

COUNTER-TERRORISM: A « EUROPEAN FBI » IS NOT THE SOLUTION

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Since the January 2015 attack in Paris, many have called for the creation of a **European FBI** or of an EU-level counterterrorism organization. This would be, in my opinion, a bad idea for at least five reasons:

1) The issue of **security**, even if some of its features fall under the “third pillar” of European Union, fundamentally remains under national, if not sovereign, jurisdiction. Although member states have common interests when it comes to specific issues such as the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration or organized crime, – they are mostly divided for the rest. The interests of France, Belgium and United Kingdom, are they the same when it comes to Africa, for example? Thus, a **European agency would have a limited range of spheres of competence.**

2) **Today at the EU level security issues are not managed efficiently:** who can say that Schengen’s external borders are adequately protected? Europe shall first start by doing what it must on the issues that already have been assigned to it...

3) A European FBI would require the establishment of a political agreement and, in particular, if we want to act as a single Union, one that would be unanimously accepted. However, **members maintain diverging positions.** France, for example, wants to physically eliminate all French (and European) jihadists in Iraq and Syria and advocates a prison sentence for anyone who returns to Europe. Denmark, on the other hand, considers them to be “misled young men who took a trip and who need help returning home and reintegrating” (barely a caricature of Copenhagen’s stance on the matter). How to reconcile such opposing positions? **The agreement would thus be a watered-down agreement of the lowest common denominator, from which the countries most threatened and most active (France, United Kingdom but also Germany or Belgium) would have little to gain.**

4) Today our national services are already lacking in resources. **Establishment of a European FBI would further detract financial means, which would be far more useful if invested at the national security levels.**

5) Last but not least, **creating yet another institution would take time**: it would require settling on a political agreement, hiring or transferring personnel (this second option would further diminish the effectiveness of our forces), finding a location for its headquarters, defining working methods, etc. **At the earliest, a European Agency would be up and running in three years. The threat, however, is immediate.**

Embracing this idea would be going in the wrong direction. **What Europe can and must do, is to push member states to strengthen their legislation and to collaborate more closely.** What needs to be done at the national level, is to **reinforce analytical capabilities of intelligence services by hiring analysts able to think “outside of the box,” as it is done in Anglo-Saxon countries, in order to bring a fresh perspective to counterterrorism analysis.**

It is not by piling on political framework that we will win this “war” but rather by making our existing institutions more efficient and more responsive.

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