

## INTRODUCTION

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**“**O beloved al Andalus. O stolen al Andalus. Do you think we have forgotten you? No, by Allah. What Muslim could erase from his memory Córdoba, Toledo and Shatiba [Xàtiva]? What sincere Muslim has not made the oath to regain you? Be patient, for you are not Spanish, you are not Portuguese. You are al Andalus of the Muslims.” So ended the statement published on January 30th 2016 by the Islamic State organisation (IS) warning of imminent attacks in European countries. A year and a half later, IS claimed the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils on August 17th and 18th 2017 (17A). 17A surprised various analysts and observers, not because Spain was not likely to be attacked, but because 17A in some ways was different from other recent attacks on European territory.

Both the profile of the perpetrators and the reactions it produced invite us to reflect on three questions: Why did 17A happen? Who is directly and indirectly responsible for this tragedy? And, how can another one be prevented? These are questions that typically arise after a terrorist attack, but the case of 17A is different for one main reason: the fleeting nature of the debates that followed. The main aim of this report Revisiting the Barcelona attacks: reactions, explanations and pending discussions is to examine the terms of these debates along with the answers given to each of the three questions.

To do this, the authors of this report approach the attacks and their consequences from multiple perspectives. Moussa Bourekba focusses on the analysis of the different readings of the radicalisation process that prevailed and what this means for research and decision-making. Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas examines the reactions to the attacks from politicians and civil society, giving particular attention to the prevalent narratives about the attacks, their perpetrators and their victims. Jordi Moreras identifies the main

singularities of these attacks and casts doubt on the relevance of some of the debates that followed them (the role and representation of Islam in Catalonia, the issue of exclusion). Finally, using comparative analysis Fatima Lahnait explores the main strategies for preventing violent extremism implemented in Spain and Europe. She also shows that, despite the change of strategies from a security focus to a more comprehensive approach, the fight against violent extremism continues to demand new interpretations of the phenomenon in order to provide tools that are adapted to local contexts.

Although it seems that society has turned the page, the debate on why these young men from Ripoll decided to kill innocent people remains open. The debate on radicalisation is progressing, but today no consensus exists on the prevalence of one factor over another. Recognising this methodological limitation nevertheless represents an opportunity for analysts, researchers and decision-makers: instead of resorting to uniform patterns based on previous experience, the ever more diversified and multidimensional processes of radicalisation, require the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches. Only then comprehensive and creative strategies can be conceived to fight a threat that, far from dissipating, remains present and in constant mutation.

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