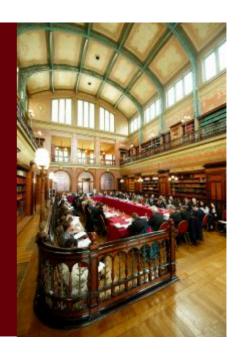
SDA Lunch Debate

Lessons from Mumbai: Re-evaluating European counterterrorism policies



May 11, 2009 Bibliothèque Solvay, Brussels



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Photographs: David Plas Year of publication: 2009

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Programme

Lessons of Mumbai:

Re-evaluating counterterrorism policies in Europe

Lunch Debate – Monday, May 11, 2009 Bibliothèque Solvay, 12:45-14:30



The terrorist attack centred on Mumbai's Taj Mahal Hotel last November, a low-tech yet highly sophisticated operation, paralysed the city and defied the precautions of India's sophisticated counterterrorism unit. The attack's guerrilla warfare tactics instead of the more common Al Qaeda bombings raise questions about EU counterterrorism efforts. Should EU counterterrorism be substantially overhauled to address the threat posed by urban warfare tactics? How best can the lessons of Mumbai be incorporated into EU counterterrorism efforts? How equipped and how flexible is the EU and its member states when faced with threats of terrorism that are constantly changing and evolving?

Speakers:

Gilles de Kerchove, EU Counterterrorism Coordinator

Daniel Keohane, Senior Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies

Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia, International Institute for Strategic Studies

Peter Vergauwen, First Officer, SC5 Terrorism Unit, EUROPOL

Moderated by Giles Merritt, Director of the Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

Lessons of Mumbai: Re-evaluating counterterrorism policies in Europe

ʻls re-evaluation European Ωf counterterrorism necessary, or were the terrorist attacks in Mumbai last November simply a one-off?' asked Security and Defence Agenda (SDA) Director Giles Merritt as he opened the debate on the implications of the Mumbai terrorist attacks, held at the Bibliothèque Solvay in Brussels on May 11, 2009.

Certainly, the Mumbai attacks were "creative, innovative, audacious and yet quite simple," according to Gilles de Kerchove. EU Counterterrorism Coordinator. The approach used during the 50-hour siege that claimed 170 lives was a unique one, de Kerchove said, speaking at the event. "[It was] the combination of tactics in one single opera-



dented classical guerilla warfare with 21st century tools." added. also drew parallels between the European Union and India. the l world's most populous democracy, and argued

that

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is unprece-

face very similar challenges in reconciling freedom with security measures. To accomplish this, methods will have to be the importance of "turning the page on "It's tailored. quite clear

what we should do," he said. "Help this government shift from a military approach [towards counterterrorism] to a law enforcement-based strategy."

The first hurdle in that process has already been cleared, as the Pakistanis have shown, for the first time, a willingness to take advice from the Europeans on the matter. "They were eager to work with the EU," de Kerchove said of his recent trip to the region. "When my predecessor came to Pakistan two or three years ago he wasn't able to meet the key people. They would only talk to him about textile tariffs."

However, it isn't the responsibility of the European Union as a collective body to fight terrorism, de Kerchove reminded the SDA audience. National security is primarily the responsibility of individual member states with the EU constrained to a supporting role. And the best way for member states to fight terrorism is by preventing radicalisation, de Kerchove emphasised, particularly amongst young people in Europe. He also called for closer links between the intelligence community and private the (especially transportation and finance) to he thwart attacks in the future. Although de He Kerchove lauded the amount of work done in the field, he also expressed concern that not enough was being done by the EU to prevent radicalisation and terrorism in failed states like Somalia and Yemen, arguing that "that's where Al Qaida likes to resettle." He pointed towards what he saw as a trend of regional mobilisation for Al Qaida in South Asia and the Middle East and described the increasing linkages between Al Qaida and groups like the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) as meriting caution.

Turning towards EU-US cooperation on counterterrorism measures, he stressed cooperation between the US and the EU. Finally, turning to the future of EU counterterrorism policies, de Kerchove emphasised the need to utilise all tools at the disposal of the EU, including organisations like Europol and Frontex.

Peter Vergauwen of Europol challenged assertions that the tactics and strategy of the Mumbai attacks were unprecedented. "I'm not all that convinced this is a shift sentiment towards the West and needs a and a new kind of attack," he said at the more roundtable. He added that the situation is far from comparable to any EU scenario. The security setting and the challenges that a densely populated city such as Mumbai faces on a day-to-day basis cannot be compared with any urban provide environment in the European Union. With the logistics more favourable and

Peter Vergauwen

measures to deal with Mumbai-type attacks.

Dialogue between the EU and NATO could do with improvement on the matter. Daniel Keohane, a senior fellow at the EU-ISS, said, addressing the audience of high-level policymakers, military, media that the chief reason the attack "stood out"

Guantanamo", a precursor for deepened and think-tanks. He added that the EU acted like, and should be viewed as a, "counterterrorism think-tank", helping member states assess their Security challenges. He also highlighted the importance of thinking creatively in terms of counterterrorism strategy to draw information from failed plots as well as successful ones. Additionally, the EU ought to review its non-existent image in the Muslim world to counter radical

> transparent and vocal hierarchy in order to bloc with a face and а clear task, Keohane arqued.

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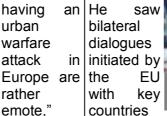
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like India and Pakistan as being a step in He the right direction, as well as the EU's efforts to push for international legal agreements dealing with terrorism and assistance provided to third party states to develop counterterrorism resources and training programmes. He also reminded the audience that the EU's internal counterterrorism policies were limited, since the EU as a collective entity lacks the power to spy, arrest or prosecute.

Providing an Indian perspective to the debate, Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, a senior fellow for South Asia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, pointed out from the eight major terrorist attacks his country had experienced in 2008 alone was that foreign nationals were a target.

Moreover, he explained that LeT, once a narrowly-focused Kashmiri



Rahul Roy-Chaudhury

organisation. moving towards global jihad | Senior cations than for continent.

He explained that the was a or banned

organisa-

tion, both in Pakistan and internationally, eradication of the LeT would be made particularly difficult because of the organisation's strong philanthropic wing, which operates hospitals and provides other charitable services in Pakistan. He saw a role for the EU in cooperating with countries in the region to prevent training and recruitment by the LeT and other similar organisations.

Coming back to the EU approach to counterterrorism, Gilles de Kerchove said that the most successful approach so far was to find "member states who have more expertise in one subject" and then get them to take the lead in that particular area. Turning to his recent trip to the Middle East, he also commented that media communication was an important aspect of counterterrorism strategy and Peter Vergauwen commented that the stressed the importance of countering EUROPOL's legal mandate was far more what he described as the "Al Qaida restrictive than that of Interpol and thus

narrative". Speaking about the EU's image - or lack thereof - in the Muslim world, de Kerchove said he believed that the EU "didn't sell its product very well".

militant | Question and Answer Session

was The first question of the afternoon an was posed by ideology of Edwin Bakker, with much Research Fellow wider impli- and Head of the Security and just | Conflict the Programme Indian sub-the Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael) while who questioned LeT whether bilateral



EU-wide

initiatives were more important for European counterterrorism. SDA Director Giles Merritt summarised Bakker's query, asking if the EU was wrapped in red tape. Giles de Kerchove responded that since the threat posed by terrorism was not the same for member states, it was logical for "more directly concerned member states to work closely together." He called for greater cooperation information-sharing and through Europol and advocated learning experiences US from the of counterterrorism initiatives. He cited French-Spanish cooperation in fighting the Basque separatist group ETA as an example of successful bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism and saw a similar opportunity for cooperation with Turkey against terrorism by the PKK, a Kurdish separatist group.

He cited "Check the Web", a Europol tool Kerchove developed under the German Presidency to monitor and analyse jihadi while it was up



Giles Merritt and Gilles de Kerchove

websites, as an example of a tool in cieties. combating terrorism but he thought that ate the real value of it." He went on to say British government effective enact "unconvinced of the added value."

extradition treaties, but described the such a "spoiling [EU- US] cooperation."

relevant to terrorism.

Valentina Pop, a journalist from the EU transparency and coordination",

cooperation was somewhat more difficult. inmates from the detention facility. De

EU explained that individual to member states decide to whether or not take in former Guantanamo inmates. detainees that are cleared for release should be seen as posing no risk to the host so-



Valentina Pop

"very few member states seem to appreci- Speaking next, Alice Reynolds of the said that while Europol - and indeed the EU in prolonged and simple nature of the general - had the necessary tools to Mumbai attacks posed distinct challenges counterterrorism as compared to a bomb attack and asked strategies, he wondered whether there what sort of implications these attacks might exist a "dysfunction in political will had for counterterrorism response forces. and practical ability", with member states She highlighted the linkages between organised crime and terrorism, and asked how easy it would be to access the Giles Merritt then asked to what extent the weaponry used in the Mumbai attacks. new Obama administration altered EU-US Rahul Roy-Chaudhury described the cooperation on counterterrorism. De audacity and brazenness of the attacks as Kerchove cited the Bush era as leading to surprising India; there had been past certain areas of cooperation, such as EU attacks by groups like LeT, but never with display of strenath Bush administration's policies vis à vis the organisational capabilities. He cited LeT's Guantanamo Bay detention facility as Indian membership and linkages with other Indian-based terrorist organisations like Indian Mujahideen as facilitating such He saw Guantanamo a tricky subject for attacks and lambasted what he saw as an President Obama and called for the US to "appalling intelligence failure" ahead of share more information with Europol the attacks. He saw the Indian security apparatus as being "very turf-conscious" and "not in the business of greater Observer, furthered the discussion on called for greater coordination both on the Guantanamo by asking what sort of Indian subcontinent and internationally. security risks would be posed to Coming back to the relationship between European member states in accepting the media and terrorism, Giles Merritt the emergence of a new breed of media- Tigner, editor of Security Europe, who savvy terrorists who understood that a asked about European intelligence sharsustained siege was the best way to ing, and whether or not it was in the Eudominate news schedules. De Kerchove ropol mandate to share information agreed that many terrorist organisations directly with third countries. have proven to be very effective through communication technology and thought De Kerchove explained that intelligence that as a response, the EU needed to fell outside EU competencies, and that develop a "counter-media tactic". He also intelligence exchanges with third parties commented that it was not always clear to like him who spoke for the EU. He believed possible since they did not yet satisfy the that EU citizens "don't care who the desired level of data protection. response comes from so long as the command structure is clear."

Shifting to Europol's role counterterrorism response, Giles Merritt extent the AfPak region posed a threat to asked if Europol shouldn't be more visible the EU. De Kerchove pointed to the obviin the aftermath of terrorist attacks with a ous security risks caused by ongoing pan-European dimension. Vergauwen saw such responses as being cases where EU youngsters go to Pakilargely the responsibility of the member stan for training and are brainwashed" by states. Returning to the question of militant ideologies. access to weaponry needed to carry out Mumbai-style attacks. reminded the audience of the impact of from

was "not uncommon" in the early 1990s to see incidents European capitals, includina Brussels, involving Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, and grenades. He warned against turning a blind



eve on the unstable region today, as it not outside the could become a source for weapons in realm of possi-European-focused terrorist attacks.

asked if the real lesson from Mumbai was The next question was posed by Brooks

Russia Turkey or

Thomas Renard, Research Fellow at the Royal Institute for International Relations in (EGMONT), asked De Kerchove to what Peter conflicts in the region as well as "many

Vergauwen The final question of the afternoon came Mark Johnson, Director the Balkans conflict in the early 1990s on European Markets, Sales and Marketing, the supply of arms in Europe. He said it Emergent BioSolutions, who asked about the risk of bioterrorism in Europe and the EU's

> position on preparedness for such attacks. Kerchove agreed that the threat chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks was very important to consider and that the creation of dirty bombs by Al Qaida was

bility. He hoped



that by the end of the upcoming Swedish presidency of the EU "clever policy decisions" would be taken regarding bioterrorism preparedness.



Bringing the debate to a close, Giles Merritt described what he saw as the two main themes emanating from the discussion. The first was the changing nature to the terrorist threat.

which he saw as becoming much less evident, and much broader. The second was the

implications of the financial crisis for international security, particularly with regards to terrorism. He saw immigrant communities in Europe as being the first to suffer as the economic situation worsens, and wondered about the effects of such economic hardship on radicalisation.

De Kerchove concluded by saying that while he believed substantial progress

had been made in EU counterterrorism efforts since 9/11, he saw the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty as being critical in boosting cooperation and compromise amongst member states. He saw a need for more EU external action to prevent terrorist attacks and described the solidarity clause of the Lisbon Treaty as something that would force the EU to be more efficient.

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About the Security & Defence Agenda





The Security & Defence Agenda (SDA) is the only specialist Brussels-based think-tank where EU institutions, NATO, national governments, industry, specialised and international media, think tanks, academia and NGOs gather to discuss the future of European and transatlantic security and defence policies in Europe and worldwide.

Building on the combined expertise and authority of those involved in our meetings, the SDA gives greater prominence to the complex questions of how EU and NATO policies can complement one another, and how transatlantic challenges such as terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction can be met.

By offering a high-level and neutral platform for debate, the SDA sets out to clarify policy positions, stimulate discussion and ensure a wider understanding of defence and security issues by the press and public opinion.

SDA Activities:

- Monthly Roundtables and Evening debates
- Press Dinners and Lunches
- International Conferences
- Reporting Groups and special events

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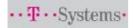
















































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The SDA gratefully acknowledges the generous support from the following governments:



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