

# The prognosis of terrorist attacks - limits of scientific findings

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## The change of the security architecture

During the past decade, Islamic terrorism is considered as a major political threat which had far-reaching consequences. Criminal law was enacted on both national and supranational levels in Europe. This fundamental change, however, was not prefigured by the terrorist attack in New York on September 11, 2001. It is rather an expression of an ongoing development. In the 1970's, ethnic or national political terrorism (e.g., IRA, RAF) was on the table and prompted the adoption of security measures. The penal policy agenda was diverted to drug crimes in the 1980's.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990's, as a consequence of the opening of the borders in Europe, organized transnational crime took the stage and was considered a critical threat.

The adoption of covert investigative measures can especially be traced back to clandestine and partially transnational network structures. In contrast to organized crime, terrorist attacks pose a threat with potential lethal consequences for uninvolved civilians. While the terrorist attack requires publicity to spread anxiety and fear, its preparation necessitates clandestine operation. Hence, at the forefront of combating terrorism are cooperative efforts of the police and intelligence agencies on national and international levels as a vehicle for research on preventative measures against the dangers posed by terrorism.

This “transcending of the boundaries” of security in the area of terrorism naturally poses fundamental problems in the realignment of national security architecture [1, 2]. The first question raised is the definition of terrorism. Moreover, early recognition and prevention of danger depend on prognoses that are supposed to illuminate an uncertain future by means of retrospective points of reference. The reliability of the predictions here needs to be approached with caution. In this context, so-called pre-incident indicators could help improve the reliability of the prognoses. The actions

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<sup>1</sup>The “war on drugs” emanating from the USA.

A long version of this text is published in the German Journal *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft (ZStW)* 1/2011.

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