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Germany: the consequences of the attacks involving immigrants

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Immigrants or people with an immigrant background were responsible for four attacks in Bavaria and Baden-Wurttemberg between 18 and 24 July. Twelve people were killed as a result of the attacks (including three of the attackers). Three of the attackers were migrants who had arrived in Germany during the past two years, and one was a German citizen of Iranian background. In two of the cases the perpetrators left video recordings proving that they were acting on behalf of Islamic State. This was the first time this organisation assumed responsibility for attacks in Germany. This was also the first suicide attack with the use of explosives in Germany. Due to the fact that these attacks came in short succession, it has rekindled the debate over Angela Merkel's migration policy, its consequences, her responsibility for the attacks, and ways to prevent further attacks. The most important proposals put forward in the debate include improving continuation of efforts to reduce the porousness of the borders, imposing stricter gun laws, allowing the Bundeswehr to become active in Germany during a terrorist threat, better funding of the law enforcement agencies and better invigilation of the Internet. The Bavarian CSU insists that all refugees staying in Germany must be vetted once again.

Commentary

- These attacks – even if they were unrelated – add credibility to slogans heard from anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim groupings. They raise such issues as the threat to national security posed by refugees, the impossibility that Muslims will integrate with the rest of society, crime among immigrants and the state's failure to fulfil its obligations to citizens. In the immediate future, this will most likely lead to a further increase in support for: the Alternative for Germany (AfD), such movements as the anti-immigrant Pegida, and falling confidence in the political parties which form the government coalition (CDU/CSU-SPD).
- Angela Merkel and her government will continue to promote the narrative which emphasises the differences between the four cases and the different individual motives of each of the perpetrators. At the same time, the CDU/CSU-SPD coalition will decide to allocate more funds to the police and other law enforcement agencies, and will most likely allow the Bundeswehr to take action inside the country. In turn, the law enforcement agencies will have to verify the previous assumption that the greatest

terrorist threat is posed by local extremists, and that migrants are not becoming radicalised.

- The sense of threat among the German public (according to public opinion polls, already 77% of Germans fear a terrorist attack) and distrust towards immigrants are likely to rise in the immediate future. This may lead to tensions between the various ethnic groups which may take the form of ‘retaliatory’ actions, including street fights and an intensification of attacks on refugee shelters.