

TERRORISM AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. A CASE STUDY ON EUROPE

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*Abstract:*The proposed article aims at analyzing the complex relationship between religious liberty and the terrorist phenomenon. The research questions will revolve around the theories advocating for a restriction of religious freedom, as imperative for counterterrorist activities and to prevent the spread of terrorism, as well as around those claiming the opposite, that religious freedom, in fact, tends to undermine the terrorist activities and resentment against restrictive laws. A secondary objective is to provide an answer to the interrogation whether the fight against terrorism is more successful by restricting or increasing religious liberties.

The study will focus on the main terrorist manifestations beginning with 2001, analyzing the main motivations behind those attacks and whether there could be identified any indicators that point to a connection between religious terrorism and the status of religious freedom in those specific areas where the terrorist incidents occurred.

Keywords: religious freedom, terrorism, religion, Europe, The United States

Introduction

Religious freedom is a basic human right, included in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and other documents, with forms of manifestation which may be diversely expressed in various societies.

Back in 1948, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* stated that ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.’¹ *The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution* declares that ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; (...).’² In Europe, freedom of religion is stipulated in Article 9 of the *European Convention on Human Rights*³ and Article 10 of the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights*⁴. The *EU*

¹ *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>, accessed on June 13th, 2019.

² *Constitution of the United States*, https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm#amendments, accessed on June 12th, 2019.

³ ‘1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.’ (<https://www.jus.uio.no/lm/coe.convention.on.human.rights.1950.and.protocols.to.1966/9.html>, accessed on June 12th, 2019)

⁴ ‘1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. The right to conscientious objection is recognised, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of this right.’ (<https://fra.europa.eu/en/charterpedia/article/10-freedom-thought-conscience-and-religion>, accessed on June 12th, 2019)

Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief adopted in 2013, underlined that ‘the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is a fundamental right of every human being’: ‘As a universal human right, freedom of religion or belief safeguards respect for diversity. Its free exercise directly contributes to democracy, development, rule of law, peace and stability. Violations of freedom of religion or belief may exacerbate intolerance and often constitute early indicators of potential violence and conflicts.’⁵

Overall, in all Member States the respect and protection of religious freedom are integrated in the constitution and enshrined in the law.

The Impact of Terrorism after 9/11

The 9/11 terrorist attack represented a milestone not exclusively for the terrorist phenomenon of the 21st century and its evolvement, but its impact went beyond to influence the way we perceive security, privacy, human rights, religion. There was a new type of vulnerability experienced not only by the United States, but other countries as well, stemming from a general understanding that if a superpower was attacked then no place was safe any longer.

After the 9/11 attacks, U.S. attorney-general John Ashcroft addressed the Senate committee and made the claim that ‘terrorists exploit our openness,’ warning that ‘terrorists are told how to use America’s freedom as a weapon against us.’⁶

The general number of terrorist incidents increased after 9/11. According to the *Global Terrorism Index*⁷ (GTI) created in 2012 by The Institute for Economics & Peace, overall, ‘in the decade since 9/11, fatalities from terrorist attacks have increased by 195%, incidents by 460% and injuries by 224%.’⁸ The U.S. however marked a decrease in the period 2001-2012 in the number of incidents and fatalities, dropping from the first position in the index to the 41st. The same source indicated that ‘often perceived as a major target for terrorist attacks, North America is the least likely region to suffer from terrorism, with a fatality rate 19 times lower than Western Europe.’⁹

The United States witnessed between 2002-2011, 127 terrorist incidents, the majority of them, 30% were perpetrated by environmentalists and animal activists, belonging to groups such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and The Animal Liberation Front (ALF); the anti-abortion activists were responsible for 7% of all attacks, and a small number of attacks, 3% were authored by organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).¹⁰ The total number of deaths resulted from all terrorist attacks between 2002 and 2011 was 23, and 76 individuals injured,

⁵ *EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief*, FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting Luxembourg, 24 June 2013, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137585.pdf, accessed on June 12th, 2019.

⁶ John Ashcroft, *Senate Committee on the Judiciary*, 6 December 2001, www.justice.gov/archive/ag/testimony/2001/1206transcriptsenatejudiciarycommittee.htm, accessed on August 15th, 2019.

⁷ ‘The index combines a number of factors associated with terrorist attacks to build a thorough picture of the impact of terrorism over a 10-year period, illustrating trends, and providing a useful data series for further analysis by researchers and policymakers. The GTD is considered to be the most comprehensive dataset on terrorist activity and has codified over 104,000 cases of terrorism.’ (*2012 Global Terrorism Index: Capturing the Impact of Terrorism from 2002 – 2011*, p. 6)

⁸ *2012 Global Terrorism Index: Capturing the Impact of Terrorism from 2002 – 2011*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/2012-global-terrorism-index-capturing-impact-terrorism-2002-2011>, accessed June 13th, 2019.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Global Terrorism Index (GTI)*, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2012-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf>, accessed on June 13, 2019, p. 22.

in fact, the GTI 2012 indicates that in the U.S. there was one of the most radical decreases in terrorist activities and victims in the period 2002 to 2011.¹¹

The Index also analyzed the various number of factors linked with terrorism, thus, overall, countries with a high degree of protection and compliance in regards to human rights are typically associated with low levels of terrorism.¹²

Compared to the U.S., Europe experienced more terrorist incidents, with an overall number of 2,341 attacks, out of which two thirds were committed by unknown perpetrators.¹³

Spain witnessed the second highest ranking incident of this period, when the Madrid train bombing occurred on 11 March 2004, causing 191 deaths. The attack, of the greatest amplitude witnessed by a Western country after 9/11, was perpetrated by the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades, a jihadist organization with links to Al-Qaeda. The profiles of the perpetrators indicated they arrived in the decade after 1990 as first generation economic migrants, most of them residing in Europe illegally, although some were legally based here, had basic education and most of them have been radicalized while in Spain.¹⁴

Fernando Reinares, who examined in detail the attack, comes to the following conclusions regarding the radicalization process of the perpetrators, indicating that ‘only 12 to 13 individuals part of the network internalized a jihadist ideology after the invasion of Iraq,’ while ‘13 to 14 of the network’s members adopted a violent ideology before the invasion of Iraq.’¹⁵ Reinares further underlines that ‘of these, five to six individuals were radicalized after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent military intervention in Afghanistan’, while ‘eight became prone to terrorism before the 9/11 attacks’, and equally important, ‘the network’s members who radicalized before 9/11 were the main actors in the March 2004 attacks, and they were also critical radicalizing agents for the rest of the group.’¹⁶ In short, the main motivations fueling the involvement in the terrorist activities are diverse but converging to an *Islamic injustice frame*, ‘to major conflicts involving Muslim communities,’ from Bosnia before 9/11, or Afghanistan afterward, as well as the invasion of Iraq.¹⁷

After the attack the Spanish Minister of the Interior ‘proposed a law to control the sermons of *imam*’, a proposal ‘greeted with mixed reviews,’ as it was denounced by the president of the Islamic Commission of Spain, but welcomed by the Maghrebi union.¹⁸

Another important terrorist incident taking place in Europe in 2004 was the murder of Theo van Gogh by a Dutch citizen of Moroccan origins, born and raised in Amsterdam. On a November morning during the month of Ramadan, on a busy street of Amsterdam, Mohammed Bouyeri shot and slaughtered Theo van Gogh, famous for his anti-Islamist position, and for the documentary *Submission*¹⁹, he had released a few months earlier. In the

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Global Terrorism Index (GTI)*, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2012-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf>, p. 37.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

¹⁴ This does not represent a typical case of *homegrown terrorism*, only the profile of one perpetrator of Moroccan origins arriving in Spain when he was 10 and attending school here, could be integrated in this pattern. (B. Hoffman, F. Reinares, *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death*, Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 38-39)

¹⁵ F. Reinares, ‘Jihadist Radicalization and the 2004 Madrid Bombing Network’, in *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 2, Nov. 2009, p. 17.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

¹⁸ Jocelyne Cesari, ‘The Securitisation of Islam in Europe’, *CEPS Challenge Paper*, No. 15, 9 April 2009, p.7, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/98995/CP015%20Securitisation%20of%20Islam.pdf>, accessed on August 15th, 2019.

¹⁹ The short film produced and directed by Theo van Gogh, and written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, was a provocative illustration of the mistreatment of women in Islam, intended to draw attention to the status of women and

Open Letter to Hirsi Ali, left on the body of van Gogh, Bouyeri both threatened Ayaan Hirsi Ali²⁰ and ‘blamed politicians for allowing Jewish influences in politics.’²¹ There was another earlier letter, addressed to the Dutch population, in which he ‘announced attacks against Dutch public places, justifying the attacks because of the support of the Dutch government for the United States and Israel.’²²

The unexpected terrorist incident whose victim was Theo van Gogh represented a milestone for the Netherlands. The openness to other cultures, tolerance of religion, and immigration began to be put into question in a country that before this terrorist incident used to take pride in being an exponent of freedom and tolerance. In the aftermath of the attack a heated public debate heightened in the Dutch society with diverse reactions, from those declaring a *war on terrorism*, to those associating the incident with the negative consequences of globalization and immigration. The Netherlands was changed forever: ‘Muslim men became suspects, whether they were charged with a crime or not. People began eyeing Muslims with a different view. Instead of embracing them, the Dutch started marginalizing them. The liberal safe-haven of The Netherlands was never the same.’²³

The analysis of Meindert Fennema, professor at the University of Amsterdam genuinely illustrate this atmosphere of confusion and reconsiderations immediately after the attack: ‘The [murder] of Van Gogh initiated an enormous backlash, both among the intellectual elite and the middle class, who said we have always been far too soft with immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, but also among the extreme right, or the youth that had extreme right sympathies but was never organized in an extreme right party.’²⁴

Another illustration of the immediate impact belongs to Andre Krouwel, political scientist at Amsterdam's Free University, who referred to a new model of integration: ‘No longer is the model that ethnic minorities should basically organize themselves, have separate organizations, cultural organizations, sports organizations, political organization in terms of unions, and all kinds of representational organizations. That is no longer the case. They now have to participate in the Dutch mainstream organizations.’²⁵

The second major terrorist attack taking place in Europe after 9/11 was the 2005 London bombings that led to 56 deaths and 784 people injured. The four terrorists were all British citizens, and with one exception, all were born on British soil. A closer look to Mohammed Siddique Khan, the leader of the group, reveals no indicators that could have predicted his violent actions: he had a university degree, belonged to the middle-class, had a family, he spent time getting involved in various community projects and has taught for a time at a primary school focusing especially on children with special needs. The main trigger factors which led to the radicalization were related to what was perceived as the general violence against Muslims. Another one of the four terrorists, is believed to have “‘idolized” bin Laden and was consumed by what he regarded as Britain’s anti-Muslim policies pertaining to Kashmir, Iraq, and Afghanistan.”²⁶ There were two video tapes recorded, so called *martyrdom videos*, which offered more clear indications on the motivations these perpetrators had: ‘Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly

‘intended to provoke discussion on the position of enslaved Muslim women. It’s directed at the fanatics, the fundamentalists,’ as van Gogh himself declared when asked about the reasons he made the movie.

²⁰ Hirsi Ali was called in the letter an *infidel fundamentalist who marches with the soldiers of evil*.

²¹ B. Hoffman, F. Reinares, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ William DeLong, “Theo Van Gogh’s Film on Islam Was So Controversial, He Was Killed Over It,” in *ATI*, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/theo-van-gogh>, accessed on July 13th, 2019.

²⁴ Mark Baker, “Netherlands: Dutch Immigration (Part 1) -- The Death Of Multiculturalism”, in *Radio Free Europe*, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1056019.html>, accessed on July 13th, 2019.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ B. Hoffman, F. Reinares, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation....²⁷

After the attack the Metropolitan police stopped and searched more than 10,000 people under section 44 of the *Terrorism Act 2000*, most of them Asian and black people. A *Prevent Strategy* was also published in 2006, and the Counter-Terrorism and Security (CTS) Act 2015 gave the Prevent Strategy a statutory basis²⁸. *The rules of the game have changed*, said Tony Blair, the Prime Minister at the time, indicating that ‘the Human Rights Act would be amended if necessary to make the deportation of people inciting terrorism more straightforward.’²⁹

Terrorist attacks increased significantly after 2012, thus in 2014 the number of fatalities was 80% higher than in 2013, and the regions in focus were Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria, where 78% of all deaths and 57% of all attacks occurred.³⁰

In the case of the West, there were the socio-economic factors such as youth unemployment and drug crime that correlated with terrorism: ‘Ten of the eleven countries most affected by terrorism also have the highest rates of refugees and internal displacement. This highlights the strong inter-connectedness between the current refugee crisis, terrorism and conflict.’³¹ The GTI also underlined that ‘Islamic fundamentalism was not the main driver of terrorism in Western countries: 80% of lone wolf deaths were by political extremists, nationalists, racial and religious supremacists.’³²

The characteristics of the terrorist phenomenon in 2015 indicate a change of pattern, when compared to the previous years. A notable point is that ISIS succeeded in spreading its terror and reached Europe, where using ‘transnational tactics in combination with lone actor attacks inspired by the group’ caused an increase in terrorist incidents witnessed by many OECD countries and resulting in a 650 per cent increase in deaths to 577 from 77 in 2014.³³

January 7, 2015 was the day the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris was under terrorist attack. This represented one of the most important terrorist incident related to ISIS that took place in France, and beyond the casualties, one needs to observe a pattern previously associated with al-Qaeda, that of transnational group-based terrorism. Among other consequences, almost instantaneously a freedom of speech versus freedom of religion debate sparked.

In an article published in *Le Monde* on 24 November 2015, ‘Le djihadisme est une révolte générationnelle et nihiliste,’ Olivier Roy explains that in order to have a correct understanding of the phenomenon of radicalization two false assumptions must be avoided: ‘1. Muslim youth and to a large extent Islam are erroneously considered endemically unable to integrate within Western societies and today’s international system;’ and 2. ‘Negative postcolonial legacies, perceptions of being inevitably excluded from Western societies (such that of France), as well as a strong sense of identification with the Palestinian cause and

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

²⁸ There has been significant criticism associated with the Prevent Strategy, related to the potential it has for causing Islamophobia and intolerance.

²⁹ Simon Jeffery, “The Rules of the Game are Changing,” in *The Guardian*, 5 August 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/aug/05/july7.uksecurity5>, accessed on July 13th, 2019.

³⁰ *Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2015-measuring-and-understanding-impact-terrorism>, accessed on June 13th, 2019.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Global Terrorism Index 2016*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2016>, accessed on June 13th, 2019.

opposition to Western intervention in the Middle East, are wrongly believed to be the decisive drivers of jihadism's allure. In reality, these are not the strongest reasons behind new-generation Muslims' fight and militancy against the Western world, especially in Europe.³⁴ For Roy the key to deciphering the phenomenon of radicalization lies predominantly in a confusion of identity manifested by the second and third generations of Muslim communities who no longer feel connected to the ethos and identity of their predecessors but at the same time they do not feel connected to the 'new identity'. According to Roy, based on the analysis of the biographies of 'homegrown' European terrorists one could conclude they are rather violent nihilists who adopt Islam than violent religious fundamentalists and he claims that 'terrorism does not arise from the radicalisation of Islam, but from the Islamisation of radicalism.'³⁵ He further makes the point that 'violent radicalisation is not the consequence of religious radicalisation,' and that religious fundamentalism 'does not necessarily lead to political violence.'³⁶

Roy compiled a database of around 100 individuals associated in the last 20 years with terrorism in France and Belgium, among which those responsible for the major attacks in these two countries. The recurrent characteristics indicate they are 'second generation; fairly well integrated at first; period of petty crime; radicalisation in prison; attack and death – weapons in hand – in a standoff with the police.'³⁷ Some other elements of particular importance for our research are those related to the religious environment, and based on Roy's analyses, their 'relationship to the local mosque was ambivalent', they did not belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, nor had taken part in 'proselytising activities, none of them were members of a Palestinian solidarity movement', and 'they were not first radicalised by a religious movement before turning to terrorism,'³⁸ with some exceptions in Britain.

Olivier Roy considers that the debate in Europe has shifted in some 25 years from immigration to the visible symbols of Islam. Various manifestations and symbols of the religious practices of communities with a migrant background, from veils to minarets have sparked opposition, tensions, and sometimes even violence. Analyzing the status of Islam in Europe, Roy identifies a *strange phenomenon*: the anti-immigration feelings mainly associated with the conservative right, but at the same time an opposition to Islam which is part both of the left and the right³⁹: "For the right, Europe is Christian and Islam should be treated as a tolerated but inferior religion. There is – unfortunately – no way to ban it, because of the principle of "freedom of religion", inscribed in our constitutions, international treaties and UN chart, but there are means to limit its visibility without necessarily going against the principle of freedom of religion – for instance the European court of human rights did not condemn the banning of the scarf in French schools."⁴⁰ For the left this issue is rather linked to the equation of fundamentalism and women's rights.

Gilles Kepel, another distinguished expert of Islam, takes distance from Roy's arguments and underlines the relationship between jihadism and Salafism. He analyses today's terrorism as a third wave of jihadism, identifying three main key events: 'First, the 2005 riots within France's *banlieues* brought third-generation postcolonial immigrants to the fore as one of the central political players in French public space. Secondly, in 2004, one of

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

³⁵ O. Roy, 'Who are the new jihadis?', in *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis>, accessed on June 13th, 2019.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ Interview with Olivier Roy, "Full Equality before the Law for All Religions", in *Quantara.de*, <https://en.quantara.de/content/interview-with-olivier-roy-full-equality-before-the-law-for-all-religions>, accessed on June 13, 2019.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

the most famous jihadist strategists, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, published "The call to global Islamic resistance", theorising the need to bring the jihadist ideology and struggle to Europe, taking advantage of youths' socio-political malaise in the suburbs. Finally, the development of YouTube and Web 2.0 provided strategic means of communication and recruitment.⁴¹

In March 2016, the suicide bombings of Brussels Airport and Maelbeek metro station claimed the lives of 32 people and wounded more than 300. Salah Abdeslam, the surviving suspect of the November 2015 Paris attacks (ordered by ISIS, and in which 130 people were killed and hundreds wounded) would later be charged for *participating in the activities of a terrorist group*.

After the attacks a *Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry on Radicalism and Terrorism* was created, whose purpose was 'to identify the penetration channels of Islamism in Belgium; to better track potential terrorists; to increase public security; to prevent radicalization of youth; and also to put in place more inclusive policies for young Muslims who may be vulnerable to the propaganda of Daesh.'⁴² There were various manifestations against the Muslim communities following the Brussel attacks, requiring *mosques out of Europe*. This cry against the mosques was not new, it echoed similar manifestations after the attacks in Spain, as well as in France, Germany, or the Netherlands.

According to a Pew Research Center study the global restrictions on religion continued to increase in 2016, and Europe especially, but also the United States are the regions with the most evident increase. The study indicated that in Europe a third of the countries 'had nationalist parties that made political statements against religious minorities, an increase from 20% of countries in 2015.'⁴³ The National Front in France is one such example, with its agenda of opposition to political Islam as well as banning any religious symbol from public spaces.

In Europe there was an improvement in the impact of terrorist activities in 2017, the total deaths were falling by 75%, due to increased counter-terrorism and security measures which had a positive effect on the lethality of attacks, especially in Turkey, France, Belgium, and Germany. The same trend may be noticed for 2018, the number of terrorist attacks and victims has decreased.⁴⁴ One could identify here the mark of the so called *democracy advantage*, found in the *high-quality democracies*, illustrated 'not of fewer terrorist attacks, but of fewer fatalities connected with them.'⁴⁵

Conclusions

There have been numerous debates centered on the manifestation of religion in the public spaces, and in the aftermath of the horrific terrorist incidents whose perpetrators belong to Muslim communities, many of these debates related to various visible aspects and symbols, from the right to wear religious garments or symbols in public places to the practicing of religion in public. As a result countries like France, Austria, Denmark are banning the use of a full-face veil in public, while in Germany 'the hijab is allowed for public school students but may be banned for public school teachers.'⁴⁶ In 2007, five countries in

⁴¹ *Global Terrorism Index 2016*, p. 84.

⁴² *Religious Freedom Report*, <https://religious-freedom-report.org/report/?report=157>, accessed on August 13th, 2019.

⁴³ *Global Uptick in Government Restrictions on Religion in 2016*, <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/21/global-uptick-in-government-restrictions-on-religion-in-2016/>, accessed on August 13th, 2019.

⁴⁴ 13 people lost their lives in 24 jihadist attacks in the EU, compared to 62 deaths in 33 religiously inspired terrorist attacks in 2017. Targeted countries were France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Sweden.

⁴⁵ Amichai Magen, 'Fighting Terrorism: The Democracy Advantage', in *Journal of Democracy*, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/fighting-terrorism-the-democracy-advantage/>, accessed on August 15th, 2019.

⁴⁶ Jocelyne Cesari, *op. cit.*, p.7.

Europe had restrictions related to religious dress and religious symbols, the map of restrictions changed consistently and ten years later, 20 European countries had included such restrictions.

Religion has been increasingly related to security concerns, although based on the available data related to the terrorist incidents, religion does not play the most important role. The most important factors related to and influencing the terrorist incidents Western Europe, North America, and other highly economically-developed regions are claimed to be the 'social alienation, lack of economic opportunity, and involvement in an external conflict.'⁴⁷

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⁴⁷ *Global Terrorism Index 2018*, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global-Terrorism-Index-2018-1.pdf>, accessed on June 23rd, 2019, p. 5.

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