

The best defence

The changing face of terrorism and battling corruption should be high on the EU's internal security agenda, argues **Ágnes Hankiss**

Counter terrorism efforts are some of the most important goals in the EU's internal security strategy. Here I would like to highlight some crucial points that will be the focus of our discussions next year.

We should welcome the cross-party motion for a resolution on the creation of an external strategy on passenger name records data. I expressed this in my

written statement delivered at a previous plenary session in November, as it called for an agreement promoting a balance of security and data protection between the US and the European Union. Agreeing with justice commissioner Viviane Reding on the basic principles of reciprocity, I underlined that this is precisely the weakness of the motion for a resolution, which I consider to be incomplete. It is important to point out that if we agree on the importance of not only transferring, but also receiving counter-terrorism and law enforcement related information from the US, submitting a wish list to the US is simply not enough. Thus there is a practical need for creating or naming of an EU body capable of receiving and processing US-originated intelligence data, and that can secure unified access to information from the member states. This problem has drawn a lot of attention since the Swift agreement regulating the transfer of data on financial transactions, which is yet to be resolved. There are stakeholders that prefer to make Europol and Eurojust responsible for this task, meanwhile others have proposed the merger of SitCen, CrisisRoom, and Watchkeeping Capability. The optimal solution is yet to be found.

The face of terrorism has changed in the past few years. Currently we cannot think of terrorism as a unified movement directed from one or two centres or by one or two



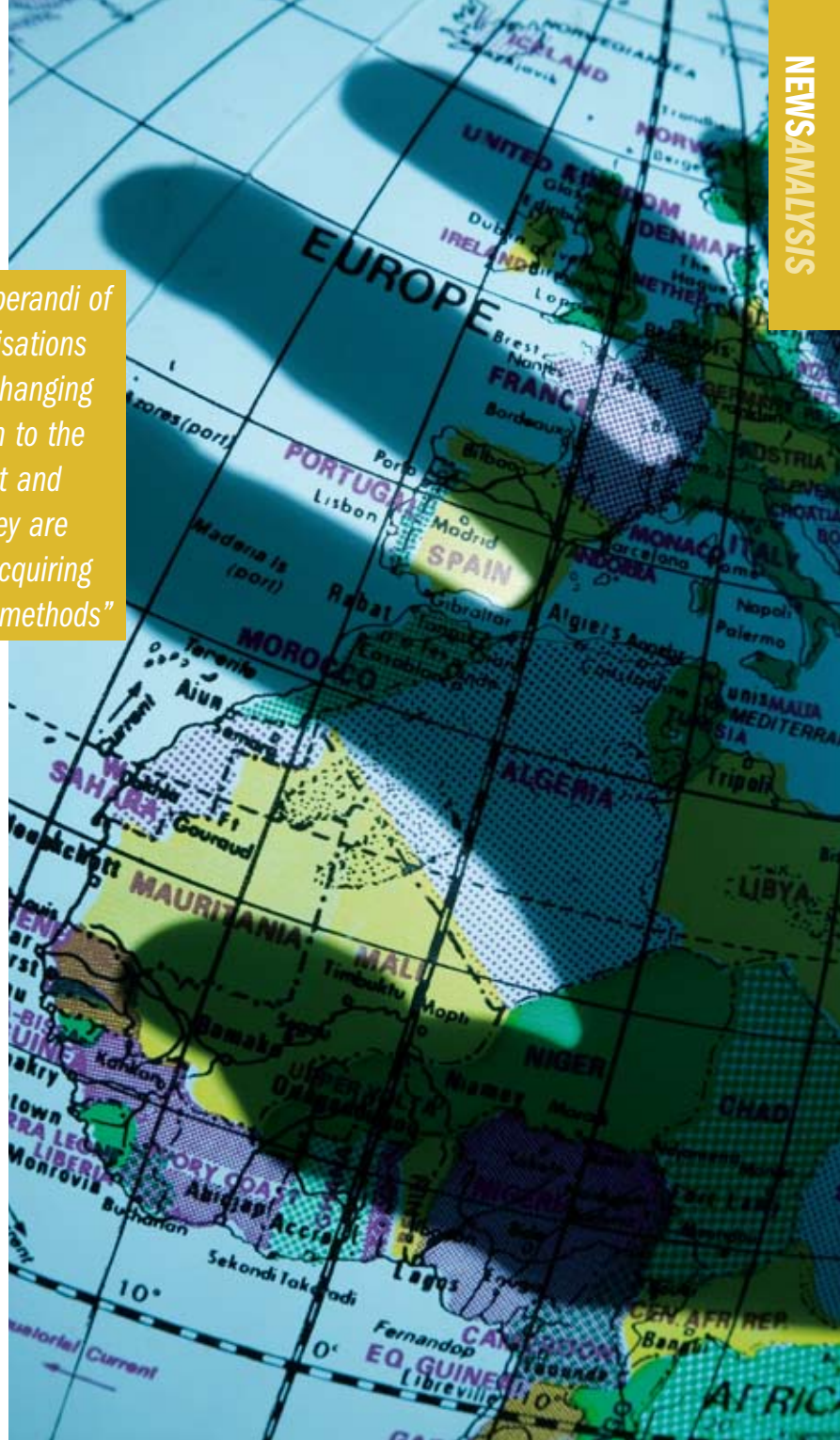
main leaders. What we generally call al-Qaeda, in reality is a hardly traceable network of organised, ad-hoc groups and cells with different geographical traits, ethnicities and nationalities. The perpetrators are not only coming from slums, ghettos or refugee camps, but from well-known, respected European schools or universities, as well as from upper-class families. For instance the “mole” David Headley, who played a key role in the Mumbai attacks, is an American citizen and informant of the drug enforcement administration.

The recruitment of “new skins” by internet is one of the main characteristics of the phenomenon of terrorist activity. I am citing here a very typical case from the study of Peter Berger. “Mom, I’m in Somalia. Don’t worry about me, I’m okay,” was how 17-year-old Burhan Hassan’s worried mother discovered where her son had gone weeks after he and six other Somali-American youths disappeared from their homes. Almost without exception, the youths who slipped away were described as good boys. But what especially troubled their relatives and others in the tight-knit émigré community, was that no one could explain how the impoverished young men were able to pay for the €1500 airline tickets they used to travel to Somalia. Abdisalem Adam, a teacher and head of the local Dar al-Hijrah Islamic centre said, “Up to now, no one knows who recruited them. But they obviously did not wake up one morning and decide to go to Somalia.” Do we consider this new face of terrorism from the right perspective when we want to differentiate so rigidly, strictly and academically between simple data collection and profile-making?

Corruption is a cardinal element of organised crime. The so called “bridgemen” play a key role in crime organisations, and they are mostly public actors like state officials, decision-makers, and journalists. Although deepening interconnections and the passage of time improve detectability, blackmail victims will be easily accessible from multiple directions, and this form of terrorism is no exception; for instance, the hijacking of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear capacities for terrorist purposes.

The modus operandi of terrorist organisations is constantly changing and in addition to the new equipment and capabilities they are continuously acquiring new financing methods. Uncovering these is of supreme importance in the fight against terrorism. One of the characteristic financing methods is to reach planners and perpetrators of attacks by channelling money via non-governmental organisations. It is not rare that these non-profit organisations are

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connected tightly to international organised crime as money-laundering entities. We were glad to receive an answer from commissioner Cecilia Malmström confirming the importance of this question, as the commission ordered two studies on this phenomenon in order to look at possibilities for countering it. All in all, proper harmonisation of the external dimension of the EU’s internal security strategy and the internal dimension of the common foreign and security policy cannot be delayed much longer and the distribution of work between the two fields should mirror the real changes of current world trends. ★

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