 2013, during one of the joint counter-terrorism operations, namely Operation *Cesto*, eight Spaniards were arrested in Ceuta for belonging to a Jihadist network whose Moroccan members were located in nearby Fnideq (also known in Spanish as Castillejos). They were radicalising and recruiting young people to fight in Syria as foreign terrorist fighters; see 'Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción N.º 2, Sumario 1/2014'; 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, Sentencia 23/2015'; and 'Tribunal Supremo, Sala de lo Penal, Sentencia 693/2016 de 27/VII/2016'. Another network, also devoted to the radicalisation and recruitment of Jihadists of Maghrebi origin (resident mainly in Morocco but also in other European countries) as foreign terrorist fighters (first to fight in Mali and then in Syria), was also the target of a joint counter-terrorism operation, codenamed Operation *Azteca*, in March 2014. The members of the network operated from Melilla and the locality of Al-Arouit, near Nador; see 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Juzgado Central de Instrucción núm. 3, Sumario 7/2014'; 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, Sentencia 3/2018'. During Operation *Jáver* in May 2014, six members of a network mainly devoted to the recruitment and sending of foreign terrorist fighters to the north of Mali were arrested in Melilla. Members of the cell also organised indoctrination and training seminars in the nearby Moroccan localities of Farhana and Nador. See 'Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción núm. 4, Sumario 4/2015'; and 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, Sentencia 17/2017'. Finally, as a result of Operation *Kibera* in the summer of 2015, two young Spanish women were arrested in Melilla when, in route to Syria and Iraq, they tried to cross the border into Morocco. The leaders of the Jihadist network that had recruited them were located in Morocco, from where they engaged in recruiting adolescents and women like them in the cities of Melilla and Ceuta; see 'Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Menores, Sentencia 1/2015'; 'Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Menores, Sentencia 12/2015'; and 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, Sentencia 3/2015'.

<sup>27</sup> Fernando Reinares & Carola García-Calvo (2015), 'Cataluña y la evolución del terrorismo yihadista en (cont.)

the 11-M and 3/11 attacks in Madrid, the centre-stage of global Jihadism in Spain shifted from Madrid and its metropolitan area to Catalonia, especially to the province of Barcelona. Between 2004 and 2012, 40% of the Jihadists who were arrested or died in Spain resided in Catalonia, as did 36.4% of those who were detained or died in Spain between 2013 and 15 April 2018.<sup>28</sup>

Four of every 10 Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 to 2017 lived in Catalonia. This is an overrepresentation compared with the no more than 27% of Muslims (or individuals originally from majority-Muslim countries) in Spain who live in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.<sup>29</sup> Such an overrepresentation of individuals residing in Catalonia among Jihadists in Spain correlates with the much higher Salafist presence in Catalonia compared with the rest of Spain. In 2016 one third of the 256 Islamic centres and places of worship in Catalonia were controlled by Salafists, more than twice as many as in 2006.<sup>30</sup> A corollary of all this are the several attacks intended for the city of Barcelona which were foiled by the National Police, the Civil Guard or the regional police (*Mossos*) in their preparatory or planning stages, along with those successfully perpetrated in that city and in Cambrils, in the province of Tarragona, in August 2017, by members of a Jihadist cell formed in the locality of Ripoll in the province of Gerona, and aligned with IS.<sup>31</sup>

### Immigrants and the second generation

There is no linear correspondence between the nationality or country of birth of the individuals considered in our study and their migration background or lack thereof. Limiting data treatment of Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 to those who were resident in the country (all but 17),<sup>32</sup> 37.3% were first-generation immigrants while 56.8% belong to the so-called second generation (Figure 6).<sup>33</sup> With

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España', Comentario Elcano, nr 28/2015, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_es/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/comentario-reinares-garciacalvo-catalunya-y-la-evolucion-del-terrorismo-yihadista-en-espana](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/comentario-reinares-garciacalvo-catalunya-y-la-evolucion-del-terrorismo-yihadista-en-espana). Among the other documents and publications on this issue, see also 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, Sentencia 7/1996'; 'Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección primera, Sentencia 6/2007'; and Reinares (2014), *op. cit.*, p. 30-32 y 215-225.

<sup>28</sup> Reinares & García-Calvo (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 16; and EDBJS, from a total of 99 Jihadists convicted or died in Spain between 1/I/2013 and 15/IV/2017.

<sup>29</sup> EDBJS; and Observatorio Andalusí (2016), *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015*, Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, Madrid.

<sup>30</sup> Rebeca Carranco (2016), 'Los salafistas controlan una de cada tres mezquitas en Cataluña', *El País*, 18/VI/2016, [https://elpais.com/ccaa/2016/06/18/catalunya/1466267306\\_699909.html](https://elpais.com/ccaa/2016/06/18/catalunya/1466267306_699909.html).

<sup>31</sup> Fernando Reinares & Carola García-Calvo (2018), 'Un análisis de los atentados terroristas en Barcelona y Cambrils', ARI, nº 12/2018, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_es/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/ari12-2018-reinares-garciacalvo-analisis-atentados-terroristas-barcelona-cambrils](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/ari12-2018-reinares-garciacalvo-analisis-atentados-terroristas-barcelona-cambrils).

<sup>32</sup> Precisely, as many as a 92.9%. The rest were residents of Belgium, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg.

<sup>33</sup> Two individuals belong to the third generation. They are both minors, one from Ceuta and the other from Melilla, who were arrested in August and December 2014, respectively, during the first two phases of Operation *Kibera*.

(cont.)

very few exceptions,<sup>34</sup> these second-generation individuals are descendants of immigrants who arrived from majority Muslim countries, mainly though not exclusively Morocco. It should be clarified that this second generation is made up of individuals born and raised –meaning the latter also include those educated up to the legally obligatory age– in the host country (in this case, Spain) to which their parents migrated.

**Figure 6. Jihadists arrested or dead in Spain between 2013 and 2017, who were residents in Spain, by migration background (%)**

Migration background	Resident in Spain
Second generation	56.8
First-generation immigrants	37.3
No immigrant ancestors	5.9
Total	(185)

*Missing data: 39*

*Not residents in Spain: 17*

Source: EDBJS.

Second-generation Jihadists are significantly overrepresented among the total number of individuals considered in our study, particularly if comparing their percentage share with the approximately 25.5% corresponding to the descendants of Muslim immigrants among the total population with Muslim cultural or family origins coming from majority Muslim countries and resident in Spanish territory.<sup>35</sup> In Spain, the Muslim population still predominantly comprises first-generation immigrants.<sup>36</sup> The weight of the second-generation cohort among the total Jihadists in Spain (detained or died between 2013 and 2017) not only reveals that individuals belonging to this cohort are the majority but also that it is now well over more than twice as large as the weight that the social segment has within Spain's Muslim population or population from majority Muslim countries established in Spain.

<sup>34</sup> There are only four exceptions, corresponding to individuals whose parents came to Spain from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay.

<sup>35</sup> To estimate the weight of this percentage of descendants we have used data from the Observatorio Andalusi, *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015*, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Observatorio Andalusi, *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015*, op. cit.; and Jordi Moreras (2018), 'Spain', p. 628-644 in Oliver Scharbroot (Ed.), *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, Brill, Boston. Moroccan immigration in Spain is one of the oldest and largest; however, the most significant flows of Moroccan emigrants to Spain took place beginning in 2000. The number of Moroccans registered as residents grew from 173,000 in January 2000 to 746,000 in January 2010. From 2009, due to the economic crisis, another change has been observed in the migration cycle between Morocco and Spain: the decline in immigration from Morocco eventually made the net flow negative in 2011. See Colectivo IOÉ (2012), 'Crisis e inmigración marroquí en España, 2007-2011', Madrid.

(cont.)

In Spain (as in other Western countries in general, and other Western European countries in particular) these second generation individuals belong to cohorts of the population which, with very diverse levels of education and occupational status, have been especially vulnerable to violent radicalisation and terrorist recruitment since the middle of the last decade and particularly in the context of the current global wave of Jihadist mobilisation.<sup>37</sup> As such, the countries most affected by this current Jihadist mobilisation are those whose Muslim populations are comprised predominantly of second-generation immigrants, as shown by the number of foreign terrorist fighters who have deployed from Western Europe to the conflict zones of Syria and Iraq since 2012.<sup>38</sup>

Like so many other teenagers and young people of the second generation with Muslim backgrounds in Western European societies, those who live in Spain are often poised on a complicated and delicate balance between cultures that makes them vulnerable to identity tensions.<sup>39</sup> Their affinities to the country where they were born or grew up are limited, but nor do they identify with the country of their parents. These adolescents and youths in a situation of diaspora –presented with a model of socialisation based on family and place of worship as the institutions of reference for Muslim communities in a Western Europe in crisis– are easily and frequently exposed to Jihadist propaganda on the Internet and social media, often through radicalisation and recruitment agents, who offer them a single solution to their identity conflicts –a solution which is not the only one available but rather the most extreme: to violently affirm their Muslim identity–.<sup>40</sup>

One case that illustrates this phenomenon well is that of a 24-year-old woman born in the city of Granollers, in the province of Barcelona. Her mother and father, both naturalised Spaniards, emigrated from Morocco and settled in Catalonia. The young woman was apprehended in November 2015 along with two Moroccan young men involved in the same Jihadist recruiting network, just as she was about to leave Spain to join the self-styled Islamic State (IS). A cousin of the arrested woman, also a second-generation Spaniard of Moroccan descent, later provided interesting information shedding light on what had occurred when she made the following reflection: 'I consider my cousin to be a victim, perhaps because she did not yet have her own personality or perhaps because she suffered from a lack of identity that all of us have experienced and overcome'.<sup>41</sup>

Granollers is precisely one of the Catalan localities that –together with the city of Barcelona, and Ripoll, in the province of Gerona– must be considered (if to a lesser degree) along with Ceuta and Melilla as the cradle of at least half of the Jihadists included in our study who were residents in Spain and belong to the second generation born in

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<sup>37</sup> Angel Rabasa & Cheryl Benard (2015), *Eurojihad. Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, New York, ch. 5; and Peter R. Neumann (2016), *Radicalized. New Jihadists and the Threat to the West*, I.B. Tauris, London, ch. 4 and 5.

<sup>38</sup> Fernando Reinares (2017), 'Jihadist mobilization, undemocratic Salafism, and terrorist threat in the European Union', *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, Special Issue, p. 70-76.

<sup>39</sup> Illustrations of this can be found in Chapter III of the study by Mónica Díaz López and Elisa Lillo on one Madrid neighbourhood, titled *Los hijos de la inmigración magrebí en San Cristóbal de los Ángeles* (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Madrid, 2014). See also Jordi Moreras (2015), '¿Por qué unos jóvenes se radicalizan y otros no?', *Notes Internacionals*, nr 123, CIDOB, Barcelona.

<sup>40</sup> Peter K. Waldmann (2010), 'Radicalisation in the diaspora: why Muslims in the West attack their host countries', WP, nº 9/2010, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid; and Jordi Moreras (2015), *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> 'Detenen tres presumptes jihadistes a Barcelona i Granollers', *TV3*, 28/XI/2015.

Spanish territory (Figure 7). But four of every 10 of these individuals were born in Morocco. In contrast, a large majority of the Jihadists who are first-generation immigrants were born in Morocco, along with a small but significant number born in Tunisia. As might be expected, all the individuals without any immigration background were born inside Spain.

**Figure 7. Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 who were residents in Spain, by county of birth and country of nationality, for migration background (%)**

Country	First generation immigrants		Second generation		Non-immigrant background		Total	
	Birth	Nationality	Birth	Nationality	Birth	Nationality	Birth	Nationality
Morocco	72.6	65.2	39.6	33.3	–	–	49.5	43.2
<b>Spain</b>	–	<b>11.6</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>55.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>41.6</b>
Tunisia	8.7	8.7	–	–	–	–	3.2	3.2
Pakistan	2.9	2.9	1.9	1.9	–	–	2.2	2.2
Algeria	1.4	1.4	1.9	1.9	–	–	1.6	1.6
France	1.4	–	–	–	–	–	0.5	–
Syria	2.9	1.4	0.9	–	–	–	1.6	0.5
Other	10.1	8.8	5.7	7.7	–	–	7.0	7.7
Total	(69)	(69)	(106)	(105)	(11)	(11)	(186)	(185)

Source: EDBJS.

Five of every 10 of the individuals included in our study and who belonged to the second generation were Spanish nationals, while three of 10 were Moroccan citizens. Moroccan nationals also constitute the large majority of first-generation immigrants among Jihadists in Spain, although one in 10 of them acquired Spanish nationality (and a similar proportion are Tunisian nationals). Among individuals arrested (or who died) in Spain as a result of their participation in Jihadist terrorist activities during the five years from 2013 to 2017, all of those without immigrant ancestors had Spanish citizenship.

Interestingly, adding the percentage of Jihadists belonging to the social segment of the second generation (the above-mentioned 56.8%) to that of the individuals with no immigration background (5.9%), it can be estimated that 62.7% of the Jihadists arrested or died in Spain from 2013 to 2017 were part of what is strictly speaking homegrown Jihadism. This clearly reveals the blooming of a homegrown Jihadism in Spain, which has occurred at the same time as the current global wave of Jihadist mobilisation has unfolded since the beginning of the civil war in Syria and that has echoed with particular intensity across the Muslim communities in Western European countries.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Petter Nesser (2015), *Islamist Terrorism in Europe*, Hurst and Company, London, ch. 9; and Reinares (2017), *op. cit.*

Nevertheless, of the total Jihadists arrested (or died) in Spain between 2013 and 2017, 73.4% are of Moroccan origin. This figure includes the 46% of all Jihadists in the study that have Moroccan nationality, the 2.9% with Spanish nationality but who were born in Morocco (and then emigrated to Spain before becoming naturalised), as well as the 24.5% with Spanish nationality who are descendants of Moroccans.<sup>43</sup> That percentage of jihadists having a Moroccan origin is consistent with the fact previously alluded to that nearly seven out of every 10 residents in Spain who are from countries with predominantly Muslim societies either have Moroccan nationality or were born in Morocco.

The frequent participation of individuals of Moroccan nationality or origin in terrorist acts perpetrated in different countries of Western Europe since 2014 –the year that IS proclaimed a caliphate (which three years later already lacked a significant territorial base)– has generated interpretations (in part already outlined in the first section of this analysis) that transcend mere demographics.<sup>44</sup> But according to the data we have been able to gather, the likelihood for someone of Moroccan origin (either an immigrant or the descendant of one) to have been involved in jihadist terrorist activities appears to be considerably higher if residing in Spain than if living in Morocco (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Individuals arrested for Jihadist activities or for being foreign terrorist fighters, per 100,000 inhabitants in Morocco versus per 100,000 residents of Moroccan origin in Spain**

	Per 100,000 inhabitants in Morocco	Per 100,000 residents of Moroccan origin in Spain
Arrested for jihadist terrorist activities (2015-2017)	2.1	15.6
Jihadist foreign terrorist fighters (to October 2017)	4.8	17.7

Source: the authors based on data retrieved for both rates from the EDBJS; World Bank, *World Bank Open Data. Morocco*, last accessed 28/II/2018; Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). *Estadística del Padrón Continuo a 1 de enero de 2015*; and Observatorio Andalusi (2016), *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015*, Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, Madrid. For the rate of those arrested for Jihadist terrorism: EDBJS and the Central Bureau of Moroccan Judicial Investigations (BCIJ), via the Agence de Presse Africaine, 11/XII/2017. For the rate of foreign terrorist fighters: EDBJS and Richard Barrett (2017), *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*, The Soufan Group, New York.

From our calculations, based on data corresponding to the 2015-2017, it has been seven times more likely for an individual born in Morocco or of Moroccan descent to be arrested

<sup>43</sup> Nine out of every 10 of the Jihadists born in Spain came from Ceuta and Melilla, which because of their geographic proximity to Morocco have Spanish-Muslim populations with originating in Morocco. One of every 10 was born in Barcelona, Gerona and Ciudad Real to Moroccan parents.

<sup>44</sup> Leela Jacinto (2016), *op. cit.*; Ellen Chapin (2017), *Beyond the Caliphate. Islamic State Activity Outside the Group's Defined Wilayat. Morocco*, Combating Terrorism Center, West Point; and Sarah Feuer & David Pollock (2018), 'Terrorism in Europe: the Moroccan connection', *Policy Watch*, nr 2852, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

for activities related to Jihadist terrorism if living in Spain than if residing in Morocco. We can also estimate, now based on data from 2012-2017, that it has been four times more likely that an individual born in Morocco or of Moroccan descent to become a foreign terrorist fighter if residing in Spain than if living in Morocco. This indicator makes it clear that the Jihadist mobilisation of individuals of Moroccan origin but resident in Spain is fed not only by the influences favouring violent radicalisation and terrorist recruitment from Morocco, but also by, to an even larger extent, dynamics unfolding within Spain and, specifically, affecting the accommodation of second-generation individuals.

## Conclusions

Global Jihadism in Spain is no longer a phenomenon essentially related with foreigners. The autochthonous component has become, since the unprecedented globalist Jihadist mobilisation that began in 2012, close in magnitude to the foreign one. The latter is essentially made up of individuals born in Morocco and particularly from the Rif region. For its part, the autochthonous component largely comprises individuals born in Spain's North-African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, as well as, though to a lesser extent, in Catalonia. Nevertheless, to speak of Jihadists in Spain today is to speak of Moroccans and second-generation individuals, a third of which are Moroccan nationals. Seven of every 10 Jihadists arrested or died in Spain between 2013 and 2017 are, in short, of Moroccan origin.

This predominance of Moroccans (or their descendants) among Jihadists in Spain shows that, despite a blooming homegrown dimension of global Jihadism in the Spanish case, this phenomenon –inherent to which is a terrorist threat– to a good extent still projects itself onto Spain from its neighbouring Morocco. The Alaouite Kingdom is not the only focus of the Jihadist phenomenon that projects itself over Spain from Islamic countries, but it is the one from which derive a large majority of the Muslim population resident in Spanish territory, a population within which violent radicalisation and terrorist recruitment processes take place. These are radicalisation and recruitment processes such as those that led to the creation of the cell whose members carried out the August 2017 attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils and to the establishment of the network whose members perpetrated the Madrid train bombings more than a decade earlier in March 2004.

But comparing Spain with Morocco, it turns out that it is easier for someone with Moroccan origin to become involved in Jihadist terrorist activities if residing in Spain than if living in Morocco, suggesting that the common problem between the two countries has an endogenous character for the latter. The fact that, among the Jihadists in our study, the majority are individuals who, irrespective of their Spanish or Moroccan nationality, were born or raised in Spain, suggests that there are problems with the accommodation of these second-generation individuals in Spain's society –difficulties that are frequently associated to identity conflicts that create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by Jihadist organisations–. Both the extraordinary overrepresentation of individuals belonging to the second generation and the recent blooming of homegrown Jihadism in Spain point to a growing trend.

Morocco and Spain share a problem that requires the maintenance of close antiterrorist cooperation in intelligence, police and judicial terms. But this should also complement



the effective implementation in Spain by the relevant authorities, but in cooperation with civil society entities (such as Muslim communities of Moroccan origin settled in Spain), of measures to prevent violent radicalisation. Measures should be adopted in areas ranging from social assistance to education and labour insertion, especially through local action that takes into account the specificities of different contexts. And, seeking the public interest, they must be coordinated at different levels of government in a highly decentralised state such as Spain within the framework of the existing National Strategic Plan for the Fight against Violent Radicalisation (PEN-LCRV), established in 2015.