**National Extraction, Geographical Origin and Migratory Ancestry among Jihadists in Spain**

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**Abstract**

Eight out of every 10 jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 are of Moroccan origin. This figure includes Moroccan nationals, Spanish nationals born in Morocco, and Spanish nationals descending from Moroccan immigrants. The historically restive Rif region of northwest Africa is the main geographical provenance of those who were born in Morocco and, similarly, because of violent Salafist who are natives of Ceuta and Melilla, of those who were born in Spain. All this reveals the extent to which the enduring reality global jihadism in Morocco is projected externally onto Spain. This is unsurprising, since a large majority of Muslims in Spain come from Morocco or have Moroccan ancestors. Yet, the blooming of homegrown jihadism in Spain over the mentioned six-year period, largely resulting from the radicalization of Moroccan descendants or second generations, points towards the internal dynamics behind the phenomenon. In Spain, however, these second generations may or may not be in a diaspora situation, an important feature which is unique in the context of Western Europe.

**Introduction**

In the years since 2012, following the unleashing of a full-fledged war in Syria that soon coalesced with an ongoing armed uprising in the contiguous Iraq, jihadist organizations — we mean organizations espousing variants of the Salafi-Jihadist ideology[[1]](#endnote-2) — active in that transborder conflict zone promoted unprecedented international levels of violent radicalization and terrorist recruitment.[[2]](#endnote-3) Western European nations were all affected, though in varying degrees, as a result of the mobilization strategies developed initially by an Al Qaeda branch based in parts of Syria and subsequently, as well as far more intensely, by Islamic State (IS) from its temporarily-controlled territories stretching across Syria and Iraq.[[3]](#endnote-4) Numbers of jihadists arrested as a consequence of their involvement in terrorism offences, deceased while committing terrorist crimes, or turned into foreign terrorist fighters, reached unknown figures throughout Western Europe, becoming forthright indicators of a jihadist mobilization cycle which had markedly abated by the end of 2018.[[4]](#endnote-5) Spain was one of those Western European countries impacted by this jihadist mobilization, albeit not as severely as others in the region – such as France, Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Switzerland or even Ireland[[5]](#endnote-6)--, either in absolute terms or relative to the size of its national population, and even more concretely to the size of its Muslim population.[[6]](#endnote-7)

A total of 275 individuals known for their adherence to jihadist attitudes and beliefs underwent detention or died in Spain, from 2013 — the year when the first counterterrorism operation against jihadist cells or networks related to the Syrian conflict was conducted in the country— until 2018, as a result of their participation in terrorism-related activities. Some 266 of them were arrested by law enforcement agencies and brought before the corresponding judges of the Audiencia Nacional (AN, National Court), the sole tribunal in Spain with nationwide jurisdiction over terrorist crimes other than the Tribunal Supremo (TS, Supreme Court) as appeal court.[[7]](#endnote-8) Most of these individuals — actually, 247 — where apprehended inside the country during those six years, while 19 were apprehended upon arrival in Spanish territory after being extradited or transferred from other states (table 1).[[8]](#endnote-9) Nine more jihadists died in Spain over the same period of time, as a result of their involvement in the preparation and execution of terrorist attacks. They include eight individuals who belonged to the cell whose members carried out attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils on 17 and 18 August 2017 plus, separately, a ninth individual who, on 20 August 2018, attempted to stab a law enforcement officer inside a police station of Cornellá de Llobregat, an urban municipality located in Catalonia, like the other two cities just mentioned.[[9]](#endnote-10)

**Table 1. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, by year, for type of detention and death**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Arrested as a**  **result of domestic**  **counterterrorism**  **operations** | **Arrested following extradition or transference from another state** | **Deceased inside the national territory** | | **Total** |
| 2013 | 22 | 1 | -- | 23 | |
| 2014 | 33 | 5 | -- | 38 | |
| 2015 | 57 | 4 | -- | 61 | |
| 2016 | 47 | 5 | -- | 52 | |
| 2017 | 56 | 3 | 8 | 67 | |
| 2018 | 32 | 1 | 1 | 34 | |
| Total | (247) | (19) | (9) | (275) | |

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to analyze the social characteristics for these 275 individuals, first we systematically collected information on every one of them. Our sources included all relevant court proceedings, related judicial documents and oral hearings at the AN, along with the corresponding reports from the Cuerpo Nacional de Policía (CNP, National Police Corps), the Guardia Civil (GC, Civil Guard) and the police agencies belonging to the autonomous governments of Catalonia and the Basque Country, respectively named Mossos d’Esquadra and the Ertzaintza. Official notes from the Ministry of the Interior detailing counterterrorism operations were also consulted. In addition, we conducted field trips to Barcelona and Ripoll, in Catalonia, on October and November 2017 as well as on October and November 2019, and to Ceuta and Melilla, the two North African enclaves under Spain’s sovereignty, on April 2016 as well as on April and October 2019. Occasionally, we relied on interviews with security services experts having specific knowledge of particular cases and, less frequently, on credited press sources. The data collected was then coded according to different variables and introduced, for the purpose of cross-tabular statistical treatment, into our Database on Jihadists in Spain (DBJS).[[10]](#endnote-11)

As many as 89.8% of all the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain from 2013 to 2018 are men, 73.5% aged 18 to 38 at the time of their detention or, in the nine cases previously described, their death. But there are other rather common social characteristics among them concerning their national extraction, geographical origin and migratory ancestry. This article focuses precisely on a series of variables related to these three main facets, providing responses to the following three questions: What are the predominant nationalities and countries of birth among jihadists in Spain? Where exactly do these individuals come from, in terms of their specific geographical origin? Which social segment do they belong to in terms of their migratory background? An evidence-based approach to these basic and other related interrogatives is needed to provide us with the substantive knowledge upon which to interpret recent key features observed at an individual level of analysis, about global jihadism in Spain. The presence and activities of individuals adhered to such a bellicose version of Salafism, initially detected in Spain during 1994, evolved and became a lethal reality with the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the Leganés episode of suicide terrorism[[11]](#endnote-12). Such presence persisted ever since and incremented during the years of the Syria-connected jihadist mobilization which started in 2012, manifesting again as a particularly deadly threat with the 2017 terrorist attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils.[[12]](#endnote-13)

**Morocco and Spain, Respectively, as the Predominant Countries of Nationality or birth**

Individuals whose country of nationality is Morocco prevail among the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain from 2013 to 2018, amounting to nearly five out of every 10 cases (Table 2). Individuals who are of Spanish nationality are close to four in every 10 cases of the same violent Salafists in Spain. The remaining – a 16.8% of the total — corresponds to individuals with up to 21 different nationalities other than the Moroccan or the Spanish.[[13]](#endnote-14) On the other hand, half of the same jihadists who constitute the subject matter of our study were born in Morocco, whereas slightly over one-quarter of them were born in Spain. The remaining individuals — 21.7% of the total — were born in 22 countries other than Morocco and Spain.[[14]](#endnote-15) In other words, Moroccan and Spanish nationals, the same with individuals born in Morocco and in Spain, together comprise – though in significantly different proportions – the vast majority of jihadists who were apprehended or who met their death in Spain over the mentioned six-year period.

**Table 2. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, by country of nationality and country of birth (%)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Country of Nationality** | **Country of Birth** |
| Morocco | 47.5 | 53.1 |
| Spain | 35.7 | 25.2 |
| Pakistan | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Syria | 0.4 | 1.9 |
| Algeria | 2.7 | 3.1 |
| France | 1.1 | 1.6 |
| Tunisia | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| Others | 8.4 | 10.9 |
| Total | (261) | (258) |
| *Missing data:* | *14* | *17* |

Source: DBJS.

As the figures show, the percentage of jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain who have Moroccan nationality does not exactly coincide with the percentage of those whose country of birth is Morocco. The percentage for the former, the Moroccan nationals, remains nearly six percentage points below that of the latter, the Morocco-born individuals. Conversely, the percentage for jihadists with Spanish nationality is 10 percentage points above the corresponding to individuals born in Spain. These small but still significant disparities in percentages stem from the simple fact that 14 of the jihadists who were born in Morocco had acquired a nationality other than their initial Moroccan nationality before they were arrested or deceased in Spain as a consequence of becoming involved in terrorism-related activities. While most of these Morocco-born jihadists – actually, 12 of them – had assumed the Spanish nationality, one of them had acquired the Danish nationality and another one the Dutch nationality.

However, while all but one of the 119 jihadists with Moroccan nationality were born in Morocco, this is the country of birth for only 10 of the 69 jihadists with Spanish nationality (Table 3). To understand why only a minority – 7.4% -- of the Morocco-born jihadists had adopted the Spanish nationality, despite the fact that most of them resided in Spain, one should first consider that Moroccan nationals are required by law to reside in Spain legally and continuously for no less than the 10 years before they can apply for naturalization.[[15]](#endnote-16) But the most important migration flows from Morocco arrived in Spain between 2000 and 2010, even if these flows had already become substantial throughout the previous decade. Secondly, first-generation economic immigrants from Morocco in Spain, like elsewhere in Western Europe, often disregard their naturalization, and eventually that of their descendants, because they maintain expectations of return to their country of origin.[[16]](#endnote-17) For instance, a survey commissioned by the Conseil de la communauté marocaine à l’etranger (CCME, Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad) in 2009 found that 69% of first generation Moroccan immigrants who were then aged 18 to 65 and residing in Spain, regardless of their administrative situation, wanted to retire in their native country.[[17]](#endnote-18) Third, there is no dual nationality recognition treaty between Morocco and Spain. The acquisition of the Spanish nationality is subordinated to the renunciation of the Moroccan nationality, something nearly impracticable.[[18]](#endnote-19) But the Spanish regulations only require, at the time of acquiring the country’s citizenship, a declaration renouncing Moroccan nationality and not an official certification from the Moroccan authorities authorizing such renunciation. In order to avoid confusion, for the purposes of this article, individuals who have acquired the Spanish nationality are accounted for here only as Spanish, unless they have a second nationality which is mutually recognized by both countries concerned.

**Table 3. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, by country of birth, for different nationalities (%)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country of Birth** | **Nationalities** | | |  |
| **Moroccan** | **Spanish** | **Other** | **Total** |
| Morocco | 99.2 | 14.5 | 1.5 | 53.0 |
| Spain | 0.8 | 78.3 | -- | 27,7 |
| Others | –- | 7.2 | 98.5 | 19.3 |
| Total | (119) | (69) | (65) | (253) |
| *Missing data: 22* |  |  |  |  |

Source: DBJS.

All things considered, the percentage of Morocco-born jihadists in our study who had acquired the Spanish nationality is three times lower than the 22% of Morocco-born residents in Spain who had become Spanish citizens by January 2015.[[19]](#endnote-20) This is a relevant difference when taking into account research suggesting that naturalization of first generation immigrants or second generation descendants in Western Europe improves their social integration, and that returns to naturalization are higher for more marginalized immigrant groups and for second generations who were not born in the country where they reside.[[20]](#endnote-21) Interestingly, at least one of the jihadists in our study who were born in Morocco is known to have expressly renounced the possibility of acquiring the Spanish nationality, even when he legally met the necessary prerequisites to apply for naturalization. This is what happened with a Moroccan, born in 1994 in Kenitra, who was arrested in Spain for jihadist activities at the age of 21 and convicted on terrorism offences in 2017. Ever since he was a child, he lived with his parents and siblings in two coastal towns in the Catalonian province of Girona. He declined to petition for Spanish nationality, unlike the rest of his family. Evidence indicates that the deliberate option of this individual — who, before undergoing jihadist radicalization, was apprehended more than 20 times for violent robbery and illicit drug trafficking, and whose quest for a sense of belonging led him to surprisingly join a Latino gang — was shaped by animosity toward the host society. He blamed police forces for discriminating against him.[[21]](#endnote-22)

The fact is that, since 2004, both Moroccan and Spanish nationals had considerably augmented their presence among the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain, just as the proportion of those born in either Morocco or Spain had likewise grown.[[22]](#endnote-23) The decisive irruption of jihadists either born in Morocco or holding Moroccan nationality became particularly evident among the members of the terrorist network behind the 11 March 2004 train bombings in Madrid. Although the actual number of individuals related in one way or another to this terrorist network may have been higher, we know with enough certainty about 25 of its members who were at large when the attacks were perpetrated. All of them were foreign nationals, but as many as 21 held the Moroccan nationality and were actually born in Morocco; same as another individual, then adjunct to al-Qaeda’s head of external operations commander, who masterminded the attacks and was in contact with the key nodes of the Madrid bombing network from his position inside the Pakistan-based Al Qaeda’s central command.[[23]](#endnote-24)

To better appreciate this trend towards an increase in the proportion of individuals having Morocco as country of nationality, country of birth, or both, we now rely on a supplementary set of data about jihadists convicted – and not just arrested – or deceased in Spain since 1996, the year when the first violent Salafist was given a jail sentence in the country, following his arrest in Barcelona on 1995 (Table 4). As we can see, very few Moroccan nationals and Morocco-born jihadists were actually convicted in Spain from 1996 to 2003, the eight years prior to the Madrid train bombings. However, percentages for individuals having Morocco as country of nationality or country of birth multiplied by, respectively, twelve and six, among jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain between 2004 and 2012 compared to the previous period. During the nine years following that of the Madrid attacks, already four out of every 10 jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain were Morocco-born and also Moroccan nationals. Those percentages for both Moroccan nationals and for Moroccan-born individuals increased again roundly six points subsequently, between 2013 and 2018. Among jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain during these six years, five out of every 10 were Morocco-born and held Moroccan nationality. Same proportion as found among the jihadists arrested or deceased in the same period of time which are the subject matter of this article.

Still, this growing presence of individuals having Moroccan nationality or Moroccan birthplace among jihadists in Spain has been less pronounced when compared to those with Spanish nationality or Spanish birthplace. In the period from 1996 to 2003, there was only one individual born in Spain among the 28 jihadists convicted in the country for terrorism-related crimes, and all but one of the nine individuals who then had Spanish nationality, mainly born in Syria, were actually naturalized individuals.[[24]](#endnote-25) The percentage for convicted or deceased jihadists who had Spain as their country of nationality decreased nearly 21 percentage points in the period between 2004 and 2012 compared to the previous period, but registered a fourfold increase between 2013 and 2018 with respect to the preceding nine years. Similarly, the percentage for convicted or deceased jihadists having Spain as country of birth — likewise just one case in the period between 2004 and 2012 — registered a six-fold increase between 2013 and 2018 with respect to the preceding nine years. Differences in the distribution of the jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain during a lapse of over two decades, more concretely since the mid-1990s, both by country of nationality and by country of birth, are indeed remarkable when comparing the 2004 to 2012 period and the 2013 to 2018 period with the earlier period from 1996 to 2003.[[25]](#endnote-26)

**Table 4. Jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain, by country of nationality and country of birth, for different periods (%)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **1996-2003** | | **2004-2012** | | **2013-2018** | |
| **Nationality** | **Birth** | **Nationality** | **Birth** | **Nationality** | **Birth** |
| Morocco | 3.3 | 6.7 | 40.7 | 42.6 | 46.5 | 50.0 |
| Spain | 30.0 | 3.3 | 9.3 | 5.5 | 41.1 | 36.0 |
| Algeria | 46.7 | 46.7 | 18.5 | 18.6 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Tunisia | – | – | – | – | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Pakistan | 3.3 | 3.3 | 25.9 | 27.8 | -- | -- |
| France | – | – | – | – | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| Syria | 16.7 | 40.0 | – | – | -- | -- |
| Others | – | – | 5.6 | 5.5 | 7.8 | 9.4 |
| Total | (28) | (30) | (50) | (54) | (129) | (128) |
| *Missing data* | *0* | *2* | *0* | *4* | *0* | *1* |

Source: DBJS.

Altogether, data on country of nationality and country of birth among the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 distinguishes two major components of global jihadism in Spain today. On the one hand, there is the foreign component — foreign nationals comprise six out of every 10 individuals and, similarly, seven out of every 10 individuals are born outside the country — which is essentially, though not exclusively, a Moroccan component. On the other hand, there is the autochthonous or Spanish component. This autochthonous component, made out by individuals whose country of nationality or country of birth is Spain — nearly four in every 10 for the former category and close to three in every 10 for the latter category — demonstrates that, since 2013, global jihadism in Spain no longer overwhelmingly emanates from abroad nor longer overwhelmingly involves foreigners like it had once been the case since the initial penetration of this phenomenon in the country –during the middle 1990s — and up until the latest jihadist mobilization which began in 2012 with the unleashing of the civil war in Syria.

It is unsurprising that the foreign component of global jihadism in Spain is essentially of Moroccan extraction. This fact is related, on the one hand, to the migratory flows to Spain from its geographically closest Islamic neighboring country, Morocco, particularly since the last decade of the 20th Century but massively since the first decade of the 21st Century. In 2015, 67.9% of the foreigners residing in Spain who came from majority Muslim countries were Moroccan nationals and 67.7% had been born in Morocco.[[26]](#endnote-27) On the other hand, Morocco is a country where individuals who adhere to global jihadism have been active since the beginning of this movement, which enjoyed significant if not considerable amounts of social acquiescence among the population. Actually, some sectors of the Moroccan population, particularly the youth, have been culturally receptive to Islamist and bellicose interpretations of both the idea of jihad and the practice of martyrdom as a result of widespread popular beliefs about maraboutic Islam and, more specifically, the men — the *murabitun* — who, during and after the Muslim conquest of the Maghreb, lived in fortified compounds built at the frontiers of Islamic territories.[[27]](#endnote-28) They served religious and military functions against the infidels, combining the character of a holy warrior, a preacher and an ascetic. These mujahids, who sacrificed themselves and are venerated in mausoleums or shrines, have historically been intertwined with symbols of social defence.

In the years following the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, popular support to global jihadism reached substantial levels in Morocco, measured in terms of both popular support for acts of suicide terrorism allegedly in defense of Islam and of confidence in Osama bin Laden – founder and *emir* of Al Qaeda until 2011.[[28]](#endnote-29) Given this evidence, plus other facts like the establishment of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG) by 2000, the incorporation of some Moroccans to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) since its formation in 2007, or that 114 terrorist cells were dismantled in Morocco from 2002 to 2011, it is not surprising that Morocco became the scene of lethal jihadist attacks during these period of time. Such as the attack in Casablanca on May 2003, the incidents in Casablanca on March and April 2007, and the Marrakesh blast on April 2011.[[29]](#endnote-30) Between 2012 and 2017, 60 terrorist cells, linked to jihadist organizations active in Syria and Iraq, were disbanded, many of them with plans and resources to attack inside Morocco.[[30]](#endnote-31) By October 2017, more than 1,660 foreign terrorist fighters left Morocco to travel to these conflict zone in the core of the Middle East and join entities like Sham al Andalus (of particular interest from a Spanish perspective, if only because its denomination alludes to Islamic Spain), the Al Nusra Front, Harakat Sham al Islam and, above all, IS.[[31]](#endnote-32) Actually, IS inspired the Moroccan jihadists who executed the Imlil stabbings on December 2018.[[32]](#endnote-33) According to a 2015 survey, 8% of Moroccan adults exhibited positive attitudes towards Islamic State, a figure almost coincident with the 9% of Moroccan adults who, in a 2007 survey, expressed support for Al Qaeda.[[33]](#endnote-34)

This enduring reality of global jihadism in Morocco has been projected onto the collectivities of Moroccan origin living in Spain – also on other Muslim collectivities in the country from different origins – by way of Moroccan Salafist clerics, radicalizing agents and terrorist entrepreneurs, whose combined influence can be observed in the mobilization of jihadists in Spain.[[34]](#endnote-35) Based in or outside Morocco, those Moroccan Salafist clerics, radicalizing agents and terrorist entrepreneurs sometimes rely on the Internet and the social media to exert their influence over Moroccan immigrants and their descendants living abroad. More often, however, they interacted in person, either on special occasions or during sustained periods of time, with expatriated Moroccans or individuals of Moroccan origin who are undergoing the radicalization process or being mobilized as jihadists. Such face-to-face interactions took place inside Morocco, inside Spain, or in both countries. Our associated dataset on jihadist who were convicted or who died in Spain up to 2018 – and whose arrest or death happened as from 2012 – indicates that about one-quarter of them underwent their radicalization process fully or partly within Morocco. This proportion amounts to half of all these jihadists when we add the cases of individuals whose radicalization and recruitment process came about within Spain but in close connection with cross-border cells and networks present in both Morocco and Spain

**Rif as Common Geographical Origin for Both the Foreign and the Autochthonous Components**

In addition to delimiting the current foreign and autochthonous components of global jihadism in Spain according to the country of nationality and the country of birth of the jihadists arrested or deceased inside Spain’s territory between 2013 and 2018 — as we have done in the previous section —, it is worth deepening in the exploration of this topic by answering the following further questions: Where exactly, in Morocco and in Spain, respectively, do the individuals making up these two components of the violent Salafist phenomenon come from? What is the concrete origin of the largely Moroccan component, in terms of birthplace demarcation, among those jihadists who were born in Morocco? What can be deduced in this regard from the existing data? And, similarly, what is the specific origin of the Spanish component, according to the geography of birthplace among those jihadists who were born in Spain? How should the available evidence in this respect be properly interpreted?

We begin by focusing on the Morocco-born jihadists who were arrested or deceased in Spain over the six year-period covered in this study, from 2013 to 2018: this is to say, we begin with what essentially became the foreigncomponent of global jihadism inside Spain. As data indicates, about half of these Morocco-born individuals come from the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region, in northwest Morocco (Table 5). Smaller proportions, according to the total number of cases for which information was made available, were also born in the Oriental region – in the country’s northeast — and the northern Rabat-Salé-Kenitra region. The remainder, up to one fifth of this subset of individuals, were born in seven other Moroccan regions, though in percentages that are no significant enough, perhaps with the narrow margin exception of the Fez-Meknes region. These four regions are Morocco’s septentrional regions. In general, the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain from 2013 to 2018 who were born in Morocco come from the same administrative regions out of which the largest aggregate of the Moroccan migration to Spain has occurred over the last four decades, but more substantially since the middle 1990s and massively as from 2000.[[35]](#endnote-36)

**Table 5. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, who were born in Morocco, by region of birth (%)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Moroccan region of birth** | **Moroccan-born jihadists** |
| Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima | 53.5 |
| Oriental | 16.3 |
| Rabat-Salé-Kenitra | 11.6 |
| Fez-Meknes | 5.8 |
| Casablanca-Settat | 3.5 |
| Marrakesh-Safi | 3.5 |
| Beni Mellal-Khénifra | 2.3 |
| Others | 3.5 |
| Total | (86) |
| *Missing data: 51* |  |

Source: DBJS.

Yet, the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region, where half of the Morocco-born jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain from 2013 to 2018 come from, is also the same region where a larger number of jihadist cells, 19 of a total of 83, were dismantled by the Moroccan security services in the period between 2011 and 2017.[[36]](#endnote-37) It is also the region with the highest concentration of individuals arrested in Morocco between March 2015 and June 2018 for offences related to jihadist terrorism, actually one fifth from a total number of well over 800.[[37]](#endnote-38) Together, the four main regions — namely, Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, the Oriental, the Rabat-Salé-Kenitra, and the Fez-Meknes regions — are the birthplace for nearly nine out of every 10 of the individuals included in our subset of Moroccan-born cases, and the location of up to 59% of all the jihadists cells dismantled throughout Morocco from 2011 to 2017, and exactly the same percentage – that is, 59% -- of individuals detained for jihadist terrorism activities and jailed in Morocco between March 2015 and June 2018.[[38]](#endnote-39)

Moreover, the zones from which a majority of the Morocco-born jihadists included in our study are from are provinces and prefectures commonly located along the Rif, a vast mountainous range in northern Morocco which hugs the Mediterranean Sea, broadly extending from the cities of Tanger and Tetouan on the West to the Moulouya River Valley near the border with Algeria on the East. Although the Rif is a distinctive geographical and historical region, the area does not currently correspond to any single administrative entity within Morocco. Actually, the Rif overlaps with large portions of the official Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region, the Fez-Meknés region and the Oriental region. This is what allows us to estimate that approximately seven of every 10 Morocco-born jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 come from urban and rural districts situated in the Rif; mainly, although not exclusively, from cities and towns within the province of Tetouan, the prefecture of Tanger-Assilah, and the also province of Nador.

Among the peoples of the Rif — mainly Arabs and Berbers, or Imazighen, who use Amazigh languages and vernacular dialects to different degrees, depending on the zone — there is a widespread contemporary tradition of rebellion that extends until the present day. This contentious tradition is best typified by, first, the rebellion against the Spanish protectorate which was established in the region between 1912 and 1956; a rebellion that was framed as a jihad to safeguard Islam. Then, the rebellion against the ruling Alaui dynasty, currently expressed by a generalized distrust towards central Moroccan authorities and the persistent movement of resistance to the *makhzen’s* — what the power establishment around Morocco’s king is known as — control.[[39]](#endnote-40) Peoples of the Rif also hold in common the fact that they are part of a very conservative society and that they inhabit rugged spaces that are among the most underprivileged and marginalized in Morocco. Generalized poverty and a lack of state-provided public goods have stimulated and enabled illicit trafficking networks, above all dedicated to the smuggling of hashish, allowing Islamists – and in particular Salafists — movements to take root there and, furthermore, penetrate the diaspora of immigrants from the restive Rif in Western European countries.[[40]](#endnote-41) The mentioned socioeconomic context and the alluded background of a contentious political culture would have meant that among these immigrants — even more so among their descendants, or second generations — a higher incidence of violent radicalization and terrorist involvement has been observed, since the beginning of global jihadism, than among those originating in other regions of Morocco.[[41]](#endnote-42)

Turning now to individuals making up the autochthonous component of global jihadism in Spain, by focusing on the jihadists born inside the country, it must be pointed out, first of all, that nearly three-quarters of them come from the cities of Ceuta and Melilla (Table 6). Both North African cities — officially, autonomous cities in the context of a decentralized state — are enclaves under Spain’s sovereignty and frontier municipalities with Morocco. Moreover, the two cities are located precisely in the upper coastal verge of the same Rif region mentioned above in relation to the foreign, essentially Moroccan component of current global jihadism in Spain. Therefore, among jihadists arrested or deceased in the country between 2013 and 2018, therefore, seven out of every 10 Morocco-born are natives of the Rif and, similarly, seven out of every 10 Spain-born are also natives of the Rif, as they were born in Ceuta and Melilla. However, the percentage of Spanish-born jihadists who came from Ceuta is higher than those who came from Melilla.[[42]](#endnote-43)

**Table 6. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, 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 | 45.3 | 45.3 |
| Melilla | 29.6 | 29.6 |
| Catalonia | 14.1 |  |
| Barcelona |  | 7.8 |
| Girona |  | 4.6 |
| Tarragona |  | 1.6 |
| Andalusia | 3.1 |  |
| Cadiz |  | 1.6 |
| Huelva |  | 1.6 |
| Madrid | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| Castilla La Mancha | 1.6 |  |
| Ciudad Real |  | 1.6 |
| Galicia | 1.6 |  |
| A Coruña |  | 1.6 |
| Murcia | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| Total | (64) | (64) |
| *Missing data: 6* |  |  |

Source: DBJS.

In 2015, Ceuta and Melilla had a population of, respectively, 84,692 and 84,570.[[43]](#endnote-44) Inhabitants with Maghreb origin and Islamic sociocultural tradition comprises around 43% in the former city and 52% in the later. Three quarters of all these inhabitants with Maghreb origin and Islamic sociocultural tradition are Spanish citizens, as Spanish citizens are virtually all the Ceuta and Melilla inhabitants who are of Iberian origin and Christian background.[[44]](#endnote-45) In both cities there are neighborhoods — especially those of Príncipe Alfonso in Ceuta and of Cañada de Hidum in Melilla – where unusual conditions of spatial segregation and societal marginalization have facilitated the penetration, over the last two or three decades, of Islamic fundamentalist currents — including Salafism in general and Salafist jihadism in particular — among their near exclusively Moroccan origin over the last two or three decades.[[45]](#endnote-46) The problem of shanty towns, the lack of sufficient basic urban infrastructures, school dropout, widespread illiteracy, youth unemployment and ordinary delinquency are all symptoms of the absence of a proper, visible state authority.[[46]](#endnote-47) This is often manifested in the incapacity of Spain’s security forces to fulfill their mandated law enforcement functions due to the hostility and even aggressiveness with which they are received by many inhabitants of certain areas in these segregated districts. Many of these inhabitants tend to perceive the situation in which they live in as discriminatory, even if what some of them want is to protect the boundaries of illegal cross-border trafficking.

On the other hand, congruent with the already mentioned figures on the spatial distribution of jihadism in Morocco, the areas surrounding Ceuta and Melilla also denote high levels of jihadist activity when compared to other zones across Morocco. Adding to what has already been pointed out, by the end of 2013 it was known that nearly 40% of the then already more than 800 Moroccan jihadists who had travelled from their home country to Syria and Iraq as foreign terrorist fighters were residing in cities and towns located in the Moroccan regions around Ceuta and Melilla.[[47]](#endnote-48) In these two cities operated five of the six cross-border jihadist networks disbanded in the course of eight of the 11 counterterrorist operations jointly undertaken between 2013 and 2018 by Spain’s CNP and GC, and their Moroccan counterparts, respectively the Direction générale de la sûreté nationale (DGSN, General Directorate for National Security) and the Gendarmerie royale (GN, Royal Gendarmerie). Although it needs to be noted that, in practical terms, Moroccan counterterrorism is conducted by the Bureau central d'investigations judiciaires (BCIJ, Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation), the primary law enforcement agency responsible for counterterrorism, and the Direction général de surveillance du térritoire (DGST, General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance), Morocco’s internal intelligence body.[[48]](#endnote-49)

Additionally, Catalonia is the birthplace of one in every 10 of individuals who are part of the autochthonous component of global jihadism in Spain. None of the other six Autonomous Communities within Spain, where other jihadists in our study were born, register relevant percentages. Aside from the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, only the Catalonian provinces of Barcelona and Girona show significant figures[[49]](#endnote-50). Actually, Catalonia has been an area of developing jihadist activity since the mid-1990s. The jihadist activity in this autonomous region of Spain resulted from the presence of individuals and cells linked to organizations such as Al Qaeda, the Group islamique armé (GIA, Armed Islamic Group) from Algeria and its successor Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC, Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), the Groupe islamique combattant marocain (GICM, Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group) and even Therik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP).[[50]](#endnote-51) Following the 2004 Madrid train bombings and its fallout, the main scenario of global jihadism activity in Spain shifted considerably from the city of Madrid and its metropolitan area to Catalonia, mainly though not only to the province of Barcelona. More specifically, the city of Barcelona and its metropolitan area as well. As a matter of fact, 40% of all the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2004 and 2012 were found residing in Catalonia.[[51]](#endnote-52)

Similarly, one third — 33.9% — of all jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 to 2018 lived in Catalonia. This is somewhat an overrepresentation, as no more than one-quarter of Muslims, or individuals originally from majority-Muslim countries, living in Spain, have their domiciles in Catalonia.[[52]](#endnote-53) The overrepresentation of individuals residing in Catalonia among jihadists in Spain coincides with the much higher Salafist presence in Catalonia compared with the rest of Spain. In 2016, one-third of the 256 Islamic centers and places of worship in Catalonia were controlled by Salafists, more than twice as many as in 2006.[[53]](#endnote-54) A corollary of all these jihadist currents in Catalonia are the several attacks intended for the city of Barcelona which were foiled since 2013 by the CNP, the GC and the Mossos d’Esquadra in their planning or preparatory stages, along with those perpetrated in that city, and the municipality of Cambrils, in the province of Tarragona, on August 2017, by members of an IS-aligned jihadist cell formed in the locality of Ripoll, in the province of Girona.[[54]](#endnote-55) Showing continuity in terms of both country of nationality and country of birth with the members of the Madrid bombing network, nine of the 10 members of the Ripoll cell were Moroccan nationals and one of them was Spanish national. In sharp contrast though, only the cell leader was a first generation immigrant whereas all the other members were descendants of immigrants. A change which brings us to the third main theme of our study: migratory ancestry among jihadists in Spain.

**The Second Generations, the Converts and the Blooming of Homegrown Jihadism in Spain**

In order to precisely explore the migratory ancestry among the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, for accuracy purposes we exclude from the data analysis 19 individuals who were not residents of the country.[[55]](#endnote-56) Having done so, the distribution of cases, according to the information confirmed, reveals that around four in 10 of those violent Salafists are first generation immigrants but five in 10 belong to second generation cohorts (Table 7). With just a few exceptions, the latter are descendants from progenitors originating in Muslim majority countries, predominantly in Morocco.[[56]](#endnote-57) Here we must clarify that our notion of second generation, descendants from immigrants originally rooted in another country, includes individuals born *or* raised in Spain. Thus including, in the latter assumption, individuals who arrived as children and were schooled within the legally obligatory ages. School attendance is compulsory in Spain from six to sixteen years of age. Additionally, a scarce percentage of individuals is ascribed to the third generation. Together, second generation and third generation cases amount to nearly six out of every 10 of the total cases. The remaining percentage corresponds to individuals with no migration ancestors.

**Table 7. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, who were residents in Spain, by migration ancestry (%)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Migration ancestry** | **Resident in Spain** |
| Second generation | 53.3 |
| First-generation immigrants | 38.0 |
| No immigrant ancestors | 5.1 |
| Third generation | 3.6 |
| Total | (195) |
| *Missing data: 61* |  |
| *Not residents in Spain: 19* |  |

Source: DBJS.

There is no linear correspondence between the nationality or the country of birth for the jihadists in our study and their migratory ancestry or lack thereof. Still, it can be observed that seven out of every 10 first generation immigrants were born in Morocco and approximately one in ten was born in Tunisia, but for the most part held the nationality of the country of birth at the time of their arrest or dead (Table 8). As expected, by contrast, all the individuals without any immigration background were born inside Spain and have the nationality of Spain. In between these two categories, jihadists who belong to the social segment of the second generations appear to split into two subgroups. While slightly over four out of every 10 of them were born in Morocco and subsequently raised in Spain but maintained the Moroccan nationality, a similar proportion were born in Spain and became Spanish citizens. Unsurprisingly, the few jihadists pertaining to the third generation have Spain both as country of birth and as country of nationality.

**Table 8. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, who were residents in Spain, by county of birth and country of nationality, for migration background (%)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **First generation**  **immigrants** | | **Second**  **generation** | | **Third**  **generation** | | **Non-immigrant**  **background** | | **Total** | |
| **Birth** | **Nationality** | **Birth** | **Nationality** | **Birth** | **Nationality** | **Birth** | **Nationality** | **Birth** | **Nationality** |
| Morocco | 68.9 | 62.5 | 45.2 | 39.8 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 50.3 | 44.8 |
| Spain | -- | 12.5 | 44.2 | 50.5 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 32.3 | 40.6 |
| Tunisia | 8.1 | 8.3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| Pakistan | 2.7 | 2.8 | 1.9 | 1.9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| Algeria | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 1.9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| France | 1.4 | -- |  | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.5 | -- |
| Syria | 5.4 | 1.4 | 1.0 |  | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.5 | 0.5 |
| Other | 12.1 | 11.1 | 5.8 | 5.9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 7.7 | 7.3 |
| Total | (74) | (72) | (104) | (103) | (7) | (7) | (10) | (10) | (195) | (192) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Source: DBJS.

Interestingly, the percentage of second-generation individuals among the violent Salafists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, 53.1% of the total, is remarkably overrepresented when compared with the estimated 25.5% of second-generation persons within the Muslim population living in the country per 31 December 2015.[[57]](#endnote-58) Thus, the percentage of second generation individuals in our sample nearly doubles the percentage of second generation individuals inside Spain’s Muslim population as a whole. In Spain, as in other Western countries in general and as in other Western European countries, in particular, second generation descendants from immigrants who have an Islamic religious or cultural background belong to cohorts of the population which, with cross countries variations in the levels of education and occupational status, have been considered especially vulnerable to violent radicalization and terrorist recruitment since the middle of the last decade and even more so in the context of the wave of jihadist mobilization that started in 2012.[[58]](#endnote-59) As shown, for example, in the numbers and ratios of foreign terrorist fighters who have traveled from Western European nations to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq since the onset of the war in Syria. The Western European countries most affected by such unprecedented wave of jihadist mobilization have been those where second generations who are in a diaspora situation comprise the larger or predominant portion within their Muslim populations.[[59]](#endnote-60)

Yet, the case of Spain is a rather idiosyncratic one on this matter, in the Western European context, with respect to the situation of jihadists born or raised in the country who are descendants of Muslim immigrants. A considerable amount of these jihadists who belong to the second generations are not, objectively speaking, in a situation of diaspora, nor do they have the subjective consciousness of being in a diaspora situation. Here we refer to second generation individuals residing in Spain’s North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Because of the geographical location of these two cities and their unusual sociocultural features, second generations individuals living there who are descendants of Moroccans neither are nor feel to be members of an ethnoreligious collectivity relocated and scattered far away from its ancestral homeland.[[60]](#endnote-61) Of the 111 jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2012 and 2018 who belong to the second generations and live in Spain, as many as a 45,1% of them have their domiciles in Ceuta or in Melilla (table 9). Therefore, they are not, strictly speaking, in a diaspora situation. Contrary to the remaining 54,9% jihadists also pertaining to second generation cohorts who live elsewhere in Spain – meaning in the national territory on the Iberian Peninsula, the Balearic Islands and the Canary Archipelago — and, consequently, are second generation individuals in a diaspora situation.

**Table 9. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, who belong to the second generation, by province of residence, for country of birth (%)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Province**  **of residence** | **Born inside Spain** | | **Born outside Spain** | | | **Total** |
| **In Ceuta**  **and Melilla** | **In the rest of Spain** | **In**  **Morocco** | **In other Muslim countries** | **In non-Muslim countries** |
| Ceuta | 61.4 | 22.2 | 2.1 | 14.3 |  | 28.0 31 |
| Melilla | 36.4 | -- | 6.4 | -- |  | 17.1 19 |
| Barcelona | -- | 44.5 | 19.1 | 14.3 | 75.0 | 15.3 17 |
| Girona | 2.2 | 22.2 | 19.1 |  |  | 10.8 12 |
| Madrid | -- | -- | 15.0 |  | 25.0 | 7.2 8 |
| Balearic Islands | -- | -- | 10.7 |  |  | 4.5 5 |
| Tarragona | -- | -- | 6.4 | – |  | 2.7 3 |
| Valencia | -- | -- | 6.4 | -- | -- | 2.7 3 |
| Bizkaia | -- | -- | 2.1 | 14.3 | -- | 1.8 2 |
| Lleida | -- | -- | -- | 28.5 | -- | 1.8 2 |
| Ciudad Real | -- | 11.1 | -- |  |  | 0.9 1 |
| Alicante | -- | -- | -- | 14.3 | -- | 0.9 1 |
| Zaragoza | -- | -- | -- | 14.3 | -- | 0.9 1 |
| Others | -- | -- | 12.7 | -- | -- | 5.4 6 |
| Total | (44) | (9) | (47) | (7) | (4) | (111) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Source: DBJS.

Like so many other adolescents and young people of second generation with Muslim background living across Western European societies in a diaspora situation, those who reside in Spain – but elsewhere other than in Ceuta or in Melilla — are often balanced upon a complicated and delicate equilibrium between cultures. On the one side, the culture common at home, among relatives, and typically also in Islamic centers and worship places. On the other side, the culture common in the diverse environments of the society within which they were born or raised. This situation makes second generation adolescents and young adults vulnerable to identity tensions.[[61]](#endnote-62) Their attachment to the country where they have been born or grew up may well be limited, same as their attachment to the country of their parents. Some among these young people in a diaspora situation — presented with a model of socialization, based on the family and the worship place as the institutions of reference for Muslim communities in Western Europe, which can be considered in crisis — may eventually become exposed to jihadist propaganda on the Internet and by means of the social media, though frequently through radicalization and recruitment agents, offering them a single, exclusive solution to their identity conflicts. A solution that is not the only possible one but instead the most extreme of them all: to violently affirm a Muslim identity.[[62]](#endnote-63)

One case that illustrates the above argument is that of a 24-year-old woman born in the Catalonian city of Granollers. Her mother and father, both of them naturalized Spaniards, had emigrated from Morocco. The young woman was apprehended in November 2015, along with two young Moroccan men who were involved in a jihadist recruiting network, just as she was about to leave Spain to join Islamic State in Syria. A cousin of the young woman, also of second generation and equally of Moroccan descent, provided interesting considerations shedding light on what had happened 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.”[[63]](#endnote-64) Granollers is precisely a locality in the province of Barcelona, the Catalonian province where 15.3% of the Spain-residing jihadists in our study who belong to the second generation have their domiciles. This percentages rises to 27.9% among all those who were in a diaspora situation, that is to say residing in Spain but outside Ceuta and Melilla. Overall, three in every 10 violent Salafists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 who lived in the country and are second generation, and up to six in every 10 of those among them in a diaspora situation, were residing in the four provinces of Catalonia, that is, in the provinces of Barcelona, Girona, Tarragona and Lleida.[[64]](#endnote-65)

These figures, complemented with analytical induction derived from our own ethnographic fieldwork in Catalonia as well as in Ceuta and Melilla suggest, tentatively, that jihadists in Spain may have radicalized out of different type of conditions, depending on whether or not they were living in a diaspora situation. Hypothetically, those who were in a diaspora situation – that is, residing anywhere throughout Spain other than in Ceuta or in Melilla — are more likely to radicalize out of problems related one way or the other with sociocultural accommodation, including identity conflicts which made adolescents and young adults vulnerable and prone to the cognitive opening necessary for the radicalization process to start. Conversely, those who were not in a diaspora situation – that is, those who were domiciled in the two North African cities under Spain’s sovereignty – are more likely to radicalize out of problems related one way or the other with socioeconomic conditions, including employment inequalities. Even when inhabitants of Ceuta or Melilla with Maghrebi origin and Islamic sociocultural tradition are significantly better off, in terms of human development, than the average Moroccan nationals living in surrounding Morocco, they may actually be or perceive themselves to be deprived when compared with inhabitants of those two cities who have Iberian origin and Christian background.

Regarding individuals with no immigrant ancestry for whom Spain is both their country of birth and of nationality, all of them — 10 cases — are converts to Islam. However, it must be pointed out that the total figure for converts in our study, 22, more than doubles that for individuals without an immigration background. This is so because some of these converts are Spain-residing first generation immigrants from non-Islamic countries and others are descendants of immigrants likewise having no Muslim background. As a whole, those converts are residents of cities and towns located in the province of Barcelona, followed by Madrid and its metropolitan area, then by municipalities of diverse size scattered across eight other provinces throughout the national territory.[[65]](#endnote-66) Overall, about half of them have Spain as their country of nationality and birth whereas about half come from other Western European nations as well as from Latin American nations.[[66]](#endnote-67) Nevertheless, slightly one in every 10 of all the violent Salafists arrested or deceased in Spain from 2013 to 2018 are converts (Table 10). Nine in every 10 were raised as Muslims.

**Table 10. Jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018, who resided in Spain, by religious background (%)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Religious background** |  | **Residents in Spain** |
| Originally Muslims |  | 91.7 |
| Converts |  | 8.3 |
| Total |  | (265) |
| *Missing data: 10* |  |  |

Source: DBJS.

The jihadists in our study who are converts to Islam encompass two different subtypes. On the one hand, are individuals who became involved in jihadism through the Islamization of previous radicalism experiences on different ideological orientations that have the common denominator of justifying violence and terrorism.[[67]](#endnote-68) On the other hand, radicalized converts also include young people brought up in dysfunctional families and who had experienced difficulties during their adolescence, often with traumatic episodes and behavioural or mental health issues.[[68]](#endnote-69) Some remaining cases can simply not be reduced to these two categories or subtypes. Individuals exemplifying the Islamization of previous radical trajectories include the case of a man who was an active sympathizer of Basque radical nationalism before his conversion and subsequent jihadist radicalization.[[69]](#endnote-70) Along this same line, another illustration is provided by an individual who became a Muslim and later on ringleader of a jihadist cell following a trajectory of left-wing activism that led him to even apply for membership in a small revolutionary terrorist group.[[70]](#endnote-71)

Examples of radicalized converts coming from dysfunctional families and seriously troubled periods of adolescence, during which personality disorders eventually became apparent, include that of a young woman, born to a middle-class Catholic family, who dropped out of school as a result of her parent’s separation. She was dressed in a Gothic style the year before adopting strict Muslim clothing, shortly before her arrest when she was about to travel from Spain to Syria to join Islamic State.[[71]](#endnote-72) Another example in this same category of radicalized converts is an adolescent who lived with his sisters and his mother who did not “adequately perform her parental functions.”[[72]](#endnote-73) He was an introverted minor who began to frequent Muslim places of worship in his municipality of residence and soon converted to Islam, establishing connections with IS sympathisers. He had other personality traits: “he suffered from a pathological grief, with feelings of dissatisfaction and despondency, externalised in erratic behaviour, including the consumption of toxic substances that had a negative effect on his daily functioning in family, social and education contexts”.[[73]](#endnote-74)

Adding the percentage of jihadists in our study without a background of external immigration — as already stated, all of them converts to Islam — to the percentages for, respectively, the second generations and the third generations, the result is that 62% of the jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 are exponents of a properly-speaking phenomenon of homegrown jihadism. This clearly reveals the recent blooming of a homegrown jihadism in Spain, which has become visible since 2012, in concomitance with the globally-reaching wave of jihadist mobilization prompted by the jihadists organizations active in Syria and Iraq since the Syrian civil war unfolded, a mobilization that reverberated with a comparatively special intensity across the Muslim communities in Western European countries.[[74]](#endnote-75) Consistent with these figures, in a separate study restricted to jihadists who were convicted or who died in Spain from 2004 to 2017, we revealed that only 21.8% of those arrested or deceased until 2011 were homegrown cases, whereas their percentage amounted to 67.7% — that is, triplicated — for those arrested or deceased as from 2012.[[75]](#endnote-76)

**Conclusions**

Overall, eight out of every 10 jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 are of Moroccan origin. The figure includes Moroccan nationals, Spanish nationals born in Morocco, and Spanish nationals descending from Moroccan immigrants. This reveals the extent to which global jihadism — together with the terrorist threat it entails — is projected externally onto Spain from Morocco. This is unsurprising, since a large majority of Muslims in Spain come from Morocco or have Moroccan ancestors, due to migration flows favored by geographical proximity. Also, Morocco is a country where the phenomenon of global jihadism has been rooted since its onset. Yet, the blooming of homegrown jihadism in Spain over the mentioned six-year period, largely resulting from the radicalization of Moroccan descendants, points towards the internal dynamics behind the phenomenon. Problems of sociocultural accommodation and socioeconomic levelling, which affect sectors of these second generations depending on whether they are or not they are in a situation of diaspora – a very important and idiosyncratic distinction in the case of Spain – creates conditions, often mixed with personal circumstances, which makes some young individuals vulnerable to the mobilization strategies of jihadist organizations, through radicalizing agents or online propaganda.

As indicated in the beginning of this article, nine individuals in our study met their death in Spain as a result of their involvement in the preparation and execution of terrorist attacks, same as many other were arrested while involved in cells or networks planning acts of terrorism, thus manifesting the reality of the jihadist threat existing in the country from 2013 to 2018. Actually, this terrorist threat dates back to at least 2001 and materialized on 11 March 2004 with the execution of the deadliest jihadist attacks ever in a Western European nation. Other 248 individuals in our study were arrested during that same six-year period, which in itself can be understood as an indicator of Spain’s rather aggressive counterterrorism approach during the cycle of jihadist mobilization which began in 2012 and affected many Western European countries before it abated in 2018. Spain, as already explained, was not as severely impacted by this jihadist mobilization cycle as other nations which have much larger segments of second generations as part of their respective Muslim populations, such as, for example, France or the United Kingdom. Precisely, only the United Kingdom and France surpassed Spain in the number of jihadists arrested for terrorism-related offences and brought before court throughout that time span[[76]](#endnote-77).

The country’s internal security structures were reformed after the Madrid train bombings in order to more adequately face the threat of jihadist terrorism from a law enforcement perspective. Additionally, intelligence capabilities, interagency coordination and international counterterrorism cooperation, both bilateral and intergovernmental, such as counterterrorism cooperation in the European Union framework, were strengthened[[77]](#endnote-78). Antiterrorist legislation was adapted twice, though as late as in 2010 and later in 2015, as part of the changes introduced in Spain’s Código Penal (Criminal Code) to better address the challenges posed by the specificities of jihadist terrorism. The Government of Spain approved in 2012 an Estrategia Integral contra el Terrorismo Internacional y la Radicalización (EICTIR, Integral Strategy against International Terrorism and Radicalization) which was in effect during the stretch of time delimited for our empirical study, before it was superseded on 2019 by a new Estrategia Nacional Contra el Terrorismo (ENCT, National Counterterrorism Strategy) elaborated under the coordination of the Ministry of Interior, the central institution in the country concerning counterterrorism policy. Meanwhile, the authorities adopted in 2015 the Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha contra la Radicalización Violenta (PEN-LCRV, National Strategic Plan to Fight Violent Radicalization), a program designed to focus on the prevention of jihadist radicalization at the local level which nevertheless suffered from poor implementation.

But our research showed, on the one hand, that a majority of jihadists arrested or deceased in Spain between 2013 and 2018 were Moroccan nationals, and that an even larger proportion of them were individuals of Moroccan origin, including second generations. Moreover, most individuals who are exponents of the now predominant homegrown jihadism in Spain are Moroccan descendants. Because of all this evidence, the corresponding counterterrorism institutions and agencies in the Government of Spain are bound to maintain strong cooperation arrangements with their Moroccan intelligence, police and judiciary counterparts. Actually, this cooperation escalated since 2004 Madrid train bombings, and Spanish officials routinely involved in bilateral exchanges during the years covered in our study assessed such cooperation as excellent, even when Spain is a full democracy and Morocco is considered a hybrid regime.[[78]](#endnote-79) About radicalization prevention, the Government of Morocco, as part of its efforts to influence the population of Moroccan origin established in Western Europe, controls in Spain the Federación de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas (FEERI, Islamic Religious Entities Federation) and supports imams who follow the moderate Maliki school within Sunni Islam.[[79]](#endnote-80) On November 2018, the authorities of Rabat acknowledged financing 34 of 42 mosques in Ceuta and all 17 mosques in Melilla.[[80]](#endnote-81) Spanish authorities refrain from publicly questioning all these Moroccan interventions, even in the two contested North African enclaves.

1. **Notes**

   On the ideology of Salafi-Jihadism, see Quintan Wiktorowic, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29 (2006), 207–239; Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism. The History of an Idea* (London: Hurst, 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Elizabeth O’Bagy, “Jihad in Syria”, Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report 6 (2012); Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad: al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016) ; Colin Clarke y Assaf Moghadam, “Mapping Today’s Jihadi Landscape and Threat”, *Orbis* 62: 3 (2018), pp. 347-371; Seth Jones et al., *The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist Threat. Challenges from the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and Other Groups* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018); Willem Willem Theo Oosterveld and Willem Bloem, “The Rise and Fall of ISIS: From Evitability to Inevitability”, The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017. Efraim Benmelech and Esteban F. Klor, “What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?”, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Published online 31 October 2018), pp. 1-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Petter Nesser*, Islamist Terrorism in Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, updated edition 2018), pp. 267-313; Fernando Reinares, “Jihadist Mobilization, Undemocratic Salafism, and Terrorist Threat in the European Union”, *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, Special Issue (February 2017), pp. 70-76. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2014* (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2014), pp. 21-29; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2015* (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2015), pp. 18-26; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016* (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2016), pp. 22-34; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017* (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2017), pp. 21-39; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018* (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2018), pp. 21-45; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019* (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2019), pp. 28-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Benmelech and Klor, “What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?”, pp. 5, 7 and 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. According to Observatorio Andalusí, the number of Muslims in Spain totalled 1,887,906 million at the end of 2015; see its *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015* (Madrid: Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, 2016). However, this figure is excessive and a more accurate assessment estimated around one million Muslims in Spain in 2017; see Carmen González Enríquez, “El número de musulmanes en España” (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *Elcano Blog*, 28 September 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. By the end of November 2019, 135 of these 266 individuals arrested had already been convicted on terrorism charges at the AN. Three more were extradited and convicted outside Spain for the same type of crimes and 17 were acquitted of such offences, despite being radicalized into Salafist Jihadism. Some 113 awaited trial in a criminal process which typically takes, in terrorism cases, between two and four years, depending on the complexity of the cause. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. Between 2013 and 2018, Turkey handed over to the Spanish authorities 4 suspects, Belgium 3, Bulgaria 3, France 2, Germany 2, Morocco 2, Jordan 1, Luxemburg 1, and Poland 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, “Un análisis de los atentados terroristas en Barcelona y Cambrils”, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *ARI 12/2018*; Gobierno de España, Gabinete de la Presidencia del Gobierno, Departamento de Seguridad Nacional, “Principales atentados yihadistas en Europa desde 2015”, Infographics, 13 March 2019, available at <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/actualidad/infografias/europa-atentados-yihadistas-desde-2015>, visited on 15 October 2019; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019*, p. 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. When advisable, to complement and further corroborate the findings presented in this article, we rely on a supplementary set of DBJS data about jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain between 1996 – the year when the first one of such violent Salafists was given a jail sentence in the country, following his arrest in Barcelona on 1995 – and 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. Fernando Reinares, *Al-Qaeda’s Revenge. The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, “Un análisis de los atentados terroristas en Barcelona y Cambrils”. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. These other nationalities, distinct from Moroccan and Spanish, include the following: French, Danish, Dutch, Belgian, Bulgarian, Italian, Portuguese, Algerian, Tunisian, Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean, Mexican, Paraguayan, Egyptian, Syrian, Saudi, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Senegalese and Nigerian. One of the individuals had two nationalities – Irish and Algerian – and another had both Algerian and French. None of these other nationalities is held by more than 3% of all the cases. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. To the countries mentioned in the previous endnote, The Netherlands must be excluded and must be added Jordan and Palestine. None of these countries, other than Morocco and Spain, is country of birth for more than 3,5% of all the cases. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. The Spanish Civil Code generally demands 10 years of legal residence for an individual to be able to request nationality, though the period is reduced to two years in the case of nationals from all of Latin America, Portugal, Andorra, the Philippines and Equatorial Guinea and of Sephardic Jews. Refugees can request nationality after a period of five years of residency. In Spain, however, *ius sanguinis* comes first and regulations grant access to Spanish nationality to persons born in Spain from Moroccan parents. These can request nationality for their child after he or she has been in the country for one year. Actually, for decades, large numbers of women from northern Morocco have given birth to their children in the hospitals of Ceuta and Melilla. Also, the grandchildren of these women will be able to request Spanish nationality as the children of someone born in Spain. Marriage to a Spaniard is another way of accessing nationality open to Moroccan nationals. In this case, one year of legal residence is required to request citizenship. See Carmen González Enríquez, “The Price of Spanish and European Citizenship”, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *ARI 4/2014*. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. Often at the expense of intra-family conflicts between first and second generations, much less inclined to a permanent return, as analyzed by Hein de Haas and Tineke Fokkema in “Intra-Household Conflicts in Migration Decision Making: Return and Pendulum Migration in Morocco”, *Population and Development Review* 36: 3 (2010), pp. 541-561. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. “Enquête auprès de la population marocaine résidant en Europe (France, Espagne, Italie, Belgique, Pays-Bas et Allemagne)”, commissioned by Conseil de la communauté marocaine à l’etranger to BVA Market Research & Consulting. Fieldwork interviews were conducted during March and April 2009. In Spain, the representative sample, comprising 413 individuals aged 18 to 65, included 392 first generation immigrants and 21 descendants or second generations: <https://www.ccme.org.ma/fr/publications/47412> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. Hind Tak-Tak, *La nationalité marocaine* (Casablanca: En toutes lettres, 2017), pp. 34-41. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Estadística del Padrón Continuo a 1 de enero de 2015*, <https://www.ine.es/dynt3/inebase/index.htm?type=pcaxis&file=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20%2Fe245%2Fp05%2F%2Fa2015>. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner and Giuseppe Pietrantuono, “Catalyst or Crown: Does Naturalization Promote the Long-Term Social Integration of Immigrants?”, *American Political Science Review*, 111: 2 (2017), pp. 256-276. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, *Sentencia 3/2017*; in addition, information obtained during the hearings of *Sumario 5/2016*, held in the Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Cuarta, Sala de Vistas 4, Génova Street premises, Madrid, on 7/II/2017; also, Fernando Reinares, Carola García-Calvo and Álvaro Vicente, “From Criminals to Terrorists and Back. Quarterly Report: Spain. Vol. 2”, Bratislava: National Security Program, Globsec, 2019, p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. To the detriment of the percentage share of jihadists convicted or deceased in Spain from 1996 to 2003 who were either nationals of, or born in, Algeria, Syria and Pakistan. One should also note that the considerable percentage of individuals with Spanish nationality during this same period corresponds to naturalized Spanish citizens of Syrian origin and, to a lesser degree, Moroccan origin. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, “Los yihadistas en España: perfil sociodemográfico de condenados por actividades terroristas o muertos en acto de terrorismo suicida entre 1996 y 2012” (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *DT 11/2013*), pp. 8-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. Fernando Reinares, *Al-Qaeda’s Revenge. The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings*, pp. 76-83 and 87-99. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. Fernando Reinares and 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”. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. Reinares and García-Calvo, “Los yihadistas en España: perfil sociodemográfico de condenados por actividades terroristas o muertos en acto de terrorismo suicida entre 1996 y 2012”, pp. 8-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. These calculations have been made based on the population that has as its country of either birth or nationality one of the 51 countries in which, according 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, 1,106,348 individuals reside in Spain who were either born in, or are nationals of, 28 of these 51 countries. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. Mohammed Maarouf, “Suicide bombing: the cultural foundations of Morocco’s new version of martyrdom,” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2013), pp. 1-33. Over the centuries, however, the *murabit* has been rivalled and to some extent overtaken by a different type with the same name, now an unarmed saint in the Maghreb countryside. See, on this matter, Brett Michael, “Mufti, Murabit, Marabout and Mahdi: 4 types in the Islamic history of North Africa”, *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 29 (1980), pp. 5-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
28. 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 of suicide attacks in defense of Islam, even if perpetrated in their own country. This figure fell to 13% in a new survey conducted on 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 this level of positive attitudes towards al-Qaeda’s leader fell to 26% in 2005; see Pew Research Center (2005), *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics*, Pew Research Center, Washington, pp. 2, 6, 27-29, and 37-38. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
29. Jack Kalpakian (2014), “Comparing the 2003 and 2007 incidents in Casablanca,” pp. 498-518 in Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares (eds.), *The Evolution of the Global Terrorism Threat. From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden’s Death*, Columbia University Press, New York; Scott Stewart (2011), “Dispatch: terrorist attack in Morocco,” *Stratfor Worldview*, 28/IV/2011. On the evolution of jihadist terrorism in Morocco, see Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb. The Transnationalisation of Domestic Terrorism* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2008), chapter 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
30. Information provided by the Bureau central d’investigation judiciaire (BCIJ), the Moroccan counter-terrorism agency, and gathered by the *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> [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. Ibid. See also: Richard Barret, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees* (New York: Soufan Group, 2017), pp. 13 y 25; and also the data provided by *Jihadist Foreign Fighters Monitor* of The Hague Center for Strategic Studies, <https://dwh.hcss.nl/apps/ftf_monitor/#section-ftf-total>; see also [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
32. Brian M. Perkins, “Morocco Continues to Face Terror Threat Despite Success of BCIJ”, *Terrorism Monitor* XVII: 13, pp. 1-2; also, concerning the Imlil cell members, Mohammed Masbah and Soudan Ahmadoun, “Morocco’s Failure to Reintegrate Former Jihadis”, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Sada* Analysis, 6 February 2019. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
33. Steven Kull et al., “Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and Al Qaeda”, College Park, Maryland: Program on International Policy Attitudes, 2007; The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2015), *Arab Opinion Index 2015*, The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, p. 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
34. On the influence of Salafist Moroccan clerics – including religious figures such as Omar el Haddouchi or Tarik Chadlioui — over members networks and cells dismantled in Spain between 2013 and 2018 see, for instance, Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, *Sentencia 23/2015*; Tribunal Supremo, Sala de lo Penal, *Sentencia 693/2016*; Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 4, *Auto* of 10 October 2018, p. 7; On the role played by Moroccan jihadist entrepreneurs – who were based in localities like Tetouan, Fnideq or Nador – and radicalizing agents see, for instance, Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 2, *Sumario 1/2014*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 3, *Sumario 7/2014*; Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 4, *Sumario 4/2015*; Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Menores, *Sentencia 1/2015*; Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Menores, *Sentencia 12/2015*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, *Sentencia 3/2015*; Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 1, *Sumario 3/2016;* Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, *Sentencia 17/2017*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Cuarta, *Sentencia 24/2017*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, *Sentencia 29/2017*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, *Sentencia 3/2018*. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
35. Bernabé López García and Mohamed Berriane (dirs.), *Atlas de la inmigración marroquí en España 2004* (Madrid: Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2004), pp. 128-130, 143-146, 154-158 and 174-176. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
36. Mohammed Guenfoudi, “Where do the Moroccan Jihadists Come from and Who do they Affiliate With?”, Rabat: Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis, 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
37. Data provided on 28 June 2018 by Mohamed Ben Issa, researcher at the then existing Centre Marocaine d’Etudes du Terrorisme et d’Extremisme, addressed in Martil. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
38. Ibidem; Mohammed Guenfoudi, “Where do the Moroccan Jihadists Come from and Who do they Affiliate With?”, Rabat: Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis, 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
39. David S. Wooldman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd El Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1968); María R. de Madariaga, *El barranco del lobo. Las guerras de Marruecos* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005) and, by the same autor, *Abd-el-Krim El Jatabi: la lucha por la independencia* (Madrid: Alianza, 2009); David Alvarado, *Rif: de Abdelkrim a los indignados de Alhucemas*, Madrid: Catarata, 2007); Anne Wolf, “Morocco’s Hirak movement and legacies of contention in the Rif”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
40. ### Leela Jacinto (2016), “Morocco’s outlaw country is the heartland of global terrorism,” *Foreign Policy*, 7 April 2016; see also the interview with Pierre Vermeren published, under the title “Daech s’appuie sur les réseaux criminels du Rif marocain”, in *L’Obs* on 1 April 2016.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
41. Ibid. See also Bernard Rougier, Pierre-François Mansour et Ahmed Almakir, “Molenbeek et la production islamiste à Bruxelles”, in Bernard Rougier (ed.), Les territoires conquis de l’islamisme (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2020), pp. 257-258. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
42. DBJS. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
43. “Real Decreto 1079/2015 de 27 de noviembre, por el que se declaran oficiales las cifras de población resultantes de la revisión del Padrón municipal referida al 1 de enero de 2015”, *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 301, 17 November 2015, Section III, p. 119001. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
44. Observatorio Andalusí, *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015*, *op. cit.*; Fernando M. Belmonte, *La Ley de Extranjería de 1985 y la transformación del espacio público en Melilla* (Melilla: Instituto de las Culturas, 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
45. Javier Jordán and Humberto Trujillo (2016), “Entornos favorables al reclutamiento yihadista. El barrio Príncipe Alfonso (Ceuta),” *Athena Intelligence Journal*, vol. 1, nº 1, pp. 22-24; Luis De la Corte, “¿Enclaves yihadistas? Un estudio sobre la presencia y el riesgo extremistas en Ceuta y Melilla,” *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2015), pp. 1-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
46. Carlos Rontomé, *Ceuta. Convivencia y conflicto en una sociedad multiétnica* (Ceuta: UNED, 2012); Ana I. Planet, *Melilla y Ceuta. Espacios-frontera hispano-marroquíes* (Melilla: Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla, Ciudad Autónoma de Ceuta y UNED, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
47. That is, the regions of Tanger-Tetouan–Al Hoceima, and the Oriental. 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 November 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
48. More concretely, three of such jihadist networks operated in Melilla and one more in Ceuta, while another network was present in both autonomous cities simultaneously. In June 2013, during one of these 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 radicalizing and recruiting young people to fight in Syria as foreign terrorist fighters (FTF); see Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 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 dedicated to the radicalization and recruitment of jihadists of Maghrebi origin (residents mainly in Morocco, but also in other European countries) as FTF (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 this network operated from Melilla and the locality of Al Arouit, near Nador; see Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 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 principally dedicated to the recruitment and sending of FTFs to the north of Mali were arrested in Melilla. Members of this cell also organized indoctrination and training seminars in the nearby Moroccan localities of Farhana and Nador; see Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 4, *Sumario 4/2015*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, *Sentencia 17/2017*. As a result of another joint counterterrorism operation, codenamed Ulbah, conducted on April 2015, a married couple –she is Spanish, he is Moroccan— was arrested in Melilla shortly after they attempted to travel to Syria with their baby, in connection with a transnational jihadist network based across the border in Morocco; see Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 1, *Sumario 3/2016* and Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, *Sentencia 29/2017*. 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 dedicated themselves to the recruitment of 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*; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, *Sentencia 3/2015*. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
49. In the case of the province of Barcelona, these individuals were born in the city of Barcelona, in Granollers and in Sant Boi de Llobregrat. In the case of the province of Gerona, they were born in the municipality of Ripoll. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
50. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo (2015), “Cataluña y la evolución del terrorismo yihadista en España,” Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *Comentario Elcano 28/2015*. 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*; Reinares (2014), *op. cit*., pp. 30-32 y 215-225. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
51. Reinares and García-Calvo (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 16; DBJS, though here from a total of 99 jihadists corresponding to the dataset on jihadists convicted or dead in Spain between 1 January 2013 and 15 April 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
52. DBJS; 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. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
53. Rebeca Carranco (2016), “[Los salafistas controlan una de cada tres mezquitas en Cataluña](https://elpais.com/ccaa/2016/06/18/catalunya/1466267306_699909.html),” El País, 18/VI/2016. On the extension of Salafism in Catalonia, see Jordi Moreras, *Identidades a la intemperie. Una mirada antropológica a la radicalización en Europa* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2018), pp. 191-244. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
54. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo (2018), “Un análisis de los atentados terroristas en Barcelona y Cambrils,” ARI, nº 12/2018, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
55. These 19 jihadists, though arrested in Spain during the period covered in our study, were residents of Belgium, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
56. There are only four exceptions, corresponding to individuals whose parents came to Spain from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
57. To estimate the weight of this percentage of descendants we have used data from the Observatorio Andalusí, *Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana. Explotación estadística del censo de ciudadanos musulmanes en España referido a fecha 31/12/2015*, *op. cit.;* Jordi Moreras (2018), “Spain,” pp. 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 important 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 turned the net flow into negative in 2011. See: Colectivo IOÉ (2012), “Crisis e inmigración marroquí en España, 2007-2011,” Colectivo IOÉ, Madrid. Interestingly also, the representative samples of individuals, aged 18 and older, of Moroccan nationality and origin living in the six Western European countries with largest Moroccan populations, which BVA Market Research & Consulting designed for the 2009 survey “Enquête auprès de la population marocaine résidant en Europe (France, Espagne, Italie, Belgique, Pays-Bas et Allemagne)”, commissioned by Conseil de la Communauté Marocaine à l’Etranger, included 5% interviewees of second generation in the case of Spain, 8% in Italy, 13% in Germany, 33% in Belgium, 39% in France and 47% in The Netherlands:

    <https://www.ccme.org.ma/fr/publications/47412> [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
58. Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard (2015), *Eurojihad.* *Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, New York, ch. 5; Peter R. Neumann (2016), *Radicalized. New Jihadists and the Threat to the West*, I.B. Tauris, London, ch. 4 and 5; Gilles Kepel, *Terror in France. The Rise of Jihad in the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
59. Fernando Reinares (2017), “Jihadist mobilization, undemocratic Salafism, and terrorist threat in the European Union,” *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, Special Issue, pp. 70-76. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
60. Here we follow the conceptualization of diaspora as discussed in Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, *Oxford Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 105. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
61. Illustrations of this can be found in Chapter III of the study by Mónica Díaz López and Elisa Lillo on one Madrid neighborhood, titled *Los hijos de la inmigración magrebí en San Cristóbal de los Ángeles* (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Madrid, 2014). Also, see: Jordi Moreras (2015), “¿Por qué unos jóvenes se radicalizan y otros no?” *Notes Internacionals*, no. 123, CIDOB, Barcelona. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
62. Peter K. Waldmann (2010), “Radicalisation in the Diaspora: Why Muslims in the West Attack Their Host Countries”, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *WP 9/2010*; Jordi Moreras (2015), *op. cit.* [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
63. “Detenen tres presumptes jihadistes a Barcelona i Granollers,” *TV3*, 28/XI/2015. For an ethnographic approach to the difficulties faced by Moroccan adolescents living in Catalonia when constructing their identities within the school environment and the broader sociocultural context, see Jordi Pàmies, “Las identidades escolares y sociales de los jóvenes marroquíes en Cataluña (España)”, *Perspectivas* 10: 1 (2011), pp. 144-168. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
64. DBJS; the settlement of Moroccan immigrants in Spain started in Catalonia and then extended towards other regions across Spain. See: Walter Actis, Carlos Pereda and Miguel A. de Prada, *Presencia del sur. Marroquíes en Cataluña* (Barcelona: Fundamentos, 1994), chapters 6 and 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
65. In addition, six converts arrested in Spain for activities related to jihadist terrorism between 2012 and 2018 were not residing in the country. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
66. Western European countries of nationality or birth for the jihadists who are converts include Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Sweden; Latin American countries of nationality or birth among them include Argentina, Brasil, Chile, México and Paraguay. Source: EDJS. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
67. On the Islamization of radicalism, with respect to current jihadism, see Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death. The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (London: Hurst, 2017), chapter 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
68. Marion van San (2015), “Lost souls? Belgian and Dutch converts joining the Islamic State”, Perspectives on Terrorism, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 47–56. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
69. Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, Sentencia 36/2005. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
70. Interview with a police expert in jihadist terrorism conducted by one of the authors in Barcelona, April 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
71. Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Primera, *Sentencia 19/2018;* “La yihadista de Almonte contactó con el islamismo en Sevilla”, *ABC*, 25 October 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
72. Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Menores, Sentencia 14/2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
73. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
74. Petter Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism in Europe* (Hurst and Company, London, 2015), chapter. 9; Reinares (2017), *op.cit.* [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
75. Fernando Reinares, Carola García-Calvo and Álvaro Vicente, *Yihadismo y yihadistas en España*, op. cit., pp. 49 and 54-55. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
76. Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2014*; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2015*; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016*; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018*; Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019*. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
77. Fernando Reinares, “Tras el 11 de marzo: estructuras de seguridad interior y prevención del terrorismo global en España”, pp. 103-139 in Charles T Powell and Fernando Reinares (Eds.), Las democracias occidentales frente al terrorismo global (Barcelona, Ariel, 2008),. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo “Spain’s Shifting Approach to Jihadism Post-3/11”, pp. 35-58 in Lorenzo Vidino, ed., *De-Radicalization in the Mediterranean. Comparing Challenges and Approaches* (Milano: ISPI and Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2018) [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
78. Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, “Cooperación antiterrorista entre España y Marruecos”, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *ARI 18/2015*. On the classification of Spain and Morocco as political regimes, see The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2019*, <http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>; also [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
79. Ana I. Planet, “Islam in Spain: From Historical Question to Social Debate”, in *Observing Islam in Spain. Contemporary Politics and Social Dynamics,* ed. Ana I. Planet (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 16*.* [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
80. “Marruecos admite que financia casi todas las mezquitas de Ceuta y Melilla”, Agencia EFE,

    21/XI/2018 (2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-81)