An Analysis of the Changing Modus Operandi of Terrorist Attacks in Europe

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OVERVIEW
There is a sharp increase in both the number of incidents and the deaths caused by different types of attacks in Europe recently. The assailants claimed these attacks either on behalf of Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) or as "lone wolves" with no direct affiliation to the ISIL. However, there has been some change in the way some of the attacks were carried out. Also, there was a shift in their target selection. Security experts and authorities have indicated significant factors contributing to this development. This research examines the appearing alarming trend in the change of terrorist modus operandi in Europe.

METHODOLOGY
Using media content analysis as a data collection method, majority of the incidents were collected from open source news sources. This study collected data related to religious and political terrorism in Europe including the events in Eastern Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey. An extensive database of a total of 400 attacks that have happened between 2001 and 2018 was compiled for analysis on an excel spreadsheet. The information was retrieved from various open sources such as newspapers, websites and some other available databases. The following variables were created: the date of the attack, the location of the attack, a summary of the attack, the target of the attack, the number of injuries and casualties, the status of the attack, the perpetrator, and the type of attack.

FINDINGS
- The findings reveal that terrorists’ modus operandi -techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTP)- has been influenced by the international events and conflicts.
- Bombings and Armed Assaults are still the most frequent Modus Operandi in Europe.
- There has been a sharp shift from more conventional forms of methods of attack to guided simple killing methods: From bombing and Firearm Assault to Vehicle-Ramming and Knife Attacks.
- Nationalist / Separatist extremism is frequently seen in the Balkan and Eastern Europe; whereas the Religious Terrorism with more Jihadist inspired motives are more prevalent in the Western part of Europe in recent years.