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PATTERNS OF RADICALISATION WITHIN JIHADI SALAFISM IN WESTERN EUROPE 2014-2020

PhD thesis

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TERMINOLOGY

As every scientific investigation – regardless of the methodology chosen – must establish a working definition of its objective, the working concepts and key terms will be described below. Jihadi Salafism will not be discussed below as the Chapter 4 is entirely dedicated to exploring this term in the context of violent radicalisation.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism is a notion that has been heavily debated and that has numerous definitions in the realm of academic research. One of the most complete definitions is the one by Charles E. Allen, former Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Intelligence and Analysis, who described radicalisation as "the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change".[1] My research argues in favour of such a process-based understanding of radicalisation, which implies a number of consequences. First, it assumes that there are several levels of radicalisation, which might range from legitimate political support to illegal political violence. These phases correspond to various degrees of causation that eventually leads to terrorist attack. Secondly, the concept describes a transformation that a person goes through that is motivated by certain objectives. Thirdly, the definition of radicalisation utilised in this research recognises that the ideologies and objectives that motivate someone to engage in extremism or terrorism are of religious-political nature, as – in line with Allen's definition above – violence is considered a legitimate mean to reach the desired societal change. In order to emphasise the nature of radicalisation as a process, present thesis presents several models aimed to describe this evolutionary development of adapting a set of ideas that might eventually lead to the use of violence for ideological or religious-political goals.

[1] ALLEN, Charles E. (2007): *Threat of Islamic Radicalisation to the Homeland. Testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs*, 14 March 2007. Available at: https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/270.pdf (accessed on 5 June 2017).

Violent extremism

From my previous years of work within the field of preventing radicalisation, the working definition in terms of violent extremism was an umbrella term for movements, ideologies or environments that do not accept a democratic social order and promote violence to achieve an ideological goal. I use a similar approach in my research, and rely on the complex definition presented by Obaidi *et al*, describing extremism as „encompassing behaviours, ideas, intentions, attitudes and values that are not in accordance with the norms of the society, such as rejecting the state monopoly on violence (and the promotion of alternative forms of violence) within a democracy",[2] also necessarily entailing an element of violence (implying that it is penalised). The phenomenon of violent extremism may be defined differently by different affected states, however, in my research I find it important to emphasise the violent version of extremism as it is that component that in most cases makes it punishable under law.

Religious extremism

Bearing in mind that this research only focuses on what may be classified religiously inspired extremism (that may lead to acts of terrorism), I needed a more specific working concept of violent extremism, considering the peculiar characteristics of this type of extremism. Hence, throughout my research I rely on the definition proposed by Schmid who suggested the complex description below in response to many previous definitions of extremism failing to address the religious version of extremism. Schmid argues that religious extremism is:

> "[t]he pursuit, usually by a fanatical sect or cult, but occasionally also by a political 'party of God', a terrorist organization, or an official 'religious establishment' of a program of societal renewal which usually involves some form of social cleansing. The use of violence is justified by reference to a divine authority, an absolute truth, or a literal interpretation of texts deemed sacred. Specific groups of people such as non-believers, pagans, apostates or heretics are identified as enemies and as such earmarked for being subjugated, punished, expelled or killed in the name of one or another sacred cause. Religious extremists want to purify the world from alleged forces of evil and establish a theocratic regime run by a religious leader or council. True believers who

[2] OBAIDI, Milan et al (2018): The Mistreatment of My People: Victimization by Proxy and Behavioral Intentions to Commit Violence Among Muslims in Denmark. *Political Psychology*. p. 39. Available at: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1240423/FULLTEXT01.pdfTest (accessed on 11 April 2020).

adhere to such a religious ideology tend to be prepared for martyrdom (suicide) operations, often expecting great rewards in afterlife for their sacrifice."[3]

Terrorism

While the challenge of preventing terrorism is partially related to the challenges associated with prevention in general, the difficulties may at times also stem from the fact that there are numerous definitions of "terrorism" that are notably dissimilar from one another. While the UN has been discussing the definition debate since 1972, no agreement defining terrorism has yet been reached among the 193 members of the United Nations General Assembly. There are a few regional definitions of terrorism, such as those issued by the European Union or the African Union and many more national definitions (some governments even have more than one), but the UN has not yet approved a single, comprehensive legal definition of terrorism. As a researcher based in Hungary and as Hungary being a Member State of the European Union (just as the countries affected by radicalisation and jihadist-inspired terrorism examined in the subsequent chapters), the definition of terrorism used here is the one set forth by the European Union, describing terrorist acts as any of the following:[4]

- seriously intimidating a population;
- unduly compelling a government or an international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act;
- seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic, or social structures of a country or an international organisation.

Like any other definition, the one above may also be subject to just criticism, especially considering the term 'seriously' in the last sentence, bearing in mind for example the debate on whether small-scale attacks, such as knife attacks may be considered as acts of terrorism.[5]

[3] Presentation by Alex P. SCHMID, 25 May 2018, the Centre for Research on Extremism (CREX) Oslo.
[4] Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32017L0541 (accessed on 11 April 2020).
[5] See for instance the statement of former Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, who in 2015 sparked a debate stating that „knife attacks are not classified as terrorism". BAKER, A. (2015): *Do Stabbing Attacks Constitute Acts of Terrorism?* Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2015.12.09. Available at: https://jcpa.org/do-stabbing-attacks-constitute-terrorism/ (accessed on 1 August 2017).

Muslim diaspora

When defining the target group most vulnerable and susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment by militant Islamists some terms need to be used with precaution as they may be perceived as containing elements of discrimination. A term like "Muslim diaspora" needs to be explored in this regard, as members of this group have been (and are still) targets of extremist propaganda. Silber and Bhatt note that "[e]nclaves of ethnic populations that are largely Muslim often serve as – ideological sanctuaries for the seeds of radical thought. Moreover, the greater the purity and isolation of these ethnic communities, the more vulnerable they are to be penetrated by extremism – under the guise that it represents a purer, more devout form of Islam."[6] In the context of Jihadist-inspired radicalisation in Europe the main target group of the radicalisation and recruitment are members of the Muslim diasporas (and in certain cases, converts[7] to Islam). Hence, understanding the mechanisms and various motivations that lead to violent radicalisation, particularly those connected to radicalisation in a jihadist context, is crucial for prevention among Western Muslim diasporas.[8] In sum, the present thesis uses the term 'Muslim diaspora' as a neutral description of a religious minority, thereby not implying the stigmatisation or labelling of a whole segment of a minority group in society. Here, it should be noted that radicalisation among converts to Islam fall outside the scope of this thesis, albeit noteworthy evidence suggesting that although converts represent a small per centage of Western Muslim diasporas, they are significantly overrepresented in Islamist extremism and terrorism.[9]

[6] SILBER, M. - BHATT, A. (2007): Radicalisation in the West: The Homegrown Threat. p. 23. Available at: https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/Justice/20090000.Radicalisation.in.the.West-Statement.of.Clarification.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2022).

[7] SCHUURMAN, B. - GROL, P. - FLOWER, S. (2016): *Converts and Islamist Terrorism: An Introduction*. ICCT Policy Brief, June 2016, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. Available at: https://www.icct.nl/app/uploads/2016/06/ICCT-Schuurman-Grol-Flower-Converts-June-2016.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2022)

[8] KÄSEHAGE, N. (2020): Prevention of Radicalisation in Western Muslim Diasporas. In: SCHMID, Alex P. (ed.): *Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness*. The Hague, ICCT Press, pp. 290-357.

[9] SCHUURMAN et al 2016, p. 3.

Jihadism, jihadi Salafism

When examining the phenomenon of jihadist-inspired radicalisation, the thesis relies mainly on the definition used by Europol (who in its turn builds on the narrow description of jihadism by Sedgewick[10]), namely that jihadism is:

> "a violent subcurrent of Salafism, a revivalist Sunni Muslim movement that rejects democracy and elected parliaments, arguing that human legislation is at variance with God's status as the sole lawgiver. Jihadists aim to create an Islamic state governed exclusively by Islamic law (*shari'a*), as interpreted by them."[11]

Europol further elaborates that "[c]ontrary to other Salafist currents, which are mostly quietist, jihadists legitimise the use of violence with a reference to the classical Islamic doctrines on jihad, a term which literally means 'striving' or 'exertion', but which jihadists treat as religiously sanctioned warfare. All those opposing jihadist interpretations of Islamic law are perceived as 'enemies of Islam' and therefore considered legitimate targets. Some jihadists include Shi'a, Sufis and other Muslims in their spectrum of perceived enemies".[12]

The emphasis on the narrow definition is important to emphasise as it constitutes an integral part of my research aiming to explore the factor of violence in this context. The term of jihad in itself may cover a wide range of activities not even in the vicinity of violence among Muslims, while it has a strongly negative connotation among many non-Muslims.[13] The evolution of jihadism under Islamic law and in the narrative of the jihadi Salafist movements will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, which also in this context seeks to explore the underlying religious and ideological justification of terrorist attacks against civilians.

I use the term jihadi Salafism throughout the thesis in order to emphasise that it is a violent subcurrent to Salafism, which also has non-violent forms (quietist and political).

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[10] SEDGWICK, Marc (2015): Jihadism, Narrow and Wide: The Dangers of Loose Use of an Important Term. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, No 2, 2015, pp. 34-41.
[11] EUROPOL (2022): Terrorism Situation and Trend Alert 2022. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Tesat_Report_2022_0.pdf (accessed on 5 March 2022). 22.
[12] EUROPOL 2022, p. 22.
[13] HANDWERK, B. (2003): What Does 'Jihad' Really Mean to Muslims? *National Geographic*, 2003.10.24. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/what-does-jihad-really-mean-to-muslims (accessed on 1 August 2017).

Identity

An important term in my research is identity. The use of "identity" as an analytical category raises legitimate concerns due to its many applications and interpretations as well as the inability of academics to define it consistently and clearly. In order to argue for the holistic nature of this key term, comprising elements both of the past, the present as well as the future, I rely on Weinrich's definition, namely how identity is "[t]he whole of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future".[14] In my research I will especially explore the concept of social identity and religious identity as important elements in the radicalisation process.

[14] WEINREICH, Peter (2003): Identity Structure Analysis. In: WEINREICH, Peter – SAUNDERSON, Wendy (eds.): *Analysing Identity: Cross-Cultural, Societal and Clinical Contexts*. New York, Routledge. p. 26.

INTRODUCTION

> "We keep referring to these people as foreign terrorist fighters. The uncomfortable truth is that they are not foreign at all. They may be foreigners in the countries where they are going. But in reality, they are our compatriots, our acquaintances, the classmates of our kids, the guys and girls we see in our supermarkets. They are part of our societies. Perhaps the only thing that's foreign to us is their mentality."
>
> Dutch Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders at the Global Counterterrorism Forum in January 2016.

JUSTIFICATION OF TOPIC SELECTION

I believe we all remember the time and place we were when the information reached us about the World Trade Center being hit by the airplanes hijacked by al-Qaeda operatives on 11 September 2001, an attack that would highly impact not only the security agenda of numerous countries, but also security studies and terrorism research as such. I was sitting in a café with a high school classmate when the owner suddenly turned on the television, showing the image of the airplanes hitting the towers in a country we had believed was untouchable and bulletproof for many years. That was the moment when I started to wonder about the phenomenon of terrorism: what process would lead to a non-violent person becoming violent, and eventually willing to take the life of random bystanders, innocent civilians to reach a desired political, ideological or religious goal? Are there any detectable signs of violent radicalisation and if so, how can we be better in not only seeing them but also interpreting them? Who are the key actors and how can we convince the 'forces of good' to join prevention?

Through the course of my professional work, I have had the privilege to meet a variety of highly committed experts, front-line workers and excellent researchers, all dedicated to the cause of finding answers to the questions above. I have also been able to observe the phenomenon of radicalisation from a close range, including the encounter and in-depth interviews with persons on the verge of travelling to conflict zones to join militant Islamist groups, as well as disillusioned defectors willing to participate in the preventative work to help others from the potentially fatal pitfalls of violent extremism. Sitting in at a café in Indonesia several years later

with my 3-months-old daughter sleeping peacefully in a sling around my chest, listening to the words of a young woman recently returned home from having travelled to the – then – IS-controlled territories in Syria and Iraq made me even more aware of the fact that the catalysing force of violent radicalisation is blind to age, gender, ethnicity and life experiences. Having worked many years with issues related to preventing violent extremism and countering radicalisation both within public administration and law enforcement, the knowledge and experience gained there have been highly useful when deciding to prepare scientific research on the subject matter. For obvious reasons I have not been able to incorporate my own, professional experiences from the time before the dissertation (if such a time ever existed…) but it has helped greatly when portraying the subjects of the literature reviewed and analysed and the information collected: human beings from a variety of backgrounds.

When I began the research for my thesis in 2016, the "Caliphate" proclaimed by the so-called Islamic State (IS) was already 2 years old and had attracted more than 40,000 persons to its territories, including around 5,000 persons – both men and women – from Europe. At its peak IS controlled around one third of Syria and 40 per cent of Iraq, but lost 95 per cent of its territories by December 2017, including Mosul, the largest city in Iraq and Raqqa, the nominal capital of the Islamic State. As the territories were gradually lost, the terrorist organisation began encouraging its supporters worldwide (especially in the West) to carry out attacks in their countries of residence rather than travelling abroad. 2017 saw the highest number of jihadist attacks carried out in the European Union (33 foiled, failed and completed jihadist terrorist attacks which is more than double the figure of the previous year).[15] The number of jihadist attacks has decreased ever since; however, radicalisation and terrorism remain key threats to the internal security of the European Union. The security challenges are exacerbated by the return of foreign terrorist fighters and the continuous radicalisation and recruitment to militant Islamist groups. The pandemic known as COVID-19 also had an impact on radicalisation, with its combination of quarantine, social isolation and the increased amount of time spent online.

As I finished the research for my thesis in early January 2021, numerous questions remained regarding the future of our safety and security. With the defeat of the Islamic State on the ground

[15] Europol concluded that "none of the reported activities in any terrorist category have been as lethal and have had such an impact on society as a whole as those committed by jihadist terrorists – such as those also committed in 2017 and since the beginning of 2018. EUROPOL (2018): Terrorism Situation and Trend Alert 2018. pp. 4, and 23. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/tesat_2018_1.pdf (accessed on 5 May 2020).

the question remains whether the large dragon truly is successfully slain, or whether we still in fact find ourselves in the jungle surrounded by poisonous snakes.[16] I tend to believe that the current security environment rather resembles the latter one – hence, there is an ever so important need to continue the robust and systematic preventative work based on multi-agency cooperation, information sharing and continuous outreach to key actors and stakeholders, who all have an important role to play to prevent vulnerable persons from being radicalised and used as tools in a greater masterplan. Another important question to bear in mind throughout the research is the question of mentality and mindset of persons who might be susceptible to radicalisation leading to acts of terrorism and how much we really have understood the complex interplay of factors on individual level during the psst decades – when, as the quote above also states, the mentality is often diminished as "only".

FORMULATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

Although different areas within radicalisation and terrorism research have generated significant results, some scientific problems remain, that I wish to explore further. Along the lines of the thoughts above, I have identified the questions below for examination.

Jihadist-inspired radicalisation in Europe has been on the agenda since the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. It was then that it became apparent to politicians and law enforcement that the Islamist-motivated threat no longer came from distant lands, but took on a concrete form in the person of people who had lived in Europe for years and in some cases for generations.[17] The process of radicalisation has grown into a separate area of research, and many researchers have sought to find an appropriate answer to the question of why some adults in Europe are susceptible to the use of radical Islamist ideology – and violence in their name. As discussed in the subsequent chapters, research has sought to explain the growing phenomenon from a variety of disciplines, using different conceptual models and theories explaining how an interplay between factors on different levels may eventually lead to acts of terrorism, but also as a phenomenon adversely affecting social cohesion, as the acquisition of

[16] Metaphor used by CIA Director James Woolsley in 1993 after the Cold War, the large dragon referring to the defeat of the Soviet Union.

[17] VELDHUIS, Tinka – STAUN, Jørgen (2009): *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model*. Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, Netherlands. Available at: https://www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import/islamist_radicalisation.veldhuis_and_staun.pdf (accessed on 7 September 2016), p. 1.

an extreme worldview also may lead to a kind of "intolerant isolation" among certain immigrant groups.[18] Part of this isolation is, at an ideological level, a move away from Western democratic values and human rights, which also makes social integration significantly more difficult. Studies have discussed the combination of an almost institutionalised lack of belonging, the search for lofty goals, and a subjective interpretation of individual religious obligations, while others claim that individual traumas and grievances, feelings of perceived or actual discrimination, and inadequacy of personal conflict management mechanisms may be contributing factors to the radicalisation process. Analysing these explanatory factors as presented in the most frequently used conceptual models of radicalisation, it is my aim to explore how they convey the role of religion, and it is my endeavour to demonstrate how many of the explanatory factors and root causes presented in these models in fact are very much linked to religion through the narrative of militant Islamist organisations.

When it comes to Europe and what is often referred to as the "Western" part of the world (including for instance the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), there is no lack of empirical data demonstrating the role of the (mostly Sunni Muslim) immigrant background in relation to radicalisation into Salafi Jihadism. The supply in terms of radicalisation and recruitment is continuous; Europol (based on the information received from the Member States) regularly confirms that recruitment of militant Islamist groups among Muslim immigrants in Western countries is an on-going issue.[19] In recent years, a number of studies and research have sought to answer the question of why the ideology and creed of radical Islamism may be attractive to individuals born, grown, and socialised in Europe. In this context, I seek to explore characteristics of the second and third generation of (Muslim) immigrants as well as (in line with the aspects of the underlying ideology) to explore correlation between potential vulnerabilities within this target group and elements of the extremist narrative exploiting these. In this regard, I wish to explore the question of religious identity as a potential barrier to integration as well as a potential (but not necessary) factor impacting the process of radicalisation. Continuing along the line of identity-related issues, I wish to examine the correlation between social identity (i.e. the knowledge that a person is a member of a particular social group together with the emotional and value importance of this group membership) and violent extremism within the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation.

[18] AIVD (2008a): Annual Report 2008. The Hague. Available at: https://english.aivd.nl/publications/annual-report/2009/05/25/annual-report-2008 (accessed on 7 September 2016), p. 85

[19] Eg. EUROPOL (2018): Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018, pp. 5-8.

An ideological movement within Sunni Islam that has grown in significance for scholars and those responsible for formulating anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policies is Salafism. Both the so-called Islamic State and al-Qaeda can be characterised as global jihadist ideological movements with roots in Salafism, accompanied by local and regional idiosyncrasies. Research has suggested that there is evidence on one hand for (Western) attacks and civil suffering in the Middle East serving as individual motivational factors in selecting Western targets.[20] Hence, in this regard I am to explore the ideology behind the jihadist-inspired terrorism, including the narrative element of how the West has subjugated and humiliated the Muslim world throughout history.[21] Understanding this literalist activist Salafi view of Sunni Islam – and the justifications of indiscriminate violence against civilians – is essential for dealing with the contemporary jihadist threat. This part also relates to the question of social identity referred to previously and becomes important when violence is committed with reference to the perceived grievances of a group that may very well be geographically distant.

Researching radicalisation is an interdisciplinary field. Numerous theories and models that purport to explain terrorism have been developed by various disciplines and sub-disciplines, mostly in the social sciences. Undoubtedly, every academic discipline could possess crucial components of the analytical jigsaw, making a significant contribution to the comprehensive comprehension of the "nature" of terrorism and violent extremism. Theoretical frameworks that concentrate on rational choice or cost-benefit analyses, power dynamics or balance of power, economic utility, organisational concerns, community strain, ideological affiliation, individual psychology, and other topics may, depending on the situation, highlight significant facets of violent extremism and terrorism. Agreeing with all this, I find it relevant to explore the usefulness a dynamic, nonlinear model of radicalisation as a synthesis of the different theories presented, which seeks to explore religion as a component interconnecting other underlying factors and key elements in the radicalisation process.

[20] See for instance the pschological theory of humiliation hypothesised as a driver of terrorist violence by JUERGENSMEYER, Mark (2000): *Terror in the mind of God. Global rise of religious violence*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press.

[21] BESENYŐ, János *et al* (2016): *Terrorizmus 2.0 - Az Iszlám Állam*. Budapest, Kossuth Kiadó, pp. 101, 51.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives have been formulated based on the presented scientific problems and the directions identified within them. The main purpose of the thesis is to understand why certain individuals belonging to immigrant diaspora communities in Western Europe go through the process of cognitive radicalisation and become prone to use violence as a legitimate means in the name of a terrorist organisation (here: the so-called Islamic State) against members of the society they are part of. Although the motivation of each person for joining the cause as defined by terrorist organisations is unique, this research show that the process radicalisation is in every case similar to a nonlinear, dynamic mosaic, where identity and religion is an explanation of the interconnectedness of variables related to messages of grievances towards vulnerable audiences, forming relationships with like-minded people, exposure to extremist ideology, and a sense of belonging to a discriminated and oppressed group. The thesis also focuses on the question of why these persons and communities are the targets of terror recruiters and how the underlying ideology may become attractive in relation to personal grievances. In order to answer these questions, the research analysis explores different conceptual models of violent radicalisation and with these as a theoretical framework; an analysis is made on the profiles of a number of jihadist-inspired perpetrators between 2014 and 2020 in the countries of Western Europe most affected by this type of violent extremism. The theory of the radicalisation process as a mosaic is a synthesis of these theories. Finally, to gain a deeper understanding on the context of the second and third generation of immigrants with Muslim (Sunni) background as a group targeted by extremist narrative, the role of religious identity and religion as a factor of self-isolation and self-sustaining, or even reproduced marginalisation in terms of integration will be further explored.

In my dissertation I wish to explore the radicalisation process leading to acts of jihadist-inspired violence in the European Union, focusing on the countries most affected by the phenomenon and in the target group most affected by the phenomenon. With a benchmark in collecting, analysing, and systemising existing national and international literature related to violent radicalisation among second and third generation Muslim immigrants in Europe, as well as with a case study of my own, present thesis aims to:

1. To examine how conceptual models of radicalisation convey the role of religion;

2. To explore the correlation between religion, group identity, masculinities and violence in the context of radicalisation and jihadi Salafism;

3. To – based on the two former aims – examine the radicalisation process of the perpetrators of completed jihadist-inspired attacks and foreign terrorist fighters in Europe between 2014-2020 through process-tracing to explore the religious component;

4. To explore the question of religious identity as a factor relevant to violent radicalisation in relation to second and third generation Muslims immigrants in Western Europe;

5. To investigate why second and third generations of Muslim immigrants in Europe are actively targeted by militant Islamist organisations and why the narrative of these organisations might resonate within this particular group;

6. To present a concrete case study examining questions on religious identity and self-identification among adolescent immigrants, where, in the course of this analysis I will argue for the importance on including the question of religious identity as a potential contributing factor in the radicalisation process.

Based on the findings, present research also aims to suggest policy responses in line with the problematisation above, especially considering the role of the Hungarian Armed Forces in multinational operations in third countries where members of the Force may encounter persons susceptible to violent radicalisation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In terms of the jihadist-radicalisation of persons in Western Europe between the years 2014 and 2020, this dissertation seeks to answer following three questions:

1. What are the most relevant social, religious, and psychological factors according to current state of research in the radicalisation process of the Western European recruits of jihadi Salafism?

2. How do these factors interplay and form a mosaic of radical identities and in what way is the question of religion and identity interrelated to these factors?

3. Why are second and third generation young Muslims targets of jihadi Salafist radicalisation and recruitment?

The first question examines the process of violent radicalisation process within the jihadist context from a comprehensive approach, while and the second and third questions are answered mainly through the analysis of case studies. The chapter on methodology will detail the approach taken to address each question.

My hypotheses are as follows:

- The question of why certain individuals engage in jihadist-related activities, particularly young people, cannot be answered through monocausal explanatory theories, but rather through a dynamic model illustrating how these factors, which are all important, can be managed in relation to each other. The mosaic theory, as a synthesis of existing conceptual models of radicalisation, presents a complementing model to interpret the radicalisation process, in which identity – both as a religious and as a social construction – is the factor interconnecting all other underlying root causes.

- Second and third generations of young Muslims constitute and will continue to constitute a preferred target group for radicalisation and recruitment to jihadi Salafist organisations due to underlying factors on both individual and group levels, whereby the question of religious identity as a form of self-isolation has to be considered.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION

In line with the problematisation described above, the significance of this work lies in the way it deals comprehensively and multidisciplinary with the issue of jihadi Salafist radicalisation, focusing on a specific time frame when the activity of the so-called Islamic State (previously ISIS/ISIL) was on record levels in Europe. Current thesis presents a broadened theoretical framework and a conceptualisation of violent radicalisation, complementing it with relevant (but in some cases potentially overlooked) psychological as well as sociological theories. Further it examines existing conceptual models of violent radicalisation within the jihadist context to see how these frequently used models convey the role of religion. Mapping out the religious component and its significance in the radicalisation process is important to fully

comprehend the jihadist-inspired radicalisation and to understand how personal grievances and individual vulnerabilities are exploited by militant Islamist groups who, with references to religion, aim to offer relief, redemption, a superior identity, and religiously motivated duties that will also eventually serve to legitimise violence. A number of jihadist-inspired terrorists' profiles are then examined along with the background of certain foreign terrorist fighters to – through the method of process-tracing – seek to find support for the significance of the religious component as a factor interconnecting other important, underlying elements in the radicalisation process.

As the analysis is done, the significance of the current research further lies in its endeavour to prove that conceptual models of radicalisation building on an orderly sequence of events towards radicalisation may be misleading. To this end, my research underscores the need for a dynamic model to develop behavioural patterns reliable to predict violent action, and presents an own model in which key elements and additional elements may be identified, and where, religion and identity are interconnecting components.

Another significant aspect of present research is the thorough analysis of one of the most affected target groups of contemporary jihadist radicalisation and recruitment, namely the second and third generation of young Muslims in Europe. Based on an in-depth exploration of the evolution of these generations in (Western) Europe and the characteristics of each generation, I seek to find factors of potential vulnerability that may imply susceptibility to accept the extremist and violent set of ideas presented in the narrative of militant Islamist organisations. To complement the assessment of the target group, I also present a comprehensive analysis of the underlying jihadi Salafist ideology and link the components in the argumentation of the terrorist organisations to the aforementioned factors on the individual level illustrate the correlation between "supply and demand" in this context. Through this analysis I argue that the religious component should not be neglected when dealing with the prevention of violent radicalisation to this strand of extremism. As part of the examination of the underlying ideology, I have explored the ideological and religious justification of attacks against (European) civilians, which makes an important contribution to the preventative work in enhancing the understanding of individual motivational factors and the larger anatomy of jihadist-inspired attacks.

To further explore the implications of this religious component, I have included the question of self-identification and religious identity, i.e., how religious identity is shaped by social factors

among a certain group of individuals (here: a group especially targeted by the propaganda and recruitment of militant Islamist organisations) in my research. To meet this endeavour, the dissertation contains a case study examining attitudes towards religious authority among adolescent first- and second-generation immigrants in Vienna, Austria, home to a large number of immigrants from a variety of backgrounds. The significance of this study is, among other, how is underscores the superiority of religious authority over other forms of authority in the case of the students of Muslim origin, which might serve as a first step towards self-isolation and a potentially hostile attitude towards the majority society. When exploring other similar studies, I found that my results were in line with previous research from a variety of different countries across the European Union, which – even if in some cases two decades had passed between my study and the previous ones – the results and the challenges stemming from these are the same. This result is important to bear in mind, not only for researchers and professionals, but also for other stakeholders and policymakers, as the European Muslim communities continue to grow steadily.

A final important contribution also lies in proving that social group identity theory and questions related to masculinity need to be addressed when dealing with the prevention of violent extremism, stressing the need for an enhanced understanding of the role of personality in the process of violent radicalisation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The scientific problems presented above are addressed by basic research. I commenced the preparation of my research activity in accordance with the requirements of the Doctoral School, taking into account the large body of literature regarding radicalisation, jihadist-inspired terrorism as well as the open-source information available on some of the profiles within the jihadist milieus in the European Union. I studied the domestic and international literature related to violent radicalisation, terrorism, and jihadi Salafism in order to remain updated on the latest research findings. The basis of my work was to strive for a systematic approach and to categorise underlying factors of violent radicalisation and the interplay between them, also for the purpose of eventually preparing a thorough educational material to professionals who may encounter persons susceptible to radicalisation.

Parallel to the systematic literature review I participated at scientific conferences related to the subject. Further I studied lectures and professional training courses available online and the information acquired was incorporated in the further development of the topic. Seeking to compare a large body of literature about violent radicalisation in the context of militant Islamism and jihadi Salafism, my aim was to narrow down the review to the time period discussed above and to explore the links between the subject matter and members of the Muslim diaspora as particular targets of this type of radicalisation.

When collecting, analysing, and systematising literature I used sources in English, Hungarian, German, French and Swedish. The literature used in the thesis is presented in the List of References. I closed my research on 1 January 2021; hence the subsequent terrorist attacks and new research data are not included in the thesis. The partial findings in the thesis were presented at conferences, lectures, and in publications both in Hungarian and English.

METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINE

The methodological outline of the dissertation is as follows. It begins by placing the topic within the wider framework of terrorism and asymmetric warfare research, including the closely related area of political violence. Moving from the overall framework to the more specific theoretical foundation, the research seeks to explore conceptual frameworks of violent radicalisation, including experiences from social psychology, social network theory and radicalisation and terrorism research in general. Considering the specific nature of jihadi Salafism, the underlying ideology is examined in depth for the sake of broadening the understanding of how the theories above might resonate with a powerful narrative that is seemingly responding to factors on the individual level. After having explored the theoretical framework, present work aims to move from the deductive level to the individual level by presenting three case studies as by the method of comparison seek commonalities and differences in the radicalisation processes analysed. The aim of the case studies is further to apply a selected conceptual model on the individual cases, and, by analysing a number of profiles of jihadist-inspired terrorism in Europe between 2014 and 2020 along with the background of persons known as foreign terrorist fighters (in this context: persons who travelled from Europe to conflict zones with the purpose of joining militant Islamist organisations), seek to complement existing theories with a synthesis on my own. The profiles included in this part are examined through the method of process-tracing, and where selected not only because the

large-scale attack they committed, but also due to the vast number of reliable sources related to their personal backgrounds, which gives a satisfactory (although not perfect) insight in their radicalisation processes. Process tracing is a qualitative research method in which particular events, processes, or phenomena are tracked across time to see how they grow and progress, hence, when evaluating patterns of radicalisation, process tracing is a useful methodological tool. This method allows researchers to investigate causal linkages between different elements that contribute to radicalisation, and it may offer a complex and situation-specific explanation of radicalisation. Nevertheless, its use is contingent upon the research setting, goals, and data accessibility. As process tracing relies heavily on interpretation, the analysis may be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher. Hence, preventing bias and upholding process integrity were crucial points throughout my research. Further, the efficacy of process tracing is dependent on the availability of pertinent data, which might be scarce, especially when researching delicate subjects like radicalisation. Because the radicalisation process is intricate and multidimensional, it can be difficult to properly identify and track down all pertinent aspects and circumstances.

Narrowing down the subject matter further, present research singles out the question of religious identity as a crucial factor within the process of radicalisation among second generation (Muslim) immigrants. To this end, the study uses structured, in-depth interviews conducted with 34 adolescents of immigrant background in Austria, one of the Member States of the European Union most heavily affected by the phenomenon of jihadist-inspired violent radicalisation. The purpose of the study was to seek to explore the question of religious identity as a potential barrier to integration among a target group of significance for the dissertation (the second generation of immigrants).

Methodological limits

Higher level qualitative scholarship in the social and human sciences necessitates competent interaction with primary sources, including the actual research subjects. The primary research subject of this research would be the persons behind jihadist-inspired terrorist attacks in Western Europe as well as the foreign terrorist fighters analysed, but who – for obvious reasons – could not be approached. Even with this obvious obstacle, still holding that original knowledge and insight can only be produced by engagement with primary sources, I sought to mitigate this methodological difficulty by engaging with a different type of primary sources

also relevant for the context of radicalisation (detailed below). Hence, other parts of my research rely on secondary or tertiary sources, which synthesises preexisting knowledge and which – complemented with a theory of my own – are applied and tested on the profiles behind jihadist-inspired acts of terror.

Another important obstacle to bear in mind regarding the analysis of jihadist-inspired radicalisation is the limits of information retrieved through open sources, including the question of reliability of the sources and the issue of bias related to certain publications either overestimating or underestimating the phenomenon. I have sought to mitigate this obstacle using several independent sources for each and every one of the profiles examined as part of the fact-checking and – where possible – to verify the information obtained with the help of academic scholarship related to each case.

When preparing the interviews in the case study, I sought to map out the potential limits and pitfalls of the method chosen and mitigate these shortcomings in advance. Being aware of how social desirability bias can cause interviewees to give responses that are more likely to be accepted by others than their genuine feelings or thoughts, result in missing or erroneous data, or how the interviewer's communication style may have an effect on the interviewee, I sought to avoid errors such as the above described through meticulously planning the questions for the structured interviews one-on-one well in advance, and to frame them in a way that would not impact the willingness of the interviewee to share his or her thoughts and experiences.

SCIENTIFIC CONTEXT: TERRORISM, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND MILITARY SCIENCE

Terrorism is asymmetric in a sense that its selection of targets is usually based on some vulnerability or weakness of the opponent. This in itself is, however, not a new tactic, as attacking vulnerabilities has been a proven strategy by many military and political leaders over the past centuries.[22] Nowadays, however, what is new is the legitimisation of the civilian population as a direct target, the open denial of universal moral principles, and the declared intention to destroy Western culture and way of life;[23] hence the experiences from military

[22] DALEY, Dan (2000): *Asymmetric Warfare: The Only Thing New is the Tactics*. National Defense University, National War College, Washington DC. Available: http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a433588.pdf (accessed 11 June 2016), p. 1.
[23] RESPERGER *et al* 2013:26

science in relation to asymmetric warfare and guerrilla tactics may be incorporated in the preventative work.

Even though averting imminent terrorist attacks remains the task of law enforcement and intelligence as well as security agencies, identifying risk factors of violent radicalisation and the scope of persons susceptible to radicalisation implies that the scope of key actors relevant to the preventative work needs to be broadened, including members of the armed forces being deployed in remote states where they may encounter the phenomenon of violent radicalisation. In the Hungarian context, the importance to connect research on jihadist-inspired radicalisation and terrorism with military science and the armed forces was reiterated by a working group of distinguished military science researchers, who stressed that "[c]onsidering the number of attacks with fanatical religious motives during recent years, more attention should be paid to the research of religious, mainly Islamist-motivated terrorism. For success, new, better prepared forces, new and more efficient tools, new and more successful combat procedures against international terrorism are needed in struggle. In this fight, the military force, law enforcement and national security services have a big role to play".[24]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Following the aims described above the main purpose of my research is to provide a comprehensive overview of the different aspects of radicalisation in the jihadi Salafist context with a special focus on second and third generation immigrants in the selected Western European countries. Hence, the theoretical framework to examine this issue consists of one hand of the analysis of conceptual models of radicalisation, further of the identification of multidisciplinary approaches through mainly the use of sociological as well as psychological theories in order to complement the aforementioned models. As part of the conceptualisation of the research question, as all acts of terrorism are preceded by the process of violent radicalisation (although, in contrast, not all form of violent radicalisation necessarily lead to acts of terrorism), radicalisation needs to be placed in a wider theoretical framework. As terrorism is most often conceptualised as a form of asymmetrical warfare, present research aims

[24] BODA, József *et al* (2016): FÓKUSZ ÉS EGYÜTTMŰKÖDÉS. A HADTUDOMÁNY KUTATÁSI FELADATAI. *Honvédségi Szemle*, 144. Évfolyam, 2016/3. sz, pp. 3-20. p. 13. The background of this article was the establishment of a working group (*Hadtudományi Kollégium*) at the National University for Public Service in 2016 commissioned to gather and summarise research directions and objectives for the area of military science.

to elaborate on the wider framework of violent radicalisation in terms of terrorism, asymmetric warfare, and political violence, not for methodological reasons but for reasons of framing the key research question of my research.

DELIMITATIONS

The thesis focuses on the period between 2014 and 2020, which correlates to the rise and fall of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. For matters of scope delimitation as well as to maintain the focus of the current dissertation, I do not discuss the question of similar radicalisation patterns in Hungary. Hungary is also not included on the basis that the issue of this type of radicalisation is not comparable to the experiences of the Member States of the European Union selected in my research. Also, policy-related matters related to the topic fall outside the scope of the thesis.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the thesis is based on the research problems outlined above. Accordingly, I have divided my dissertation into several structural units.

Chapter 1 seeks to elaborate on the conceptualisation of radicalisation by placing the issue in a wider theoretical framework; firstly, within the wider context of terrorism and asymmetric warfare relevant to understand the *modus operandi* used in contemporary jihadist attacks on European soil and, secondly within the frame of political violence, to explore the relationship between the individual and his ingroup as well as correlation between the individual's use of violence and the group in whose name the violence is committed. The case of foreign terrorist fighters will be discussed in this chapter as well as part of the framework related to terrorism, in order to highlight that this phenomenon is very much linked to my research topic, namely radicalisation leading to acts of terrorism.

Chapter 2 aims to describe the process of violent radicalisation in the context of jihadi Salafism from a multidisciplinary angle, presenting several conceptual models to describe different phases of the radicalisation process. To give a holistic description, the chapter also contains a literature review on models seeking to explore the interplay between factors of radicalisation on different levels (micro, meso and macro), structural factors and trigger events. Beyond describing the most frequently used conceptual models; this chapter seeks to explore how these

models comvey the religious component in the radicalisation process. Although the socio-economic predictors of violent extremism are not a primary focus of the current dissertation, a summary of this literature is nonetheless important due to the fact that these reasons have frequently been cited by scholars in the past.

Chapter 3 contains a description of psychological factors on the level of the individual relevant to the process of violent radicalisation, thereby focusing especially on the theory of social group identity and the theory of masculinity in the context of extremism. Here it is important to note that although it has become more widely acknowledged that the construction of masculinity may play a significant role in radicalisation and violent extremism, with most violent extremists being men,[25] this dissertation did not directly take a gender perspective. However, from a psychology and societal standpoint, the overall findings of this dissertation may help to illuminate why men are more likely than women to engage in violent extremism.

Chapter 4 outlines the religious and ideological justifications through which Salafi-Jihadist organisations such as al-Qaeda and IS justify their use of violence against civilians – with an emphasis on European (and to further delimit: Christian) civilians. The sources used in this chapter are primary as well as secondary sources, the primary sources being mainly the propaganda magazines created and disseminated by IS.

Chapter 5 gives an in-depth description and analysis of some of the most recent jihadist-inspired terrorist profiles committing completed acts of terrorism in Europe between 2014 and 2020. For the sake of delimitation, the description of the perpetrators have been limited to completed attacks, hence, the persons behind foiled or failed attacks are not included. Piecing together their profiles, the information gathered is solely retrieved from open sources. The chapter attempts to map out common traits and factors significant in terms of the process towards violent radicalisation and uses process tracing to explore the religious component in particular. Some of the findings in this chapter have been published in two separate publications[26] and is

[25] For more information on how masculinity relates to violent extremism, see AGIUS, C. - BERGMAN ROSAMOND, A. - KINNVALL, C. (2020): Populism, ontological insecurity and gendered nationalism: Masculinity, climate denial and Covid19. *Politics, Religion, & Ideology,* 21(4), pp. 432–450 and DIER, A., & BALDWIN, G. (2022): *Masculinities and violent extremism*. United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). International Peace Institute.

[26] HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2017): Radicalisation into Salafi Jihadism – Some Patterns and Profiles in Europe between 2015-2017. *Defence Review*, Special Issue 2017/I. and HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2018): Returning Forreign Terrorist Fighters, Their Wives and Children. *National Security Review*, Issue 2, pp. 4-32.

especially recommended for professionals who in their daily work may encounter persons susceptible to violent radicalisation.

Chapter 6 follows the aim of the previous chapter and seeks to give an overview over the same processes of cognitive as well as behavioural radicalisation in the context of foreign terrorist fighters, along with a summary and systematisation of relevant literature dealing with the issue. While seeking to map out factors facilitating radicalisation and the decision of individuals to join terrorist organisations in conflict zones, the aim of the chapter is also to compare the findings to the previous chapter and to explore potential similarities and differences in the radicalisation process of persons who decide to commit jihadist-inspired attacks in their country of habitat and persons who leave to a remote area for similar reasons.

Chapter 7 contains a case study conducted in March 2016 investigating questions related to religious identity among second generation immigrants between 16-18 years in a public school in Vienna, Austria. Although the interviews were conducted among 34 adolescents of mixed religious background, the study is relevant for the discussion related to the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants as targets for jihadist-inspired radicalisation. Bearing this in mind, the study seeks to contribute to on-going debate on religious identity among second generation Muslim immigrants as well as to what extent and through which mechanisms religion may or may not present an obstacle to adaption to and/or integration in the host society. As a theoretical framework serving a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the second (and third) generation of immigrants, a complementing literature review is presented on questions related to religious identity and identification in general – and in peculiar related to the aforementioned categories.

Chapter 8 – the final chapter – contains a summary of the findings above and lists the conclusions and recommendations based on these, along with the new scientific results.

CHAPTER 1

TERRORISM, ASYMMETRIC WARFARE AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE – A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As all acts of terrorism are preceded by the process of violent radicalisation (although, in contrast, not all form of violent radicalisation necessarily lead to acts of terrorism), radicalisation needs to be placed in a wider theoretical framework. As terrorism is most often conceptualised as a form of asymmetrical warfare, current chapter aims to elaborate on the wider framework of violent radicalisation in terms of terrorism, asymmetric warfare, and political violence, not for methodological reasons but for reasons of framing the key research question of my research. Nevertheless, considering that the process of adopting a set of extremist and violent ideas is of psychological nature, and the fact that the majority of the individuals included in the case studies in present thesis find themselves in civil environments in Europe, there is a need for an extended approach to explore terrorism (and violent radicalisation) within the context of political violence and to further seek to explore the link between religion and political violence on both group-based level as well as on the level of the individual. This latter will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters presenting conceptual models of violent radicalisation as well as psychological factors relevant to the process of radicalisation.

1.1.BACKGROUND RELEVANT TO THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the bipolar world order, there have undoubtedly been significant changes in the international security policy environment. Although there was a time when the risk of international armed conflicts was seemingly decreasing, new and more complex threats have emerged and form the basis of new security risks, challenges and threats.[27] Geopolitical divides, proliferating crises, national conflicts becoming international with the involvement of global and regional powers, climate change,

[27] RESPERGER, István (2001): A fegyveres erők megváltozott feladatai a katonai jellegű fegyveres válságok kezelése során. *Doktori értekezés*, Budapest, 2001. p. 4. BÉRES, János (2008): Napjaink muszlim terrorizmusának gyökerei és visszaszorításának lehetőségei. *Doktori értekezés*, Budapest, 2008. p. 4.

transnational organised crime, irregular migration flows and global terrorism are some of the complex threats against global security. The actors responsible for the maintenance of order and security, including the armed forces, must be prepared to face these multifaceted challenges, including hybrid threats, a type of warfare characterised by a fusion of conventional and unconventional tools of power. The complex nature of the threats is highlighted in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) description of possible responses against these threats of hybrid nature:

> "NATO Allies face threats and challenges from both state and non-state actors who use hybrid activities to target political institutions, influence public opinion and undermine the security of NATO citizens. Hybrid methods of warfare – such as propaganda, deception, sabotage and other non-military tactics – have long been used to destabilise adversaries. What is new about attacks seen in recent years is their speed, scale and intensity, facilitated by rapid technological change and global interconnectivity."[28]

Amid several challenges our continent and the Member States of the European Union are facing currently, terrorism remains a key threat to the internal security.[29] Although the number of jihadi-inspired terrorist attacks have been decreasing in the Member States of the European Union since 2017 and statistics show that until the very same year separatist terrorist attacks were the most common, the threat from jihadi-inspired radicalisation and terrorism still remain high.[30] As demonstrated by the first chart below, jihadist terrorism has been increasing in the Member States of the European from 2014 an onwards, reaching its peak in 2017 and thereafter gradually decreasing. Although the number of completed jihadist terrorist attacks has sharply decreased toward the end of the period examined in present thesis, the number of arrests related to jihadist terrorist offences remains high (also compared to the other strands of violent extremist environments currently active within the EU), as shown by the second chart below. The high number of arrests indicate that the phenomenon of jihadist-inspired radicalisation and terrorism continue to remain a threat to the internal security of the EU.

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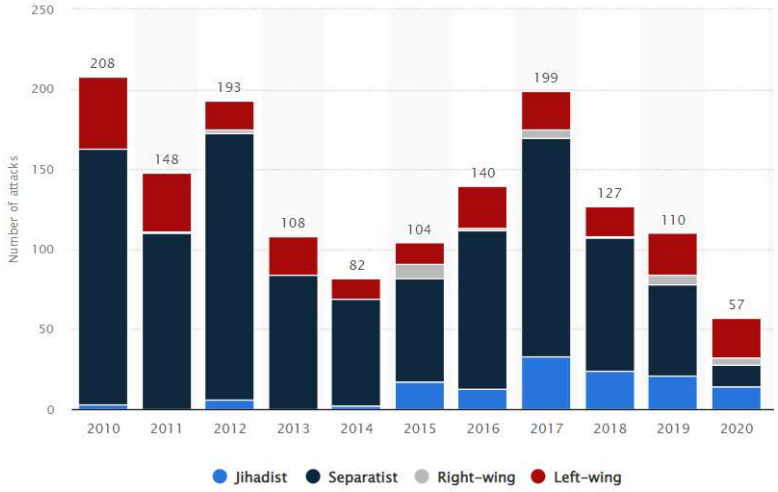
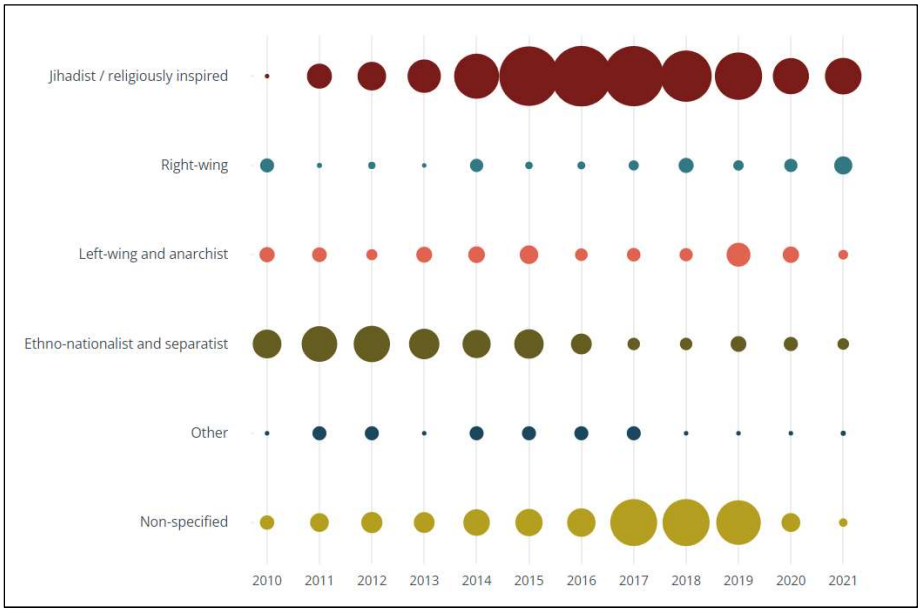
[28] North Athlantic Treaty Organization: NATO's response to hybrid threats. Last updated 21 June 2022. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm (accessed on 5 August 2022).

[29] EUROPOL (2022): Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2022. *Europol*. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Tesat_Report_2022_0.pdf (accessed 7 August 2022), p. 4.

[30] As shown by the Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports by Europol between the years 2017-2022, discussed in detail below in the consecutive chapters.



1. Figure. Number of failed, foiled or completed terrorist attacks in the European Union (EU) from 2010 to 2020, by affiliation.[31]



[31]Statista: Number of failed, foiled or completed terrorist attacks in the European Union (EU) from 2010 to 2020, by affiliation. Statista Research Department. Chart created based on the information in the Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports by Europol 2011-2021. 2023.02.28. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/746562/number-of-arrested-terror-suspects-in-the-european-union-eu/, accessed on 1 March 2023.

2. Figure. Terrorism-related arrests in the EU between 2010 and 2021, by year and by type: jihadist/religiously inspired, right-wing, left-wing and anarchist, ethno-nationalist and separatist, other and non-specified.[32]

Looking back at the past few years it becomes evident that the level of jihadist activity in Europe has been on a historically high level.[33] Though it is difficult to predict with certainty how the jihadist propaganda and network will evolve in the upcoming years, certain trends affecting the development are visible already now. These are, among others – as identified by Hegghammer in 2016 – the economic underachievement of a growing young Muslim population in Europe, the return of foreign fighters from conflict zones, continued armed conflicts in the Muslim world and continued "operational freedom" on the Internet.[34] Further factors that are important to consider in this context, especially when discussing the question of second and third generation of Muslims in Europe is the question of religious identity, self-identification and the issue of dual loyalties, the latter referring to – as described by Baron - "competing or conflicting allegiances between states".[35]

When submitting this thesis, the latest available (2022) Terrorism Situation and Trend Report published annually by Europol notes that similar to previous years, a significant majority (340) of all terrorist offenses that were the subject of convictions and acquittals by courts in Member States in 2021 were still related to jihadist terrorism.[36] The similarities continue regarding the jihadist environment in the Member States: same as in previous years, personal relationships were used to recruit for Islamist terrorism in the EU in 2021, offline as well as online, underlining the nature of radicalisation as a social process. Europol notes that in the offline world "Salafist organisations, unofficial prayer rooms, jails, and reception centres" have all been identified as places where radicalisation and recruiting take place.[37] Both recruiters and

[32] Figures between 2010 and 2019 include the UK. Infographic created by the Council of the European Union based on the information in the Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports by Europol 2011-2021. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/terrorism-eu-facts-figures/, accessed on 1 March 2023.
[33] HEGGHAMMER, Thomas (2016): The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Volume 10, No 6. Available at: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/566/html (accessed on 12 June 2017).
[34] HEGGHAMMER 2016.
[35] BARON, Ilan Zvi (2009): The Problem of Dual Loyalty. *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 1025–44. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27754542 (accessed 11 August 2022).
[36] EUROPOL 2022, p. 28.
[37] EUROPOL 2022, p. 34.

targets of recruitment have gotten younger - and have included minors, a trend that might be explained by how younger people have greater access to digital platforms.[38]

1.2. FRAMING THE ISSUE: SECURITY POLICY-RELATED ASPECTS RELATED TO THE ISSUE AT CORE

Since the breakdown of the bipolar world order, there have undoubtedly been significant changes in the international security policy environment. Although there have been times during the past two decades when there was a tendency to the risk of international armed conflicts seemingly decreasing, new and more complex threats have emerged and form the basis of new security risks, challenges and threats.[39] Geopolitical divides, proliferating crises, national conflicts becoming international with the involvement of global and regional powers, climate change, transnational organised crime, irregular migration flows and global terrorism are some of the complex threats against global security. Recent experience also shows that the use of asymmetric warfare, particularly by extremist groups, has intensified in recent times,[40] and therefore the use of such attacks is likely to continue to increase in the 21st century to counter security risks, challenges, and threats. Jihadist-inspired terrorist attacks in European countries represent a not too frequent, but – in the light of the past couple of decades – an increasingly common genre on the current spectrum of warfare. This genre can best be described as asymmetric warfare, aimed at creating fear and chaos as well as imposing its will on a named adversary. Hence, successful deterrence and counter-terrorism efforts must therefore consider the operational essence of asymmetric warfare in addition to the general principles of asymmetric warfare.

The number of armed conflicts and tension in the security environment is also reflected in global military expenditure, which – according to the latest figures by SIPRI – rose for the seventh consecutive year in 2021 to reach USD 2113 billion.[41] The global military expenditure accounted for 2.2 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to USD 268

[38] EUROPOL 2022, p. 34.

[39] RESPERGER 2001, BÉRES 2008.

[40] LONG, David E. (2010): Countering Asymmetrical Warfare in the 21st Century: A Grand Strategic Vision, *Strategic Insights*, 2010. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Available at: https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=487275 (accessed on 11 June 2016).

[41] SIPRI (2022): *SIPRI Yearbook 2022, Summary*. Available at: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/yb22_summary_en_v3.pdf (accessed on 10 August 2022), p. 10.

per person.[42] World military spending was 0.7 per cent higher than in 2020 and 12 per cent higher than in 2012, and the upward trajectory remained unaffected despite economic fluctuations induced by COVID-19.[43]

Although difficult to define precisely, the concept of international security today increasingly reflects the recognition that states are interdependent to achieve security.[44] Therefore, only by working together can states achieve common security. This is particularly true for Hungary, as a member of the EU and NATO, as the common European security and defence policy and membership of an international military alliance also imply that an armed attack against one member state constitutes an attack against the whole alliance[45] and that the invocation of the mutual defence and solidarity clause obliges the EU to act collectively.[46] Managing global risks lies partly in cross-border cooperation. But to counterbalance the unifying processes of globalisation, it is equally important to strengthen the capacity of nation-states to assert their interests and to support regional organisation.[47] Any national security strategy must therefore be able to keep pace with the changes underway in the rapidly changing international security environment. A successful strategy must have the right responses to the risks, threats, and challenges of our time in a globalised world where enemies have long since lost respect for national borders and international rules for the protection of civilians – including the issues of violent radicalisation and terrorism.

Carl von Clausewitz, one of the most famous authorities on the science of war, said of war that it is "nothing more than the continuation of politics by other means".[48] Before that, however, he explained that "[b]oth side seeks by physical force to compel the other to do its will, the immediate object being to crush its opponent and thus to render him incapable of any further resistance. War is thus the use of force to compel our opponent to do our will".[49] The experience of recent decades has shown that military and non-military operations, known as asymmetric

[42] SIPRI 2022, p. 10.
[43] SIPRI 2022, p. 10.
[44] MATUS, János (2005): A biztonság és a védelem problémái a változó nemzetközi rendszerben. *Hadtudomány – A Magyar Hadtudományi Társaság folyóirata*, XV. évf. 4. sz. Available at: http://www.zmne.hu/kulso/mhtt/hadtudomany/2005/4/2005_4_24.html (accessed on 1 June 2016).
[45] Article 5 of The North Atlantic Treaty.
[46] Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union.
[47] BODA, J. (2014): Biztonsági kihívások – nemzetbiztonsági válaszok. *Pécsi Határőr Tudományos Közlemények*, XV, 2014, p. 37.
[48] CLAUSEWITZ, Carl von (1961): On War. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, p. 56
[49] CLAUSEWITZ 1961, p. 37.

warfare, fully reflect this characterisation of war, since the hallmark of warfare is precisely the procedures and methods used to achieve political or ideological ends, based on unequal power relations, whereby the weaker party can impose its influence on the opponent.[50] The expected effect of the procedure is therefore primarily psychological rather than military. In this regard, Thornton notes that in relation to asymmetry, inequality is not necessarily measured in terms of power relations, but also in terms of one party indulging in methods that the other either cannot or will not.[51] The above is illustrated by the genre of terrorism, where a non-state actor uses assassinations, even with civilian casualties, to implement its policies, but where the opposing party (usually a state) cannot afford to use the same methods. There are examples of the opposite in history (e.g., the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), but they are still in the minority.[52]

The causes of the outbreak of contemporary armed conflicts vary heavily, posing new challenges for decision-makers responsible for creating security and for law enforcement agencies responsible for maintaining security. While some of today's conflicts are religious and/or cultural in nature, impoverishment, shrinking living space due to population growth, and competition for water, land and survival are likely to play an increasing role in the outbreak of future conflicts. For example, climate experts have suggested that years of severe drought and the resulting internal migration – competition for jobs and competition for drinking water - may well have been one of the triggers of the prolonged civil war in Syria.[53]

Terrorism remains high on the security agenda for numerous countries also in the mentioned context: when a state fails to provide the necessary economic, social and basic livelihood conditions, popular discontent can lead to the emergence of groups resorting to asymmetric methods and guerrilla tactics to fight state actors.[54] It is therefore appropriate to design national security strategies and military doctrines to address the challenges posed by types of conflict

[50] RESPERGER, István – KISS, Álmos Péter – SOMKUTI, Bálint (2014): *Aszimmetrikus hadviselés – kis háborúk nagy hatással*. Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó. p. 23.

[51] THORNTON, Rod (2004): *Asymmetric Warfare - Threat and Response in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, UK, Polity Press. p. 4.

[52] THORNTON 2004, p. 4.

[53] GLEICK, Peter H. (2014): Water, Drought, Climate Change, and Conflict in Syria. *Weather, Climate, and Society*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2014, pp. 331–40. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24907379 (accessed on 12 August 2022), pp. 333-334.

[54] PORKOLÁB, Imre (2005): Aszimmetrikus hadviselés az ortodox és gerilla hadikultúra összecsapásai. *Hadtudomány*, 2005/4. Available at**:** http://www.zmne.hu/dokisk/hadtud/Porkolab.pdf (accessed on 1 June 2016), pp. 16-17

and asymmetric threats using new methods. The use of asymmetric warfare, particularly by extremist groups, has intensified in the years past;[55] hence, there is a reason to expect that the use of such attacks is likely to continue to increase in the 21st century when drafting responses to counter security risks, challenges, and threats.

1.3. TERRORISM, ASYMMETRIC WARFARE AND MILITARY SCIENCE

The pursuit of asymmetry is not new in military science; throughout history many victorious strategies have been based on exploiting a favourable asymmetry.[56] In his book on the art of war, which is still relevant in many respects today, the ancient Chinese warrior-philosopher Sun Tzu stressed that the "[h]ighest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans".[57] The emphasis was therefore not necessarily on the destruction of the enemy's army, but on the destruction of the enemy's strategy. According to Sun Tzu, symmetrical warfare (two sides with equal armies) should be avoided as long as possible, and before that, unconventional methods of attacking the enemy's weak points in the first place should be exhausted. In his book, he devotes an entire chapter to mapping the enemy's weaknesses and strengths, in which the essence of today's asymmetric warfare is clearly spelled out: "[a]ppear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected".[58] Attacking unexpected, weak points is expected to bring success in battle.

Already in the First and Second World Wars, operations that would be classified as guerrilla tactics, partisan warfare or even insurgency by today's terminology could be traced,[59] but in the decades following the Second World War, wars between states fought with conventional methods and means became increasingly rare.[60] At the same time, armed conflicts within states became increasingly common: uprisings and liberation movements against colonial powers, ethnic or religious minorities rising up against the central government, revolutionaries rising up

[55] LONG 2010.

[56] ISASZEGI, János (2015): Az aszimmetrikus hadviselés kialakulásának története. *HADTUDOMÁNY: A MAGYAR HADTUDOMÁNYI TÁRSASÁG FOLYÓIRATA*, 25 (1-2), pp. 76-78. Available at: http://real.mtak.hu/23548/1/konf_isaszegi.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2022), p. 77.

[57] SUN TZU (2009): *The Art of War*. Translated by Lionel Giles. Project Gutenberg, 2004. 37.

[58] SUN TZU 2009, p. 57.

[59] ISASZEGI 2015, p. 77.

[60] RESPERGER *et al* 2014, p. 66.

against a conservative government (or counter-revolutionaries against a revolutionary government).[61]

1.3.1. Asymmetric warfare

Symmetric warfare is characterised by the clash of opponents representing essentially similar war cultures.[62] In contrast, Resperger *et al* describe the essence of asymmetric warfare is as a "[p]rocedural form of unconventional or costly malicious action that the attacked is not prepared or cannot adequately prepare to counter".[63] Daley notes that the target of the attack is usually the vulnerability or weakness of an adversary, which is not in itself a new tactic, as attacking vulnerabilities has been an explicit strategy of many military and political leaders over the centuries,[64] but the methods used today are certainly novel. Looking at the genre of terrorism, Resperger *et al* underline that the methods of execution are generally characterised by violence, a disregard for moral norms, a disregard for the protection of civilians, and a blurring of the line between combatant and non-combatant.[65] The use of child soldiers and female suicide bombers can be found among the perpetrators of assassinations.[66] Based on the experience to date, the party that uses asymmetric warfare can be described as follows:[67]

- It uses seemingly simple, unconventional methods achieving significant results.
- He knows the opponent's weaknesses and exploits them.
- The aim is to achieve maximum results with minimum resources.
- Organisationally, there is no need for a larger military force or for a potentially cumbersome hierarchical and bureaucratic command.
- The small forces used allow for quick decision-making.
- It avoids face-to-face combat because it does not have the military strength to do so.

[61] RESPERGER *et al* 2014, p. 66.
[62] PORKOLÁB 2005, p. 16.
[63] RESPERGER et al 2014, p. 24.
[64] DALEY 2000.
[65] RESPERGER et al 2014, p. 26.
[66] The role of female suicide bombers, and the role that women can and should play in combat, is a controversial issue in jihadist circles. There are official positions on this, but they are still mainly specific to liberation Islamist movements in religious cloaks (e.g., Palestinians and Chechens).
[67] RESPERGER et al 2014, p. 25.

1.3.2. Terrorism as asymmetric warfare

Terrorist organisations have shown a capability to adapting quickly to changes in the global socio-political environment and terrorism has hence become the primary strategy of irregular warfare of the twenty-first century. Some of these changes serve as facilitators for terrorists to carry out their operations, find finance, and acquire new capabilities, resulting in a gradual change on how terrorism interacts with the rest of the world. International terrorism has become an increasingly common form of warfare, as many states – and non-state actors – have recognised that they are able to fight more effectively against adversaries that are economically more developed and have greater (traditionally organised) military power fight effectively if they use asymmetrical warfare.[68]

The attacks on the New York skyscrapers and the Pentagon signalled that warfare had entered an era in which a party with a weaker military force and a significantly smaller budget could, with relatively little material investment and human resources inflict enormous damage on a hostile superpower, and with a large army of the superpower at the ready.[69] The following years confirmed the actual beginning and consolidation of the new form of asymmetric warfare: In 2002, the Chechen group of Mossad Barayev seized a Moscow theatre and took nearly 900 guests and actors hostage; in 2004, 191 people were killed when a group close to al-Qaeda detonated ten bombs simultaneously on four trains in Madrid; in 2005, 56 people were killed in London in coordinated suicide bombings at several different locations during the morning rush hour. The list of attacks that have claimed many lives and left many injured (Mumbai, 2008; Oslo and Utøya, 2011; Boston, 2013; Nairobi, 2013, Paris, 2015 and Brussels, 2016) goes on and Europol underlines that terrorism remains the greatest threat to the internal security of the EU.[70]

The most recent example of the above mentioned is the battle of the militant Islamist organisation calling itself the Islamic State, who fought against an opponent vastly superior in terms of material, technological, and financial resources. Therefore, with the limited military forces at its disposal, the so-called Islamic State is unable to fight its adversaries on the

[68] PORKOLÁB, Imre (2020): *Az aszimmetrikus hadviselés adaptációja – A tradicionális és irreguláris hadikultúrák összecsapásának vizsgálata*. Budapest, Dialog Campus. p. 20.
[69] ISASZEGI 2015, p. 77.
[70] EUROPOL 2022, p. 4.

battlefield and as a result, the sole choice in this struggle was to rely on asymmetrical tactics.[71] The asymmetric warfare waged by the Islamic State is similar to that of al-Qaeda in the years following the 9/11 attacks and is rooted in the same theories proposed by jihadist theorists associated with the al-Qaeda leadership, developing strategies for war against US and the West based on conditions of extreme asymmetry.[72] The underlying ideological and religious justification for the use of asymmetric warfare, especially targeting civilians in the West, will be explored in detail in Chapter 4.

Why jihadi Salafi radicalisation needs to be examined through the framework of terrorism is also clearly demonstrated in the changes regarding the *modus operandi* of the attacks analysed in this piece of research. The *modus operandi* underlines how terrorism uses elements of military, economic as well as psychological warfare against the target country and its economy. In the field of psychological warfare, the aim is to spread fear, anxiety, and panic throughout society (regardless of geographical location), making citizens feel unsafe everywhere. Therefore, the failure of a government to prevent and counter terrorist attacks that potentially target multiple segments of society – be it a critical infrastructure, a business, a restaurant, a mall, a hotel, a transport arena or a venue for public and social uprisings - conveys the message that the state is unable to guarantee the security of its citizens and protect its critical infrastructures against the damage caused by terrorists. The acts of terrorism analysed in this thesis include committed by terror cells or lone actors 2014 through 2017 seemed to suggest not only a somewhat new way of carrying out attacks on European soil, but also a shift regarding the selected targets towards mass social events, such as concerts and markets. Also the tendency commencing around 2016 (presumably following the statements by late IS' spokesperson Mohammad al-'Adnani to carry our attack with whatever means – see more in detail under Chapter 4) demonstrate the important link between terrorism and radicalisation, as the act of terror seemingly came one step closer in the process of radicalisation. Still, it needs to be underlined that averting acts of terrorism is a task for law enforcement agencies (self-evidently including security and intelligence agencies), while the prevention of violent radicalisation

[71] BRÜGGEMANN, Ulf (2017): The Asymmetric War of ISIL – Implications for Counter-Terrorism. *Security Policy Working Paper*, No. 13/2017. German Federal Academy for Security Policy. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep22187.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aa4593b5a98d851ad9b10d7ad60351676&ab_segments=&origin= (accessed on 1 August 2022), p. 2.
[72] BRÜGGEMANN 2017, p. 2.

should – in the best of worlds – commence long before a crime is imminent and law enforcement needs to step in and involve a wide range of actors outside the security spectrum.

1.4. POLITICAL VIOLENCE

As violent radicalisation and terrorism may to certain parts be considered as political violence, the theories related to this field of research need to be reviewed as part of the theoretical background in analysing underlying causes of violent radicalisation. Although various scholars, governments, and even international organisations (such as the WHO[73], for instance) use different definitions, the essence of each definition is the same, namely political violence can be defined as violence that is deliberately perpetrated in order to achieve political goals. Hence, broadly defined, the notion of political violence touches upon a wide range of issues – from guerrilla warfare, insurgency, terrorism, rebellion, revolution to rioting, and civil war – and further, as a means by the state against its own citizens as the deprivation of political representation, wrongful imprisonment, detention, forced eviction from homes and homelands and statelessness[74].

In the context of radicalisation and political violence it is the theories exploring the relationship and potential correlation between the factors on the level of the individual and the use of violence for political purposes that are of utmost interest. One of the most cited theories within research related to political violence is the one of relative deprivation, which – in the words of Gurr may be described as the gap between expected and achieved welfare creating collective discontent.[75] Translating the feeling of relative deprivation into terrorism, Gurr notes that "[t]he primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism (…). The anger induced by frustration (…) is a motivating force that disposes men

[73] WHO also defines political violence is „the deliberate use of power and force to achieve political goals". World Health Organization (WHO) *World Report on Violence and Health.* Geneva: 2002. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241545615, accessed on 1 August 2022.
[74] SCHNEIDER, D. – TURSHEN, Meredeth (2011): Political and Social Violence: Health Effects. In *Encyclopedia of Environmental Health*, pp. 623-630.
[75] GURR, Ted Robert (1970): *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ, Center of International Studies, Princeton University Press.

to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities".[76] Gurr concludes that „[t]he more intense and prolonged a feeling of frustration, the greater the probability of aggression".[77]

1.4.1. Religion and political violence

Moving further towards the more specific and the core issues of present research by linking the question of religion to political violence, one popular explanation of extremism as a driving force behind terrorism is that it consists of ideological convictions about a duty to use violence to restore the political system to a form suggested by religious principles.[78] Therefore, organisations fighting for their political goals against widely recognised systems with reference to religious principles are often attributed with the extremist label (e.g. the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq – i.e. the predecessor of the so-called Islamic State against the Syrian government, or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front against the Philippine government), meaning that the idea of religious extremism as political needs to be further explored. A description of religious extremism for political purposes on group level is – among others – presented by Wiktorowicz (detailed below under Chapter 3), offering a four-stage model of extremism that culminates in violence.[79] According to this model the actor's rational choice is subjugated by faith in the group's claims as by his willingness to act in accordance with the group's standards. Therefore, individuals will purposefully employ violence on behalf of the group to achieve their goals when the norm of the group permits the use of non-normative strategies, such as violence. This is one example of the conceptualisations of extremism linking (religious) extremism to acts of group violence, other, more in-depth studies of extremism conceptualising it on the individual level as support for specific beliefs will be presented in subsequent chapters.

[76] GURR 1970, p. 36

[77] GURR 1970, p. 41.

[78] ARENA, M. P. – ARRIGO, B. A. (2005): Social psychology, terrorism and identity: a preliminary re-examination of theory, culture, self and identity. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law,* 23, 2005.

[79] WIKTOROWICZ, Quintan (2005): *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West*. Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

1.5. FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS AS PART OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Another question that needs to be considered when conceptualising violent radicalisation and terrorism is the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. Some scholars[80] argue that it is more accurate to see this kind of 'overseas fighting' as one type of "transnational activism" or "international volunteerism", however, in contrast to these, I will argue why foreign fighters should be analysed also within the context of terrorism and explore why this matters for the question of violent radicalisation. For these reasons I use term 'foreign terrorist fighter' (FTF) throughout my research in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014), identifying an FTF as anyone who "travels to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training".[81] What speaks against the emphasis on terrorism in certain cases is how in many cases scarce information is found regarding the activities of the persons in the conflict zone itself. This is problematic in a way, since the last pieces of the puzzle are equally important to fully complete the "lifecycle" of a foreign fighter and to thereby be able to duly assess the threat posed by the person upon return, bearing in mind what kind of activities the person would engage in and what role he or she had in the ranks of the terrorist organisation. Not underestimating the threat posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters it needs to be noted that not everyone returnee continues with similar activity upon return. Some are killed in battle, while others become disillusioned by the fighting, or simply find the dissonance too big between the religious ideals promised by the Islamic State propaganda machinery and the realities of a life in Syria.[82] Hoffman and Furlan notes further that not all foreign fighters have the will to organise and carry out terrorist operations.[83] In fact, some of the returning former combatants return from Syria deeply

[80] See DELLA PORTA, Donatella - SYDNEY, Arrow (2005): *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield; DELLA PORTA, Donatella – DIANI, Mario (2006): *Social Movements: An Introduction*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell; MOORE, Cerwy – TUMELTY (2009): Assessing Unholy Alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and Nationalism to Islamism and Salafism, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 25:1, pp. 73-94.

[81] UNITED NATIONS Security Council Resolution 2178. 24 september 2014. Available at: https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SCR-2178_2014_EN.pdf (accessed on 3 June 2019).

[82] HOFFMAN, Adam – FURLAN, Martha (2020): *Challenges Posed by Returning Foreign Fighters*. Program on Extremism, The George Washington University. March 2020. Available at: https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Challenges%20Posed%20by%20Returning%20Foreign%20Fighters.pdf (accessed 7 September 2020), p. 7.

[83] HOFFMAN – FURLAN 2020, p. 7.

traumatised by the cruelty of the Islamic State, the dynamics of the Syrian civil war in general, and the coalition airstrikes on IS-held areas.[84]

The following chapter aims to give an overview over the threat analysis related to returning foreign terrorist fighters made by Europol as well as the security and intelligence agencies of the most affected Member States of the European Union, along with a summary of the most relevant literature dealing with the issue.

Critiques have claimed that the notion of foreign terrorist fighters phrase has a limiting effect since it redefines international fighting as merely another kind of terrorism,[85] but, as will be detailed below, the change in language used by policymakers (instead of the term "foreign fighters", which was originally used to describe foreign combatants to the now more common "foreign terrorist fighters") also illustrates the legitimate concern that foreign fighters may engage in terrorism abroad or return to their home country and carry out acts of terrorism. This seeming hesitancy is reflected also by relevant European national authorities not consistently prosecuting the first (2013–2014) and second (early 2015) waves of returning foreign fighters. This was on one hand as it was assessed that they would pose a low threat, but also frequently as the result of insufficient legal tools, on the other. However, following the terrorist attacks in Western Europe from 2014 and onwards involving several returnees, increased focus has been placed on the threat posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters. The attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014 was carried out by solo perpetrator Mehdi Nemmouche, which was the first attack in Europe committed by a returning foreign fighter returning since the beginning of the conflict in Syria in 2011. The security threat was further underlined by the attempted mass shooting on the Thalys train between Paris and Brussels in August 2015 and culminated in the coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 and in Brussels in March 2016.

Several studies have been conducted analysing the motivational factors of European Muslims traveling to conflict zones to receive military training and participate in operations directed by terrorist organisations (here: the Islamic State). The studies have offered a wide range of push

[84] HOFFMAN – FURLAN 2020, p. 7.
[85] BAKER-BEALL, Christopher (2003): The concept of the foreign terrorist fighter: An immanent critique. *European Journal of International Security, 8*(1), 2003, pp. 25-46, available at: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-international-security/article/concept-of-the-foreign-terrorist-fighter-an-immanent-critique/912480084C80ED3DA7FE5554EB055119#fn17 (accessed on 30 December 2021).

and pull factors (as well as a combination of them all): poor integration and social alienation, adventure-seeking, the sense of duty towards what is perceived as suffering Muslims in Muslim countries, a legitimate act of self-defence, the power of a transnational identity as propagated through the jihadi Salafist narrative (and the claim that this identity is currently under dire threat), the strong effect of social media in the radicalisation process and the role of networks and peer-to-peer-groups in the radicalisation and recruitment process.

With the Islamic State having suffered severe losses on the battlefields of both Iraq and Syria, what remains of it is held encircled by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Kurdish liberation forces waiting to declare the total territorial defeat of the terrorist group. The fate of the several hundred foreign terrorist fighters holding European citizenship currently being held captive by the SDF forces is heavily debates across the affected Member States, some claiming that the door should be completely closed, others claiming that they should be stripped of their European citizenship in case of dual citizenship, some claiming that they should be subjected to national investigation and prosecution, while others would rather see an international criminal tribunal dealing with the potential war crimes of the foreign terrorist fighters. The opinions differ even in relation to the measures following a potential prosecution: some Member States claim that these persons can be reintegrated into society, while this would be a mission impossible in the view of others. The issue is further complicated an Iraqi court started sentencing several French foreign fighters to death for having joined ISIS in the beginning of June.[86]

Returning foreign fighters are perceived to pose a threat for two main reasons: firstly, the enhanced capability to carry out attacks and secondly, the intent to do so.[87] Already in an article published 2013 Hegghammer made an attempt to assess the impact of returning foreign fighters on domestic terrorist activity.[88] Focusing on jihadists in North America, Western Europe and Australia between 1990 and 2010 the inquiry suggested that one of nine foreign fighters

[86] THE SOUFAN GROUP (2019): *IntelBrief: French Foreign Fighters Sentenced to Death in Iraq*. The Soufan Group, 2019.06.03. Available at: http://www.soufangroup.com/intelbrief-french-foreign-fighters-sentenced-to-death-in-iraq/ (accessed on 12 June 2019).

[87] REED, Alastair – POHL, Johanna (2017): Tackling the surge of returning foreign fighters. *NATO Review*. 14 July 2017. Available at: https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2017/Also-in-2017/daesh-tackling-surge-returning-foreign-fighters-prevention-denmark-rehabilitation-programmes/EN/index.htm (accessed on 5 March 2019).

[88] HEGGHAMMER, Thomas (2013): Should I stay or Should I go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting. *American Politcal Science Review*. February 2013. Available at: http://hegghammer.com/_files/Hegghammer_-_Should_I_stay_or_should_I_go.pdf (accessed on 20 June 2017), p. 10.

returned with the intent to commit attacks in the West.[89] This proportion seems to be in line with what The Soufan Group – providing strategic security intelligence to governments on jihadist-inspired radicalisation and terrorism – described as the generally "stronger desire to join something new rather than destroy something old".[90] The above cited study examining the Islamist terrorist plots in Europe between 2014 and 2017 came to a different conclusion: out of the 142 plots analysed the author found that 30 of them in fact had involved a person who had received terrorist training abroad or had combat experience.[91] This means that one in five attacks (approximately 21 per cent) involved a foreign terrorist fighter. In his study Hegghammer also drew the important conclusion that the effectiveness of a terrorist attack would increase with the presence of a foreign fighter. As emphasised by several scholars, experiences from a war zone also changes the mindset of the person,[92] in the majority of the cases these persons have significantly a lowered threshold for violence. This violence potentially used upon return is not necessarily demonstrated through terrorist attacks, but experience show that it is prevalent primarily through continued criminal activity, including gross violent crimes, extortion, fraud and money laundering. A brief study examining the Swedish foreign terrorist fighters found that among the crimes committed by returnees on site in Sweden are gross extortion, gross abuse and ill-treatment, abuse, abuse of laws, money laundering crimes and gross frauds.[93]

By late 2018 it was estimated that out of the approximately 5,000 European foreign terrorist fighters some 1,500 had returned, while around 1,000 had been killed on the battlefields of Syria or Iraq.[94] In its Terrorism Situation and Trend Report from 2018 Europol highlights that those returning to Europe are "potentially increasing the risk of more organised spectacular-type attacks in Europe in the medium to long term".[95] The intent to carry out attacks against the West may also increase as it becomes more difficult to travel to conflict zones such as Syria

[89] HEGGHAMMER 2013, p. 10.
[90] BARRETT, Richard (2017): Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees. *The Soufan Group*. October 2017, p. 14.
[91] SIMCOX, Robin (2017): European Islamist Plots and Attacks Since 2014 – and How the U.S. Can Help to Prevent Them. *The Heritage Foundation*. No 3236. August 1, 2017. Available at: https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/BG3236.pdf (accessed on 2 February 2018), p. 6.
[92] BYMAN, Daniel (2017): Frustrated Foreign Fighters. *Lawfare*. 2017.07.12. Available at: https://www.lawfareblog.com/frustrated-foreign-fighters (accessed on 5 June 2019).
[93] OLSSON, Daniel – SANDELIN, Magnus (2019): Grova våldsbrott följer i IS- återvändarnas spår. *Doku.* 2019.03.11. Available at: https://doku.nu/2019/03/11/grova-brott-foljer-i-is-atervandarnas-spar/ (accessed on 5 June 2019).
[94] EUROPOL 2018, p. 26 and EUROPOL 2019, p. 40.
[95] EUROPOL 2018, p. 26.

and Iraq.[96] Hence, one of the most significant threats is the one of conducting attacks, although Europol also adds in this context that the ability of such individuals may potentially be reduced due to "the increased military pressure, loss of cohesion, lack of infrastructure and reduced access to resources".[97] After the military defeat the ability to direct external attacks against the West has seemingly been reduced greatly, however, the intent of conducting such attacks remain and Europol warns that IS may rely on sympathisers in Europe (e.g. former members or imprisoned sympathisers).[98] The number of persons returning to the EU remained in 2018 according to Europol "very low", mainly due to the fact that several hundreds of them found themselves in detention in either Syria or Iraq.[99] However, in the case of the returnees, all men (and some women) are believed to have received weapons training, including combat experience (in the case of the men).[100] Parallel to – or as a direct consequence of – the decreasing number of persons travelling to Syria or Iraq, it is obvious that the remaining jihadist networks in EU Member States have shifted their focus to carrying out activities in the EU.[101] In some cases (such as in the Netherlands) the jihadist movement is many times larger than before the war in Syria.[102]

Europol also suggests that there is evidence that the returning foreign fighters use the flow of irregular migrants to get back into Europe, however, this is not deemed to be systematic.[103] This is an important fact also recognised by – among others – the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, who in its terrorist threat assessment from February 2019 underlined that terrorist groups indeed have used the flow of refugees to send operatives to Europe.[104] Although security and border protection measures have been enhanced across Europe, there is a risk that the foreign terrorist fighters will use stolen or forged travel documents to return via third countries.[105]

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[96] EUROPOL 2018, p. 28.
[97] EUROPOL 2018, p. 27.
[98] EUROPOL 2018, p. 33.
[99] EUROPOL 2019, p. 9.
[100] EUROPOL 2019, p. 9.
[101] EUROPOL 2019, p. 7.
[102] EUROPOL 2019, p. 40.
[103] EUROPOL 2018, p. 28.
[104] NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR SECURITY AND COUNTERTERRORISM (2019): Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands 49. February 2019. Available at: https://english.nctv.nl/binaries/Summary%20DTN49_tcm32-380575.pdf (accessed 5 July 2019).
[105] EUROPOL 2018, p. 29.

1.5.1. Foreign terrorist fighters as a security threat linked to terrorism

The correlation between foreign fighters, terrorism and radicalisation is also well-reflected in the threat assessment by national security and intelligence services in the countries of the European Union most affected by the phenomenon. Following brief overview is concerned with the countries most affected by the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon and the aim of the compilation to give a realistic picture to what extent these persons are assessed to pose a threat upon return. The countries below are the same countries from where the foreign terrorist fighters examined in Chapter 7 originate.

According to information on the website of the French Government, the main threat – just like in the past years – still comes from jihadist networks embodied by "Daesh, al-Qaeda and their affiliates", whose aim is to "impose a totalitarian Islamist ideology through violence".[106] Returning foreign fighters from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq are listed as a particularly acute threat. Looking at absolute numbers, the highest number of persons from European traveling to join the Islamic State originated from France. In mid-2016 the French Ministry of Interior estimated that around 1,910 persons from France were "concerned by the jihad in Syria and Iraq", of which 600 to 700 persons and 500 children were said to still be present in the conflict zone.[107] Comparing with global figures in relation to female departees France presents the third highest numbers (after Russia and Tunesia) with 382 women who have travelled to the conflict zone.[108] Until February 2018 the number of returnees was 225 persons (56 per cent men and 22 per cent women) and 68 minors (21 per cent).[109] 66 of the minors are under the age of 13 and only 2 above 13 years.[110] This relatively small number is explained by the Minister of Interior as a consequence of the difficulties with leaving the conflict zones. In the same

[106] GOUVERNEMENT DE LE RÉPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE (2018): Comprendre le terrorisme. Available at: https://www.gouvernement.fr/risques/comprendre-le-terrorisme, accessed 13 June 2019.

[107] JOURNAL DE DIMANCHE (2017): *Collomb sur les Français de retour de Syrie et d'Irak: "Nous en sommes à 217 majeurs et 54 mineurs*. Le Journal de Dimanche, 2017.08.06. Available at: https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/collomb-sur-les-francais-de-retour-de-syrie-et-dirak-nous-en-sommes-a-217-majeurs-et-54-mineurs-3404645 (accessed 13 June, 2019). GOUVERNEMENT DE LE RÉPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE (2018): Prévenir Pour Protéger: Plan national de prévention de la radicalisation. Paris, 2018. https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2018/02/2018-02-23-cipdr-radicalisation.pdf (accessed 18 June 2019. 29).

[108] COOK, Joana – VALE, Gina (2018): *From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State*. King's College, London. Institute for the Study of Radicalisation, ICSR. 2018. Available at: https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Women-in-ISIS-report_20180719_web.pdf (accessed 20 June 2019), p. 22.

[109] GOUVERNEMENT DE LE RÉPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE 2018, p. 28.

[110] GOUVERNEMENT DE LE RÉPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE 2018, p. 29.

interview, given to French newspaper Le Journal de Dimanche, the Minister of Interior expressed that the terrorist threat remains very high in France. He mentioned the fact that the Champs-Elysees had been targeted twice and that French intelligence and security services had foiled several attempts to attack since the beginning of the year. According to Europol's TE-SAT report (mentioned above) France reported the highest number of verdicts for jihadi terrorism for 2017 (114), the vast majority related to IS or its affiliated groups.[111] Albeit it may very well be considered to a large success from a law enforcement point of view, the risk remains that these persons will continue to radicalise and recruit others while being incarcerated. As of February 2018, there were 19,745 persons enlisted in the counter-terrorism surveillance record (*Fichier de traitement des Signalements pour la Prévention de la Radicalisation à caractère Terroriste, FSPRT*).[112]

According to estimates by the German domestic intelligence service some 1,050 persons left the country since 2013 to join the Islamic State in either Syria or Iraq, more than a fifth of these are female.[113] The majority of the persons who have travelled are younger than 30 years. About one third has returned to Germany. The security and intelligence authorities have concrete information about 110 returnees who have actively participated in terrorist training and have been engaged in armed combat in Syria or Iraq. There is also concrete evidence stating that approximately half of all the persons travelled have participated in or otherwise supported combat operations on behalf of the Islamic State and al-Qaeda (or their affiliates and other terrorist groups).[114] For the other half of the group this means that there still are no sufficient grounds for the initiation of investigations by the competent judicial authorities. Evidence further suggests that approximately 200 of the persons travelling from Germany are dead. The BfV underlines that a stronger trend in relation to returns must be expected along with the territorial defeat of the Islamic State.[115]

According to the website of British security service MI5 "[U]K nationals travelling overseas to serve with extremist groups as 'foreign fighters' present a potential threat to the UK, both while

[111] EUROPOL 2018, p. 17.
[112] GOUVERNEMENT DE LE RÉPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE 2018, p. 27.
[113] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGGSCHUTZ (2019): Islamistisch motivierte Reisebewegungen in Richtung Syrien/Irak. 2019.03.14. Available at: https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/zahlen-und-fakten-islamismus/zuf-is-reisebewegungen-in-richtung-syrien-irak (accessed on 6 June 2019).
[114] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGGSCHUTZ 2019.
[115] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGGSCHUTZ 2019.

they are overseas and when they return to the UK".[116] Syria is the main attraction for British jihadist and so far around 900[117] persons have travelled, of which are 50[118] minors and 145[119] women. While being overseas these persons may connect terrorist groups with groups of extremists back home and thereby help in developing the ability to carry out attacks on British soil. Foreign fighters may also gain combat experience, participate in military training, and broaden their international network of like-minded extremists, which make them an even greater threat upon return to the UK – even if they have not been tasked to carry out attacks. The MI5 underlines in this context that having fought overseas may very well also promote radicalisation and contribute to the further spreading of ISIS propaganda considering their English language skills. 425 persons had returned as of mid-2018[120] and of the 900 persons more than 100 have been deprived of their British citizenship.[121]

Regarding the case of Belgium, estimates from both official and non-governmental sources put the figure for individuals who have travelled to Syria or Iraq between 2011 and 2016 between 420 and 516, which means that Belgium has the highest number of foreign terrorist fighters per capita in Western Europe.[122] Though the Belgian authorities have been straightforward with the problem already from an early stage, still there is little official information to be found regarding the persons behind the numbers. Information from 2016 claims that an estimate of 180–260 foreign fighters remain in the conflict zone, 60 to 70 have been killed, mostly in combat. Between 55 and 120 individuals have returned, and 50 tried to leave but were stopped (yet, these 50 are still included in some counts).[123] After the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels

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[116] MI5: *Foreign Fighters*. Available at: https://www.mi5.gov.uk/foreign-fighters (accessed 20 June 2019).

[117] United Kingdom, Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 656, (2019), https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-03-18/debates/42259394-C90B-4670-BFC9-A5F91518A5FF/ISISMembersReturningToTheUK (accessed 20 June 2019).

[118] BENOTMAN, Norman – MALIK, Nikita (2016): *The Children of Islamic State*. London: Quilliam Foundation. Available at: https://www.quilliaminternational.com/shop/e-publications/the-children-of-islamic-state/ (accessed 20 June 2019), p. 8.

[119] EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2017): Radicalisations and violent extremism – focus on women: How women become radicalised, and how to empower them to prevent radicalisation. *Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*, December 2017. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596838/IPOL_STU(2017)596838_EN.pdf (accessed 19 June 2019), p. 46.

[120] United Kingdom. Hansard Parliamentary Debates 2019.

[121] United Kingdom. Hansard Parliamentary Debates 2019.

[122] GINKEL, Bibi van – ENTENMANN, Eva (eds.) (2016): *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles, Threats & Policies*. The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) Evolutions in Counter-Terrorism, Vol. 1 November 2016, p. 25.

[123] GINKEL – ENTENMANN 2016, p. 25.

in 2014 by the returning foreign terrorist fighter and lone perpetrator Mehdi Nemmouche the Belgian authorities raised the threat level to the highest (4 – very serious). The threat level has been lowered and raised ever since – but Belgium was the first (and only) Western country to lower the threat to a 2 in January 2018, implying that there still is a threat, but attacks are less likely.[124]

Continuin along the lines of the number of foreign terrorist fighters per capita, the second highest numbers after Belgium have been recorded in Sweden. The phenomenon of foreign fighters is not new in Sweden, but already posed a challenge to security agencies in relation to Swedish residents traveling to Afghanistan/Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen from 2006 and onwards.[125] Bearing these countries of destination in mind, the Swedish Security Service made the assessment that it was realistic to assume that Swedish residents would continue to travel to areas with a high presence of jihadist organisations, at that time Syria and Iraq being the main countries of destination.[126] The majority of the persons travelling to Syria were men between 18-30 years, but also women who wished to offer logistical support to the terrorist groups. In 2013 the Swedish Security Service assessed that the majority of the returnees would not have intent to carry out attacks in Sweden, however, they added that "some individuals may have such intent".[127] One year later the security agency noted that the numbers traveling to the mentioned conflict zone had risen "exceptionally" and was now closer to several hundred rather than a couple of dozen.[128] The threat assessment related to returning foreign terrorist fighters was different from the previous year. Now they were deemed as a "potentially serious threat" in relation to the intent to carry out attacks,[129] especially in the light of the statement made by the previously quoted late spokesperson al-'Adnani in September 2014 urging "soldiers of the

[124] COOLSAET, Rik – RENARD, Thomas (2018): *How Belgium Overcame the Threat from Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters*. Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations. 2018.03.22. Available at: http://www.egmontinstitute.be/how-belgium-overcame-the-threat-from-returning-foreign-terrorist-fighters/ (accessed 3 July 2019).
[125] GUSTAFSSON, Linus – Ranstorp, Magnus (2017): *Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: An Analysis of Open-Source Intelligence and Statistical Data*. Stockholm: Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies (CATS), Swedish Defence University. Available at: http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:fhs:diva-6731 (accessed on 5 March 2019). pp. 23-24.
[126] SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE 2013, p. 53.
[127] SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE 2013, p. 54.
[128] SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE (2014): *Swedish Security Service Yearbook 2014*. Available at: https://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/download/18.4c7cab6d1465fb27b01f1a/1426682274489/Arsbok2014.pdf (accessed on 5 March 2019), pp. 6, 56.
[129] SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE 2014, p. 57

Islamic State" to conduct lone-wolf attacks against the West.[130] This year several countries raised their threat level due to the mentioned statement (such as Norway, Australia and the United Kingdom). According to the latest available threat assessment the Swedish Security Service underlines that violence-promoting Islamist extremism and returning foreign fighters still pose the greatest threat to national security.[131]

Due to – among others – the threat posed by jihadist networks active in the Netherlands as well as the perceived threat from returning foreign terrorist fighters, the threat level is still assessed to be high in the Netherlands (4 on a scale of 5), meaning that the threat of an attack is substantial and the chance of an attack in the country is real.[132] In its annual report for 2018 the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (*Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst,* hereinafter: AIVD) underlines that where terrorism is concerned, the area of main interest is jihadist terrorism.[133] AIVD describes the threat from foreign fighters as two-fold: on one hand those who remain in the conflict zones are likely to regularly be in touch with their "home base" in the West, contributing to the further spread of jihadist ideology – and on the other hand there are those returning. As of November 2018 more than 310 persons had travelled to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, of which approximately 85 have died and 55 returned.[134] AIVD underlines the challenges with trying to assess the state of mind and the intent of the ones returning – whether the person is disillusioned or traumatised, whether they have the intent to continue the jihadist activity or whether they were sent in order to carry out attacks.[135] According to the AIVD the jihadist movement in the country comprises approximately 500 persons, mainly pro-ISIS.

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[130] McFATE, Jessica Lewis – GAMBHIR, Harleen – STERLING, Evan (2014): *'ISIS' Global Messageing Strategy Fact Sheet.* Institute for the Study of War. December 2014. Available at: http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/GLOBAL%20ROLLUP%20Update.pdf (accessed 2 March 2019).

[131] SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE (2018): *Swedish Security Service Yearbook 2018*. March 2019. https://sakerhetspolisen.se/download/18.6af3d1c916687131f1fae5/1552543607309/Arsbok-2018.pdf (accessed 10 May 2019), p. 59.

[132] National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism. Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands 2019, p. 49.

[133] AIVD (2018a): *Annual Report 2018*. https://english.aivd.nl/publications/annual-report/2019/05/14/aivd-annual-report-2018 (accessed 18 June 2019), p. 11.

[134] AIVD (2018b): *Syria's Legacy. Global jihadism remains a threat to Europe*. November 2018. Available at: https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2018/11/09/the-legacy-of-syria-global-jihadism-remains-a-threat-to-europe (accessed 18 June 2019), p. 8.

[135] AIVD (2018a): Annual Report 2018, p. 13.

1.6. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

I have argued above that the conceptualisation of the key term of radicalisation must be viewed in the context of a larger theoretical and conceptual framework in terms of terrorism, asymmetrical warfare, and political violence, in my research not primarily for methodological reasons, but rather for reasons of an expanded approach of the research question itself. A clear conceptual framework provides common definitions and terminology for discussing and analysing the phenomenon as well as it contributes to avoiding confusion and misunderstanding in the discourse surrounding violent radicalisation. Further, conceptual frameworks offer analytical tools that researchers and policymakers can use to better understand the complex processes involved in radicalisation as they help identifying key variables, relationships, and drivers.

The analysis regarding foreign terrorist fighters above also accurately reflects the relationship between radicalisation, terrorism, asymmetric warfare and political violence, as the analysis above gave support to the fact that one of the most security-critical aspects of jihadist-inspired radicalisation and its spread in Europe is the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. The recruitment of foreign fighters became an increasingly important element of IS military strategy in the wake of the territorial and military losses caused by the international coalition air strikes, and experience has shown that these individuals are in many cases much more enthusiastic and persistent than local fighters.[136]

The assessment by national security and intelligence agencies of the countries most affected by FTF's considering the high number/high number per capita in relation to the population confirmed that returning jihadists do pose a risk to European societies in several ways and should, hence, be dealt with in a terrorism framework (among others). Due to the military training in the use of weapons and explosives, the combat experiences, the prolonged ideological indoctrination as well as the potentially lower threshold towards the use of violence, the presence of foreign terrorist fighters pose a serious threat to the country of departure. With the experience gained on the battlefield, they can plan, facilitate, and carry out attacks, but they can also more easily radicalise others in their own circles with their increased status.[137] They

[136] GARTENSTEIN-ROSS et al 2016, p. 13.

[137] RÉPÁSI, Krisztián (2013): Európa az iszlamista terrorizmus árnyékában. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 6. évf., 1. sz., 2013, pp. 41-56. Available at: http://epa.oszk.hu/02400/02463/00014/pdf/EPA02463_hadtudomanyi_szemle_2013_1_041-056.pdf (accessed on 6 March 2016).

also have the necessary knowledge regarding their country of residence, the potential weaknesses in the systems. Further, there is clear evidence for a so called 'veteran effect'; not only does the presence of a veteran (a domestic person with experience as a foreign fighter) increase the probability of an attack, but it also doubles the chance of the attack being lethal.[138] As the multiple terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 clearly demonstrated, all of the perpetrators identified were foreign fighters and residents of the EU prior to joining the Islamic State.[139]

[138] HEGGHAMMER 2013.

[139] GARTENSTEIN-ROSS, Daveed – BARR, Nathaniel – MORENG, Bridget (2016): *The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. March 2016. Available at: https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Gartenstein-Ross-IS-Global-Propaganda-Strategy-March2016.pdf (accessed on 20 May 2017), pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER 2

THE RADICALISATION PROCESS: STATE OF RESEARCH, DEFINITION AND CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Since the Islamist extremist terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005 the concepts of 'home-grown terrorism' and 'radicalisation' have been introduced and thoroughly explored through research, just as it has become part of the everyday lives of many European citizens. Since these events, understanding the dynamics, trigger factors and root causes of violent extremism leading to acts of terrorism has been subjected to vast research and the process of radicalisation has grown into a separate field of research within terrorism studies, much of the existing literature focusing on Islamist extremism and jihadist terrorism.[140] Similar to other terms within social science, the notion of radicalisation has been heavily debated, not only in terms of research but also within the context of policymaking.

Violent radicalisation is the key term of the present dissertation and is the main objective of my research at large. My aim has been to collect, systematise and analyse books, scientific articles and reports (grey literature) within a limited period. I have chosen to mainly collect works between 2014 and 2020, not only because this period largely overlaps the period of my research, but first and foremost because it coincides with the rise of the so-called Islamic State and the impact it had on the radicalisation and recruitment in certain affected Member States of the European Union (which was clearly illustrated not only through the number of attacks carried out and plots thwarted, but also by the record numbers of foreign terrorist fighters from (Western) Europe traveling to the territories controlled by the Islamic State).

The following chapter aims to describe the state of research on jihadist-inspired violent radicalisation especially related to the Muslim diaspora and explore the process of violent radicalisation in the context of Salafi-Jihadism from a multidisciplinary angle. Understanding the mechanisms and various motivations that lead to radicalisation, particularly those connected to religious-affiliated radicalisation, is crucial for prevention in relation to members of the mentioned diaspora groups. Analysing the paths and underlying causes of radicalisation provide

[140] SCHMID Alex P (2013): *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Overview*. ICCT Research Paper March 2013. The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) – The Hague. iv.

not only researchers, but also policymakers, law enforcement and all actors relevant to the preventative work with important information on the factors and dynamics of the radicalisation process – as well as useful information on how to prevent individuals from joining terrorist organisations.

Research on radicalisation and violent extremism potentially leading to acts of terrorism has been one of the largest growth areas in social science scholarship over the past two decades.[141] During this period, important research has been conducted to increase the knowledge and understanding of factors conducive to radicalisation and to why certain person come to adopt extreme views and – eventually – use violence as a means to reach political or ideological goals, while others – although sharing the same views remain non-violent. A study financed by the European Commission concluded in 2014 that there were no less than "[o]ne hundred and eleven radicalisation factors (psycho-social, economic, cultural, organisational/operational etc) and their combinations, seventy factors relevant for interventions, and twenty three factors relevant for evaluations".[142] Despite vast research, Neumann and Kleinmann underline that scholarship seeking to identify factors related to violent behaviour has not been consistent and conclusive enough.[143]

To be able to describe the phenomenon as accurately as possible the selection of a working definition is absolutely crucial; hence the key terms used in this chapter will be discussed below. One of the primary benchmarks in this chapter to base all other theories upon is that there is not one single pathway to radicalisation, but there are many; and the root causes as well as the catalysing events vary. Hence, the radicalisation process may best be described as a dynamic process in which it is important to bear in mind that as the underlying causes vary from

[141] JENSEN, Michael A. – ATWELL SEATE, Anita – JAMES, Patrick .A (2020): Radicalisation to Violence: A Pathway Approach to Studying Extremism, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32:5, 2020, pp. 1067-1090. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2018.1442330 (accessed on 20 April 2022).

[142] IMPACT, Synthesis report on the state-of-the-art inevaluating the effectiveness of of counter-violent extremism interventions, 2014, p. 4-5. The project received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 312235 and is available at the following link: http://impacteurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/D2.2-Synthesis-Report.pdf (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[143] NEUMANN, Peter – KLEINMANN, Scott (2013): How Rigorous Is Radicalisation Research? *Democracy and Security*, 2013, 9:4, pp. 360-382. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/48602750 (accessed on 20 April 2022).

individual to individual. Hence, correlation does not necessarily equal causation; rather a robust theoretical framework needs to be applied on a case-by-case basis.

The field of research is a constantly growing and developing one, making every piece of information valuable to be able to strengthen and enhance a fact-based preventative work. In terms of counter-radicalisation policies, Coolsaet, Ravn and Sauer note that it is crucial to reflect on the dominant narratives in public discourse about radicalisation, as policy responses are based on how the concept is understood.[144] Coolsaet *et al* argue that "[d]espite a lack of a scholarly consensus on how to understand radicalisation, a set of preconceived ideas about the phenomenon is taken for granted in the public discourse."[145] This is especially pivotal for decision-makers tasked with the sometimes thankless assignment to draft counter-radicalisation policies, as part of the success of these measures depend on an understanding as well as on legitimacy among the population at large.

Hence, different perspectives on radicalisation are important to be familiar with when choosing the appropriate strategies to bolster preventative efforts, as efforts to accomplish the common goal of prevention are likely to encounter challenges if the starting points differ. Wolfowicz *et al* argue similarly, that the factors used to assess the increase (risk factors) or decrease (protective factors) the likelihood of the radicalisation outcome must be evidence-based, otherwise counter-radicalisation interventions will not be as effective as they could be and run the risk of stigmatising certain communities (which, in its turn, may also increase the risk of radicalisation).[146]

Although radicalisation may occur among various ethnic and religious groups, present dissertation focuses solely on radicalisation processes in the context of militant Islamism and jihadi Salafism in a European context. This delimitation is also reflected in the subsequent chapters examining persons who have committed jihadist-inspired attacks or travelled abroad to conflict zones to join militant Islamist groups. Despite the focus on jihadist-inspired

[144] COOLSAET, Rik – RAVN, Stine – SAUER, Tom (2019): Rethinking radicalisation : addressing the lack of a contextual perspective in the dominant narratives on radicalisation. In: N. Clycq, C. Timmerman, D. Vanheule, R. Van Caudenberg, & S. Ravn (eds.): *Radicalisation : a marginal phenomenon or a mirror to society?* Leuven, Leuven University Press 2019, pp. 21–46. Available at: https://rikcoolsaet.be/files/2019/02/Radicalisation-Ravn_Coolsaet_Sauer.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2022).

[145] COOLSAET et al 2019.

[146] WOLFOWICZ, Michael et al. (2021): Cognitive and behavioral radicalisation: A systematic review of the putative risk and protective factors. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 17, e1174. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8356320/ (accessed on 1 July 2022).

radicalisation, it is important to note that although the literature overview may suggest certain commonalities in the radicalisation processes (such as for instance the perceived impotence and frustration to reach or affect the desired (political) change, and the experience of political events that are perceived as negative),[147] there is no single profile of a terrorist; violent radicalisation occurs regardless of religion, ideology or ethnicity.

2.1. DEFINITIONS OF RADICALISATION

As already stated in the beginning of the dissertation, numerous definitions and models exist, which all try to explain the essence of the process through which a person becomes susceptible to adopting ideas that might eventually lead to the use of violence for political or ideological purposes. As underlined in the terminological discussion, when discussing the concept of radicalisation in general, I rely mostly on the definition of radicalisation presented by Allen, who describes radicalisation as "[t]he process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change".[148] Through this definition, Allen wished to – among other objectives – make clear the distinction between radicalisation and terrorism (as not all radicalisation may lead to acts of terrorism), yet also highlight the similarities regarding the social patterns in both cases. Vidino describes radicalisation as "[a] highly individualized process determined by the complex interaction of various personal and structural factors".[149] My research argues in favour of such a process-based understanding of radicalisation, which leads to the following consequences. First, it makes the assumption that there are several levels of radicalisation, which might range from legitimate political support to illegal political violence. These phases correspond to various degrees of causation that eventually leads to terrorist attack. Secondly, the concept describes a transformation that a person goes through that is motivated by certain objectives. Thirdly, the definition of radicalisation utilised in this research recognises that the ideologies and objectives that motivate someone to engage in extremism or terrorism are of religious-political nature, as

[147] Literature Review on Radicalisation. 2019. 15.
[148] ALLEN Charles E. (2007): *Threat of Islamic Radicalisation to the Homeland*. Testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, 14 March 2007. Available at: https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/270.pdf (accessed on 5 June 2017).
[149] VIDINO, Lorenzo (2010): *Countering Radicalisation in America, Lessons from Europe*. United States Institute for Peace. Special Report. Washington, DC: USIP, 2010, p. 1. Available at: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/SR262%20-%20Countering_Radicalisation_in_America.pdf (accessed on 5 April 2019).

– in line with Allen's definition above – violence is considered a legitimate mean to reach the desired societal change.

Social psychology distinguishes between belief, sentiment, and behaviour, a distinction that is highly relevant in the context of Jihadist-inspired terrorism, where it is self-evidently the radicalisation of behaviour that pose the greatest challenge in terms of security.[150] Accordingly, it is therefore important to note that the process of radicalisation may be violent or non-violent (cognitive), although both may equally threaten the social cohesion, integration and the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic or religious groups in a society.[151] Vidino and Brandon refer to cognitive radicalisation as

> "[t]he process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different belief system."[152]

Violent radicalisation in its turn occurs with the additional step: the actual use of violence springing from the cognitive radicalism. This distinction does, however, not automatically imply that cognitive radicalism is acceptable par default. Schmid argues that "[t]he distinction between acceptable 'non-violent extremists' and unacceptable 'violent extremists' is a false and illusionary one since religious extremism (as opposed to some form of more secular radicalism) is inherently violent. Islamist extremism needs to be challenged and confronted rather than accommodated and tolerated by liberal democracies."[153] Regarding the outcome of the non-violent, but radical behaviour Wolfowicz *et al* note that a high level of specificity is needed when discussion cognitive or attitudinal changes (i.e. what may be considered as a non-acceptable non-violent, but nevertheless radical opinion).[154] This outcome is specified by McCauley and Moskalenko as a „[b]eliefs, feelings, and behaviours in directions that

[150] McCAULEY, Clark – MOSKALENKO, Sophia (2008): Mechanisms of political radicalisation: Pathways toward terrorism. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20, 2008, pp. 415–433. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550802073367 (accessed on 1 June 2022), p. 417.
[151] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 13.
[152] VIDINO, Lorenzo – BRANDON, James (202): Countering Radicalisation in Europe. ICSR King's College. Available at: http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ICSR-Report-Countering-Radicalisation-in-Europe.pdf (accessed on 5 June 2017), p. 9.
[153] SCHMID, Alex P. (2014): *Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* ICCT Research Paper, May 2014. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. Available at: https://www.icct.nl/app/uploads/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2022), p. 2.
[154] WOLFOWICZ et al 2020.

increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the ingroup."[155] Using conceptions that are consistent with the above has been a common practice in research to evaluate cognitive radicalisation[156] and are necessary also in terms of preventative measures: the phenomenon to be countered must have a clearly specified aim that enjoys broad societal consensus.

Arguing about the importance of non-violent radicalisation, the Dutch intelligence and security service (AIVD) brings forward another important broadening of the concept, namely as

> "[t]he (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect)."

Supplemented by:

> "[a] person's (growing) willingness to pursue and/or support such changes himself (in an undemocratic way or otherwise), or his encouraging others to do so".[157]

The discussion above shows not only that the radicalisation is understood as a process consisting of two parts, name a cognitive at first and an attitudinal/behavioural as a second step and why both research as well as policy-making based on facts and evidence need to incorporate both, but also that albeit much of the attention has been focused on the behavioural changes (potentially resulting in acts of violence), there is a need to address non-violent radicalisation as well for a variety of reasons, including early prevention as well as social cohesion. After

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[155] MCCAULEY – MOSKALENKO 2008, p. 416.

[156] Examples: Bhui, K., Warfa, N., & Jones, E. (2014). Is violent radicalisation associated with poverty, migration, poor self-reported health and common mental disorders? *PLoS One*, 9(3), e90718, Doosje, B., Loseman, A., & Van Den Bos, K. (2013). Determinants of radicalisation of Islamic youth in the Netherlands: Personal uncertainty, perceived injustice, and perceived group threat. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(3), 586–604, Kruglanski, A. W., Jasko, K., Chernikova, M., & Milyavsky, M. (2018). The rocky road from attitudes to behaviors: Charting the goal systemic course of actions, The Motivated Mind (pp. 261–306). London, UK: Routledge, Schmid, A. P. (2013). Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review. *ICCT Research Paper*, 97(1), 22, Webber, D., Babush, M., Schori-Eyal, N., Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, A., Hettiarachchi, M., Bélanger, J. J. Gelfand, M. J. (2018). The road to extremism: Field and experimental evidence that significance loss-induced need for closure fosters radicalisation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114(2), 270–285.

[157] AIVD (2004): *Background of jihad recruits in the Netherlands*. 2004, pp. 13-14. Available at: https://english.aivd.nl/publications/publications/2004/03/10/background-of-jihad-recruits-in-the-netherlands (accessed on 8 June 2017).

having elaborated on the importance to bear in mind the distinction between the non-violent and violent radicalisation, the transformation from the former into the latter will be discussed in the subsequent subchapter.

2.2. ROOT CAUSES ON MICRO-, MESO- AND MACRO LEVELS

Before summarising and analysing the most common conceptual models of radicalisation, a brief overview over the underlying individual components, the root causes, need to be made. As most conceptual models build on a linearity of events, where the gradual changes in the behaviour of the individual may be traced according to certain visible criteria, it is important to first clarify underlying factors that are relevant to move further between these different phases towards the violent end of the radicalisation process. Combining these – the linearity of events in the radicalisation process with a thorough knowledge of different root causes provide not only researchers, but also policymakers, law enforcement and all actors relevant to the preventative work with important information on how to frame the policies aiming to preventing individuals from joining organisations espousing violent extremism.

Already in 1981 Crenshaw pointed to the fact that despite the increased volumes of literature on terrorism, there was a lack of a general theoretical analysis regarding the causes of terrorism.[158] By establishing a theoretical order for different types and levels of causes, a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved regarding the environment and individual circumstances that may lead to the formation of a terrorist group. Crenshaw argued that these circumstances should first be differentiated: *preconditions* are factors on societal level setting the stage for terrorism in the long run and *precipitants* are events that occur immediately before the act of terrorism, i.e. the direct cause of terrorism.[159] Preconditions may further be divided into enabling (providing opportunities for terrorism to occur) or permissive (situations that directly motivates and inspires terrorist campaigns) factors.[160] In terms of the direct cause of terrorism, Crenshaw notes that – although these are the most difficult to predict – there seems to be a common pattern among the precipitating factors related to certain action taken by

[158] CRENSHAW, Martha (1981): The Causes of Terrorism. *Comparative Politics* Vol. 13, No. 4 (July 1981), pp. 379-399. 379. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/421717 (accessed on 20 April 2022).
[159] CRENSHAW 1981, p. 380.
[160] CRENSHAW 1981, p. 381.

government that may act as catalysts for terrorism, such as e.g. government's use of "[u]nexpected or unusual force" in response to protests or reform attempts.[161]

As a primary condition that may be one of the reasons behind acts of terrorism Crenshaw mentions the "[c]oncrete grievances among an identifiable subgroup of a larger population, such as an ethnic minority discriminated against by the majority".[162] A second important condition creating motivation for terrorism is the lack of opportunity for political participation.[163] However, Crenshaw adds that context always should be taken into consideration in the sense that terrorism most often is the dissatisfaction of the elite of the specific subgroup, and hence represents the minority of a minority. The strategy of this minority choosing terrorism as a method of reaching their aims is often claimed to be on behalf of a larger population – who have not been consulted about and who may not agree with the aims or methods of the terrorists.[164]

Since Crenshaw various authors on radicalisation have focused on the same three levels (micro, meso and macro) of underlying causes of terrorism, widening the scope of research to include several disciplines. Trying to model the radicalisation process with the distinction of factors on individual, group-based and societal levels also permit a multi-disciplinary approach as well as a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The three-level model was also used by Kleinemann who sought to map out potential differences in the radicalisation process of both Muslims converts and non-converts in the United States.[165] Comparing 83 case studies, Kleinemann categorised the radicalisation theories into the aforementioned three levels of analysis and found that factors on the level of the individual were more prevalent in the case of the converts than the non-converts, while group-level processes affected both groups similarly.[166] In the cases studied, Kleinemann found the mass-level factors did not play a significant role in the radicalisation process.[167] Regarding the individual-level factors he also noted that while these factors may be a result of a specific event, they cannot be reduced to only

[161] CRENSHAW 1981, p. 384.
[162] CRENSHAW 1981, p. 383.
[163] CRENSHAW 1981, p. 383-384.
[164] CRENSHAW 1981, p. 384.
[165] KLEINMANN, Scott M. (2012): Radicalisation of homegrown Sunni militants in the United States: Comparing converts and non-converts. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 35*(4), 2012, pp. 278–297. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2012.6562 (accessed on 20 April 2022).
[166] KLEINMANN 2012, p. 278.
[167] KLEINMANN 2012, p. 278.

that particular event, although they are internalised and may manifest themselves in the mind-set of the person.[168]

The factors on the individual level vary, but a common trait is the feeling of grievance, relative deprivation, and a sense of (un)fairness. In the above cited work Crenshaw mentions grievances as an important individual-level factors, which is confirmed by Moghaddam and his staircase-model examining the psychological process behind why – out of many disgruntled members of society – (only) a few turn to terrorism (elaborated below in subchapter 3.2.1.).[169]

In his ground-breaking work *Understanding Terror Networks* Sageman used social, psychological, and environmental factors to determine individual (and group) characteristics of terrorist organisations, including an empirical analysis of 172 Salafi *mujahedin* linked to al-Qaeda.[170] In terms of the social and environmental factors, Sageman notes that members were "[g]enerally middle-class, educated young men from caring and religious families, who grew up with strong positive values of religion, spirituality, and concern for their communities"[171]. Describing the psychological factors, he elaborates on how the profiles examined felt isolated and emotionally alienated, sought a purpose to give "[e]motional relief, social community, spiritual comfort, and cause for self-sacrifice."[172] An important conclusion is that these conditions – in the view of Sageman – would make the future *mujahid* prone to the attraction of Salafi jihadism. The same factors were used by Bakker to compare 242 terrorist profiles in Europe (defined as the then 25 Member States of European Union, the non-EU Western European countries and the countries in the Balkan region) between September 2001 and August 2006.[173] The characteristics of the profiled examined were also compared to the ones examined by Sagemen and Bakker concluded that:

> "[t]he main conclusion must be that there are more dissimilarities than similarities between the two. There is the difference in average age between Sageman's group (25.7 years) and ours (27.3). Whereas the former mainly consists of married men, the jihadi terrorists in Europe were predominantly single. The samples also differ very much with

[168] KLEINMANN 2012, p. 285.
[169] MOGHADDAM 2005, p.161
[170] SAGEMAN Marc (2004): *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p. vii
[171] SAGEMAN 2004, p. 96.
[172] SAGEMAN 2004, p. 97.
[173] BAKKER, Edwin (2006): *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations, December 2006. Available at: http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2006/20061200_cscp_csp_bakker.pdf, (accessed 15 December 2013), pp. 51-52.

> regard to socioeconomic status and occupational background. The subgroup within Sageman's sample that comes closest to the group of Islamist terrorist in Europe is that of the Maghreb Arabs. Both groups share a socioeconomic background, faith as youth, type of occupation, and the fact that many of them have a criminal record".[174]

In terms of factors on the level of the individual, Bakker also concluded that although the majority of the terrorists examined had a background within a lower strata in society (and also had a criminal record), more than a fifth of them possessed a higher level of education – 42 persons had finished secondary school and fifteen persons had finished university.[175] The numbers related to the education was only found and confirmed in the aforementioned number of cases out of all the 242 profiles examined, meaning that the real numbers revealing the level of education could be higher.

The level of education as a factor often discussed in terms of violent radicalisation was also considered by Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman, who – by the end of 2008 – gathered information on the background of 117 domestic terrorists in the United States and the United Kingdom.[176] Albeit focusing on certain behavioural changes that were observed rather than analysing the data pertinent in terms of environmental, psychological, and social aspects, Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman asserted that compared to global jihadist movement, the terrorist profiles in their study had a lower educational background and narrower career possibilities.[177] This conclusion was, however, contested by Altunbas and Thornton,[178] who highlighted that of the 99 persons of the 117 profiles examined (i.e. whose educational data were available) only 23.2 per cent had not completed high school, while another 36.4 per cent had some college education (albeit their graduation could not be validated) and 24 per cent had at least some college education, implying that it is not entirely clear what a "[l]ow educational level" might entail in the context. This conclusion was in line with what Bakker found.

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[174] BAKKER 2006, p. 50.

[175] BAKKER 2006, p. 38.

[176] GARTENSTEIN-ROSS, Daveed – GROSSMAN, Laura (2009): *Homegrown terrorists in the US and UK: An empirical examination of the radicalisation process.* Washington DC: Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Available at: https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/HomegrownTerrorists_USandUK.pdf (accessed 15 June 2017).

[177] GARTENSTEIN-ROSS – GROSSMAN. 2009, p. 19.

[178] ALTUNBAS, Yener – THORNTON, John (2011): Are Homegrown Islamic Terrorists Different? Some UK Evidence. *Southern Economic Journal*, vol. 78, no. 2, 2011, pp. 262–72. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23059389 (accessed 15 June 2017).

Continuing along the lines of individual factors the researchers found that the 117 persons examined had a lower rate of marriage,[179] which is of interest when discussing if and what impact masculinity has on the process of violent radicalisation.

2.3. MODELLING THE RADICALISATION PROCESS

Despite stressing different elements of the radicalisation process, the examples of working definition above show that there is a common understanding of the radicalisation as a process, i.e., an interplay between different factors related to the individual that in the end may lead to the use of violence for political, ideological, or religious purposes. Trying to model the process of radicalisation, including the complex interplay between several factors on different levels is of pivotal importance for all actors relevant to the preventative work. While different models may emphasise different determinants and may differ also in terms of linearity of the radicalisation process, a certain level of commonality is found among them.

Several conceptual frameworks have been developed by academics and analysts to study the causes of radicalisation, the most well-known of these classifies the factors relevant to the process of radicalisation into three groups: situational, psychological, and societal. Accordingly, present literature review aims to present relevant conceptual models and further to explore the state of research in relation to underlying factors of violent radicalisation divided into three levels: micro (factors related to the individual), meso (factors on group-level) and macro (factors related to the larger, societal environment). In exploring these models and explanatory factors, my focus is to examine how the role of religion is conveyed in the models presented below. Mapping out the religious component and its significance in the radicalisation process is important to fully comprehend the jihadist-inspired radicalisation and to understand how personal grievances and individual vulnerabilities are exploited by militant Islamist groups who, with references to religion aim to offer relief, redemption, a superior identity and religiously motivated duties that will also eventually serve to legitimise violence.

The following part aims to present the overall framework of conceptual models and relevant theories when discussing radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism in general, and the subsequent part will specifically focus on models in the context of radicalisation into militant Islamism and jihadism. At the end of the chapter, I will compare the different theories and

[179] GARTENSTEIN-ROSS – GROSSMAN. 2009, p. 19.

models described and discuss the theoretical framework selected when making an attempt to analyse the radicalisation process of a number perpetrators who committed jihadist-inspired acts of crime between 2014 and 2020 in (Western) Europe.

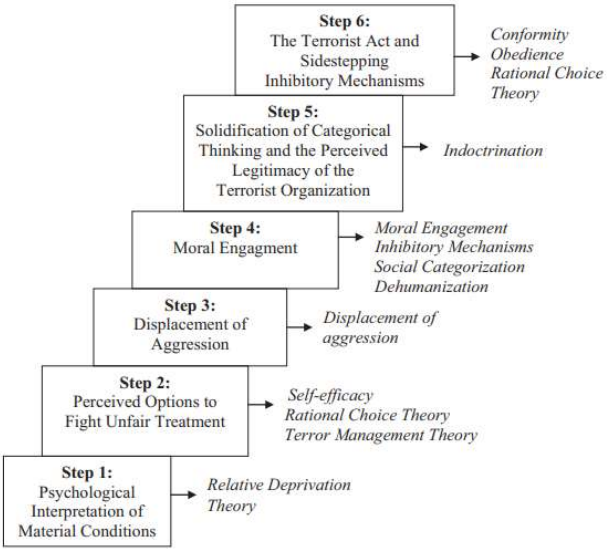
2.3.1. Conceptual models of radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism

There are several conceptual models aiming to describe the process of violent radicalisation, following subchapter aims to highlight the models deemed as most relevant in the context of present research. Analysing why persons from Western societies are drawn to join the global radical Islamist movement called *Al-Muhajiroun*, Wiktorowicz identified four key processes that would all increase the likelihood of a person to be drawn to radical Islamism and – at a certain point – to participate in their activities: cognitive opening (i.e. being receptive to adopt new ideas and beliefs), religious seeking (seeking meaning within a religious frame), frame alignment (the narrative presented by the radicals "makes sense" and appears as tempting to the seeker) and socialisation (referring to the manner in which the religious education and activities are conducted and how these may facilitate indoctrination).[180]

One of the most well-known models is Moghaddam's metaphorical narrowing staircase, illustrating how advancing onto the higher levels means increasingly limited options, until – in the last stage – terrorism is regarded as the only way to solve the individual perceived issues. Moghaddam describes the steps leading to violent radicalisation as a building, in which the ground floor is populated by those perceiving some form of deprivation or injustice. Those who wish to do something about it climb to the second floor, which accommodate those who found no solution to their problem, but instead find an enemy to displace their aggression upon. The third level harbours those who join a group espousing a moral engagement before ascending to the fourth floor, where "recruitment to terrorist organisations" takes place. Finally, on the fifth floor – which is the narrowest of all floors (i.e., the one the least people reach), the individual is trained to "sidestep inhibitory mechanisms" and sent to kill. "[A]s individuals climb the staircase", Moghaddam writes, "[t]hey see fewer and fewer choices, until the only possible outcome is the destruction of others, or oneself, or both". However, regarding the staircase-model one needs to bear in mind that it was specifically designed as an explanation to suicide

[180] WIKTOROWICZ, Quintan (2004): *Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiround and Radical Islam*. Paper presented at The Roots of Islamic Radicalism Conference, Yale University, USA, 8-9 May 2004. http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wiktorowicz.Joining-the-Cause.pdf (accessed on 5 June 2017).

bombers; hence the five stages may not be applicable in the wider context of violent radicalisation.[181]



3. Figure. The Staircase to Terrorism by Moghaddam with the proposed processes and theories on each step as illustrated by Lygre *et al*[182]

Important from a policy-making point of view, Moghaddam argues that counterterrorism efforts ought to be directed towards prevention, rather than those who have already reached the top of the "staircase" or become radicalised. Improving people's general well-being, according to Moghaddam, is crucial to deterring violent extremism since it will effectively make fewer people feel dissatisfied and less likely for them to take the "stairs to terrorism".[183] In a critical review of the "staircase model" Lygre *et al* suggest that some steps from the model should be removed as there is not enough comprehensive empirical evidence supporting the corresponding processes. [184] Lygre *et al* further argue that "[t]here is also a lack of empirical evidence for the transitions between the different steps in Moghaddam's model, questioning the suitability of the staircase metaphor. The fact that one of the processes in the model could be

[181] MOGHADDAM, Fathali M. (2005): The staircase to terrorism: a psychological exploration. *American Psychologist*, Vol 60(2), Feb-Mar 2005, pp. 161-169, p. 161
[182] LYGRE, Ragnhild B. – EID, Jarle – Larsson, Gerry – RANSTORP, Magnus (2011): Terrorism as a process: A critical review of Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism". *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, September 2011. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51648120 (accessed on 1 August 20229, p. 2.
[183] MOGHADDAM 2005.
[184] LYGRE *et al* 2011, p. 7.

linked directly to terrorism might weaken the thought of terrorism as a gradual process".[185] Instead, the researchers suggested the model to be developed as seeing terrorism rather as a result of multiple contributing factors, where the likelihood of terrorism increases if several of the components interact in a given situation. McCauley's and Moskalenko argue similarly; namely that political radicalisation occurs because of an increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in support of intergroup conflict and violence.[186]

Within the context of radicalisation among Western Muslim diaspora, scholars have shown a keen interest for describing the radicalisation as a process occurring in chronological phases.[187] Borum noted four stages in the ideological development, in his view radicalisation begins when (1) a group or individual labels a specific scenario or event as undesirable. Later, the unfavourable condition is not only (2) described as unjust but is also (3) blamed on a specific individual or group, which is then (4) regarded as bad, making aggression against that target easier to justify.[188] This demarcation of "us and them" is important also from an identity point of would, as I will argue in the subsequent chapter based on social identity theory that the construction of a social identity to which individuals can adhere is a crucial element in the radicalisation process.

Another widely used phase model is the so-called top-down model used by for instance the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET). The PET phase model, as depicted in Figure 4, distinguishes the different degrees or stages of the radicalisation process, with each phase increasing the level of radicalisation.[189] Veldhuis and Staun describe the stages of this phase model as follows:

> "[T]he process starts by being 'susceptible' to radical ideas and meeting a 'radicaliser', and advances on to new religious practices and changed behaviour. Subsequently, the process involves a narrowing of the person's circle of friends and family and results in the so-called 'hardening phase', which includes 'reviewing of and interest in very violent videos' displaying terrorists in battle and the killing of hostages".[190]

[185] LYGRE *et al* 2011, p. 7.
[186] McCAULEY – MOSKALENKO 2008.
[187] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 13.
[188] BORUM, Randy (2004): *Psychology of Terrorism*. Psychology of Terrorism Initiative, University of South Florida. Available at: https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208552.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2022).
[189] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 13.
[190] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 13

Phase 1	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Phase 4*
Contact between 'radicalisator' and a person open to radical ideas	Gradual change of behaviour – change in religious behaviour, new communication habits (internet)	Narrowing of social life to include only like-minded individuals – social bonds with family and former friends are cut off or restricted	The radical often goes through a process of (moral) hardening – by watching very violent videos and combat scenes

4. Figure. *The phase model by PET.*[191]

Another well-known phase model is the one used by the New York Police Department (NYPD). In contrast to the above one, the NYPD phase model is a bottom-up model, describing radicalisation as a bottom-up process. The first phase (*Pre-Radicalisation Phase*) describes the life and world of the individual in terms of lifestyle, lifestyle, religion, social status, neighbourhood, and education. According to Silber and Bhatt, these Muslim immigrants are typically male, second- or third generation, from middle-class families, with "regular" lives and careers, and little to no criminal history.[192] Phase 2 (*Self-Identification*) shows how the person progressively begins to consider a radical interpretation of Islam and opens up to new ideas about the world. From this point forward, the person starts to drift away from his or her prior identity and hang out with people who share their interests.[193] In Phase 3 (*Indoctrination phase*), the individual wholly adopts 'Jihadi-Salafi ideology' and concludes that militant Jihad is required against everything contradicting the extremist agenda. Hence, the individual start disregarding all persons who may be critical of the new beliefs, i.e., the social life is narrowed to only include like-minded persons. The last stage (*Jihadization phase*) is the one of moral hardening, entailing the self-identification as a 'holy warrior' and the actual use of violence.[194]

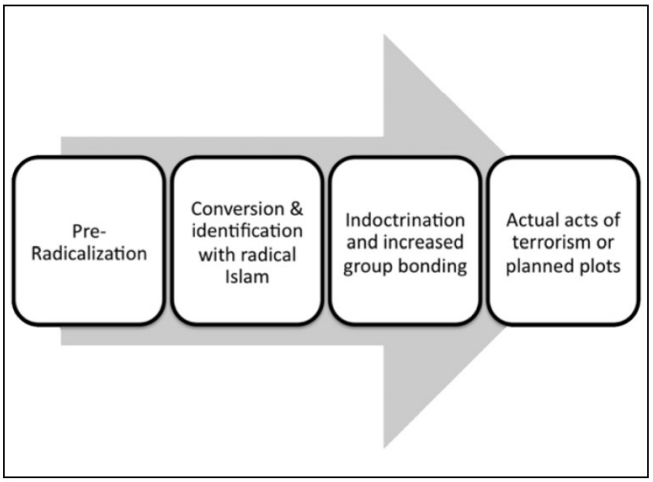
[191] PET, Center for Terroranalyse (CTA) (2009): Radikalisering og terror, 2009.
[192] SILBER – BHATT 2007, p. 23.
[193] SILBER – BHATT 2007, p. 36.
[194] SILBER – BHATT 2007, p. 43.

Pre-radicalisation	*Self-identification*	*Indoctrination*	*Jihadization*
Point of departure: Mostly 'unremarkable', 'ordinary jobs', 'little, if any criminal history'	Individuals 'begin to explore Salafi Islam, gradually gravitate away from their old identity and begin to associate themselves with like-minded individuals'. Catalyst: cognitive opening or crisis. Triggers: economic, social (discrimination), political, personal	The individual 'progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts Jihadi-Salafi ideology' and concludes that militant 'action is Required'	Group members 'accept their individual duty to participate in jihad'. The group begins 'operational Planning'

5. Figure. NYPD phase model.

Commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Justice, Precht describes a four-phase "typical pattern of radicalisation" that resembles the conceptual models presented above (especially the one used by the NYPD).[195] Precht calls the stages as follows: Pre-radicalisation (1); Conversion and identification with radical Islam (2); Indoctrination and increased group bonding (3); and Actual acts of terrorism or planned plots. In this regard Precht also notes that small group dynamics and identification are often powerful accelerants of commitment to extremist ideology.

[195] PRECHT, Thomas (2007): Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: From conversion to terrorism. Danish Ministry of Justice, December 2007. Available at: https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Arbejdsomraader/Forskning/Forskningspuljen/2011/2007/Home_grown_terrorism_and_Islamist_radicalisation_in_Europe_-_an_assessment_of_influencing_factors__2_.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2022).



6. Figure. Precht's model of a "typical" radicalisation pattern.

Precht also sought to analyse the factors influencing radicalisation into violent Islamism and outlines hereby three categories of motivational factors for radicalisation:[196]

1. Background factors such as:
   • Muslim identity crisis
   • Personal traumas
   • Experience of discrimination and relative deprivation factors
   • Living environment and peers (segregation and parallel society)
   • Alienation and perceived injustices
   • Relative absence of a critical Muslim debate on Islamist terrorism

2. Trigger factors such as:
   • Western foreign policy and single provocative incidents
   • The myth of Jihad and desire for activism
   • Presence of a charismatic person or spiritual advisor;

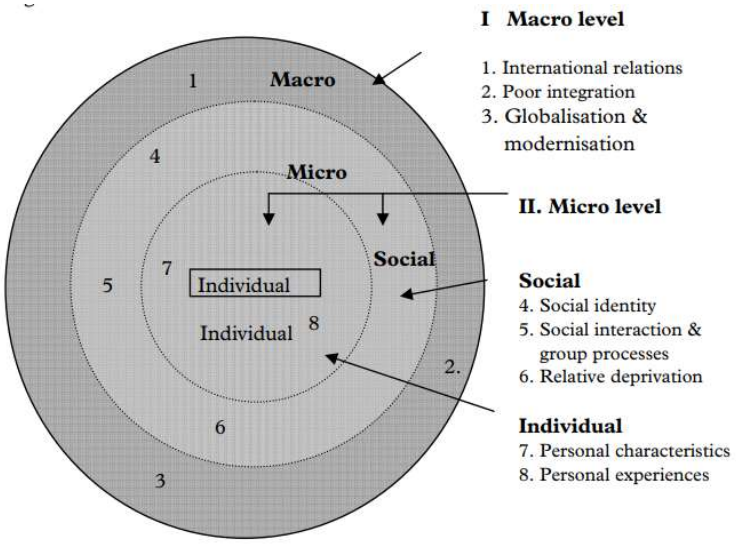
3. Opportunity factors (places to meet likeminded people) such as:
   • The Mosque,
   • Internet and satellite channels,
   • School, universities, youth clubs or work

[196] PRECHT 2007, p. 6.

• Prison
• Sporting activities
• Cafes, bars or bookstores

As an important conclusion, Precht notes that home-grown terrorism may be seen as a sociological phenomenon where factors like group dynamics, identity, belonging, and values play a significant role in the process of transformation. Recognising the significance of religion, Precht adds that for some persons it may serve as a "vehicle" to fulfil other aims. A common trait among the persons examined is that they are at a crossroad in their lives, searching for a cause.[197]

A comprehensive model analysing the factors that are responsible for causing radicalisation among Muslims in the Western world is presented by Veldhuis and Staun.[198] In their root cause model the most frequently mentioned causal factors are categorised into different measurement levels, which vary in the extent to and the way in which they contribute to radicalisation. It is underlined that not every causal factor is a necessary condition for the radicalisation process, but which factor becomes the triggering factor and at what time might differ.[199]



7. Figure. *The root cause model as depicted by Veldhuis and Staun.* [200]

[197] PRECHT 2007, p. 7.
[198] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 21.
[199] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 21.
[200] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 21

At the centre of the spectrum is the individual, whose views and behaviour are gradually influenced by several factors at various measurement levels. The outer layer, i.e., causes at the macro level are related to social structures and include a wide range of issues, such as for instance demographic shifts, political, economic, and cultural changes, levels of education and labour market participation.[201] Such contextual elements are typically acknowledged as prerequisites for criminal activity and abnormal behaviour.

The two inner layers of the model represent the micro level, which is further divided into societal and individual variables to emphasise the focus on the individual as "embedded". The notion of an "embedded individual" serves the purpose of illustrating that radicalisation is above all an individual process that can only be understood in relation to the individual's social environment. Hence, the second (or middle) layer represents social elements, representing the individual's relationships with other groups and peer persons. The perceptions and responses to macro-level variables are influenced by a variety of elements, including who they are, where they live, what they think, who their friends and family are and what they believe, and who they compare themselves to.[202] The third and final layer in the model represents individual-level causal factors, including psychological traits, life experiences, and personal values and views. Hence, when analysing the radicalisation process in a comprehensive manner, Veldhuis and Staun underline that "[m]acro-level factors play an important role as preconditions that create a radicalisation-prone environment, while social and individual factors at the micro-level factors account for individual responses and behaviour".

2.4. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Current chapter contains an in-depth literature review of the different conceptual models regarding the radicalisation process in the context of militant Islamism extremism and jihadist-inspired terrorism, as well as a number of selected theories pivotal to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of violent radicalisation in the light of recent jihadist-inspired attacks on European soil. Understanding the mechanisms and various motivations that lead to radicalisation, particularly those connected to religious-affiliated radicalisation is crucial for

[201] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 21
[202] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 21

prevention in Western Muslim diasporas, not only because this group is especially vulnerable for radicalisation and recruitment effort by fundamentalist groups espousing extremist views, but also because the members of this particular group are many times also negatively impacted by the wrongdoings of the extremist groups. Based on a concept of the pivotal role of the religious component in the radicalisation process, I have sought to explore how these models convey the role of religion. Even if these conceptual models do not necessarily focus on religion per se, or give these explanatory factors a religious dimension, it is my endeavour to demonstrate how they, in fact, are very much linked to a religious discourse, also through the narrative of the militant Islamist organisations.

However, before entering this assessment, I will commence with summarising the aspects of clarification in terms of radicalisation, still a heavily debated and contested notion. In this regard I have argued above that clarity in relation to the term itself is needed not only from a research point of view, but also from a policy point of view, as the term 'radicalism' itself has long historical roots and does not automatically mean acts of terrorism. As described, although radicalisation is a word that may have many different meanings, the first and most significant distinction is made through the usual categories of social psychology distinguishing belief, sentiment, and behaviour. In the context of jihadist-inspired terrorism it is self-evidently the radicalisation of behaviour that poses the greatest challenge in terms of national, public, and human security. Although the law usually focus on the behavioural aspects if violent radicalisation as in the pre-criminal phase and when a crime is imminent, there are also other important aspects to bear in mind with regard to the cognitive radicalisation, that might not automatically be prohibited by law, but that do have severe consequences for social cohesion and the further deepening of (immigrant-majority) parallel societies.

Among the variety of definitions and conceptual models describing radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism, a common and important trait is the depiction of radicalisation as a socio-psychological process through which an individual becomes susceptible to adapt a system of extremist views and beliefs and – eventually – becomes prone to use, support or finance acts of violence as a method to reach political or ideological goals. This evolutionary development is also demonstrated in several evidence-based models described above, illustrating the linearity of the process and the cognitive as well as behavioural changes as gradual steps. These theories argue that the first step of the radicalisation process is the individual being dissatisfied with his/her life, with society, or with their government's foreign policies. As a next step these persons encounter others who share the same views, and together they go through a series of

events that may eventually lead to acts of violent extremism or terrorism. However, it is important to note that only a few ultimately turn to acts of violence, the rest will halt or discontinue at various stages of the radicalisation process.

It may be a banality and something that most scholars prefer to highlight, but it is ever so true: radicalisation does not occur in a vacuum. The models described above all show that there are always signs of the radicalisation process evolving, almost always including some interaction between individuals – on the path of going from non-violent to violent behaviour. In this regard, roughly one third of the studies investigating violent radicalisation confirm that meeting a recruiter or facilitator – or using the internet to get in touch with other like-minded persons – indeed is a crucial factor in the radicalisation process.[203] I argue that these encounters – in many cases – entail a religious component, which is of significance for the radicalisation process. These encounters may be either through peer groups or through charismatic leaders, such as imams, just a depicted in the models above.

From several conceptual models it becomes clear that the religion as a constant underlying component is seemingly almost present. This is underlined, among others, by the motivational factors in Precht's model, which show that the religious element is present at all stages: in the background related to a religious identity crisis, in the second stage where it takes the shape of a charismatic person, a spiritual leader or the encounter with the narrative of *jihad* (which inevitably is also linked to religious elements) as well as in the third category presenting mosques as potential places to meet like-minded persons. Also, the model used by the NYPD takes a benchmark in the individual life previous to the various steps of radicalisation, whereby the religious component is one aspect of relevance.

Summarising what has been said, it becomes clear that the radicalisation of an individual is the result of a synergetic relationship with the immediate environment. Therefore, I believe that no significant analysis can be made without considering the person and the larger context in which he or she lives and acts. Although most studies on conflict drivers and/or radicalisation reasons use this type of cumulative inquiry, there is still a difference in emphasis. This is also underlined by the fact that neither the literature review nor the models presented above show that any single factor can be said to be the sole causal factor of the radicalisation process. In the subsequent chapter I will explore the question of identity in relation to radicalisation and argue for the need

[203] Literature Review on Radicalisation. Project financed under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 740934. 2019.

of a model focusing on the dynamic interaction between a set of equally important factors, in which identity (social and/or religious) is the key component interconnecting all the other underlying factors and root causes.

CHAPTER 3

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

> "Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly 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."
>
> Mohammed Sidique Khan,
> one of the 7/7 bombers in London 2005

Already a brief review of academic literature reveals a wide range of theories phrased by researchers to understand the factors contributing to radicalisation and terrorist activities. Broadly, these can be divided into three groups: sociological, psychological, and situational. The sociological theories emphasise factors that have on impact on the behaviour of an entire group, while psychological theories aim to explain factors on the level of the individual. After having highlighted some of the most frequently used conceptual models when trying to explain the process of violent radicalisation potentially leading to acts of terrorism, this subchapter aims to present and explore a number of theories of special interest for my research in the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation, all related to the question of identity. Below I will examine the most relevant theories from a psychological point of view in the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation, namely the social group identity theory, the theory of masculinity, the victim and humiliation theory. Finally, I will make an attempt to reflect upon how the jihadi Salafist narrative is framed in a way that resonates with the aforementioned underlying psychological factors and questions of identity.

In terms of identity, it is usually portrayed as bridging the gap between the "outside" and the "inside", between the personal and the public worlds and by this, inserting the subject into the

structure.[204] Yet, as Stuart notes, these concepts are "in flux" today.[205] The subject, previously experienced as a unified and stable identity, is fragmenting; it is not a single identity, but several, sometimes contradictory and indeterminate identities. The process of identification, whereby we form our cultural identity has become "endless, changeable and problematic".[206] Underlining the dynamic nature of identity, Sen states that identity is an ever-evolving concept that can be generated from a variety of factors, including one's race, religion, gender, marital status, economic status, occupation, and political convictions.[207] In the context of this research, this definition implies that it is possible for a person to integrate several views and convictions into their identity, such as being a Muslim, a citizen of Europe, a supporter of democracy, and a person who values human rights and cultural diversity at the same time.[208] Yet, within the Muslim population in Western countries, identity difficulties are common.[209] Muslim immigrants of the second and third generations must balance the family's ethnic identity while simultaneously managing a Western identity, and Meeus underlines that it is especially common with teenagers in this generation who lack self-certainty and self-esteem.[210] To understand the important of self-esteem it suffices taking a glance at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where it is clearly visualised and empirically supported that self-esteem is a basic need in itself.[211] On the other hand there is also significant empirical evidence supporting that people tend to identify most strongly with the part of their identity that is most threatened or attacked during stressful or uncertain times.[212]

The question of identity is important, as one of my research aims is to explore why second and third generations of Muslims in (Western) Europe continue to be target groups for jihadi Salafist radicalisation and recruitment. By highlighting the importance of identity as a factor impacting

[204] HALL, Stuart (1997): A kulturális identitásról. In: FEISCHMIDT, Margit (ed.): *Multikulturalizmus*. Budapest, Osiris - Láthatatlan Kollégium, 1997, pp. 60–85.
[205] HALL 1997.
[206] HALL 1997.
[207] SEN, Amartya (2008).: Violence, identity and poverty. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2008, 45(1), pp. 5-15.
[208] MURSHED, Syed Mansoob – PAVAN, Sara (2011): Identity and Islamic Radicalisation in Western Europe. *Civil Wars*, 2011, 13(3), pp. 259-279.
[209] YUSOUFZAI, Khouwaga – EMMERLING, Franziska (2017): How identity crisis, relative deprivation, personal characteristics, and empathy contribute to the engagement of Western individuals in Islamist terrorist behavior. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 8(1), pp. 68-80. Available at: https://cvir.st-andrews.ac.uk/article/10.15664/jtr.1292/ (accessed on 19 October 2020).
[210] MEEUS, Wim (2015): Why do young Individuals become Jihadists? A theoretical account on radical identity development. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 12(3), pp. 275-281.
[211] MASLOW, Abraham H. (1943): A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*. 1943, 50 (4), pp. 370–396.
[212] MAALOUF, Amin (2011): On identity. London, Random House

the process of radicalisation, I argue that this component is in fact an explanation of interconnectedness between several different psychological factors on individual level.

3.1. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Strindberg suggests that when analysing acts of violent extremism or terrorism, we must assume that the perpetrators behind these acts of violence "[a]ct on their basis of their own understanding of themselves and the world around them".[213] Hence, Strindberg suggests, before asking the question "why do they do what they do", we should firstly answer the question "how do they understand the world and their place in it?".[214] The understanding of the world requires an analysis of the specific context the individual finds himself in, which, in turn, demands two things. Firstly, knowledge with the reality and understanding of the research subject based on original sources, and secondly, a structure for arranging those conclusions drawn from primary sources and fusing them with relevant academic theories and viewpoints. The methodological limits related to the absence of primary sources in the context of jihadi Salafist radicalisation have already been discussed above in the introductory chapter; nevertheless, important information is still to be found through open sources that might give important insight to the question of the individual interpretation of the specific context. With that said, it must be noted that this by now means replaces the primary sources themselves, hence, far-reaching conclusion cannot be drawn from the fragmentary information found related to this subjective interpretation.

Within this field of research, a useful theoretical and functional framework to establish context is offered by the social identity theory (SIT), which is a theory of the relationship between the individual and the group that emphasises how an individual's perceptions and behaviour are influenced by their membership in the particular group.[215] Firstly developed in social psychology to comprehend intergroup prejudice and discriminating patterns, there now is a substantial corpus of research on conflict between and within groups that are also relevant for the study of radicalisation in a jihadist context. According to SIT, being a part of a certain group

[213] STRINDBERG, Anders (2020): *Social Identity Theory and the Study of Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. Totalförsvartes Forskningsinstitut, FOI-R--5062—SE, 2020. Available at: https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--5062--SE (accessed on 21 March 2021).
[214] STRINDBERG 2020, pp. 9-10.
[215] STRINDBERG 2020, p. 14.

(the "ingroup") affects how we feel about ourselves and how we see ourselves. Positive or negative effects, such as making us feel good or awful, proud or humiliated, happy or dissatisfied etc, are influenced by comparisons with other groups (the "outgroups"), as well as by the accomplishments of the "ingroup" itself. These comparisons affect our perceptions of and actions toward the "outgroup" and its members, in addition to how we feel about ourselves and other members of our "ingroup".[216] Davis and Cragin argue that because we are constantly looking for ways to distinguish "us" from "them", our need for a strong social identity causes us to make judgments that are inherently biased toward members of our own group and against members of other groups. Similar can be observed when groups engage in conflict, they use techniques to preserve or build a positive social identity relative to other groups, which results in discernible and predictable behavioural patterns. These patterns are, based on each person's psychological requirements, inevitably altered by the particular circumstances and conflicts as they are perceived, interpreted, and framed by the ingroup.[217]

That said it becomes clear why the social component is important. Humans are social by nature, and it is through our social connections that we acquire knowledge about what is acceptable and unacceptable, as well as true and untrue. Social connections further allow us to form friendships, grow loyalties, show solidarity and empathy, as well as foster rivalries, enmities, and complaints. Through our social networks, we can exchange experiences and viewpoints, build worldviews, take on narratives, and turn personal goals into group aims. In the words of Haji et el, they "[m]ay create or accentuate divisions between us and those who do not belong to our group, but they can also promote cohesive ties".[218] Hence, the process of discovering who we are in relation to others and what makes up our identity also heavily relies on our social interactions. This implies that social identity is that aspect of an individual's identity that specifically turns to their social ties for meaning and content and this is, according to Strindberg, the core of Social Identity Theory (SIT): comprehending the formation, administration, mobilisation, and manipulation of social identity.[219]

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[216] DAVIS, Paul K. and CRAGIN, Kim (eds.) (2009): Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together. Santa Monica, CA, RAND, 2009, p. 1.
[217] DAVIS – CRAGIN 2009. Chapters 5, 6 and 3.
[218] HAJI, Reeshma – McKEOWN, Shelley – FERGUSON, Neil (2016): Social Identity and Peace Psychology: An Introduction. In: McKEOWN *et al* (eds.): *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*. Geneva, Switzerland, Springer International, 2016, p. xv.
[219] STRINDBERG 2020, p. 17.

How can the social identity theory be used as an analytical framework for radicalisation and the use of violence in an extremist or terrorist context? As it is the interaction between a person and a group that is the primary analytical focus of SIT, Berger argues that "with the exception of the wholly original ideologues – the 0.0001 per cent of the 0.01 per cent of people who become violent extremists – group radicalisation precedes individual radicalisation".[220] In other words, a person who is becoming radicalised will almost always identify with the narrative of a group, and it is this shared narrative – rather than solely personal views and ideas – that gives rise to the justification for their development toward violent behaviour. Along the same lines, Davis and Cragin note that "[a]bundant evidence indicates that socialization processes are a necessary precondition for radicalisation (by which we mean the process of becoming willing to conduct a terrorist act). Group processes assure individuals that their chosen path is correct, build up socially motivated courage, and help to dehumanize selected targets."[221]

SIT has been criticised (among others) for its explanatory power allegedly outweighing its predictive power, claiming that the theory is less accurate at predicting behaviours and actions but helpful in retrospective analysis.[222] Yet, bearing in mind the reliable and robust results produced through the use of this theory within the context of political violence, I find it a useful methodological tool when framing the social context the individual finds himself in to map out the relationship between the individual and the group he identifies with.

To further comprehend the relevance of the social identity theory in the case of second and third generation young Muslims in (Western) Europe, questions of identity and belonging need to be analysed more specifically within this particular group. Although the question of specific characteristics of these generations as well as an in-depth analysis of religious identity will be thoroughly developed in Chapter 8, the following outsets need to be linked to the subject matter.

Several studies focus on what may be resembled to a limbo between different identities, in this case the cultural and religious identity of the parents (and the country of origin of the parents) and the identity of the country of residence (here: any Western European country). Buijs and his colleagues found that Moroccan youngsters living in the Netherlands have a hybrid identity

[220] BERGER, James M. (2018): *Extremism*. Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2018, p. 117
[221] DAVIS – CRAGIN 2009, p. xxiv.
[222] HOGG, Michael A. – WILLIAMS, Kipling D. (2000): From I to we: Social identity and the collective self. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Vol. 4, No, 1 (2000), pp. 81–97.

entailing the feeling of being cut off from both their parents' as well as the Dutch culture.[223] As this hybrid identity is neither acknowledged nor recognised by their immediate surroundings, consequently, the *Ummah* (the perceived global community of Muslims) provides them with a fulfilling sense of identity that unites them with other Muslims, making nationality – whether Moroccan or Dutch – unimportant.[224] The greater the identification and the more friends who adopt it, the more time and effort are put into this identity. This type of identification among young Muslims in the West, following rather the lines of religion than ethnicity, has been hypothesised by several academics,[225] but also investigated through surveys. Regarding the latter, Pew Research Institute found in 2006 that based on their survey among Muslims in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Spain that the core identity of European Muslims' is their religion.[226] The results of the survey showed that the respondents tended to identify more as Muslims than as British, Spanish, or German, with the exception of Muslims, who were almost evenly divided on this issue.[227] As a further step, these identity approaches also carry with them a potential that people will more likely react strongly to any perceived threats or attacks on their Muslim identity, the more stronger the religious component of their identity grows.[228] Hence, aspects of ethnicity will eventually not matter, but instead what these persons sense as threats to the valued identity of being a Muslim, which in turn will typically result in favouritism for the in-group on behalf of the out-group.[229] In line with what has been said, Roy also confirms that Muslims may retreat into a narrowly defined, inward-looking society that is fixated on its boundaries if they feel that their Muslim identity is in danger,[230] and at the same time Islam may grow more alluring and practical as a tool for social and political mobilisation.

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[223] BUIJS, Frank J. – DEMANT, Froukje – HAMDY, Atef (2006): *Strijders van eigen bodem. Radicale en democratische moslims in Nederland*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.
[224] BUIJS *et al* 2006.
[225] Eg. BALLARD, R. (1991): The Pakistanis: Stability and Introspection. In Peach, C. (ed.): *The Ethnic Minority Populations of Great Britain: Ethnicity in the 1991 Census, Vol. 2.* London, Central Statistical Office; SAEED, A. – BLAIN N. – FORBES, D. (1999): New ethnic and national questions in Scotland: post-British identities among Glasgow Pakistani teenagers, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2(5), pp. 821-44.
[226] PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2006): *Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity*. Pew Research Center, 2006. 17.06. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2006/07/06/muslims-in-europe-economic-worries-top-concerns-about-religious-and-cultural-identity/ (accessed on 3 April 2017).
[227] PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2006
[228] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 41.
[229] VELDHUIS – STAUN 2009, p. 41.
[230] ROY, Olivier (2004): *Globalised Islam: The search for a new Ummah*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Also confirming the increasing importance of the *Ummah* in the identification process of young Muslims in the West, Roy concludes that this is partly because the changes in the relationship between Muslims and Islam caused by globalisation.[231] Roy refers to this process as deterritorialisation, meaning that religion becomes less and less bound to a particular territory or culture, paving way for a new religiosity centred only on religion. This global Islam is founded on a flexible and dynamic set of norms rather than culture, making it adaptable to different environments. And as the *Ummah* develops into a global, even virtual, community, this global Islam particularly appeals to young Muslims who feel excluded and alienated in Western communities, because it gives them identity and a set of behavioural guidelines.[232]

In sum, aspects of identity matter to a significant extent in the context of second and third generations of young Muslim. Not being able to accommodate the different components of one's identity into a coherent self may instead result in a vacuum, which – based on the understanding of the importance of identification and a sense of belonging as a basic human need – militant Islamist groups will seek to fill with a far more cynical intent.

3.1.1. Social identity theory in a jihadi Salafist context

Already Crenshaw (cited above) drew the conclusion over 30 years ago that people are lured to totalitarian movements because they lack a sense of identity and can find solace in authoritarian ideas.[233] Militant Islamist organisations groups that promote unity in identity through membership include both the Islamic State as well as al-Qaeda. To explore the formation of such identity, some discursive elements will be highlighted below in a brief discourse analysis. For scope delimitation matters, only discoursive elements related to this identity formation will be highlighted here, and the identification of these elements of relevance will commence with examining the ideology of Osama bin Laden, founder, and leader of al-Qaeda until his death in 2011. Given his prominence in jihadi Salafist circles, it is fair to assume that bin Laden's rhetoric has significantly contributed to the development of a (militant) Islamist identity and considering how his statements have propagated among militant Islamist groups for decades, it

[231] ROY 2004

[232] ROY 2004

[233] As cited in ARENA, M.P. and ARRIGO, B.A. (2005): Social Psychology, Terrorism, and Identity: A Preliminary Re-Examination of Theory, Culture, Self, and Society. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 23, 2005, pp. 485–506.

is important to analyse his views on identity. Presenting his views on the *Ummah*, the global community of Muslims, bin Laden quotes the *Qur'an* (in italics below) in a film for a training handbook:[234]

> *"[Y]ou are the best community ever brought forth to mankind… You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, biding to honour and forbidding dishonour, and believing in Allah.* Thus, forever, let there be one nation, calling for good, enjoining honour and fighting dishonour, those are the prosperous".

Bin Laden suggests that to seek prosperity, the *Ummah* must unite as a nation. This includes the protection of members of this global community in case of an attack: "[a]trocities are committed against our brothers and sisters. Yet they are part of our community, and they deserve our sympathy and our support", he continues,[235] which means that there is an individual obligation of every Muslim to act in cases the *Ummah* is under attack. Although not being the first person to argue for the necessity of protecting the *Ummah*, by juxtaposing pictures of murder and destruction directed towards this alleged global community of Muslims using passages from the *Qur'an* as support for taking action to undo the harm, bin Laden's speech appeals to the collective consciousness of the Muslim community.

By repeatedly referring to the Muslim community worldwide as "*our Ummah*" in his statements, bin Laden aims to create a sense of solidarity and belonging.[236] The ingroup (believers) and outgroups (non-believer) are clear, and in further distancing these groups from one another, the former is elevated above governments and states and distanced from non-Islamic influences. This contributes to the creation of a superior group identity that promotes self-worth,[237] which becomes important in the light of how social identity theory claims that being a part of a certain group affects how we feel about ourselves and how we see ourselves. This might especially be relevant in individual cases of real or perceived marginalisation and discrimination, where identification with a superior group identity as framed by the militant Islamist narrative may be particularly enticing. Further stressing the defensive component in his argument, bin Laden claimed that "[w]e ourselves are the target of killings, destruction, and

[234] HELLMICH, Christina (2005):Creating the Ideology of Al Qaeda: From Hypocrites to Salafi-Jihadists. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2005, 31(2), pp. 111-124.
[235] HELLMICH 2005, p. 118.
[236] bin LADEN, OSAMA (2005). *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*. London and New York, Verso. 2005.
[237] HELLMICH 2005, p. 118.

atrocities. We are only defending ourselves. This is a defensive *jihad*. We want to defend our people and our land. That is why we say, if we don't get security, the Americans, too, would not get security. This is the simple formula that even an American child can understand. Live and let live".[238] In the context of terrorist attacks against Western targets the interpretation of defensive holy war is the most commonly used, and violence against civilians is justified with a doctrine of "proportional response", i.e. when the non-Muslims kill Muslim civilians it becomes permissible to attack their civilians in return.[239] A more in-depth examination of the underlying justification of violence against (Western) civilians will be made in the subsequent chapter.

Although ideologically competing in a sense with the al-Qaeda, the Islamic State continues to follow the same ideology laid out by Osama bin Laden.[240] Furlow *et al* highlight how the narrative of the Islamic State also very much relies on an imagined global Muslim community, where Muslims who may not know one another yet associate with one another based only on their shared "Muslimness".[241] As imaginary communities typically rely on state institutions to maintain their unity and the militant Islamist narrative rejects the idea of states, the idea of the Caliphate rises as the base for an imagined unified *Ummah*.[242] According to Anderson's notion of the imagined community, a community can exist even in the absence of regular face-to-face interactions amongst its members if its members believe they are a part of it.[243] Using the word "imagined", Anderson argues that this means "perceived", not "false" or "make believe", and entails that although these persons never actually meet, they will still form a kinship with each other.[244] The reference to this imagined global community is also present in the late IS-leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's statements, where he calls for the unification of all Muslims under the name and governance of Islam by addressing "[t]he Ummah (people) of Islam, in the East and

[238] As quoted in ESPOSITO, John (2002): *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, p. 24.
[239] WIKTOROWICZ 2005, p. 89.
[240] STYSZYNSKI, Marcin (2015): ISIS and Al Qaeda: Expanding the Jihadist Discourse. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 2015, 6(8), pp. 9-14.
[241] FURLOW, Bennet – Fleischer, Kristin – CORMAN, Steven R. (2014): *De-Romanticizing the Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate*. Centre for Strategic Communication Arizona University, 2014, pp. 1-17. Available at: https://csc.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/csc1402-deromanticizing-islamic-state-caliphate.pdf (accessed on 2 May 2017).
[242] FURLOW *et al* 2014, p. 2.
[243] ANDERSON, Benedict (2006): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. United Kingdom, Verso, 2006.
[244] ANDERSON 2006.

in the West".[245] Portraying this imagined global community as superior, al-Baghdadi successfully offers an alternative identity to disenfranchised Muslims in the West.[246] Claiming that "[M]uslims' rights are forcibly seized ... in the East and in the West" by non-Muslim government further creates a common enemy, al-Baghdadi's narrative aims to unite the members of the *Ummah* against a common foe, with the bond between the individual members of this perceived global community now going beyond simple solidarity.[247] This leads us to the subsequent part, where I will elaborate more on the exploitation of grievances related to a particular social identity as psychological factors relevant to the process of radicalisation. The way IS has exploited grievances of certain Muslim immigrants to the EU, for the purpose of recruiting and inciting them to engage in terrorist activities has not only been underlined by research, but also by Europol in its annual terrorism trend and situation report. Europol notes to this end that "[]IS ideology has a certain appeal amongst segments of the Muslim population in the EU, sometimes expressing admiration for "martyrdom". Motivations may generally include a belief that Islam is under attack from the West."[248]

Besenyő *et al* underline how the underlying narrative of terrorist organisations plays an important role in contemporary jihadist-inspired radicalisation processes, as one of the main pillars of this narrative is precisely the emphasis on 'how the West has historically subjugated and humiliated the Muslim world'.[249] Scheuer adds that in the interpretation of militant Islamists, current world political events (e.g. the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, the intervention in Libya, the intervention in Syria) are a continuation of this on-going subjugation, and every devout Muslim, regardless of geographical location, has an individual obligation to join the fight to defend Islam.[250]

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[245] al-BAGHDADI, Abu Bakr (2014): *Islamic State Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi Encourages Emigration, Worldwide Action*. SITE Intelligence Group, 1 July 2014. Available at: https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadiencourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html (accessed on 2 May 2018)

[246] LOW, REMY: "Making up the Ummah: The rhetoric of ISIS as public pedagogy', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 2016, 38(4), pp. 297-316

[247] al-BAGHDADI 2014.

[248] Europol. *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*. 2017. 31.

[249] BESENYŐ, János – PRANTNER, Zoltán – SPEIDL, Bianka – VOGEL, Dávid (2016): *Terrorizmus 2.0 - Az Iszlám Állam. Történet, ideológia, propaganda*. Honvéd Vezérkar Tudományos Kutatóhely. Budapest, Kossuth Kiadó, 2016, p. 101.

[250] SCHEUER, Michael (2002): *Through our enemies' eyes: Osama bin Laden, radical Islam, and the future of America*. Potomac Books, Inc. 2002.

On the part of European jihadists, prominent Sunni Islamist cleric Omar Bakri Muhammad (former leader of the U.K.-based Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir and the now-proscribed al-Muhajiroun) claimed the arrest of large numbers of Muslim citizens and the intervention in conflicts in Muslim areas has made Europe a place where Muslims were no longer safe, which justifies jihad. In making this argument, he defined terrorism as a necessity.[251] Policies to restrict and tighten immigration to Europe are also part of the radical Islamist narrative, which seeks to reinforce the sense of discrimination and discontent among Muslims in the West to recruit more successfully. As a concrete example, Ayman al-Zawahiri[252] (often referred to as the chief ideologue of al-Qaeda) described the expulsion of the *hijab* from French schools in 2004 as an act of hostility and considered it to be tantamount to the burning of villages in Afghanistan, the house demolitions and murder of children in Palestine, and the pillaging of Iraq.[253]

This type of argument is frequently used by the Islamic State as well: the alleged mistreatment of Muslims, where the non-military is seen as complicit and hence, legitimate targets for acts of violence. In the rhetoric of IS, the term "Crusaders" is often used as an instrument to describe the West and its actions, revoking the above-mentioned defensive war for the protection of Islam.[254] The term is frequently used in their online propaganda magazine, public statements, videos, relentlessly aiming to maintain the "us-and-them" worldview, thereby portraying Islam as constantly being under threat and humiliation. As part of the defensive war against this proclaimed enemy the "crusade civilians" are seen as legitimate targets through association with the governments they elected,[255] but also as part of the retaliation for "[t]heir planes do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, man or woman".[256] Coinciding with the losses

[251] NESSER, Petter (2000): Ideologies of Jihad in Europe. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23:2, 2000, pp. 173-200, p. 187.
[252] After years of hiding, Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed in 2022 (July 31) in a U.S. drone strike in Kabul. Wilson Center: *Zawahiri Killed in U.S. Strike in Afghanistan*. Wilson Center, 2022.08.02. Available at: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/zawahiri-killed-us-strike-afghanistan (accessed on 15 January 2023).
[253] NESSER 2000, p. 186.
[254] GOUTHAM, K. (2016): *ISIS and the Crusades*. Darthmouth University. 16 May 2016. Available at: http://sites.dartmouth.edu/crusadememory/2016/05/16/isis-and-the-crusades/ (accessed on 20 June 2017).
[255] GOUTHAM 2017.
[256] Statement by Abu Muhammed al-Adnani in May 2016 calling for attacks on military and civilian targets in the West. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamicstate-idUSKCN0YC0OG, accessed on 20 June 2017.

on the ground, the Islamic State specifically called upon attacks against civilian targets in the West from 2016 and onwards.[257]

3.1.2. The theory of masculinity in the context of violent extremism and terrorism

As summarised above regarding different factors impacting radicalisation, research on these root causes has focused on the variety of political, socioeconomic, ideological, cultural, and religious factors that can influence an individual's pathway towards violent actions. That said, it becomes evident that gender analysis has not been more fully utilised to better explain and understand the involvement of men and women in extremist organisation (and how these may differ) – especially considering the fact how "gender" is most often used synonymous to "women". As stated above, violent extremist groups depend on defining themselves as superior to other groups and to use alleged grievances against members of the ingroup to incite to violence. Continuing along the lines of identity and ingroup-dynamics as a legitimising factor of violence, in this subchapter I will argue that an important part of this self-representation of the ingroup in the case of jihadi Salafist organisations builds on a hypermasculine and heavily militarised image of what is considered as manliness. Engaging in large-scale militarised violence, the hierarchy and identity of the group's members serve as an important motivation, and as it was exactly large-scale militarised violence that allowed the Islamic State to expand and establish its claim to supremacy,[258] it is crucial to explore how the ideal of a violent and militarised masculinity was furthered in the recruitment and propaganda of the Islamic State. Hence, the main question of the current subchapter is what role does religion play in the violent self-representations of IS soldiers, and how does violence contribute to the creation of an idealised militarised masculinity?

With the increasing number of violent extremist organisations and networks globally, researchers commenced paying more attention to questions of masculinity to comprehend (and thereby stop) violent extremist behaviours. Masculinity in this context refers to the social construction of manhood and the construction of social hierarchies based on what is regarded

[257] EUROPOL 2017, p. 32.

[258] FARAZ, Ahmad (2018): *Legitimization of violent masculinities in self-representation of U.S army and (Islamic State) ISIS*. International Institute of Social Studies. Available at: https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/46648/Ahmad_Faraz_MA_2017-18_SJP.pdf (accessed on 19 May 2019).

as masculine,[259] in other words, the norms, behaviours, societal expectations, and power dynamics that are associated with being a man. Recognising that masculinities are contextual, relational and change over time resulting in a variety of distinct, overlapping, and perhaps conflicting ideas on masculinity is crucial.[260] Hence, the literature offers a variety of (sometimes competing) notions on masculinity. Firstly, it is important to note that masculinities may function on a variety of levels, including societal, institutional, and individual.[261] This is critical from the violent extremism point of view, as it implies that masculinity can be defined on group-level. Secondly, masculinities frequently work to uphold hierarchies and bolster men's dominance, power, and privilege over both women and other men.[262] Thirdly, some scholars argue that gender, violence, and conflict are linked in what is called "militarized masculinities" in both state and non-state contexts.[263] According to this theory, masculinities can legitimate military force and authority by connecting military service and an idealised warrior image to markers of "manliness". But although a growing corpus of research has demonstrated that masculinities do matter also in the context of violent extremist groups, a relatively small number of studies have focused on explain what function masculinities serve at various phases of participation in the extremist activities. Reviewing current research on gender and violent extremism, Phelan noted that it is vitally understudied how masculinities contribute to involvement in violent extremism.[264]

The link between masculinity and violent extremism may seem quite obvious, as violent extremist and terrorist organisations across the ideological spectrum exploit masculinities in order to recruit members.[265] Violence, discrimination, persecution or any other offences against

[259] ICCT (2022): *ICCT Live Briefing: Masculinity and Violent Extremism*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. 2022.11.13. Available at: https://www.icct.nl/event/icct-live-briefing-masculinity-and-violent-extremism (accessed on 15 December 2022).
[260] DIER, Aleksandra – BALDWIN, Gretchen (2022): *Masculinities and Violent Extremism*. International Peace Institute and UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, June 2022. Available at: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Masculinities-and-VE-Web.pdf (accessed on 18 July 2022).
[261] DIER – BALDWIN 2022, p. 2.
[262] CONNELL, Robert W. (1987): *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press.
[263] WEGNER, Nicole (2021): Helpful Heroes and the Political Utility of Militarized Masculinities. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23, no. 1.
[264] PHELAN, Alexandra (2023): Special Issue Introduction for Terrorism, Gender and Women: Toward an Integrated Research Agenda, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 46:4, pp. 353-361.
[265] See, eg. NDUNG'U, Irene –SHADUNG, Mothepa (2017): *Can a Gendered Approach Improve Responses to Violent Extremism?* Institute for Security Studies (ISS), September 2017; FRIED, LAURO, AND BARKER: Masculinities and Preventing Violent Extremism.

the members of the ingroup by state actors as well as by non-state actors can serve as inspiration and motivation for individuals to join or support violent extremist groups that promise revenge, consolation, or unity.[266] As will be described in detail below, in the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation, this exploitation of masculinities is found in – among others – the idealisation of warrior masculinities, expectations surrounding masculine roles, resistance against shifting gender roles, and the sense of victimisation described above, including the individual obligation of every Muslim to defend the *Ummah*, that all constitute integral elements of the recruitment strategy.[267]

Exploring how militant Islamist groups such as the Islamic State exploit masculinities in recruiting and propaganda, it becomes clear that they frequently employ hypermasculine imagery, depicting vicious warriors and promising marriage, sex slaves as "spoils of war", and wealth as reward – all of which confer social prestige. Such imagery has proven to be efficient in attracting men who, due to a sense of loss of power and/or economic disenfranchisement, may not see any other way to achieve their goals. Hence, joining a violent extremist group may seem like a tempting option to reclaim their "place" in the established hierarchy.[268] A parallel between jihadist-inspired violence and street gangs based on this emasculation is provided by Andersen and Sandberg, who argue that a way to understand violent jihadism in the West is as a subcultural reaction to a sense of alienation inside Western culture.[269] In this sense, the authors refer to how *Dabiq* encourages violence and a romanticised perspective on honour and combat, in which the bond between "brothers" is paramount, and draw parallels between the "jihadi cool" movement imitating the image of the hyper-masculine Muslim warrior and street gangs promoting ideas of masculinity and violence.[270]

These strategies are evident in the recruitment propaganda of the Islamic State, all centring around an image of hyper-masculinity in order to capitalise on feelings of bitterness and emasculation. In addition, IS routinely exploited women and children in its propaganda to make men feel bad for not standing up to defend them and the so-called Caliphate.[271] Images used

[266] ASLAM, Maleeha (2012): *Gender-Based Explosions: The Nexus between Muslim Masculinities, Jihadist Islamism and Terrorism*. Tokyo, United Nations University Press.
[267] DIER – BALDWIN 2022
[268] International Peace Institute–UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) virtual series on counterterrorism and masculinities, November 16–18, 2020.
[269] ANDERSEN, Jan Christoffer – SANDBERG, Sveinung (2018): Islamic State Propaganda: Between social movement framing and subcultural provocation. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32 (7), pp. 1506–26.
[270] ANDERSEN – SANDBERG 2018, p. 14.
[271] Videos and several numbers of *Dabiq*

show a culture of masculinity and feature a wide range of objects, including cars, weapons, violence, honour – and eventually, death. The Muslim warrior, or *mujahidin*, who battles in *jihad* is the embodiment of the ideal of masculinity and it is through this idealised concept of combat and honour that jihadists can prove that they are not coward, weak, or feminine. The propaganda magazine *Dabiq* crafts and presents an image of how these men tough, determined, and manly and united as a "band of brothers". Death is revered and the values of individual self-sacrifice and male honour are praised. The ultimate proof of masculinity is to become a martyr, *a shahid*.[272]

Seeking for the component creating a link between religion ad violence, it is found both in the propaganda magazines as well as the videos and *nasheeds* of the Islamic State, calling upon the individual duty and collective responsibility of all Muslim men to fight for the safety, honour, dignity, and authority of the Muslim identity as a whole as a divine duty. Elaborating on how these messages could reach such broad audiences, a brief mention has to be made of IS' use of the media in reaching out to a much wider (and presumably also younger) audience. As Horváth notes, the terrorist network is no longer satisfied with the video messages used by Osama bin Laden, former leader of al-Qaeda, but they are using all forms of social media, creating apps that can broadcast their messages in large quantities. Considering the strong hardware background and IT specialists, the terrorist organisation is also prepared to eliminate the apps, filter the messages.[273] Horváth also underlines that in their use of social media, the geographical boundaries of the target groups began to be interpreted more broadly and were extended to Muslims living in the countries of the Western world.[274] IS has proven to be masters in utilising social media to find and target those who might be especially susceptible to their ideology. For instance, they use teen-friendly social media sites to lure and recruit young people, who are more receptive to its messages. By portraying their group as the answer to all problems, terrorists can tailor their propaganda to appeal to specific vulnerable communities.[275]

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[272] MESSERSCHMIDT, James (1995): Masculinities and Crime. In: CULLEN, Francis T. – AGNEW Robert – WILCOX, Pamela (eds.): *Criminological Theory: Past to Present*. New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 354-365.

[273] HORVÁTH, Attila (2018): A terrorizmus és a média kapcsolatáról. *Acta Humana*, 2016/5. pp. 33-44, p. 38. Available at: http://real.mtak.hu/122222/1/AH_2016_5_Horvath_Attila.pdf (accessed on 1 May 2018).

[274] HORVÁTH 2016, p. 38.

[275] LIEBERMAN, Victoria A. (2017): Terrorism, the Internet and Propaganda. *Journal of National Security Law & Policy*, 2017/01. Available at: https://jnslp.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Terrorism-the-Internet-Propaganda.pdf (accessed on 2 June 2018).

Summarising the above, the subchapter on the role of masculinity in the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation, I have found support for how violence is portrayed as a necessary tool to establish dominance and power for the sake of forming the identity and honour of the ingroup, which creates an important link to the social identity theory discussed above. As crucial part of the identity-formation of the ingroup, violence committed in the name of the ingroup is praised as acts of bravery and sacrifice. Masculinity is used as part of the demarcation of identities between the ingroup and outgroup, where the ingroup is portrayed as morally upright, spiritually distinct and militarily strong, protecting the honour of Islam thus, and serving a holy purpose, while the outgroup is portrayed as hateful liars and disbelievers, who "deserve" what is brought upon them by the soldiers of the Islamic State.

3.1.3. The correlation between the jihadi Salafist narrative, social identity, masculinities and the use of violence

Berger defines violent extremism as "[t]he belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group".[276] Hostile action can take many different forms, such as verbal abuse, marginalisation and discrimination, denigration via memes and other symbols on social media, murder, terrorism, and genocide, and it is important to note here that narratives of violent extremism can arise in almost any ideological or religious framework. In the words of Strindberg, these narratives are a product of how groups organise their views about the ingroup and how it interacts with the outside world.[277] Individuals' views and feelings are given more inclusion, a wider perspective, and communal meaning by ideologies and theologies, just as they provide direction and structure to violent activity. Notably, some narratives and ideologies tend to be more easily interpreted in term of violent action than others. However, the way how ideology is shaped into (or accepted as) a narrative that links the well-being of the ingroup to violent action against an outgroup is self-evidently preceded by firstly, the formation of an ingroup, secondly, the identification of a villainous outgroup, and thirdly the social categorisation of „us and them". Hence, battle lines are drawn by group identity.[278]

[276] BERGER, John M. (2018): Extremism. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018, p. 44.
[277] STRINDBERG 2020, p. 29.
[278] STRINDBERG 2020, p. 29.

Applying this to the context of my research, the above stated means that the violent action committed in the name of the Islamic State (or any other militant Islamist organisation for that matter) has been preceded by the creation of an ingroup (here: the believers), whose well-being is linked to an alleged oppression by the outgroup (here: the non-believers, the „West", the non-Islamic regimes) and where violence is portrayed as a legitimate means in support of the ingroup. This violence is linked to a hyper-masculine image of the ideal man and warrior, who is brave, pious, and not afraid to sacrifice his life for the ingroup. I have showed how the narrative of both al-Qaeda as well as the Islamic State have actively shaped their narrative to create this ingroup, here a global community of Muslims, with which (Muslim) individuals worldwide can identify themselves with regardless of geographical location, language or ethnicity. What matters is the identity as a Muslim and the belief of the aim and worldview set forth by this narrative. To contrast this identity – portrayed as superior and above other allegiances, such as state and citizenship – the discoursive elements have focused on real or perceived grievances of individuals as well as on the image of the „Muslim world" as being constantly humiliated by the „West". Claiming the individual obligation of every ingroup member to fight this alleged injustice, the justification of violence has been successfully established, nonetheless accompanied by referenced to Qur'anic verses as well as professional and powerful propaganda tools.

3.2. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Having made an effort above to define radicalisation and lay out conceptual models of violent radicalisation, I have analysed the theoretical foundations of intrinsic causal factors related to – among others – psychological propensities. An important conclusion is that efforts to prevent violent radicalisation must go beyond what is suggested Moghaddam, namely that improving people's general well-being will effectively make fewer people feel dissatisfied and less likely to take the "stairs to terrorism". The psychological theories explored above related to social identification imply that it may not be possible to reduce the prevalence of violent extremism by solely trying to improve objective circumstances, as these groups may very well continue to feel injustice because they identify themselves with a group that is geographically situated elsewhere.[279]

[279] Although it falls outside the scope of the present thesis, a highly interesting example of this phenomenon is the statement by Mohammed Sidique Khan, one of the so-called 7/7 bombers in London 2005 in a video

After reviewing the literature in the previous section, it becomes evident that a person's subjective assessment of his or her situation is probably a key underlying component in the decision to engage in violent extremism. For instance, while being impoverished by objective standards, a person may not necessarily believe that he or his people have been treated unfairly. At the same time, another person who may be prosperous monetarily might still feel as though his or her people have been treated unfairly. Notably, this subjective assessment of unfairness or disadvantage may also be influenced by personal characteristics. That said, the interconnectedness of the psychological theories presented above provides significant support for how the factors related to group identification in combination with the belief that this group is unfairly disadvantaged is likely to increase the engagement in violent extremism. Nonetheless, fundamental psychological characteristics have a significant impact on whether someone chooses to employ violence for their cause or not, hence, the issue of personality needs to be further explored.

Through the application of the theoretical framework provided by social identity theory, I have examined the ways in which identity discourses shaped by jihadi Salafist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State interact, leading the justification of violence against members of the so-called outgroup on the basis of alleged mistreatment of the ingroup.

message the day before the attack when four suicide bombers killed 52 persons and left over 700 injured, claiming that th his personal motive was that "[y]our democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the globe". The full text of the video is available under following link: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4206800.stm, accessed on 10 April 2017.

CHAPTER 4

THE UNDERLYING IDEOLOGY – JIHADI SALAFISM AND THE JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS

"I acted purely in the name of my religion."

Mohammed Bouyeri,
the murderer of Dutch filmmaker
Theo Van Gogh in the court
hearings after the murder

Comprehending the various ideological currents and orientations that exist within Islam is a complex effort and understanding the role that a religious-affiliated ideology plays in the radicalisation process is seemingly an even more complex effort. The focus on religion is of importance, as it is many times a factor being neglected by policymakers for a variety of reasons – starting from a lack of understanding of the religious component to a fear of stigmatising Muslim communities and/or being accused of Islamophobia. This does not imply that those tasked with drafting counter-radicalisation policies need to be experts of religion. Rather, it means that the underlying ideology needs to be examined also through a religious lens to fully comprehend the potential of certain religious interpretations in triggering and legitimising violent behaviour. As Fischl correctly notes, it would be a mistake to address only the political and social roots of this type of terrorism, because that would mean ignoring the religious and cultural background.[280] To understand what drives these terrorists and to effectively counter them, it is essential to take religious and ideological factors into account, claims Fischl.[281] Wood argues along the same lines, in relation to the Islamic State he notes that there is a "[t]emptation to see that jihadists are modern secular people, with modern political concerns, wearing medieval religious disguise – and make it fit the Islamic State", but highlights that the ideology of the Islamic State in fact is inseparable from the Islamic system of thought, as „[t]he religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from coherent and even learned interpretations of

[280] FISCHL, Vilmos (2011): Iszlám és terrorizmus, avagy a civilizációk összecsapása? *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 4. évfolyam 1. szám, Budapest, 2011, pp. 75-80. 76. Available at: http://epa.oszk.hu/02400/02463/00019/pdf/EPA02463_hadtudomanyi_szemle_2011_1_075-080.pdf (accessed on 10 May 2017).
[281] FISCHL 2011, p. 76.

Islam".[282] However, we must add that their understanding is one of the many other interpretations, to which they ardently oppose labelling them as apostasy. In this thesis my goal is not to separate religion from political ideology, rather to highlight concepts and interpretations that may and do serve as triggers for violent radicalisation.

Salafism is an ideological movement within Sunni Islam that has grown in significance for scholars investigating underlying religious justification of certain acts of terrorism, as well as for those responsible for formulating anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation policies. Both the self-proclaimed Islamic State and al-Qaeda can be characterised as global jihadist ideological movements with roots in Salafism, accompanied by local and regional idiosyncrasies. Hence, understanding this literalist Salafi view of Sunni Islam is essential for dealing with the contemporary jihadist threat. Especially today, when Europe is witnessing what Kepel calls a "third-generation jihad", underlining that "[b]ehind the jihadist eruption lays the entrenchment of Salafism, the most radical proponents of which (…) are aiming for the destruction of Europe through civil war".[283]

This chapter will examine the religious justifications as understood within the context of jihadi Salafism, through which militant Islamist organisations such as the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda justify their use of violence against civilians (with an emphasis on European/Christian civilians). I use the term jihadi Salafism in order to emphasise that this strand is a (violent) subcurrent of Salafism.

4.1. INTRODUCTION: SALAFISM

Using Wagemakers' term, Salafism may be characterised as a "heterogeneous movement" that manifests itself in various ways.[284] '*Salaf*' derives from the word 'predecessor' and Salafism can simply be said to derive from *al-salaf al-salih*, which refers to the first three generations of Muslims following the Prophet who are referred to as 'the righteous ancestors' that Salafists

[282] WOOD, Graeme (2015): What ISIS Really Wants. *The Atlantic*, 2015 March. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/ (accessed on 10 May 2017).
[283] Gilles KEPEL during a Council of Europe debate on Democratic Security on 28 April 2016. The presentation is entitled „*The attacks in Paris and Brussels: Salafism and jihadism in Europe*", excerpts are available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/dpaer/all-democratic-security-debates/-/asset_publisher/k0pohoL2inGg/content/prof-gilles-kepel-on-the-attacks-in-paris-and-brussels-salafism-and-jihadism-in-europe- (accessed on 1 September 2017).
[284] WAGEMAKERS, Joas (2016): *Salafism in Jordan*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

aim to imitate.[285] Citing a *hadith*[286] by Sahih al-Bukhari (8:76:437) where the Prophet described the first three generations as 'the best people', Salafists believe that their way of life is the most authentic, therefore they follow and imitate the habits of these first generation as rigorously as possible.[287] Salafists are not the only ones reading the above mentioned *hadiths*, but a crucial difference to other Sunni Muslims is that where the latter may use the texting as inspirational, the Salafists adjust their entire lifestyle to adhere to the pious predecessors.

There have been studies attempting to identify the essence of Salafi thought through listing its essential characteristics. Haykel mentions six specific theological views that are central:[288]

(i) a return to the authentic practices and beliefs of the pious predecessors, the salaf;
(ii) monotheism (*tawheed*);
(iii) fighting unbelief actively;
(iv) the *Qur'an* and Sunna as the only valid sources of religious authority,
(v) ridding Islam of heretical innovations, and
(vi) a belief that specific answers to all questions are found in the *Qur'an* and the Sunnah.

Salafists advocate a return to a purer past and doing so, their main focus is an undivided God (*tawheed*) and complete adherence to God's laws and directives. According to Salafists, only God has the authority to enact laws, and everyone is required to follow them strictly. Salafists therefore reject democracy and secular legislative authority; in their belief all Muslims must submit to God's almighty authority as the only source that may impose laws and regulations.

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[285] WAGEMAKERS, Joas (2021): The Citadel of Salafism. In: AFZAL UPAL, Muhammad – CUSACK, Carole M. (eds.): *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*. Brill, 2021, pp. 333-347.

[286] Hadith (Arabic: *Ḥadīth*), meaning "news" or "story", can be described as the second most important source of religious guidance after the *Qur'an*. It entails a corpus of the sayings or traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, revered by Muslims as a major source of religious law and moral guidance. Britannica describs the meaning of the hadit has follows: „[f]or Muslims, hadiths are among the sources through which they come to understand the practice of Muhammad and his Muslim community (*ummah*)". Definition available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hadith, accessed on 1 June 2019.

[287] RANSTORP, Magnus (ed.) (2020): Contextualising Salafism and Salafi Jihadism. Nationalt Center for Forebyggelse af Extremisme, Danmark, p. 6.

[288] HAYKEL, Bernard (2014): On the Nature of Salafi thought and Action. In MEIJER, Roel (ed.): *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement.* Oxford Academic. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199333431.003.0002, accessed 7 Aug. 2021. According to Haykel, "[t]he focus on theological differences, as opposed to legal ones, is important because theology in Islam does not entertain a tolerance for a multiplicity of equally valid, but obviously different, beliefs – only one view is correct, and on this basis it becomes possible to exclude and excommunicate the adherents of other views" (p. 41).

Hence, Salafism serves also as a defence against secular policies and principles of the West.[289] In his research on Salafi attitudes towards democracy Anjum brings examples of antidemocratic Salafis to illustrate the belief that democracy is a "[s]ystem that the West promotes in, if not imposes on, the Muslims", more precisely the "the crusading states" or "world's forces of disbelief" that "[i]mpose the religion of democracy upon the oppressed and subjugated peoples [of the Muslim world]".[290]

Salafism is literalist and dogmatic. Change, divergence, and renewal in any form are considered as a sin as well as a denial of truth, and truth-denying, necessitating the combating of polytheism (*shirk*) and non-believers (*kuffars*). In their definition, all behaviour as either *haram* (forbidden) or *halal* (authorised), which must be adhered to exactly. They also draw a clear line between believers and non-believers and adhere to tight regulations and closely monitor the compliance with this moral code, which governs all behaviour and all interpersonal interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Corrective actions are needed for any deviance.[291] Wagemakers notes that as a result, Salafists want to meticulously emulate the Prophet and "have a hadith for any circumstance".[292]

4.1.1. Subgroups of Salafism

However, as already stated above, Salafism does not represent a singular perspective, but rather a set of attributes present in several heterogeneous groups. According to contemporary research Salafism should be split into three groups: apolitical/purist Salafists (stressing the education of Muslims in terms of living a sober and fundamental lifestyle without the use of violence), political Salafists (active within the realm of politics, seeking to increase their influence), and jihadi Salafists (placing the emphasis on the use of violence and a combative approach in order to reach their goals).[293] According to Koning there are two characteristics setting apart political

[289] RANSTORP 2020, p. 6.
[290] ANJUM, Ovamir (2016): Salafis and Democracy: Doctrine and Context. *The Muslim World,* Volume 106 Issue 3, pp. 448-Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/muwo.12158 (accessed on 7 August 2022).
[291] RANSTORP 2020, p. 6
[292] WAGEMAKERS, Joas (2018): Salafism or the Quest for Purity. *Oasis*. Available at: https://www.oasiscenter.eu/eu/en/what-is-salafism-quest-for-purity (accessed on 7 August 2022).
[293] ABBAS, Tahir (2017): Traditional and Modern Muslim Education at the Core and Periphery: Enduring Challenge. *Handbook of Islamic Education* 7 (1 January 2017), pp. 1–12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53620-0_13-1, (accessed on 7 August 2022). Further: de GRAAF, Beatrice (2010): The Nexus Between Salafism and Jihadism in the Netherlands. *Combating Terrorism Center at West*

and jihadi Salafism from other branches, namely its "capability to blend seamlessly within society and its informal structure".[294] Due to this "invisible" nature, Salafism has been able to defy several attempts by security agencies around the world to dismantle political and jihadi Salafism. The securitisation of radical religious objectives has therefore in certain cases been hampered by methods of concealment, such as participating in political discussions or act openly to hide the political Salafists' religious intentions.[295]

This distinction has also been visualised[296] by the Radicalisation Awareness Network, a network launched by the European Commission in 2011 with the purpose of connecting frontline practitioners from across Europe with one another, to exchange knowledge, first-hand experiences, and approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms.

Point, 3 March 2010. Available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/the-nexus-between-salafism-and-jihadism-in-the-netherlands/ (accessed on 7 August 2022).

[294] KONING, Martijn (2012): Styles of Salafi Activism: Escaping the Divide. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*. 8, pp. 400-401. 10.2752/175183412X13415044209032, accessed on 7 August 2022.

[295] KONING 2012. Further: WELTEN, Liselotte – ABBAS, Tahir (2021): Critical Perspectives on Salafism in The Netherlands. *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2021, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. Available at: https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2021/04/Salafism-in-the-Netherlands.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2022).

[296] RANSTORP, Magnus (ed.) (2019): *Factbook on Islamist Extremism: A Practical Introduction*. EU Radicalisation Awareness Network – Centre of Excellence. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/homeaffairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ranpapers/docs/ran_factbook_islamist_extremism_december_2019_en.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2022).

8. Figure. Attributes of and different groups of Salafism.[297]

4.1.2. Doctrinal elements[298]

To further deepen the understanding of the Salafist narrative, some doctrinal elements need to be explained, the focus below will be on the justification of violence and the concept of "commanding right and forbidding wrong". This obligation to – in other words – "enjoin good and forbid evil" derived from the self-definition of Islam, consistutes the religious legal basis for the practical implementation of extremist ideas. It is part and parcel of Islamic faith based on the *Qur'anic* statement that "[t]hose who do not judge according to what Allah has sent down [by revelation] are the infidels."[299] March argues that moderate Muslims also agree that

[297] RANSTORP 2019.

[298] Present subchapter builds on the findings in the study by SPEIDL, Bianka – HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2020): Importing Religious Conflicts Through Migration - Atrocities Against Christian Asylum Migration Seekers in Europe. In ÖTVÖS István – Keresztfalvi Zsuzsanna (eds.): *The First Internatioal Conference on Nations under Genocide. Pázmány Péter Catholic University- Salahaddin University-Erbil. 19-21 April 2017, Budapest*. Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 2020.

[299] *Qur'an*, 5: 4.

the aim of Islam is to transform the world according to the rules given in divine revelation. Considering this, man's decision based on rational discretion or obedience to a secular authority is a denial of divine supremacy and sovereignty.[300] Jihadi Salafism takes this concept to the extremes, in which every aspect and value of human life is strictly subordinated to judgemental evaluation based on literalist understanding of the *Qur'an* and the Tradition (volumes of *hadith* considered as authentic in Hanbali legal practice). This means that the believer is not supposed to make subjective choices and preferences, but all his or her attachments and detachments must be based on the verdicts of Islamic law.[301] All that is declared by the law needs to be in line with Islam, the will of God is to be liked, and reversely, all that is opposing it must be hated.

The majority of Muslim jurists hold that fighting is only justified in response to an attack and aggression and that no human being is to be killed merely for contravening Islam, but rather to deter his aggressiveness.[302] Similarly, as they are not involved in combat, civilians or non-combatants may not be killed or attacked; Islamic tradition forbids the execution of priests, women, and children.[303] In order to use violence (also including the killing of civilians), the frame of reference must be altered, and the offender must be revealed to be the victim. Hence, victimhood is a requirement for defending violence, and this victimisation is, in Islamist, fundamentalist, and jihadist propaganda, legitimised by the claim that Muslims are the victims of Western haughtiness, and since Muslim civilian suffering is occurring everywhere in the world, they are justified to respond by attacking them everywhere in their homeland.[304] To this end, jihadist propaganda uses "Crusaders" as a recurrent adjective for Christians, and while it condemns the West for its atheism, its civilians are labelled as crusaders without distinction. Extending the battlefield from the centre of war in the Middle East into the West went, in the case of the Islamic State, hand in hand with the severe losses on the ground in Syria and Iraq. According to *Rumiyah* 1: *"[I]t is only from the hikmah of Allah that he has scattered you around the earth and in the various lands of the Crusaders to see which of you are best in deeds. So*

[300] MARCH, Andrew F. (2009): Sources of Moral Obligation to non-Muslims in the "Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities" (Fiqh al-aqalliyyāt) Discourse. *Islamic Law and Society* 16, 2009, pp. 34-94, p. 42.
[301] AL-QAHTANI, Muhammad Saeed (1999): Al-Wala' Wa'l-Bara': According to the 'Aqeedah of the Salaf. London, Al-Firdous Ltd. 1999. With reference to Ibn Taymiyya, p. 47.
[302] Sheikh Wahbeh AL-ZUHILI (2005): Islam and International Law. *International Review of the Red Cross*, Volume 85 Number 858, June 2005. Available at: https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/irrc_858_zuhili.pdf (accessed on 10 September 2015).
[303] AL-ZUHILI 2005.
[304] See for instance the statement by Mohammed al-Adnani, late spokesperson of the Islamic State, who in his speech from May 2016 paved way for several lone perpetrator attack across the European Union, by encouraging followers to, rather than travelling to Syria or Iraq, stay where they are and attack the "Crusaders" in their homeland.

here before you are the doors of jihad – unhinged, and in their lands![305] Being scattered around the world may be interpreted as a metaphor for migration and a justification of leaving the Islamic homeland in order to get access to other lands, particularly the wealthy West.

To seek answers to why some people seeking safety in the West find the rhetoric of the Islamic State's rhetoric so alluring, the theories of Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) need to be examined firstly, as he is still regarded as the most significant Sunni Islamist thinker in the Muslim world today. Wahhabism and Salafism, two of today's most influential Sunni interpretations of Islam, have their roots in Ibn Taymiyya's way of thinking. He wrote the passage that follows: "[A]llah sent His Messengers and revealed His Books in order that all religion should be devoted to Him, Alone; therefore, love should be only for those who are loyal to Him and anger is for His enemies".[306] This is one of the first formulations of the principle of *al-wala' wa-l-bara'*, which translates to loyalty (to what that is pleasing to God) and disavowal (of all that is displeasing to Him). This obligation to "enjoin good and forbid evil", derived from the self-definition of Islam, constitutes the religious legal basis for the practical implementation of extremist ideas. The concept is also known and widely used as "Commanding right and forbidding wrong" in English translation.

In Sunni Islam this principle is of paramount importance, even *tawheed*, the dogma about the oneness of God is "part of the doctrine of *Wala'and Bara'*",[307] and is thus "a matter of belief and disbelief".[308] In his book, *Al-Wala' wal-Bara' according to the Aqeedah of the Salaf* ("Loyalty and Disavowal in the doctrine and the tradition of the first three generation of Islam")[309] Sheikh Muhammad Saeed al-Qahtani, a prominent Saudi expert and teacher of Islamic Law (who, according to a promoting website has delivered lectures in many European states as well, including "Holland and Britain"),[310] gives an in-depth understanding of the accepted fundamentalist reading of this doctrine. Qahtani's discourse is used here as an example of a doctrinal background of the justification of violence, also bearing in mind that he is an influential expert of Islamic law. The English translation of his book is available on the Internet

[305] *Rumiyah* 1:17
[306] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa,* 1st Edition, 1349 A.H., Maktabat al-Manar, Egypt., Vol.28, p. 208-209. Referred to by Muhammad Saeed al-Qahtani: Al-Wala' Wa'l-Bara' According to the 'Aqeedah of the Salaf. Available at: http://tawheednyc.com/aqeedah/al%20walaa%20wal%20baraa/alwalawalbara2.pdf (accessed on 1 April 2017).
[307] QAHTANI 1999, p. 10.
[308] QAHTANI 1999, p. 8.
[309] Op cit QAHTANI.
[310] Link to Qahtani's website: https://adviceforparadise.com/profiles/12/ (accessed on 5 September 2018).

and thus reveals an important primary audience, namely Muslims living in the West. Right at the outset of his discourse, Qahtani declares that Muslims got corrupted "by means of education, media and instilling western thoughts and ways of life into the minds of Muslims".[311] This statement is in line with the above mentioned inevitable self-victimisation needed to justify violence, a preliminary to the incitement to hatred. This reframing guarantees the moral grounds on which Qahtani nullifies the moderate readings of various statements referring to Christians and Jews in the *Qur'an* and in the Islamic tradition.

Similarly, to other fundamentalists, Qahtani categorises human beings into two groups: "[p]eople then are to be divided into two groups, one that follows guidance and the other which has gone astray".[312] Regarding the term "followers of guidance", the subsequent pages reveal that this only refers to Sunni Muslims. Concerning the relations between the groups, he claims that "[t]hat there is no common ground between these two groups, neither in this world, nor in the next".[313] Giving a reason for the irreconcilable difference, he explains that those who reject the truth of "[D]ivine Wisdom and of the *Shari'ah* (...), they follow Satan".[314] In what follows Qahtani sets up subcategories that determine the enemies of Islam: "[t]he enemies of Islam fall into different groups; disbelievers, polytheists, People of the Book, and hypocrites".[315] From this point on, it is clear that there is absolutely no distinction to be made between atheists, adherents of Eastern philosophies, and Christians because they are all a threat to Muslim believers. Qahtani then resorts to an overused Islamist political argument of Jewish-Christian conspiracies against the Muslims:

> "(…) [i]t is perhaps worth mentioning the danger posed by the Jews and the Christians, who between them control most of the world, and who use all means at their disposal to maintain this control. They have held out **the greatest of deceptions** in order to dupe the Muslims… They have used every kind of wickedness, perfidy and treachery in this struggle ever since they have experienced, firsthand, the zeal of the Muslims for their religion, having **previously confronted them in the fullness of their creed**. **So they declared war** over land, economic and political ideologies, strategic interests, and then they tried to convince the guileless amongst us that **the whole issue of the creed was**

[311] QAHTANI 1999, p. 9.
[312] QAHTANI 1999, p. 28
[313] QAHTANI. 1999, p. 31
[314] QAHTANI 1999, p. 33
[315] QAHTANI 1999, p. 40

> **outdated; that it was totally irrelevant. They said that it should not be a point of discussion; that those who struggled on its behalf were only reactionary fanatics.** So it **is time to return to central importance the creed** before we lose heart, struggling with all that we have in order to dispel, once and for all, this impudence which has been wearing away at us for so long. (…) Allah is the Most Truthful of all when He says, 'The Jews and the Christians will never be pleased with you until you follow their religion' (…) The **true nature of the enmity** between the Muslims and the non-Muslims **arises from a religious difference** and an incompatibility of methods. As for the religion of Allah, **the believers are** its followers; **the keepers of His *Sharia'h***, and the allies of His Servants. **As for the rest, they follow their desires; they follow Satan and are united in his forces**.[316]

Hence, the quote above illustrates another tool of reframing, which introduces the following key idea (*emphasised by the author in bold above*): anything non-Muslims do to appease Muslims, or to advance their interests is solely done to deceive them. Therefore, non-Muslims lie with the intent to mislead Muslims as their ultimate goal. Despite certain claims in this context that religion is secondary, there are clear religious motivations in the statement above, with the conclusion that the non-Muslims declared war on the Muslims. Therefore, Speidl argues, the admission of extremist acts committed in the name of Christianity and the distancing of Church leaders and laymen from any form of past or present fanatic act serves only to divert Muslims from "the central importance" of their creed.[317] Hence, the clear, unambiguous conclusion is that those who adhere to the *shari'a* are believers, and anyone who does not fall into this category is a follower of Satan. As they are "united in his forces", they are waging war once more on the defenceless, underprivileged, preoccupied, and misled Muslims.

In the light of what has been said above, Qahtani elaborates on what is expected of the believers in response to the veiled deception. Here, too, he suggests categorising people consciously into three groups: true believers, corrupted believers, and the third group (which is the most intriguing in my research), namely "those who deserve unremitting hatred". These are "[]disbelievers in Allah (…) It includes, as well, those who deny any of the five Pillars of Faith, who worship alongside Allah any of the prophets of Allah, or His righteous or pious servants, reserving for them any kind of devotion due only to Allah, such as love or supplication, fear or

[316] QAHTANI 1999, p. 43.
[317] SPEIDL – HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA 2020.

hope (…)".[318] The definition fully corresponds to the perception of Christians through the jihadist and fundamentalist definitions mentioned above. Qahtani calls true Muslims (equalled with the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jama'*) to completely disassociate themselves from those who disbelieve, whether atheists, followers of other religions or apostates, and show them uncompromising sternness."[319] Qahtani does not hesitate to make one step further to legitimise the acts of violence. He argues as follows:

> "[T]here is no basis here for the assumption that the Prophet was somehow approving of the religion of these pagans; neither with that of the Jews, Christians nor other People of the Book, as some of the secular-minded people have suggested. By the same token, it does not imply any prohibition against fighting them, as some have wrongfully asserted (…)".[320]

The only way to interpret this rationale realistically is to say that believers must always treat non-Muslims with an attitude of armed jihad. The book's last chapters paint a rather bleak picture of Muslim and Christian coexistence everywhere in the world. When moderate Muslims do not act and behave in accordance with the concept of hatred, Qahtani openly threatens them with the possibility of becoming targets themselves: "[m]any verses were revealed which warned the believers, indeed forbade them, from associating with the disbelievers, generally, and with the People of the Book, especially (…) [from] falling into obedience to them, and from taking them as allies, friends or confidants".[321] Since "[w]hoever identifies with the Jews and the Christians and is loyal to them, is one of them.[322]

Qahtani is but one of extreme interpretations, encouraging hatred and bloodshed. There are websites containing a wealth of information in English and other European languages, which might be used as a resource for radicalising Muslims living in Europe. But because the complex meaning of the discourse above is either not grasped, or is at times perhaps purposely ignored, their substance is often not prohibited.[323]

[318] QAHTANI 1999, p. 46.
[319] QAHTANI 1999, p. 46.
[320] QAHTANI 1999, p. 78.
[321] QAHTANI 1999, p. 90.
[322] QAHTANI 1999, p. 113.
[323] SPEIDL – HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA 2020.

4.2. JIHADI SALAFISM

After having presented key doctrinal elements of the fundamentalist narrative closely linked to jihadi Salafism, this subchapter will explore how this violent subcurrent of Salafism – sees violence as a vital tool to alter the current world order, in which the USA and its allies are seen as the front line in a full-scale battle against Islam and Muslims under Pax Americana (a a term used to describe the period of military and economic expansion of the United States in the Western Hemisphere that emerged after World War II, with the United States as the dominant global superpower).[324] Not only is violence seen as a vital tool, but in the view of jihadi Salafists, every Muslim has a personal obligation to engage in armed conflict with both near enemies (understood as regional apostate regimes) and far enemies (understood as Western powers).[325] Below I seek to explore the meaning(s) of jihadism, and to discuss the different eras of jihadism in Europe, and in this context, to examine the jihadists' view of Europe legitimising their violent actions, including attacks on civilians.

Technically the word *jihad* means 'war in the way of God'. In modern times, *jihad* can be pursued according to two different interpretations: either as the way of striving towards a good life in consistence with the faith (the greater *jihad*), or the way to struggle against the enemies of Islam (the lesser *jihad*) in a holy war.[326] The holy war in its turn can be either offensive, i.e. for the purpose of spreading the faith or expanding the (Muslim) state or defensive, i.e. in response to attacks by invaders (such as the Crusaders around 900 years ago).[327] According to a majority of Islamic scholars it is incumbent to all Muslims to wage jihad against outside forces invading Muslim territories for the sake of protection of the faithful as well as for the survival of the global Muslim community (the *Ummah*).[328] In the terms of Islamic law, offensive *jihad* can only be declared by a legitimate religious-political authority, while the defensive *jihad* needs no authorisation.

To comprehend the doctrine of offensive *jihad* it is first important to understand the division of the world by Muslim jurists into different parts according to where Islam was in force and where it was not. Classical Islamic law divides the world into three parts: the territories under the

[324] RANSTORP 2019, p. 7.
[325] RANSTORP, 2019. p. 7.
[326] MISKEL, Jim. F. (2010): Terrorism. In BIRX, James H. (ed): *21st Century Anthropology*. California, SAGE Publication, Inc, 2010, pp. 1007-1015, p. 1011.
[327] MISKEL 2010, p. 1011.
[328] WIKTOROWICZ, Quintan (2005): A genealogy of Radical Islam. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:2. 2005, pp. 75-97, p. 83.

jurisdiction of Islam (*dar al-Islam)*, the war zones (*dar al-Harb)* and the land of infidelity, with which a temporary truce can be made (*dar al-Sulh)*. Although this tripartite division is not mentioned in the *Qur'an* or in sacred tradition, it probably became part of political practice during the 8th century.[329] The lives, property and religious autonomy of the monotheistic communities living under the authority of *Dar al-Islam,* i.e., Islam, are guaranteed as long as they do not challenge the Muslim leadership and pay the ration (*jizya*) or land tax (*kharaj*). *Dar al-Harb* refers to areas where Islamic law is not yet in force. The view of religious jurists has been that such areas should be subjected to jihad and, if possible, to peaceful means, if not, to the extension of the territory of *dar al-Islam by* force – by compelling surrender or subjugation. An intermediate category is the *dar al-Sulh*, the area of truce, which can be concluded for ten years under the 628 Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, which paused the Prophet's war with the Meccans. The treaty is considered to be a landmark in Islamic history, as not only did it pave the way for official recognition of the first Islamic state (under the leadership of Prophet Muhammed), but it also meant an official recognition of the Muslims who hence became equally allowed to make alliances with other tribes.[330] This division of the world is by no means a thing of the past, already at the end of the 1980's Watt predicted that "[i]n so far as traditional Islam grows in strength it could come into the forefront of world politics".[331] In this regard Speidl notes that the juxtaposition of *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-Harb* disappeared from the discourse in the post-World War II period until it was revived by al-Qaeda and the self-proclaimed Islamic State.[332]

Today, the majority of religious scholars do not classify areas where Muslims are free to practice their religion as *dar al-Harb*, but at the same time, there is no consensus on whether the area that can be classified *as dar al-Islam* necessarily is under Muslim political jurisdiction or whether it is sufficient for Muslim communities to be able to operate under the rules of Islamic religious law.[333] According to classical Islamic law, the natural state of affairs between Islam and the land of infidelity is war, with peace only possible in exceptional cases, when there is a particular threat or pressure on the Muslim community. Apart from medieval jurists, some

[329] HASHMI, H. Sohail (2007): *Abodes of Islam, war, and truce; diplomacy; rebellion*, in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, pp. 11-12.
[330] FARMAN, Mursal – YUCEL, Salih (2023): Rereading the Hudaybiyya Treaty: With Special Reference to Ibn ʿUmar's Role in *Fitan*. *Religions*. 2023; 14(5):666. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050666 (accessed on 1 August 2023).
[331] WATT, Montgomery William (1988): *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*. London, Routledge, 1988, p. 4.
[332] SPEIDL, Bianka (2016): The ideology of the 'Islamic State'. In: BESENYŐ *et al*: *Islamic State Terrorism 2.0*. Budapest, Kossuth, 2016, p. 125.
[333] SPEIDL 2016, p. 123.

religious jurists of the 20th and 21st centuries also hold this belief.[334] Some scholars also argue that this division is of permanent character. In this regard Lewis notes that

> „[t]he basis of the obligation of *jihad* is the universality of the Muslim revelation. God's word and God's message are for all mankind; it is the duty of those who have accepted them to strive (*jahada*) unceasingly to convert or at least to subjugate those who have not. This obligation is without limit of time or space. It must continue until the whole of the world has either accepted the Islamic faith or submitted to the power of the Islamic state. Until that happens, the world is divided into two: the House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*), where Muslims rule and the law of Islam prevails; and the House of War (*dar al-Harb*) comprising the rest of the world. Between the two there is a *morally necessary, legally and religiously obligatory* state of war, until the final and inevitable triumph of Islam over unbelief".

Based on the above it becomes clear that in the view of the Salafi-Jihadis, there is an individual obligation for every Muslim to oppose apostate regimes and armed jihad must be conducted to defend Muslims and to advance *dar al-Islam*. In their view Europe is *dar al-Harb*, which is also the pretext employed by the Islamic State, who emphasise how it is impossible to live an Islamic life in *dar al-Harb* (meaning the West, as well as anywhere else that is not governed by themselves).[335] Once *dar al-Harb* is targeted, no distinction between civilian or military targets is made, permitting the killing of civilians in *dar al-Harb* because they are compliant with the decisions and behaviours of the rulers in their countries.[336] This permittivity and justification is clearly outlined in the speech of al-'Adnani, late spokesperson of the Islamic State in May 2016 that is believed to have significantly contributed to the increase in jihadist-inspired attacks across the European Union the same year (as well as the following one):

> "[W]e address the soldiers of the caliphate and its supporters in Europe and America. You, the slaves of God, the monotheists, if Taghut prevents you from migration, then

[334] MARCH 2009, pp. 42-43. The classical and modern sources cited by March are Abū Zakariyyāʾ al-Nawawī (d. Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma (d. 683/1223), *al-Mughnī,* Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1995. 12:763-4. Ḥalīma "al-Ṭarṭūsī", "Man dakhala diyār ghayr al-muslimīn"; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ṣāliḥ al-Jarbūʿ, "Al-taʾsīl li-mashrūʿiyyat ma ḥasala li-Amrīka min tadmīr" (http://alansar.hopto.org/jar/); and Sayyid QUṬB, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1979. 3:1582.

[335] As presented for instance in the video titled „Honour is in jihad", where a fighter by the name of Salahudin al-Bosni addresses Muslims living in the West. al-Hayat Media Center, 4 June 2015

[336] Abu Mohammed AL-'ADNANI's speech, op. cit.

> open the door for Jihad and target them. The least you can do in their homeland is way more cherished to us. When you dream of migrating to our land, we wish we were in your place in order to torture and terrorise the Crusaders so that a neighbour fears his other neighbour. If any of you feels incapable, then do not underestimate even throwing a stone at a Crusader in his own homeland. Do not underestimate any action as the benefit is great for Jihadis while the pain that the pagans suffer is huge. We were told that some of you cannot do anything because of their inability to reach military targets and because they feel embarrassed to target what so called civilians. You have to know that there is no immunity for blood in the homeland of Crusaders. In that land there are no civilians and there is no space here to detail the evidence. The least of these proofs is dealing with them in kind. Their planes do not differentiate between an armed and unarmed man nor do they differentiate between a man and a wife. Targeting civilians is cherished by us as it is painful and deterring. Get ready, you monotheists, to gain the great reward or martyrdom in Ramadan."[337]

Further, the so-called Islamic State also maintains that Muslims who reside in *dar al-Harb* are under the control of non-Muslims and as a result, are living in a dishonourable manner, from which only the *hijra* and travelling to a land where they can freely practise their religion is presented as "wiping away all past sins" and "purification".[338] A further part of the jihadi Salafist agenda is to extend the rule of Islam globally. Bockstette describes this self-proclaimed goal as "[t]o reinvigorate the Islamic *Ummah* and to mobilize the Muslim community in a revolutionary transformation of the Muslim world population in confrontation with the international order spearheaded by Western society. They strive toward the creation of a new worldwide Islamic caliphate, which jihad terrorists widely consider the ideal Islamic form of government representing the political unity and leadership of the Muslim world. These goals and underlying root causes are the factors and circumstances that drive the *jihad* terrorists."[339]

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[337] Abu Mohammed al-'ADNANI in a voiced letter produced by al-Furqan for media production, one of the main and oldest media wings of IS. The speech was made in May 2016.

[338] 'The hijrah of Umm Sulaym al-Muhajirah', *Rumiyah*, Issue 13, 9 September 2017, 'Hijrah and forgiveness', *Dabiq*, Issue 3, 29 August 2014

[339] BOCKSTETTE, Carsten (2008): *Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication Management Techniques*. Geroge C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, December 2008, Number 020. Available at: https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/jihadist-terrorist-use-strategic-communication-management-techniques-0 (accessed on 1 May 2017).

This definition perfectly resonates with the statement of the founder of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (that later became the Islamic State), Abu Musab-al Zarqawi:

> "[o]ur political agenda [...] is that of the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him), I have been sent with the sword, between the hands of the hour, until Allah is worshiped alone (...) this is what determines our political goal. We fight in the way of Allah, until the law of Allah is implemented, and the first step is to expel the enemy, then establish the Islamic state, then we set forth to conquer the lands of Muslims to return them back to us, then after that, we fight the kuffar (disbelievers) until they accept one of the three. I have been sent with the sword, between the hands of the hour; this is our political agenda."[340]

4.3. JIHADISM

The term jihadism refers mainly to Sunni Muslim militant ideologies and movements that preach the struggle "in the way of Allah", in defence of Muslims and for the restoration of the Caliphate. Since there is no structural hierarchy in Sunni Islam, there is no ideological supreme authority whose pronouncements are universally authoritative.[341] Therefore, the different religious tendencies and their followers have different answers to the questions of *jihad*.[342] In this regard, Maher argues that while al-Qaeda was keen on positioning itself within the tradition of religious scholarship, the Islamic State did not demonstrate the desire to achieve the same deep-rooted religious scholarship, but – in the words of Maher – rather connected it to the battlefield (which is also well illustrated by late IS spokesperson al-'Adnani's above cited statement regarding the targeting of civilians).[343]

[340] „Dialogue With Sheikh Abu Musab AI-Zarqawi, a never before published interview, has been released by Al-Furcian Foundation for Media Production, the official publisher of media for the Islamic State of Iraq", 28 December 2006. Available at: https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/4c2a34da-81ca-43f1-a8db-8330c25738e7/content (accessed on 1 May 2017)

[341] BRIGNONE, Michele (2017): *Religious Authorities in Islam - Who speaks for Muslims*. Oasis, 2017.03.04. Available at: https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/religious-authorities-islam (accessed on 15 July 2022).

[342] NESSER 2000, p. 174.

[343] MAHER, Shiraz (2016): *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

4.3.1. The jihadist interpretation of Europe

As discussed above, living among "infidels" remains a contentious issue in fundamentalist and jihadist circles. Al-Qaeda followers generally agree that it is possible to live in the land of infidelity if the security of Muslims is guaranteed, i.e., there is a mutual security treaty between Muslims and the host country, but this is only acceptable if Muslims are still weak and unprepared to fight. This can be considered a state of truce, which should not last longer than ten years.[344]

Regarding the activities of European Islamist groups, Nesser argues that these can be divided into three phases, the first phase (the era of classical *jihad*) lasting until the mid-1990s.[345] During this period, local and international groups with specific political aims were active, seeking to bring about political change in a Muslim country or to end the foreign occupation of a country. The main debate during this period was about whether it was permissible to kill Muslims in local conflicts. In the second phase, from the mid-1990s until the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the struggle for local and global goals was not clearly distinguished in radical Islamist circles. The third phase, which began with the invasion of Iraq (and continues today), is characterised by an ideological unification, whereby there is an acceptance of al-Qaeda's call for a global jihad, in which European states are considered legitimate and priority targets. From religious law point of view, it was the two latter phases that presented a dilemma regarding the justifiability of attacks against non-Muslim host states. It is in this context that the debates unfolding around the conditions of compliance with the mutual security treaties mentioned above have become of particular importance.

The era of classical jihad in Europe

The classical jihad was typical of the first period, up to 1995. In the 1980's, followers of the radical Islamist views of Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) made their way from all over the Arab world to Europe, fleeing the persecuting security services of the secular dictatorships in their respective countries. The radical Islam movement has most likely been influenced to a large extent by Sayyid Qutb's ideas. In his book *Milestones* he criticises modernism in the West, especially the 1960s socialist and secular nationalist movements. These were viewed as disrespectful of Islamic law, the Islamic state, and the Muslim community. According to Qutb,

[344] NESSER 2000, pp. 175-176.
[345] NESSER 2000, pp. 175-176.

Muslim communities were in a "Godless Ignorance" (*Jahiliyya*) that needed to be reversed or retaken by Islam. He stressed the significance of offensive jihad to drive *Jahiliyya* out of the Islamic homeland – as well as from the rest of the globe.

Qutb was a significant source of inspiration for Islamist extremism from the 1970s and onward. Followers of his radical views made their way from all over the Arab world to Europe by persons fleeing the persecuting security services of the secular dictatorships in their home countries. As the chief ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb's ideas arrived to Europe through the settlement and expansion of Muslim Brotherhood in the host societies of Muslim diaspora.[346] In order to build bases from which Muslims may prepare for war (*fard ayn jihad)* against their governments, much like the Prophet and his Companions in Medina, Qutb urged Muslims to leave Muslim societies not controlled by Islamic law (i.e. to undertake *hijra)*. Nesser notes in this regard that from this ideological point of view many jihadists seem to view Europe as the contemporary Medina, a base where they may prepare for violent Islamisation "for a vanguard of true believers seeking to reestablish the Caliphate".[347] While in Europe, these persons joined networks that supported insurgents organising in various parts of the Arab world against regimes aligned with the West. These included the Afghan Talibs fighting the Soviets, the Bosnian, Chechen and Kashmiri Islamists, and the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA).[348]

Up until the time when al-Qaeda declared jihad against Jews and crusaders in 1998, European radical Islamists were primarily supporting jihad in the Muslim world. However, there were disagreements within the groups, particularly over the persecution and killing of Muslims of other denomination as well as over the distribution of financial resources. Sharp conflicts also erupted between militants such as the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front and the more universalist Muslim Brotherhood.[349]

The ideological centre of radical Islamists in Europe was the Finsbury Park Mosque in London. In the 1990s, leading figures of the movement, such as Abu Qatada (1959-), urged support for separatists in the Middle East and Chechnya, claiming that the Muslim land was ruled by apostates and that their liberation took precedence over the "[f]ight against the polytheists and the People of the Book". Following the 2001 September 11 attacks, Qatada publicly expressed

[346] NESSER 2000, p. 182.
[347] NESSER 2000, p. 182.
[348] NESSER 2000, p. 182.
[349] NESSER 2000, p. 180.

enthusiastic support for bin Laden's strategy, but often criticised al-Qaeda among his immediate associates.[350] One of Qatada's disciples, Abu Hamza (1958-), was – like his master – a supporter of classical *jihad*, particularly in Algeria and Bosnia. During Abu Hamza's reign, Finsbury Park mosque drew hundreds of Muslims from all over the United Kingdom, many of whom were eager to join the violent jihad as soon as they arrived to the building.[351] Finsbury Park is an excellent example of how a mosque became the hotspots for radicalised persons, who intentionally made their way there to connect with like-minded people or to engage in violent extremism. In other words, individuals who had already made the decision to join the ranks of militant Islamism knew where to go.[352] The third influential speaker, Syrian-born Omar Bakri Muhammad (1958-), who himself was among those fleeing from the home country for fear of prosecution by the authorities for his ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, moved to the United Kingdom, where he founded the London branch of the Hizb ut-Tahrir and eventually the radical Islamist organisation known as the al-Muhajiroun ("The Immigrants").[353] Bakri called primarily for the liberation of Kashmir and an Islamic revolution in Pakistan[354], but also called for *jihad* against the Assad regime in Syria.

The second era, the era of global jihadist ideology in Europe

The second phase, in which the ideology of global *jihad* took hold in Europe, was gradual. Qatada, Hamza and Bakri celebrated the 9/11 attacks, but had reservations about the terrorist acts carried out in Western countries.[355] During this period, European Islamists tried to remain loyal to both local uprisings and al-Qaeda's global war. There seems to have been constant debate about who the main enemy was and how to fight it, an example of this internal conflict is illustrated by how the members of the so-called "Frankfurt cell" of Algerian origin, who wanted to bomb a Christmas market in Strasbourg, clashed with the cell's leadership, who instead ordered attacks on American and Israeli targets.

[350] NESSER 2000, p. 180.
[351] O'NEILL, Sean – McGRORY, Daniel (2006): *The Suicide Factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque*. London, Harper, 2006, pp. 115-16.
[352] O'NEILL – McGRORY 2006, pp. 115-16
[353] ISSA, Ellie (2012): *A Profile of Syrian Jihadist Omar Bakri Muhammad*. Jamestown Foundation Volume: 3 Issue: 12. Available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/50ee8ff12.html (accessed on 16 May 2018).
[354] NESSER 2000, p. 181.
[355] NESSER 2000, p. 181.

An analysis of the motives places the jihadist cells and networks operating in this period on the scale of classical and global jihad. When a group planned an attack on US and Israeli interests in Europe, citing the global war against Islam as its justification, it was presumed to be linked to al-Qaeda. On the other hand, if an Algerian terrorist cell bombed Paris and claimed to have done so against French political interference in Algeria, it was following the principles of classical jihad.[356] The third period, which continues today, has seen the rise of global jihad in Europe and has its roots in 1998. The transition between the second and third phases was also gradual and only became definitive after the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Regarding the ideologues of global jihad in the case of the European militant Islamists, the above stated can be summarised as follows:

1. writings of medieval and contemporary Middle Eastern Salafi thinkers;
2. statements by al-Qaeda leaders;
3. sermons, writings, video and audio recordings of radical speakers in Europe. The material was available in three different ways: in radical mosques and religious self-education circles in Europe; in *madrasah*s and training camps in Afghanistan or Pakistan; and on websites and Internet chat forums. The focus of interest has been on justifying *jihad* and suicide bombings, attacks on prominent enemies such as the United States, Israel and their allies, certain military tactics such as the use of weapons of mass destruction, and the ostracism and murder of other Muslims.[357]

The third era: global jihad against Europe

In a 1999 speech in London by Abu Hamza, the above-mentioned leading figure of European radical Islamists, there already is a strong indication that the jihadists' attention has turned to Europe. Hamza, in the presence of Islamists from Sweden, France and Germany, explained that it was forbidden to live among the infidels and that Muslims should prepare to leave. Hamza said that the primary responsibility of Islamists in Europe was to ensure the safety of themselves and their families, to fulfil the obligation of Islamic missionary service, to prepare for jihad and

[356] NESSER 2000, p. 176.
[357] NESSER 2000, p. 178.

to travel to war zones.[358] In the period between the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, jihadist ideologues declared Europe as enemy territory (*dar al-Harb*) and called for attacks on the continent. The networks that emerged in the second phase of European jihadism began to plan, prepare and carry out attacks in European countries allied with the United States in the name of global Islam.

However, Europe as a collective concept was not in al-Qaeda's vocabulary until 2004. This changed in April 2004 with Bin Laden's speech entitled "First Letter to the Peoples of Europe". The speech was delivered less than a month after the Madrid bombing. In it, the al-Qaeda leader stated that the Madrid attack was in retaliation for European intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bin Laden offered a ceasefire to 'neighbours north of the Mediterranean' on condition that the people of Europe put pressure on their governments to end the operations within three months. The ceasefire was to take effect when the last European soldier left Muslim-inhabited areas. Following the April open letter, al-Qaeda's leadership increasingly treated Europe as a single entity, and there may well still have been countries designated as priority targets.[359] The arguments included not only the involvement in the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also grievances against Muslims in Europe, such as the ban on the *hijab* and the Muhammad cartoons. In the arguments and interrogation transcripts following the invasion of Iraq, al-Qaeda's propaganda that Europe was waging a crusade against Islam became a recurrent element.[360] The accusations were directed primarily against France, Britain and Italy, with the French and British also referring to recent events such as the intervention in Algeria and involvement in the first Gulf War. After European countries sent troops to Afghanistan, al-Qaeda made increasingly specific threats against some European countries, such as Germany and France.[361]

In February 2004, Ayman al-Zawahiri also described the expulsion of the *hijab* from French schools as an act of hostility, and considered it to be tantamount to the burning of villages in Afghanistan, the house demolitions and murder of children in Palestine, and the pillaging of Iraq.[362] On the part of European jihadists, Omar Bakri Muhammad said that the arrest of large numbers of Muslim citizens and the intervention in conflicts in Muslim areas made Europe a

[358] NESSER 2000, p. 174-175.
[359] NESSER 2000, p. 186.
[360] NESSER 2000, p. 185.
[361] NESSER 2000, p. 186.
[362] NESSER 2000, p. 186.

place where Muslims were no longer safe and justified *jihad*. In making this argument, he defined terrorism as a necessity.[363]

A partly new chapter in European jihadism has been opened by the so-called Islamic State. Their ideology is based on the reasoning of al-Qaeda, but it is a more radical version of it, which also considers only one way of practising Islam, sanctioned by them, to be valid and rejects all religious practices outside it. The struggle against these is taken for granted by both Muslims and non-Muslim monotheists.

4.4. THE INTERPRETATION OF JIHAD AND JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS

4.4.1. Violence against civilians

One of the justifications for the use of violence against civilians in the discourse of Salafi-jihadist terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State is the one of *jihad*, being one of the most heavily debated notions not only in contemporary terrorism research but also among the general public in the context of Jihadist-inspired attacks against the West. As a result of the lack of a clear hierarchy among the religious scholars today, jihad has been authorised by a wide range a religious leaders for a wide range of purposes,[364] including resistance, liberation and terrorist organisations alike to justify their causes and to recruit followers.[365]

Prophetic tradition defines jihad as follows: *"[I] asked the Prophet: What is jihad? And he said it is fighting against the unbelievers whenever you meet them".*[366] From this tradition, jurists have inferred the following normative definition for jihad: *"[f]ight with a sword against the unbelievers until they convert to Islam or pay tribute to the expression of humility in the form of taxes".*[367] In the 7th century, *jihad* targeted pagan Arab tribes, and was later extended to Jews

[363] NESSER 2000, p. 187.
[364] MISKEL 2010, p. 1011.
[365] ESPOSITO 2002, p. 24.
[366] Ism. b. Isḥ. al-Jahḍamī, *Juz' fīhi min aḥādīth al-imām Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyyānī*. Sulaymān ibn ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz al-ʻArīnī (ed.), al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1998, p.37. Quoted in BELHAJ, A. et. al. (2017): Radical Islamism and 21st Century Terrorism. *Budapest Report on Christian Persecution*. 2017, pp. 91-100, p. 97.
[367] M. b. A. Ibn Rushd, al-Muqaddimāt al-mumahhidāt. M. Ḥajjī (ed.), Beyrut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988, vol 1, p. 369. Quoted in BELHAJ, A. *et al* 2017, p. 97.

and Christians living on the Arabian Peninsula and its neighbouring territories. This was not just a religious war; it was equally about goods and territories.[368]

The interpretation of *jihad* as a religious duty and moral obligation for every Muslim became prevalent during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan when jihadis relied extensively on the works of medieval scholars such as Ibn Talmiyya and Ibn Nuhaas al-Demyati, trying to resurrect the idea of active participation in the defensive *jihad,* which was later extended by scholars tied to al-Qaeda to justify attacks against the United States.[369] For this, however, it needed to be proven that the United States in fact is an occupying force, for which the American troops in Saudi Arabia (authorised by the Saudi King Fahd to repel Saddam Hussein) served as an argument. The defensive argument was further stressed by Osama bin Laden in an interview in 1998, in which he claimed that "[w]e ourselves are the target of killings, destruction, and atrocities. We are only defending ourselves. This is a defensive *jihad*. We want to defend our people and our land. That is why we say, if we don't get security, the Americans, too, would not get security. This is the simple formula that even an American child can understand. Live and let live."[370]

Hence, in the context of terrorist attacks against Western targets the interpretation of defensive holy war is the most commonly used, and violence against civilians is justified with a doctrine of "proportional response", i.e. when the non-Muslims kill Muslim civilians it becomes permissible to attack their civilians in return.[371] Among the conditions to kill civilians the most cited conditions in the justification of al-Qaeda was that the enemy had killed Muslim civilian on purpose and that civilians had assisted the enemy in "[d]eed, word or mind".[372]

This type of argument is frequently used by the Islamic State as well: the alleged mistreatment of Muslims, where the non-military is seen as complicit and hence, legitimate targets for acts of violence. In the rhetoric of IS, the term "Crusaders" is often used as an instrument to describe the West and its actions, revoking the above mentioned defensive war for the protection of Islam.[373] The term is frequently used in their online propaganda magazine, public statements, videos, relentlessly aiming to maintain the "us-and-them" worldview, thereby portraying Islam

[368] BELHAJ A. et. al. 2017, p. 98.
[369] WIKTOROWICZ 2005, pp. 83-84.
[370] As quoted in ESPOSITO 2002, p. 24.
[371] WIKTOROWICZ 2005, p. 89.
[372] WIKTOROWICZ 2005, p. 89.
[373] GOUTHAM 2016

as constantly being under threat and humiliation. As part of the defensive war against this proclaimed enemy the "crusade civilians" are seen as legitimate targets through association with the governments they elected,[374] but also as part of the retaliation for "[t]heir planes do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, man or woman".[375] Since 2016 – coinciding with the losses on the ground –, the Islamic State has specifically called upon attacks against civilian targets in Europe as well as in the United States. The late spokesperson al-'Adnani (killed in an air strike in May 2016) proclaimed in the Turkish version of their magazine *Konstantiniyye* that "[b]lood has no value in the countries of the crusaders and that there are no innocents there".[376] Another argument based on the principle of lex talionis (retaliation) is found in *Dabiq* 4, in which the Islamic State calls for terrorist attacks in the West – including civilians:

> "[I]f you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be".[377]

The attack in May 2017 on the Manchester Arena (described further in the subsequent chapter) horrified many, as several of the victims were children, and yet it was not the first time that Islamist extremists targeted children.[378] The justification of attacks against children is also to be found in the argument accentuated already by al-Qaeda according to which tactics prohibited for Muslims become legitimate if the enemy uses the very same.[379] "[I]t is allowed for Muslims to kill protected ones among unbelievers as an act of reciprocity. If the unbelievers have targeted

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[374] GOUTHAM 2016

[375] Statement by Abu Muhammed AL-'ADNANI in May 2016 calling for attacks on military and civilian targets in the West. Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamicstate-idUSKCN0YC0OG (accessed on 20 June 2017).

[376] BULUT, Uzuy (2016): Islamic State Calls for Attacks on Civilians in Europe and America". *Clarion Project*. 21 August 2016. Available at: https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-calls-attacks-civilians-europe-and-america/ (accessed on 20 June 2017).

[377] Al Hayat Media Center (2014): *Dabiq Issue 4: The Failed Crusade*. 2014 October 11.

[378] The most infamous of these attacks is the one on the school of Beslan in 2004. Other examples: http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/23/us/manchester-terror-other-children-attacks-worldwide/index.html, accessed on 20 June 2017.

[379] WIKTOROWICZ 2005, p. 90.

Muslim women, children, and elderly, it is permissible for Muslims to respond in kind and kill those similar to those whom the unbelievers killed."[380]

4.4.2. Hostility against Christians

Although the Christian minority has been a target of the followers of the so-called Islamic State for a long time, their attacks became more severe because of their losses in Syria, Iraq, Libya and the Sinai. Soliman describes these repeated setbacks as catalysts for the terrorist organisation to launch a series of attacks against Christian targets, such as the Petrine Church in Cairo and the Christmas market outside the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin.[381]

As already described above, a part of the militant Islamist narrative (including the one of IS) relies on the notion of Islam being oppressed and defenceless Muslims continuously being targeted by the invading West, it is in their interest to create and maintain a conflict between Islam and Christianity. The underlying ideology is explained more in detail in some of the English-language propaganda magazines, *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* nr 15 features a long article ("Break the Cross") on the discrepancies of Christian doctrine to reach out to – and convert – Christian readers. To emphasise this even more, the number also contains stories of conversions (both male and female) with the purpose of inspiring and encouraging others to convert to Islam.[382] Further, the issue portrays Western women have lost morality and decency, and Western men as having have lost religiosity, thus not only is present Christianity depicted as a false religion, but neither are modern Westerners embracing any of the good values of Christianity.[383]

Two months after publishing *Dabiq* 15, IS issued a new journal entitled *Rumiyah* in English, French, German, Russian, Turkish, Pashto, and Uyghur.[384] *Rumiyah* means Rome in Arabic and refers to the tradition that the Prophet promised Muslims the arrival of Rome after the occupation of Constantinople. The name change was most probably due to the loss of the city of Dabiq in a Tukish-led offense in October 2016, but could also be understood as a signal that

[380] „Why we fight America", Al Qaeda spokesperson explains September 11, as quoted in WIKTOROWICZ 2005, p. 90

[381] SOLIMAN, Mohammed (2017): *From Cairo to Berlin: Why is ISIS Targeting Christians?* Policy Analysis, Washington Institute, 2017.03.17. Available at: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/2996/en (accessed on 1 August 2022).

[382] *Dabiq* nr 15, 64-69; 36-39.

[383] *Dabiq* nr 15, 25

[384] *Rumiyah* 1

the operations carried out by IS would increasingly shift from inside the "Caliphate" to the outside, the West. Just like *Dabiq* 15, the central message of *Rumiyah 1* is also an emphasis on the war waged by the Islamic State against the West (and Russia), which is defined as a religious war between Islam and Christianity. Christians are consequently mentioned as "Crusaders" throughout the magazine, not limited to only include Westerners, but basically all countries of the world. Current events are interpreted as a crusade against Islam, propagating and justifying against the enemies of Islam, hence an article entitled "[T]he Kafir's blood is *halal* for you, so shed it" encourages the killing of civilians by citing Islamic law allowing the murder of anyone living outside the jurisdiction of Islam in the land of unbelief (*dar-al-Kufr*).

4.5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

As a complement to previous chapters outlining conceptual models of violent radicalisation and pertinent theories relevant to understand both cognitive as well as behavioural radicalisation, present chapter has sought to explain the importance of the religious-affiliated component of the radicalisation process. Through the overview over the pertinent parts of Islamic law, relevant scholars, source documents and narratives important to the understanding of the phenomenon of radicalisation into jihadist-inspired acts of crime I argue that the religious component is crucial.

Using the outline of the central pillars of Jihadi Salafism as articulated by Maher while revising some of the main propaganda magazines of the IS targeting a global audience, I have found robust support for the question of the role of the religious component as an important factor of jihadist radicalisation. Jihadi Salafism use Islamic language and imagery to further their cause; hence they draw from the same theological sources that guide the lives and activities of more than a billion other Muslims (despite only choosing those aspects of the Islamic tradition that further their specific goals). Because of this, it is exceptionally challenging and dangerous for moderate Muslims, let alone non-Muslims, to confront jihadi Salafists without running the risk of being accused of opposing all of Islam.[385]

[385] MOGHADAM, Assaf (2018): *The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology*. CTC Sentinel, Vol. 1, Issue 3, February 2008. Available at: https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss3-Art5.pdf (accessed on 16 March 2017).

As the subsequent chapter – examining some of the profiles behind jihadist-inspired acts of terror in Europe between 2014 and 2020 will demonstrate, it is difficult to draw a direct correlation between the underlying Salafi-jihadist ideology and the act of terror due to the lack of primary resource (i.e., the terrorist himself). Nevertheless, the cognitive and behavioural changes in the persons' lives observed as well as the *modus operandi* in which many of the attacks where carries out resonates very well with the narrative of militant Islamist organisations adhering to a Salafi-jihadist ideology – such as the so-called Islamic State. Connecting the underlying religious-affiliated narrative of Salafi-jihadism to the main target group of this type of radicalisation and recruitment, Kepel stated that „[t]hey are against European democracy and would rather build citadels of jihad within Europe out of which to reach out not only to the young, deprived people of Muslim descent who live in European suburbs, but also to reach out to what is happening in the Middle East. And this is the major battle".[386] This quote summarises the importance of not only recognising the power of the religious-affiliated component in the process of radicalisation as presented through the narrative of Salafi-jihadism, but also linking itt o the question of how these narratives try to capitalise about young Muslims throughout Europe.

Linking the narratives of jihadi Salafism to the previous chapter it becomes clear that the essence of these has empirically proven to be important causal factors in the process of violent radicalisation. One of the most illustrative proofs of this linkage is the way the narrative of humiliation and constant subjugation of the Muslim world by „the West" has had a strong psychological resonance among certain members of the target group of the Jihadi Salafists. They rather feel loyalty towards a perceived global Muslim community than the states they live in, are citizens of and speak the language of.

[386] Gilles KEPEL during an interview on Frontline, published 25 January 2005. Available at: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/interviews/kepel.html (accessed on 13 February 2017).

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY: PROFILES OF JIHADIST INSPIRED TERRORISTS IN EUROPE 2014-2020

The following chapter will give a brief description and analysis of some of the most recent Jihadist-inspired terrorists committing completed acts of terrorism in Europe as well as foreign terrorist fighters from Europe between 2014 and 2020. Piecing together their profiles, the information gathered is solely retrieved from open sources, including court records, online communications provided by the terrorist offenders, media profiles, and interviews with family members, where available. Also, the demographic data of the profiles examined below has been taken into account.

In terms of analysis, the most significant methodological dilemma when addressing the radicalisation process of individuals is the lack of primary sources (i.e., the jihadists themselves). The chapter attempts to map out common root causes and motivational factors in the radicalisation process according to the conceptual models of radicalisation into violent extremism and terrorism as presented in the previous chapters. Some of the findings in this chapter have been published in two separate publications[387] and is especially recommended for law enforcement agencies, policymakers and all professionals and frontline worker who in their daily work may encounter persons susceptible to violent radicalisation.

The aim of exploring the background of the terrorist profiles and their potential pathways to radicalisation is to trace the religious component in every case (where it is possible with the help of open sources). With this method of process-tracing, changes in religious identification or behaviour become the most significant patterns of observation. According to Precht,[388] this transformation can be observed through the following three steps (where number 3 falls outside the scope of this research):

1. from no specific faith or religious observance to a religious identity;

[387] HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2017): Radicalisation into Salafi Jihadism – Some Patterns and Profiles in Europe between 2015-2017. *Defence Review*, Special Issue 2017/I. and HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2018): Returning Forreign Terrorist Fighters, Their Wives and Children, *National Security Review*, Issue 2. 2018, pp. 4-32.

[388] PRECHT 2007, p. 35.

2. from a normal religious observance to a more radical interpretation of religion;

3. a shift from one faith to another (e.g., from Christianity to Islam).

Although individual and unique circumstances play a significant role in this change process, the change frequently begins with a frustration and dissatisfaction regarding the own circumstances, world events or politics. In search for a cause and an identity, militant Islamism frequently provides both. According to Precht's process-tracing model, some people can be gradually shedding their previous identities and starting to develop a new one based on religion, which is usually a more action-oriented Islam connected to the ideals of radical Islamism, rather than the Islam of their parents.[389] The new identity may eventually also take the shape of frequent visits to the mosque, a potentially new appearance and new peer groups.

Process tracing is a qualitative research method in which particular events, processes, or phenomena are tracked across time to see how they grow and progress, hence, when evaluating patterns of radicalisation, process tracing is a useful methodological tool. This method allows researchers to investigate causal linkages between different elements that contribute to radicalisation, and it may offer a complex and situation-specific explanation of radicalisation. Nevertheless, as noted in the introductory chapter under methodological limits, the use of this process-tracing is contingent upon – among others – data accessibility. The information presented in the current chapter is based on open sources regarding the background the persons who have completed jihadist-inspired terrorist attacks in the European Union between 2014 and 2020. The selection of the attackers is based on the fact that significantly more information is found related to perpetrators of completed attacks, in comparison to individuals behind terrorist plots that were disrupted.

The time frame selected is in line with the proclamation of the so-called Caliphate by the self-proclaimed Islamic State in 2014, its call to the terrorist organisation's sympathisers to commit attacks against the West from 2015 and onwards as well as with the efforts of the international coalition against the Islamic State to defeat the organisation in Syria and Iraq. By the end of 2017, IS had lost 95 per cent of its territory, including the two biggest cities Mosul (the second largest city in Iraq) and its nominal capital Raqqa (in northern Syria). Despite the losses on the ground, the terrorist organisation was still inspiring and carrying out attacks across the globe –

[389] PRECHT 2007, p. 35.

including in Europe. The last Jihadist-inspired attack included in this dissertation is the attack carried out by a sympathiser of the Islamic State in Vienna, Austria in November 2020.

6.1. 2014

In its Terrorism Trend and Situation Report (TE-SAT) regarding 2014 Europol noted that EU citizens and residents travelling to Syria, Iraq and Mali for example, to fight alongside extremist groups, continued to be of major concern to all Member States.[390] This year the EU experienced its first attack carried out by a returnee from Syria, underlining the threat posed by militant Islamists returning to Europe after having fought on the battlefield alongside the Islamic State. Europol added that in addition, some EU-based would-be jihadists, either unable or unwilling to travel to the conflict zones, would also continue to pose a threat.[391]

6.1.1 Mehdi Nemmouche (May 2014, Brussels)

On 24 May 2014 a French national of Algerian descent entered the Jewish Museum in Brussels, Belgium, where he shot and killed four people using a revolver and a Kalashnikov rifle. Investigation revealed that he had spent more than a year in Syria and had close links to the Islamic State. Upon his arrest in Marseille (France) six days after the attack, he was found in possession of the rifle (wrapped in a sheet with 'Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant' inscribed on it in Arabic), the revolver, ammunition, a gas mask, a laptop computer, a video camera and a recording, in which he appeared to claim responsibility for the attack, according to Europol.[392] Five further arrests took place in Marseille in December 2014 in relation to this event.

Mehdi Nemmouche was born in Roubaix (northern France), once home to a blooming textile factory and the centre of French socialism, now among the poorest towns in the country and a hub for immigrants mainly from North Africa identified as one of the so-called 'high-risk-areas' battling with issues such as unemployment, juvenile delinquency, insecurity, mass immigration and housing unfit for habitation.[393] His father was a shopkeeper, who refused to recognise

[390] EUROPOL: *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2015*. Europol. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/p_europol_tsat15_09jun15_low-rev.pdf (accessed on 3 February 2016).
[391] EUROPOL 2015, p. 5.
[392] EUROPOL 2015, p. 18.
[393] WIEVIORKA, Michel (2007): *The Lure of Anti-Semitism: Hatred of Jews in Present-Day France*. Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. 94.

Nemmouche as a son, and his mother allegedly suffered from depression.[394] As the social authorities would deem his mother unfit to raise her son, aged only 3 months Nemmouche would grow up in a foster family in the northern industrial city of Lille as the only Muslim child. He moved to his to his grandmother at the age of 17 and apparently never had contact ever again with his foster family.[395] He committed his first known crime at the age of 13 and continued to get involved in petty crime.[396] During the years to come he was convicted for violence (for which he spent two months in jail), driving without a licence and for rebellion.[397] He was also engaged in heavier criminal activities including armed robbery, resulting in multiple arrests and more time in prison. He was released in December 2012 after having served five-year sentence.[398] Allegedly associating with Islamist inmates Nemmouche began to adopt a radical view of Islam while serving his prison sentence.[399] It was also during this time in prison when he encountered Nacer Bender, arms trafficker from Marseille, who later supplied Nemmouche with the weapons used at the museum shooting.[400] Three weeks upon his release he travelled to Syria and joined the Islamic State. According to four French captives taken hostage by the Islamic State and held in a detention facility holding European hostages in Aleppo in 2013, Nemmouche was one of their guards.[401] Nemmouche allegedly also guarded hostages James Foley and Steven Sotloff, US journalists who were executed by the terrorist organisation in mid-2014.[402] Known as "Abu Omar the hitter" he was known for his brutality, torturing the prisoners and bragging about his involvement in other operations of the Islamic

[394] PERLIGER, Arie – MILTON, Daniel (2016): *Introduction. From Cradle to Grave: The Lifecycle of Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria*. Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2016, pp. 1–3. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05619.4 (accessed on 7 March 2022).

[395] WEITZMANN, Marc (2014): *Who is Mehdi Nemmouche, and Why Did He Want To Kill Jews?* Tablet, July 15, 2014. Available at: https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/frances-toxic-hate-1-nemmouch (accessed on 7 March 2022).

[396] FRANCE24 (2019): *Brussels Jewish museum shooter 'an angry French teen' who was radicalised in jail*. France24 Online, 2019.08.03. Available at: https://www.france24.com/en/20190308-brussels-jewish-museum-attack-mehdi-nemmouche-french-teen-radicalised-jail (accessed on 8 March 2022).

[397] WEITZMANN 2014.

[398] PERLIGER – MILTON 2016, p. 2.

[399] Counter Extremism Project: *Mehdi Nemmouche*. Counter Extremism Project. Available at: https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/mehdi-nemmouche (accessed on 8 March 2022).

[400] BASRA, Rajan – NEUMANN, Peter R. (2020): *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries*. ICSR King's College London, 2020. 34. Available at: https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ICSR-Report-Prisons-and-Terrorism-Extremist-Offender-Management-in-10-European-Countries_V2.pdf (accessed on 8 March 2022).

[401] DICKEY, Christopher (2014): *French Jihadi Mehdi Nemmouche Is the Shape of Terror to Come*. Daily Beast, September 9, 2014. Available at: https://www.thedailybeast.com/french-jihadi-mehdi-nemmouche-is-the-shape-of-terror-to-come (accessed on 8 March 2022).

[402] Counter Extremism Project: Mehdi Nemmouche.

State, including raping women and killing babies.[403] The exact reason to why he left Syria and travelled back to Europe remains unknown, however, some counterterrorism experts claim that he was deemed as unreliable due to his extreme behaviour.[404] He was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Belgian court in March 2019 on murder charges in relation to the shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels 5 years earlier.[405] During the trial Nemmouche was described as "sadistic, playful and narcissistic" by one of the former French hostages held at the detention centre in Aleppo where Nemmouche had been the guard.[406]

Considering the factors facilitating the radicalisation of Nemmouche it is obvious that he comes from a difficult family background characterised by an unstable upbringing with absent parents, a foster family and a grandmother eventually raising him as well. He engaged in different criminal activities from a rather early age with the criminal record growing longer and the crimes committed becoming more severe. During his trial in Brussels, it was held that while serving his sentence in prison Nemmouche was known as an "extremist proselytiser", speaking of jihad and the "genocide of Muslims in Bosnia 1995" and trying to organise group prayer among the inmates.[407] Although Nemmouche had been flagged as radicalised and as part of a proselytising hub, he was still allowed to intermingle with other criminal inmates. This illustrates not only how prisons may serve as hotbeds of Islamist radicalisation, but also how extremists can broaden their networks in prison with 'common' criminals.

6.1.2. The three Jihadist-inspired attacks in France in December 2014

Religiously inspired terrorist plots in Europe prior to 2014 have involved links to the mother organisation of the Islamic State, the al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) as well as to its forerunners Jabhat-al-Nusra and ISIS, however, from the beginning of 2014 and onwards the majority of the jihadist-inspired terrorist plots in Europe are linked to the Islamic State and fewer to al-Qaeda.[408]

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[403] DICKEY 2014

[404] PERLIGER – MILTON 2016, p. 2.

[405] FRANCE24 2019

[406] BBC (2019): *Brussels Jewish Museum murders: Mehdi Nemmouche guilty*. BBC News, 2019.03.07. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47490332 (accessed on 7 March 2022).

[407] FRANCE24 2019

[408] NESSER, P. *et al* (2016): Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, no. 6, Terrorism Research Institute, 2016, pp. 3–24. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/26297702 (accessed on 8 March 2022), p. 4.

The Islamic State first called upon its sympathisers to commit attacks in Europe in September 2014 – two months after the proclamation of its caliphate and one week after the French-led coalition against IS was announced. Through its spokesperson and supposed leader of international operations Mohammad al'Adnani, the Islamic State vowed to avenge France's military engagement in the coalition.[409] This narrative of immediate reprisal seems to have echoed quite quickly and efficiently in the French jihadist environment, as in December 2014 France saw a series of jihadist-inspired attacks in different parts of the country. On 20 December 2014 a lone individual entered the police station in Joué-les-Tours near the city of Tours in central France and attacked officers with a knife. During the attack the assailant was reported to repeatedly have shouted '*Allahu Akhbar'* (Arabic for 'God is greater').[410] Later he was identified as Bertrand Nzohabonayo, a 20-year-old French national born in Burundi and a convert to Islam.

According to relatives Nzohabonayo had arrived in Joué-lès-Tours a few years ago and came from a family where the parents had separated.[411] Without work after leaving vocational school he was living with his sister or other family member and became soon know to the authorities cases of petty crime, drug trafficking, extortion, shoplifting and concealment.[412] Regarding the radicalisation process it is know that Nzohabonayo had a younger brother, Brice Nzohabonayo, who was already known to the French authorities for his radical views and for having considered travelling to Syria (for which he had been flagged by the General Directorate for Internal Security, the DGSI).[413] Brice Nzohabonayo had been monitored by the French security service since August 2013, following a report by their mother who expressed concern over Brice's radical views and the influence he might have on Bertrand.[414] According to their sister

[409] NESSER *et al* 2016, p. 4.

[410] EUROPOL 2005, p. 18.

[411] Le POINT (2014): Qui est Bertrand Nzohabonayo, l'agresseur de Joué-lès-Tours? *Le Point*, 2014.12.21. Available at: https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/qui-est-bertrand-nzohabonayo-l-agresseur-de-joue-les-tours-21-12-2014-1891481_23.php (accessed on 8 March 2022).

[412] Le POINT 2014.

[413] NÉGRONI, Angelique – LECLERC, Jean-Marc (2014): *«Bilal», l'assaillant des policiers de Joué-lès-Tours, s'était autoradicalisé*. Le Figaro, 2014.12.21. Available at: https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2014/12/21/01016-20141221ARTFIG00172-bilal-l-assaillant-des-policiers-s-etait-autoradicalise.php (accessed on 8 March 2022).

[414] BREEDEN, Aurelien – COWELL, Alan (2014): *France Puts More Troops on Streets After a String of Attacks.* The New York Times, 2014.12.23. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/24/world/europe/french-authorities-appeal-for-calm-after-string-of-attacks.html (accessed on 9 March 2022).

Bertrand quickly radicalised after having converted.[415] Hence, in terms of the assessment of the assailant's radicalisation one of the questions to be answered was whom of the two brothers had influenced the other in the radical direction (or whether both of them had had a mutually unfavourable influence on one another). Bertrand Nzohabonayo had converted to Islam four years prior to the attack, grew a beard and wore a *djellaba* (a long robe worn in the Maghreb region of North Africa).[416] Upon his conversion to Islam he took the first name of Bilal.[417] A look at Bertrand Nzohabonayo's Facebook account suggests he was far gone in the religious radicalisation; not only did several texts and slogans inspired by radical Islam appear on his profile, but also by the Islamic State.[418] This image was reportedly uploaded on December 18, two days before the attack on law enforcement. His brother was arrested in Burundi a day after the jihadist-inspired terrorist attack in Tours. A Burundi intelligence spokesperson stated that they had received tips regarding the brothers' movements from 2013 and onwards, as the two were moving between France and Burundi.[419]

Although factors of vulnerability related to becoming susceptible to adopting radical ideas are present in Bertrand Nzohabonayo's background (immigrant background, separated parents, unemployment, early criminal record, and repeated crimes committed), the exact path from converting to Islam to be willing to kill in the name of a radical (Islamist) ideology remains unclear, but an important influencing factor appears to be the brother. The psychiatric component is yet to be entangled to fully apprehend the radicalisation process.

Following the attack near Tours a series of other similar attacks occurred in France in which the perpetrators alluded to religion or to the Islamic State.[420] On December 21 a lone actor, a 40-year-old man ploughed his car into pedestrians in the city of Dijon, the capital of the Burgundy region in eastern France. The assailant was reportedly heard shouting "*For the children of Palestine*" in Arabic (referring to Israel's military campaign on the Gaza strip over the summer of 2014) and "*Allahu Akhbar*" and injured thirteen people. The driver was identified as Nacer Ben, a person known to the authorities for his long record of mental illness. The incident was not labelled as a terrorist attack by the French authorities; the prosecutor in Dijon

[415] BREEDEN – COWELL 2014
[416] NÉGRONI – LECLERC 2014.
[417] NÉGRONI – LECLERC 2014.
[418] NÉGRONI – LECLERC 2014.
[419] AP (2014): *Burundi arrests brother of French police attacker*. Associated Press, 2014.12.22. Available at: https://apnews.com/article/3848551f8f4c4d0781b2ff9ebc0dc57e (accessed on 8 March 2022).
[420] EUROPOL 2015, p. 18.

referred to the known mental health issues and claimed the incident was not linked to terrorism.[421]

On December 23, a van was driven into shoppers at a Christmas market in the city of Nantes in western France leaving ten people injured (of which one eventually deceased from his wounds on the consecutive day). The driver was identified as Sébastien Sarron, a 37-year-old man living by himself in the village of Berneuil outside Nantes. According to information available regarding his background he was not known to the authorities and neither was his psychiatric history. A local newspaper indicated that before moving to Berneuil, Sarron had been involved in a case of theft and concealment and prior to the attack he had lost his job as a nurseryman.[422] The judicial police found a notebook in his car containing suicidal notes. Serron tried to stab himself after having rammed the pedestrians – and eventually committed suicide in prison in 2016.[423]

Regarding the incidents in Tours and Nantes, Europol notes in its Terrorism Situation and Trend Report that although French authorities claim that ideology was only a partial motivational factor behind the attacks, the attacks were nevertheless carried out with a *modus operandi* recommended by the propaganda of the Islamic State.[424] Even if the two above mentioned attacks in Tours and Nantes were not officially labelled as terrorist attacks, they are an important illustration of how the propaganda of the Islamic State may resonate among a certain group of society, who are marginalised, frustrated – and who may be suffering from mental illness.

6.2. 2015

6.2.1. Brahim and Salah Abdeslam (Paris, 2015 November 13)

On 13 November 2015 several persons committed multiple attacks throughout eastern and northern Paris killing 131 and wounding 368 persons. The attacks took place on several

[421] BBC (2014): *France Dijon: Driver Targets Pedestrians*. BBC News, 2014.12.22. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30571911 (accessed on 10 March 2022).
[422] L'INDEPENDENT (2014): *Drame de Nantes (1 mort : qui est vraiment Sébastien Sarron l'agresseur?* L'Independent, 2014.12.23. Available at: https://www.lindependant.fr/2014/12/23/drame-de-nantes-1-mort-qui-est-vraiment-sebastien-sarron-l-agresseur,1971735.php (accessed on 10 March 2022).
[423] FRANCEINFO (2016): *Drame du marché de Noël à Nantes: Sébastien Sarron s'est suicidé en prison*. FranceInfo, 2016.04.13. Available at: https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/pays-de-la-loire/loire-atlantique/nantes-metropole/nantes/drame-du-marche-noel-nantes-sebastien-sarron-s-est-suicide-prison-974364.html (accessed on 10 March 2022).
[424] EUROPOL 2015, p. 18.

geographical locations (Stade de France Soccer Stadium, Rue Bichat, Rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi, Rue de Charonne, the Comptoir Voltaire restaurant at Boulevard Voltaire and the Bataclan theatre) almost simultaneously and consisted of shootings, suicide bombings and a suicide hostage barricade. The *modus operandi* recalled the November 2008 Mumbai attacks where the Lashkar-e-Taiba hit multiple civilian targets with gunfire as well as suicide bombings almost simultaneously.[425]

Brahim Abdeslam was one of the gunmen in the 11th and 12th *arrondisements* in Paris and the one who blew himself up at the restaurant on Boulevard Voltaire. The role of his brother, Salah Abdeslam, was partly logistical; his interrogation several months later as the sole survivor of among the other members of the terrorist cell shed light on how Mr Abdeslam had rented at least two of the vehicles used at the attacks and drove three of the suicide bombers to the stadium (where they were later refused to entry and hence detonated their vests outside the stadium). He was also the one who had bought the remote detonators used in the attacks (12 in total) and the 15 litres of peroxide used to fabricate the explosives.[426] Salah Abdeslam also had a suicide vest, which he did not detonate, but escaped the attacks. In terms of his motives why he did not carry out his part of the mission, he later claimed during his trial that he had changed his mind and decided not to detonate the vest.[427] His suicide vest was later found in a trash can along with a cell phone. He was able to avoid law enforcement for almost four months in the Molenbeek suburb of Brussels until getting caught by Belgian police in March 2016. Molenbeek has been held as one of the hotbeds of Jihadist radicalisation in Western Europe. With a population of almost 100,000 with 30 per cent being of foreign nationality and 40 per cent of foreign origin, it has functioned as an operational and logistical hub for the terrorist cells that carried out the attacks in Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016.[428] The Islamic State claimed

[425] NANCE, Malcolm (2016): *Defeating ISIS: Who they are, how they fight, what they believe*. New York, Skyhorse Publishing, 2016, p. 140.
[426] GRAHAM-HARRISON, Emma – RANKIN, Jennifer (2016): *Paris terror attack's most wanted is finally arrested – but critics ask how he stayed free for so long*. The Guardian. 2016.03.19. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/19/salah-abdeslam-capture-belgium-paris-attacks (accessed on 11 March 2022).
[427] BBC (2022): *Salah Abdeslam: Paris attacks defendant denies killing anyone*. BBC News, 2022.02.09. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60315908 (accessed on 10 March 2022).
[428] NANCE 2016, pp. 145-146.

responsibility in a video released after the attacks, announcing in French that "[a]s long as you keep bombing you will not live in peace. You will even fear travelling to your market".[429]

Brahim and Salah Abdeslam, French nationals of Moroccan origin grew up in Molenbeek. Salah Abdeslam had a history of criminal activity and served time in prison for robbery in 2010 together with his childhood friend Abdelhamid Abaaoud (below). After the prison sentence he worked for Belgium's public transportation system STIB-MIVB as a mechanic, a job from which he was fired from later. According to certain sources, he was discontinued from the job due to regular absence, but the woman he was briefly engaged to claimed that it was due to criminal activity and a prison sentence.[430] A couple of months before the attack a video footage of the two brothers showed a rather secular lifestyle: the two of them dancing, drinking and flirting with women at a nightclub and according to some of their friends they used to smoke hashish as well. Hence, the radicalisation process of the two brothers has puzzled scholars and analysts paving way for several theories.

According to some researchers this type of 'secular' behaviour may be an example of *taqiyya*, or calculated pretence, when the "warrior" tries to melt in with the enemy to avoid detection.[431] In an interview with the Belgian broadcaster RTBF the elder brother of Brahim and Salah, Mohamed Abdeslam, told the journalists that he had not apprehended any signs that may indicate radicalisation, rather he believed it to be a matter of manipulation. He stated though that Salah had begun to pray a couple of months prior to the attack and that he had stopped drinking alcohol but claimed that these signs did not cause any particular reaction in the family.[432] Another theory was brought forward by Salah Abdeslam's ex-fiancée who claimed that he was radicalised when the childhood friend Abaaoud went to Syria.

After his arrest in March 2016 Salah Abdeslam was silent and non-cooperative with the legal system, hence the time to follow the exact details regarding his radicalisation process were not clear. Following the patterns of other young men coming from similar background (second-

[429] CALLIMACHI, Rukmini (2015): *ISIS Claims Responsibility, Callin Paris Attacks 'First of the Storm'*. The New York Times, 14 November 2015. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/15/world/europe/isis-claims-responsibility-for-paris-attacks-calling-them-miracles.html (accessed on 16 June 2016)

[430] FLANDERS NEWS (2016): *Salah Abdeslam's Ex Fiancée Speaks Out*. Flanders News, 24 February 2016. Available at: http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/1.2581476 (accessed on 15 June 2017).

[431] COTTEE, Simon (2016): *Europe's Joint-Smoking, Gay-Club Hopping Terrorists*. Foreign Policy, 13 April 2016. Available at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/13/the-joint-smoking-gay-club-hopping-terrorists-of-molenbeek-abdeslam-radicalisation/ (accessed on 15 June 2016).

[432] BBC (2015a): Paris attacks: *Abdeslam brothers were maipulated, not radicalised*. BBC News, 22 November 2015. Available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34895294 (accessed on 5 June 2017).

generation immigrants growing up in a suburb with a large immigrant presence and with a history of crime, violence and unemployment) it is clear his background contains a similar breeding ground for radicalisation as in the case of the other members of the Belgian cell. Other factors that are believed to have accelerated the radicalisation process were the time spent in prison as well as a close friend travelling to the conflict zone in Syria to wage *jihad*.

However, some researchers question his ideological motivation, or to which extent Abdeslam was a true believer of the terrorist ideology and point to the fact that he did not lead his life according to the conservative Salafism prescribed by the Islamic State. After a thorough examination of Salah Abdeslam's profile and lifestyle before the Paris attacks, Speckhard and Yayla presented the theory of a man who was likely not ideologically convinced and who had not received the same training most IS operatives do.[433] Through interviews with defectors from IS, the researchers found that it was common for terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State to enrol new members in a one month long dedicated ideological training (*shariah* training). Also, members were expected to lead their lives according to the strict laws of Salafism and at the same time monitor other members to observe whether everyone truly was practicing the teachings of the terrorist organisation.[434] The researchers point to the fact that Mr Abdeslam did not receive such training, nor did he practice the fundamentalist teachings of the Islamic State. Hence, the question remains why he nevertheless participated in one of the deadliest terrorist attacks on European soil since World War II. Speckhard and Yayla believe that Mr Abdeslam joined the cause primarily because the emotional ties to his brother and the other members of the Belgian cell, but also because he shared the same anger and grievances towards Western society.

The researchers suggest that although the Islamic State – just like any other terrorist organisation for that matter – naturally prefers its members to be fully ideologically committed, in this case the trust issues must have prevailed: due to the risk of security breaches, potential moles (and the fact the recruiting a new member takes time) the members of the cell probably settled with a person who shared the same hatred towards the West and who nevertheless had

[433] SPECKHARD, Anne – YAYLA, Ahmed (2016): *ISIS Operative Salah Abdeslam:A Not so True-Believer Terrorist*. ICSVE Brief Reports. 2016. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anne-Speckhard/publication/299278076_ISIS_Operative_Salah_AbdeslamA_Not_so_True-Believer_Terrorist/links/56f015c508aeae9f93e8062b/ISIS-Operative-Salah-AbdeslamA-Not-so-True-Believer-Terrorist.pdf (accessed on 11 March 2022).
[434] SPECKHARD – YAYLA 2016.

a close friendship and family ties to the others.[435] The lack of true ideological commitment to the cause (resulting in glorious martyrdom according to the beliefs of the Islamic State) may have explained why Abdeslam eventually decided not to detonate his suicide vest.

The trial of Salah Abdeslam as the only survivor of the nine persons being directly involved in the Paris attacks – the biggest trial in the modern history of France – commenced in September 2021 and is estimated to take up to 9 months with no less than 1,800 civil plaintiffs taking part. During the hearings Salah Abdeslam reportedly gave contradictory statements on his pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, although he consequently justified the terrorist attacks claiming that it was to avenge the families of the IS fighters killed by French air strikes in Syria.[436]

6.2.2. Abdelhamid Abaaoud (Paris, 22 November 2015)

The dual Belgian-Moroccan citizen Abdelhamid Abaaoud is believed to have been the leader of the terrorist cell committing the attacks in Paris. He was a third-generation immigrant born in the Anderlecht neighbourhood of Brussels in Belgium and the eldest of six children.[437] He was enrolled in a prestigious Catholic school of Brussels, but was expelled after one year due to disruptive behaviour and poor academic achievements.[438] Following the expulsion he joined local gangs of youngsters among several of the later co-perpetrators in the Paris attacks where to be found (including the Abdeslam brothers). Abaaoud had an early criminal record and was sentenced to prison several times for theft, violence and resisting police officers between 2006 and 2012.[439] He caught the eye of the Belgian security service in 2013 after a trip with six other young men to Syria, to which he later travelled several times. Probably to avoid Belgian security services Abaaoud faked his own death and returned to Belgium (Verviers) in 2014 with the intent to coordinate an attack, which was foiled in January 2015. He managed to escape the police and returned to Syria, where he gave an interview to the *Dabiq* magazine, the online

[435] SPECKHARD – YAYLA 2016

[436] BBC (2022), op. cit.

[437] VLIERDEN, Guy van (2015): Profile: Paris Attack Ringleader Abdelhamid Abaaoud. *CTC Sentinel*, Volume 8, Issue 11. November/December 2015. Available at: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CTCSentinel-Vol8Iss112.pdf (accessed on 15 June 2017), p. 30.

[438] VLIERDEN 2015, p. 30.

[439] VINCENT, Elise (2015): *Ce que les services belges savaient d'Abdelhamid Abaaoud*. Le Monde, 20 November 2015. Available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/attaques-a-paris/article/2015/11/20/abaaoud-ce-que-les-services-belges-savaient_4814101_4809495.html#ZUPuVud15TepHuOU.99 (accessed on 15 June 2017).

propaganda magazine of the Islamic State. Among the topics where how he managed to get back to Europe, set up a safe house, obtain weapons and escape Western intelligence.[440]

According Abaaoud's father the radicalisation commenced while serving the last term in prison, however, the details remain unclear. What is known is that after prison Abaaoud fell in the circles around a known veteran from the *jihad* in Afghanistan, Khalid Zarkavi, recruiting persons in Molenbeek to the Syrian *jihad*.[441] Abaaoud's background illustrates the story of a young troublemaker with an immigrant background involved in petty crime who at already at a young age displayed a disruptive and violent behaviour. This violent and deviant behaviour later became legitimised by the jihadist ideology espousing more violence as legitimate means, where Abaaoud could advance in the ranks and obtain capacity to coordinate sophisticated attacks.

6.3. 2016

6.3.1. Ibrahim and Khalid al-Bakraoui (Brussels, 2016 March 22)

On 2016 March 22 three persons committed suicide attacks up in Brussels, two at the departure hall of the Zaventem International Airport and one at the Maelbeek metro station at the city centre killing 31 and injuring more than 270 persons. The persons were identified as the brothers Ibrahim and Khalid al-Bakraoui (29 and 27 years old) of Moroccan origin, born and raised in a working-class neighbourhood of Brussels (Laeken). Both brothers had an early criminal debut and long criminal records prior to the terrorist attack, Khalid had participated in at least four carjackings and an armed bank robbery in 2009, and Ibrahim had been the lookout at a robbery attempt in 2010 whereby he shot a policeman in the leg with a Kalashnikov rifle. Ibrahim was sentenced to nine years of prison for attempted murder but was released on parole after four years.[442] The al-Baktraoui brothers were born in Belgium to Moroccan parents, the father

[440] *Dabiq* nr 7

[441] VLIERDEN 2015, p. 30.

[442] THE NEW YORK TIMES (2016): *Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui: From Bank Robbers to Brussels Bombers*. The New York Times, 24 March 2016. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/world/europe/expanding-portraits-of-brussels-bombers-ibrahim-and-khalid-el-bakraoui.html (accessed on 5 June 2017).

reportedly being a retired butcher and devout Muslim and the mother described as "conservative and reclusive".[443]

The case of the al-Bakraoui brothers is also interesting because they committed the attack only three days after Saleh Abdeslam, the only known surviving terrorist from the Paris attacks in November 2015 (above). The Islamic State claimed responsibility for this attack as well, which was not the first of its kind in the Belgian capital. IS has attacked Brussels previously; in May 2015 a person linked to the terrorist organisation (Mehdi Nemmouche) killed four persons and injured several at the Jewish Museum of Brussels. There are some evidence that seem to suggest that the al-Bakraoui brothers felt forced to act quickly after the capture of Abdeslam; police found a note in the bin of a laptop of the elder brother claiming that he felt he was hunted and "no longer safe" and feared "ending up in a cell like him" (Abdeslam).[444] When police raided the apartment of the al-Bakraoui brothers they discovered a makeshift bomb factory as there was 15 kg of explosives, 150 litres of acetone, 30 litres of hydrogen peroxide, detonators, a suitcase filled with screws and nails.[445] Both Bakraoui brothers are also believed to have been plotting another attack in which radioactive material would have been scattered over a populated area, including the kidnapping of a nuclear expert to build a dirty bomb.[446]

The details of the radicalisation process are not fully known; however, the life stories are quite similar to the above-mentioned profiles – with the difference that the al-Bakraoui brother did not have a history of petty crime, rather one of serious offences (bank robbery, shootings etc). Interestingly, the 14th edition of the *Dabiq* propaganda magazine released after the Brussels bombings had an entire section dedicated to the alleged dreams of Khalid al-Bakraoui. According to the article he had three dreams leading to the execution of the attack, the first one during his imprisonment and the two others after the Paris attacks. In the dreams described there is first a wake-up call to become more religious and in the two latter ones a pathway to martyrdom appears, potentially suggesting that there may have been someone in his immediate

[443] THE NEW YORK TIMES 2016.

[444] CHISAFIS, Angelique (2016): *The men in a top floor who sowed terror in Brussels*. The Guardian, 24 March 2016. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/23/brussels-attacks-schaerbeek-flat-coordinated-atrocities-plotted-el-bakraoui (accessed on June 5 2017).

[445] CHISAFIS 2016

[446] WEBB, Emma – SUTTON, Rupert (2016): *An Enduring Threat: Europe's Islamist Networks Then and Now*. The Henry Jacksons Society, Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism. 2016, pp. 9-10. Available at: https://relayto.com/the-henry-jackson-society/92ha8lN0 (accessed on June 5 2017).

surroundings picking up on these dreams and trying to encourage and radicalise him further.[447] According to the magazine, the al-Bakraoui brothers began sympathising with the Islamic State during their imprisonment.

6.3.2. Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel (Nice, 2016 July 14)

On Bastille Day 2016 a man drove a 19-tonne lorry into the crowds gathered to celebrate the French national holiday at the Promenad des Anglais in the Riviera city of Nice, killing 86 and injuring more than 450 others. The man was identified as Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a 31-year-old Tunesian with a French resident permit. He moved to France in 2005 and married a French-Tunisian cousin with whom he had three children. According to his father, Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was suffering from a mental illness causing him a nervous breakdown, and claimed that he had been to a psychiatrist as well as received medical treatment prior to his move to France.[448] Neighbours described him as a loner with a history of violence, alcohol and drugs and who – after the divorce from his wife – according to French prosecutor François Molins assigned to the case, also indulged a wild sex life including both men and women.[449]

An interesting statement regarding his radicalisation process was made by the then French Minister of Interior Bernard Cazeneuve who claimed that the perpetrator "[a]ppeared to have been radicalised very quickly".[450] The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack saying that Lahouaiej-Bouhlel acted in response to its calls to target civilians in countries that are part of the international coalition against them.[451] According to the prosecutor and the police Lahouaiej-Bouhlel had given expression to a recent interest in radical Islamism, searching the web for verses of the *Qur'an*, *nasheeds* (Arabic chants) with jihadist propaganda as well as videos of fatal traffic incidents and articles on recent attacks (such as the one in the gay nightclub in Dallas where a gunman who proclaimed allegiance to IS shot 49 persons).[452]

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[447] The Bored Jihadi Blog: *The dreams of a Brussels bomber*. 1 April 2016. Available at: http://boredjihadi.tumblr.com/post/142889314077/three-dreams-of-a-brussels-bomber (accessed on 14 June 2017).

[448] CHAZAN, David (2016): *Bastille Day terrorist was radicalised within months and sent £84,000 to his Tunisian family days before attack*. The Telegraph, 17 July 2016. Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/16/bastille-day-terrorist-was-radicalised-within-months-and-sent-84/ (accessed on 20 June 2017)

[449] CHAZAN 2016

[450] CHAZAN 2016.

[451] BBC (2016): *Who was Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel?* BBC News, 19 July 2016. Available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36801763 (accessed on 20 June 2017).

[452] BBC 2016.

Investigators also found violent content related to militant Islamism and the flag of IS on his computer. Lahouaiej-Bouhlel had an earlier police record from the years between 2010 and 2016 for threatening behaviour, violence, and petty theft.

The case of Lahouaiej-Bouhlel illustrates how mental illness can play a significant role in the radicalisation process. In his case, the history of violence and threatening behaviour, as well as the negative experiences from the divorce and the unemployment may have contributed to the search for alternative – and radical – solutions and new purposes. Considering what is known about the rather short period of time during which the radicalisation process occurred and the fact that he was not known to the French authorities as a potentially violent Islamist it becomes increasingly important to focus on awareness-raising measures regarding the early signals of potential transformations and a changed behaviour as were voiced - with hindsight – by neighbours and others in the perpetrator's immediate surroundings. Although the details on the true ideological and/or religious conviction of Lahouaiej-Bouhlel probably will remain unknown, it is important to bear in mind how the rhetoric of radical Islamist groups propagating for violence as a legitimate solution may attract persons with psychological problems seeking for alternatives to channel personal traumas, failures and frustration.

6.3.3. Anis Amri (Berlin, 2016 December 19)

On 2016 December 19 a man deliberately drove a hijacked truck into a Christmas market at the Breitscheidplatz in Berlin, killing 12 persons and wounding 48 others. This was the first confirmed IS-inspired attack on German soil that resulted in fatalities.[453] The perpetrator was identified as Anis Amri, a 24-year-old man of Tunisian origin who had entered as an asylum seeker in 2015. Amri was one of nine children who according to his father grew up as a troublemaker, dropping out of school, living on occasional jobs and eventually turning to alcohol and drugs.[454] Using the turmoil around the revolution in Tunesia in 2011 he escaped a prison sentence for having stolen a vehicle by fleeing the country and left for Italy. According to a spokesperson for the Italian state police, Amri entered the country without any ID and claimed to be a 16-year-old minor. Italian authorities ordered his deportation, but the Tunisian

[453] HEIL, Georg (2017): The Berlin attack and the 'Abu Walaa' Islamic State recruitment network. *CTC Sentinel* Volume 10, Issue 2. 2017, p. 1. Available at: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss228.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2017).
[454] HEIL 2017, p. 1.

authorities refused to accept the request referring to the lack of proper documentation. Nor did the Tunisian authorities respond to the request to send him travel documents. After having attacked a staff member of the refugee shelter and started a fire at the shelter Amis was – together with four other Tunisian asylum seekers – sentenced to four years in prison for damaging state property, assault and arson in 2011.[455] He was released in 2015 and left for Germany through Switzerland, where he applied for asylum. Between July and December 2015 Amri would register as an asylum seeker at least five times under different names and use altogether 14 identities while being in Germany.[456] The asylum application was denied, and the deportation process had commenced but could not be completed due to the fact that Amri's identity could not be fully established.[457]

According to German security officials Amri was on the radar of the German law enforcement authorities not only for having searched for a gun, but being in contact with IS-operatives abroad as well as radical Islamists in Germany, including a network recruiting for the Islamic State in Germany.[458] The network was organised around a Salafi preacher, an Iraqi national known as Abu Walaa, who together with four other suspects were arrested one month prior to the Christmas market attack. According to news sources Amri's name was mentioned several times in the 345-pages of investigation.[459] According to the investigative file, police informants had passed on information about the members of the network who had been discussing the execution of attacks, and where one possible method mentioned was driving a truck full of gasoline into a crowd.

The radicalisation process is believed to have commenced while being in prison in Italy. According to a report for the Italian Committee for Strategic Anti-Terrorism Analysis (CASA) Amri was considered to be a dangerous person and the leader for the Islamists in prison. He had reportedly threatened and attacked staff members and threatened to decapitate a Christian inmate. During his stay in Germany, he attended classes at "Madrasa Dortmund", a *Qur'an* school in Dortmund, which was where he first got in touch with the above mentioned Abu Walaa-network.

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[455] HEIL 2017, p. 1.
[456] HEIL 2017, p. 2.
[457] BERLINGER, Josh – SMITH-SPARK, Laura (2016): *Berlin Christmas market attack suspect: Who was Anis Amri?* CNN, 23 December 2016. Available at: http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/22/europe/anis-amri-berlin-christmas-market/ (accessed on 10 January 2017).
[458] HEIL 2017, p. 1.
[459] BERLINGER – SMITH-SPARK 2016

Through its affiliated *Amaq* news agency, the Islamic State claimed to have inspired the attack and stated that Amri was a "soldier of the Islamic State" acting in response to the call for committing attacks in the West. Four days after the attack *Amaq* released a video of Amri pledging allegiance to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi vowing to "[s]laughter crusaders who are shelling Muslims every day".

Anis Amri constitutes a so far rare example of a person with a troublemaker background who entered the European Union as an asylum seeker demonstrating violent behaviour already in the country where the first asylum application was filed. Most probably the radicalisation took place in the Italian prison, confirming existing knowledge on prisons being one of the most significant hotbeds for jihadist recruitment in Europe. The almost immediate way into a like-minded group in another Member State of the EU (Germany) show how these ties and networks function without borders. The case also illustrates one unfortunate consequence of the failure to return declined asylum seekers to their country of origin – especially of those who pose a security risk.

6.4. 2017

6.4.1. Khalid Masood (London, 2017 March 22)

On March 22 a man drove into pedestrians outside London's Westminster Parliament, resulting in four fatalities and more than 50 injured persons. The attacker was later identified as Khalid Masood, a 52-year-old man born in Kent. According to information from the Metropolitan Police he used numerous alternative names and aliases throughout his life, but Khalid Masood was the name he took after having converted to Islam.[460] Masood had several convictions, the earliest from the age of 18, when he was charged for criminal damage. Later he served several sentences in prison for a wide range of crimes, including grievous bodily harm, assault and possession of an offensive weapon.[461] On one occasion he was involved in – among other troubles – a serious attack allegedly in a pub preceded by racist provocation, where he stabbed a man in the face, for which he was sentenced to two years imprisonment. After prison he

[460] CASCIANI, Dominic (2017): *London attack: Who was Khalid Masood?* BBC, 26 March 2017. Available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-39373766 (accessed on 15 April 2017).
[461] DEARDEN, Lizzie (2017a): *Khalid Masood told friend 'I want some f***ing blood, I want to kill someone' before converting to Islam in prison*. The Independent, 25 March 2017. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/khalid-masood-adrian-elms-ajao-westminster-london-attacker-isis-prison-radicalisation-want-blood-a7650276.html (accessed on 15 April 2017).

moved away from his village, leaving wife and children behind, and started using steroids and cocaine. According to persons from his new environment he had a bad temper and after another incident by which he yet again stabbed another person in the face, he was sentenced to prison for a second time.

The time of the conversion to Islam is not known, but according to an interview with a childhood friend, it took place sometime while being incarcerated. This would be in line the radicalisation patterns of several other known terrorists who at some point during their time in prison became susceptible to the violent jihadist ideology offering redemption, status and new goals.[462] In 2004 he married a Muslim woman of Pakistani descent and took a position as English teacher in the following year at the General Authority of Civil Aviation in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.[463] The travel to live in Saudi Arabia may be interpreted as a typical pattern of a convert who seek for opportunities to live and work in an Islamic country in order to fully embrace their new faith and way of life.[464] Masood moved back to the UK in 2010 and settled in Luton, well known for its links to militant Islamism. On March 22 he hired a car and drove into pedestrians killing four people.

6.4.2. Rakhmat Akilov (Stockholm, 2017 April 7)

The 39-year-old citizen from Uzbekistan had in November 2014 applied for residence permit in Sweden, but was denied in June 2016.[465] The Migration Court did not grant the leave to appeal and Akilov was to be deported, but went underground instead. The deportation order was sent to the police in February 2017. On April 7 Akilov stole a truck and drove into the largest shopping street in central Stockholm, the Swedish capital, killing four people and injuring 15 others. Akilov was arrested a couple of hours after the attack and later confessed guilty. According to information leaked from the interrogation, Akilov claimed to be a member

[462] BASRA, Rajan – NEUMANN, Peter. R. – BRUNNER, Claudia (2016): *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures*. ICSR King's College London. 2016. Available at: http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Criminal-Pasts-Terrorist-Futures.pdf (accessed on 15 April 2017).
[463] CASCIANI 2017
[464] Questions by converts on where to move to live under Islamic law are subjects to many discussions online, eg. https://www.quora.com/If-I-want-to-move-to-a-Muslim-country-and-start-a-new-life-which-country-would-you-recommend.
[465] LUNDBERG ANDERSSON, Hannes – SYRÉN, Michael (2017): *Rakhmat Akilov, 39, misstänks för attacken*. Expressen, 9 April 2017. Available at: http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/rakhmat-akilov-39-misstanks-for-attacken/ (accessed on 3 May 2017).

of the Islamic State and that he was proud over his deeds.[466] The motive for his attack was supposedly "[f]or what Sweden is doing to his country" (i.e., that Sweden participates in the international coalition against the Islamic State upon a Government decision from the end of 2014 mainly through non-combatant military personnel supporting the Kurdish armed forces in northern Iraq) and he claimed further to have received the order to carry out the attack directly from the Islamic State.[467]

Little is yet known about Akilov's radicalisation process, however, the Swedish Security Service had been investigating him previously as part of a counter-terrorism investigation[468] and he was also known to the authorities for being a sympathiser of IS and Hizb ut-Tahrir.[469] It is also known that he had links to an al-Qaeda affiliated group in Syria through a Russian-language social media site. The leader of the group is suspected of having ordered the above mentioned subway suicide bombing in St Petersburg only a couple of days before the Stockholm attack.[470] During a press conference a week after the Stockholm attack Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov claimed that Uzbekistan's security service had previously passed information on Akilov to partner countries in the West (without identifying the countries by name) and that he was recruited by the Islamic State after he left the country in 2014.[471] An Uzbek security source claimed that Akilov had attempted to join IS, but was arrested on the Syrian-Turkish border and deported to Sweden in 2015. He moved to Turkey in 2012 after a divorce from his wife leaving four children behind. Turkey is among the countries to which Uzbek nationals do not need a visa, and according to certain sources (Uzbek nationals living in Sweden), Akilov got in touch with radical Islamists in Turkey.[472] According to the same sources

[466] LUNDBERG ANDERSSON – SYRÉN 2017.
[467] LUNDBERG ANDERSSON – SYRÉN 2017
[468] RANSTORP, Magnus – GUSTAFSSON, Linus (2017): *Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq – An analysis of open-source intelligence and statistical data*. Swedish Defence University, Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies, 2017, p. 15. Available at: https://www.fhs.se/documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/CATS/publikationer/2017/Swedish%20Foreign%20Fighters%20webb.pdf (accessed on 13 June 2017).
[469] EXPRESSEN (2017): *Misstänkte terroristen Rakhmat Akilov kallar sig sprängexpert*. Expressen, 9 April 2017. Available at: http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/misstankte-terroristen-rakhmat-akilov-kallar-sig-sprangexpert/ (accessed on 13 June 2017).
[470] RANSTORP – GUSTAFSSON 2017, p. 15.
[471] ARAB NEWS (2017): *Uzbekistan 'had warned West about Stockholm attack suspect'*. Arab News, 15 April 2017. Available at: http://www.arabnews.com/node/1084616/world (accessed on 3 May 2017).
[472] SVENSKA DAGBLADET (2017): *Uppgifter: Akilov efterlystes av Uzbekistan*. Svenska Dagbladet, 12 April 2017. Available at: https://www.svd.se/akilov-radikaliserades-innan-han-kom-till-sverige (accessed on 3 May 2017).

in Sweden, Akilov's religious knowledge was at a rather low level, and that he at a certain point started using drugs (mainly cocaine) in Sweden.

The case of Akilov comprises a complex interplay between several important underlying causes: is the attack purely to be seen as an ideologically and politically motivated act of retaliation for the on-going situation in Syria, or is it rather to be interpreted as a desperate act for a refused asylum application seen through the lens of a sympathiser of militant Islamism?

Here it must be noted that both the suicide bomber in the subway of St Petersburg one week prior to the attack in Stockholm as well as the person bombing the Istanbul International Airport on New Year's Eve also were Uzbek citizens. Analysts and researchers claim that it is likely that radicalisation into violent Islamist extremist will continue to grow in Central Asia, mainly due factors such as societal deprivation combined with an opportunity to rebel used by extremists, low level of religious knowledge and education combined with strong political views on the repression of Muslims, the exposure to violence, feelings of exclusion and alienation and all the mentioned factors combined with the question of religion.[473]

6.4.3. Salman Abedi (Manchester, 2017 May 22)

On the evening of May 22 an explosive device detonated after a concert in Manchester, one of the largest cities in the United Kingdom. The explosion caused 22 fatalities and dozens of injuries, making the attack the deadliest since the London bombings of 7 July 2005. The device was used as a suicide bomb and in the days following the attack Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old man of Libyan descent was named as the perpetrator. According to media sources available Salman Abedi is the 22-year-old son of Libyan parents who fled from Muammar al-Gaddafi to the United Kingdom in the 1990s.[474] Abedi was born in 1994 as the second eldest child and grew up in Manchester with his family. Apparently, the majority of the family members moved back to Libya leaving Abedi and the elder brother behind. Abedi eventually dropped out from

[473] HEATHERSHAW, John – MONTGOMERY David W. (2015)? *Why do Central Asians Join ISIS?* Exeter Central Asian Studies Network, 2015. Available at: http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/excas/2015/07/17/isis/ (accessed on 13 June 2017).

[474] The TELEGRAPH (2017): *What we know about Manchester suicide bomber Salman Abedi*. The Telegraph, 26 May 2017. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/26/everything-know-manchester-suicide-bomber-salman-abedi/ (accessed on 28 May 2017).

university and some neighbours claim to have noticed the young man becoming more devout and withdrawn.

In terms of the radicalisation process, some experts claim that Abedi had for long time been exposed to radical views from his immediate surrounding. The father had been a member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), a terrorist organisation that had pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden and whose aim it was to overthrow Gaddafi an replace his regime with a hard-line Islamic state.[475] After a failed plot many of the persecuted members of the LIFG were granted asylum in the United Kingdom on the basis of "our enemy's enemy is our friend", as the United Kingdom was an opponent of the Gaddafi-regime.[476] Parts of the Libyans granted asylum moved to Birmingham and Manchester that were both already home to large Arab communities.

According to researchers many of the Muslims in Manchester attended the Didsbury Mosque, the only Arab mosque in the region and run by the Muslim Brotherhood, thus, preaching a fundamentalist form of Islam.[477] Abedi also attended the mosque; hence, the radical views are suggested to have sprung both from his father as well as from the preaching in the mosque. After the family moved back to Libya Abedi apparently shuttled back and forth between Manchester and Tripoli not finding a sense of belonging in neither country. In his attempt to find both an identity and a community he first joined a violent gang subculture and later embraced the views of the Islamic State. When and how the radicalisation process commenced remains somewhat unclear, but according to French intelligence sources Abedi had recently visited Libya as well as Syria. An explanation to the radicalisation process was provided by his sister Jomana, who claimed that Abedi became radicalised when seeing imagery from the US-lead coalition's air strikes in Syria. IS claimed responsibility for the attack, reducing the victims to "crusaders", "polytheists" and "worshipers of the cross".[478]

The attack was perpetrated right at the main exit of the concert as people were leaving after the concert ended, showing that it is sufficient to select a strategic position to cause mass casualties,

[475] DOWARD, Jaime – COBAIN, Ian – STEPHEN, Chris (2017): *How Manchester bomber Salman Abedi was radicalised by his ties to Libya*. The Guardian, 28 May 2017. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/28/salman-abedi-manchester-arena-bomber-radicalisation (accessed on 28 May 2017).
[476] DOWARD *et al* 2017.
[477] DOWARD *et al* 2017.
[478] MAHER, Shiraz (2017): *Inside the minds of ISIS murderers*. The New Statesman, 28 May 2017. Available at: http://www.newstatesman.com/world/2017/05/inside-minds-isis-murderers (accessed on 30 May 2017).

the perpetrator did not even need to enter.[479] According to UK-based security experts the chosen method is worrisome for several reasons. Unlike recent trends in the UK, where terrorist attacks have been carried out with knives or cars, the Manchester attack was carried out with a device requiring not only a certain level of technical expertise, but also a much higher degree of sophistication than the aforementioned selection of weapons.[480] Another implication that may imply a higher level of professionalism in the construction of the device is the information provided by Manchester Hospital staff to Jane's Terrorism and Intelligence Center (JTIC) saying that they were treating people for shrapnel wounds, which may be caused by nails, ball bearings or other metal.[481] It is still an important question in the on-going investigation whether Abedi acted alone or was part of a larger network.

The radicalisation process of Abedi illustrates how a breeding ground for violent acts may develop through family and the preaching of the mosque attended. From his background and certain life events it may be assumed that Abedi was most probably struggling to find a balance between the Libyan as well as the British roots and heritage, and the absence of important (and moderate) role models supporting him in these efforts may have accelerated the process in the wrong direction.

6.4.4. The London Bridge attack (3 June 2017)

On 3 June 2017 three drivers ploughed a van into pedestrians on London Bridge. After having crossed the bridge, the car crashed, and the three men got out launching an attack against people in their way towards Borough Market armed with ceramic knives tied to their wrists. 8 people were killed in the attack and 48 persons injured. The three attackers were eventually shot by police and were later identified as Khuram Shazad Butt, 27, a British citizen born in Pakistan, Rachid Redouane, 30, who had claimed to be Moroccan and Libyan and Youssef Zaghba, 22, a Moroccan-Italian man.[482]

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[479] NEWSOME, Bruce (2017): *Manchester: The newest terrorism and the the future of terrorism*. Berkeley blog, 24 May 2017. Available at: http://blogs.berkeley.edu/2017/05/24/manchester-the-newest-terrorism/ (accessed on 28 May 2017).

[480] ACTON, Gemma (2017): *Sophisticated weapon used in Manchester terror attack is 'disturbing', says security expert*. CNBC, 23 May 2017. Available at: http://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/23/sophisticated-weapon-used-in-manchester-terror-attacks-is-disturbing-says-security-expert.html (accessed on 28 May 2017).

[481] ACTON 2017.

[482] BBC (2019): *London Bridge attack: What happened*. BBC News, 2019.05.03. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-40147164 (accessed on 11 March 2022).

Butt moved with his family from Pakistan to the United Kingdom at the age of eight with a visitor's visa. He lived in eastern London with this wife and two children (the second one born one month before the terrorist attack) and had previously worked for the fast food chain KFC as well as for the London transport operator Transport for London (TfL) and was according to sources spending a lot of time weightlifting.[483] Butt was already know to the authorities and had even appeared in documentary about British jihadists (*The Jihadis Next Door*), in which he was portrayed Butt as a person who condemned the UK government for its actions in Iraq and Syria and was seen posing with the black flag of the Islamic State in Regent Garden in central London. For this incident (which occurred in 2015) he was detained by the police but was later released without being arrested.[484] At the beginning of 2016, Butt started to associate with Anjem Choudary, a radical preacher and head of the now-banned group al-Muhajiroun that supported an extremist interpretation of Islam. Choudary was convicted to five-and-a-half-years in prison for inviting support to the Islamic State in 2016 but was released on licence in 2018 and his ban on speaking in public was lifted in 2021.[485] The al-Muhajiroun network was formed as a branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir in 1996 and was active for more than a decade indoctrinating young Britons into its radical ideology and encouraging its followers to engage in high-risk activity.[486]

Analysts claim the London Bridge attack is an example of how two decades of radicalising activity mainly by radical preachers in the UK has reached a tipping point.[487] The attack was claimed by IS through a breaking news message issued by its news agency *Amaq* and was later reported in *al-Naba'* and *Rumiyah*.[488]

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[483] SAMUELSON, Kate (2017): *What to Know About the Three London Bridge Attackers*. Time Magazine, 2017.06.07. Available at: https://time.com/4806833/london-bridge-attackers-what-to-know/ (accessed on 13 March 2022).

[484] SAMUELSON 2017

[485] BBC (2021): *Anjem Choudary: Radical preacher's public speaking ban to be lifted*. BBC News, 2021.07.18. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-57878910 (accessed on 13 March 2022).

[486] KENNEY, Michael (2010): *What is to be Done about al-Muhajiroun? Containing the Emigrants in a Democratic Society*. Paper prepared for the Commission for Countering Extremism London, United Kingdom. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836686/what-is-to-be-done-about-al-muhajiroun.pdf (accessed on 13 March 2022).

[487] DEARDEN, Lizzie (2017b): *London attack linked to hate preacher Anjem Choudary's extremist network*. The Independent, 2017.06.06. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/london-attack-bridge-borough-isis-perpetrators-khuram-butt-links-anjem-choudary-documentary-jihadis-next-door-a7776101.html (accessed on 10 May 2022).

[488] EUROPOL 2018, p. 24.

6.4.5. The Barcelona attack (17 August 2017)

On 17 August 2017 a rented white van was driven into pedestrians on the busy tourist street Las Ramblas in the heart of Barcelona. Some eight hours later another car plowed into a pedestrian street in the seaside resort town of Cambrils approximately 120 km from Barcelona. The two attacks left 16 people dead and over 140 persons wounded in what is held as the most devastating terrorist attacks in Spain since the 2004 Madrid train bombings.[489] The night before the attacks there was a massive explosion in the city of Alcanar (Tarragona province, Catalonia), which was also connected to the Barcelone and Cambrils attacks as this was the perpetrators' base of operations and bomb factory. According to investigators the perpetrators were experimenting with triacetone triperoxide (TATP).

Behind the attack was a cell of 10 men, including four sets of brothers who – according to the judicial documents and interviews with investigators related to the case – had all been radicalised by an IS-supporting cleric in the Catalonian town of Ripoll.[490] Their average age was 23 – all of them were in the early 20's. The former imam, Abdelbaki Es Satty, a man of Moroccan origin, had been a sympathiser of radical Islamism for over a decade, but had always managed to keep a low profile towards the authorities.[491] According to an article in The New York Times Spanish authorities believe that the cleric had been inspired by al-Qaeda recruiters and used their methods to recruit youngsters for the Islamic State.[492] The majority (eight of ten) of the young men radicalised by es Satty were also of Moroccan origin in a town with 11,000 inhabitants, of which 1,100 are of Muslim origin.[493] They were second-generation descendants

[489] REINARES, Fernando – GARCÍA-CALVO, Carola (2018): Spaniards, You Are Going to Suffer: The Inside Story of the August 2017 Atacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, *CTC Sentinel*, January 2018, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2018. Available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CTC-Sentinel_Vol11Iss1-1.pdf (accesed on 10 May 2022), p. 1.
[490] REINARES – GARCÍA-CALVO 2018, p. 1.
[491] BABAS, Latfa (2017): *The Imam of Ripoll: A discreet extremist and an intelligent Jihad recruiter*. Yabiladi, 2017.08.25. Available at: https://en.yabiladi.com/articles/details/56843/imam-ripoll-discreet-extremist-intelligent.html (accessed on 10 May 2022).
[492] RUBIN, Alissa J. *et al* (2017): *How a Shadowy Imam Evaded Scrutiny and Forged the Barcelona Cell.* The New York Times, 2017.08.23. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/23/world/europe/abdelbaki-essati-spain-attacks-imam.html?mcubz=0 (accessed on 10 May 2022).
[493] SINDREU, Jon *et al* (2017): *Investigators Probe Imam's Role in Radicalizing Young Men in Barcelona Terror Attack.* The Wall Street Journal, 2017.08.20. Available at: https://www.wsj.com/articles/imam-in-spanish-town-emerges-as-suspect-in-barcelona-attack-1503274339 (accessed on 13 May 2022).

of Moroccan immigrants; all of them were born or raised in Spain and as legal residents in the country they had access to the very same services as the majority society.[494]

According to neighbours and friends the young men were well integrated in their local community: they played soccer together, used to hang out at the riverbank, drank alcohol regularly, and liked to party, rarely attended the most and spoke to each other in Catalan.[495] Their friends were not only limited to ones of similar origin. Regarding their socio-economic situation all were benefiting from a social inclusion program for persons with an immigrant background, seven out of nine had competed secondary education and of those six were attending a professional training program.[496] However, some months prior to the attack their behaviour started to change; the young men would attend the mosque more frequently and became fervent in their faith. They wore *djallabas* from time to time (the traditional robes of North Africa). The background of the young men in the Ripoll-cell suggest that the radicalisation was not triggered by social exclusion or deprivation of any kind, rather it is believed to have evolved due to the influence of the radical imam.

According to investigators imam Es Satty had served a prison sentence earlier for drug trafficking and it was during this period that he encountered Rachid Aglif, known as "El Conejo" (Spanish for "The Rabbit") who had been charged for being a facilitator for the Madrid bombing. Es Satty was released for "[s]howing employment and an effort to integrate" and managed to keep a low profile while in Ripoll.[497] After migrating to Spain at the age of 30 (in 2002) he lived in the Andalusian city of Jaén for some time where he shared residence with an Algerian man who one year later would die as a suicide bomber in Iraq.[498] When moving to Ripoll in 2015, Es Satty had been in the focus of counter-terrorism investigations, but had – unlike those whom he had been in contact with, never been arrested.

The radicalisation process outlined above illustrates the dominant pattern for similar processes observed by researchers in Spain, namely that "[v]iolent radicalisation [in Spain] leading to involvement in jihadi terrorism appears to be highly contingent upon two key factors of what has been termed 'differential association', namely contact with radicalizing agents and pre-

[494] REINARES – GARCÍA-CALVO 2018, p. 6.
[495] SINDREU, J. *et al* 2017.
[496] REINARES – GARCÍA-CALVO 2018, p. 6.
[497] BABAS 2017.
[498] REINARES – GARCÍA-CALVO 2018, p. 7.

existing social ties with other radicalised individuals".[499] The study cited found that "[t]he importance of contact with a radicalizing agent points toward the relevance of ideology in the development of jihadi terrorists, while the significance of pre-existing social ties indicates the relevance of communitarian bonds with local networks, which facilitate terrorist radicalisation and recruitment".[500] Hence, it is more than likely that Es Satty benefited from existing social and family ties as there were four pairs of brothers in the Ripoll-cell. Also age and kinship is believed to have been determinant for the role of the young men in the group: while the elder ones played operational roles in the attacks, the younger brothers had more peripheral roles and are likely to have been persuaded into full compliance by their older brothers.[501] The selection of pairs of brothers would also ensure the meticulous carefulness required for the planning of the terrorist attack, as the elder brothers enforced the strict code of conduct onto their younger brothers.

After the attack in Barcelona the IS-affiliated *Amaq* news agency issued a message through the messaging application Telegram claiming that "[p]erpetrators of the attack in Barcelona were Islamic State soldiers and the operation was carried out in response to calls for targeting coalition countries".[502] Responsibility was also claimed through the same channel for the attack in Cambrils on the subsequent day.[503]

The case with the Ripoll-cell demonstrates a remarkable capacity to form a larger group and planning and attack without arousing any suspicion – neither among the security and intelligence authorities, nor among the local Muslim community. The radicaliser was a highly skilled person with a decade long experience from the jihadist environment who carefully selected his followers and managed to radicalise them without anyone noticing or understanding the changes the young men underwent. The fact that the changes in behaviour among the members of the cell went by rather unnoticed (or were even perceived as positive) in their

[499] REINARES, Fernando – GARCÍA-CALVO, Carola – VICENTE, Álvaro (2017): Differential Association Explaining Jihadi Radicalisation in Spain: A Quantitative Study. *CTC Sentinel* 10:6 (2017). Available at: https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss6-2.pdf (accessed on 10 May 2022. 29).

[500] REINARES – GARCÍA-CALVO – VICENTE 2017, p. 34.

[501] REINARES – GARCÍA-CALVO 2018, p. 7.

[502] JOSCELYN, Thomas (2017): Islamic State claims its 'soldiers' responsible for the Barcelona Attacks. *FDD's Long War Journal*, August 17, 2017. Available at: https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/08/islamic-state-claims-its-soldiers-responsible-for-barcelona-attack.php (accessed on 18 May 2022).

[503] "Referencias a España en la propaganda yihadista," Grupo de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional, Universidad de Granada; "El Estado Islámico reivindica el atentado en Cambrils," Vanguardia, August 19, 2017. Available at: https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170819/43661975116/estado-islamico-reivindica-el-atentado-en-cambrils.html (accessed on 18 May 2022).

families and the community at large underlines the need for awareness-raising measures in Muslim communities regarding potential signs of radicalisation.

6.4.6. Further attacks in 2017

In August 2017 soldiers patrolling in France were attacked by an offender and were seriously injured, but neither of them lost their lives.

In October 2017 a 30-year-old man, citizen of Tunesia, stabbed two young women to death at the train station of Marseille in southern France, shouting "*Allahu akbar*" at the time of the attack. The Islamic State – through its *Amaq* news agency - claimed responsibility for the attack. The attacker, identified by Tunisian authorities as Ahmed Hanachi, was shot and killed by security forces. Hanachi had no legal ground for his stay in France and had been arrested several times both in his country of origin as well as in France.[504] His criminal record included a history of petty crime, alcohol and drugs and the use of multiple identities, but was not known for being a jihadist sympathiser.[505] According to the French government's inspectorate general Hanachi's case demonstrate serious failure in the system not being able to properly handle persons staying in the country illegally.[506]

6.5. 2018

According to Europol's Terrorism Situation and Trend Report regarding 2018 the number of jihadist attacks decreased compared to the previous year (from ten to seven), however, the number of disrupted jihadist plots showed a significant increase.[507] Europol underlined that despite the military defeat over IS the threat from jihadist terrorism remained high, as the

[504] FRANCEINFO (2017): *Marseille: les autorités tunisiennes ont identifié l'auteur de l'attaque au couteau comme étant Ahmed Hanachi, un de leurs ressortissants*. France Télévisions, 2017.10.02. Available at: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/attaque-au-couteau-a-la-gare-de-marseille/marseille-ce-que-l-on-sait-de-l-assaillant-de-la-gare-saint-charles_2399190.html (accessed on 18 May 2022).

[505] Al JAZEERA (2017): *Two men held over fatal stabbing in Marseille*. Al Jazeera, 2017.10.12. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/12/two-men-held-over-fatal-stabbing-in-marseille (accessed on 18 May 2022).

[506] Al JAZEERA 2017.

[507] EUROPOL (2019): Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/tesat_2019_final.pdf (accessed on 10 June 2020), p. 4.

situation became more complex within the jihadist milieus: multiple actors with different motives were either acting alone or conspiring with others.[508]

6.5.1. The attacks in Carcassonne and Trèbes (23 March 2018)

On 23 March 2018 there were reports on several incidents in the town of Carcasonne in south-west France. In the first incident a man hijacked a car in Carcassonne, opening fire on the driver as well as on the passenger leaving the passenger dead and the driver seriously injured. Later he drove the vehicle with high speed towards a group of four policemen who were jogging and opened fired, injuring one on the policemen. After the attack on the policemen the gunman drove the vehicle to the city of Trèbes (8 km from Carcassonne) and opened fire in a supermarket while shoppers still were inside. He is claimed to have shouted that he was a soldier of the Islamic State as he took several hostages inside the shop and reportedly demanded the release of Salah Abdeslam, the sole survivor of the 2015 Paris attacks.[509] In exchange for one hostage held back the attacker demanded a policeman. A 45-year-old gendarme volunteered but was severely injured. The offender was eventually killed by an elite Swat team storming the supermarket.[510] In the attack a total of four people died and 15 were injured. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks through its Amaq News Agency.

The attacker was identified as Redouane Lakdim, a 25-year-old man from Morocco who became a French citizen in 2004. Lakdim lived in a socio-economically marginalised housing estate in Carcassonne, a town that is one of the historical hotspots for tourists in southern France. He had a record of petty crimes and was flagged as a potential security threat in 2014. According to France's top anti-terrorism prosecutor, Francois Molins, Lakdim had been on the extremist watch-list due to „[h]is radicalisation and his links to the Salafist movement", but there had been no indication of him carrying out an attack.[511] However, he was known to the police and intelligence services for drug offences and illegal firearms. Lakdim had also served

[508] EUROPOL 2019, p. 4.

[509] BBC (2018a): *France shooting: Police kill supermarket gunman*. BBC News 2018.03.23. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43518769 (accessed on 1 June 2022).

[510] BBC 2018a

[511] BBC (2018b): *France attack: Lakdim's girlfriend 'known to security services'*. BBC News, 2018.03.26. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43539728 (accessed on 1 June 2022).

a short prison sentence in Carcassonne in 2016 and had reportedly been highly active on Salafist social media platforms.

The method of targeting police or military is similar to a pattern of attacks on police officers and soldiers, from the shooting spree of the Toulouse terrorist Mohamed Merah in 2012 (first targeting soldiers before attacking a Jewish school), to an attack in 2017 when a police officer was killed on the Champs Elysées in Paris.

6.5.2. The Christmas Market attack, 11 December 2018, Strasbourg, France

On the evening of 11 December 2018 a gunman opened fire near a crowded Christmas market in the eastern French city of Strasbourg in an attack that killed five people, leaving another 11 injured.[512] Besides opening fire the attacker also used a knife to seriously injure and kill people and was reportedly shouting "*Allahu Akbar*" during the attacks and claimed that the attack was to "avenge" for "his brothers killed in Syria".[513] The perpetrator, later identified as 29-year-old Cherif Chekatt, was shot dead by police two days later after an extensive police investigation. Less than an hour after his death the Islamic State issued a statement through its *Amaq* agency claiming that Chekatt was a "soldier of the caliphate".[514]

The life of Chekatt seems to follow a similar pattern to other attackers in recent years (Mohamed Merah, the Kouachi brothers, Amédy Coulibaly and Radouane Lakdim). Chekatt was born in February 1989 in Strasbourg into a family with Moroccan roots and grew up in an outer-city housing project home to many of France's north-African immigrant population.[515] He left school at an early stage and had several low-paid jobs. He had his first conviction at the age of 17 and was given a two-year prison term for aggravated kidnapping and robbery. Later, he was incarcerated for robberies, some of which were violent, further assault against police officers and attempted homicide.[516] In total, he was charged for 27 incidents and found guilty 25 times,

[512] BBC (2018c): *Strasbourg Shooting: What we know*. BBC News, 2018.12.16. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46535862 (accessed on 1 June 2022).
[513] HÉNIN, Nicolas (2018): Lessons from the Strasbourg Attack. *European Eye on Radicalisation*, 2018.12.14. Available at: https://eeradicalisation.com/lessons-from-the-strasbourg-attack/, accessed on 1 June 2022.
[514] HÉNIN 2018
[515] WILLSHER, Kim (2018): *Chérif Chekatt: who is the Strasbourg shooting suspect?* The Guardian, 2018.12.12. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/12/cherif-chekkat-who-is-the-strasbourg-shooting-suspect (accessed on 1 June 2022).
[516] HÉNIN 2018.

leaving him incarcerated for over half of his adult life. Serving a considerable time in prison Chekatt is believed to have been radicalised during his time behind bars. For this very reason he was noticed by the relevant authorities already in 2015 and was put on the watchlist for potential threats to national security by the French domestic intelligence service (DGSI).[517]

Here it needs to be noted that Strasbourg has for a long time been a main hub for jihadist activity and recruitment. Further, the Strasbourg Christmas market is one of the biggest Christmas markets in France – if not all of Europe –, and has already been the target of an al-Qaeda-linked terrorist plot in December 2000 that was disrupted by French and German authorities.[518] It was one of al-Qaeda's first initiatives against the West and Europe and the market has been put under special security measures ever since.[519] At the time of the 2018 Christmas market attack several recruiters for fighters in Syria and Iraq had been active in the city. One of them, Foued Mohammed-Aggad, would subsequently turn out to be one of the terrorists responsible for the Paris Bataclan theatre attack on November 13, 2015.[520] This connection also illustrates the interconnectivity between the jihadist milieus in Western Europe.

The choice of a Christmas market – just like the terrorist attack at the Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016 – as a target is of symbolic importance: not only is Christmas the largest (Christian) festive celebration in most European countries, but an attack may also be designed against it in order to further divide Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe.[521]

In sum, in 2018 jihadist attacks were carried out by lone actors targeting civilians or symbols of authority. In the majority of cases, it was difficult to determine the motivation of the offender and whether there was any connection to a terrorist organisation or to other radicalised persons.

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[517] BBC 2018c

[518] The Frankfurt group was composed of at least 10 members spread across at least three countries, Britain, France and Germany and were all veterans of bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan. The group also worked with Muslim extremists in Britain, Italy, France, Spain and Belgium. The target of the plot is thought to have been the Christmas market in Strasbourg as well as the Notre Dame cathedral next to the market place. (FINN, P. Five Linked to al Qaeda Face Trial in Germany, *The Washington Post*, 2002.04.15. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/04/15/five-linked-to-al-qaeda-face-trial-in-germany/4b7c7dee-6dfd-4ed3-abba-bf474b58db74/, accessed on 1 June 2022).

[519] HÉNIN 2018

[520] BBC (2015b): *Who was third Bataclan attacker Foued Mohamed-Aggad*? BBC News, 2015.12.09. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35055304 (accessed on 1 June 2022).

[521] THE SOUFAN CENTER: *IntelBrief: Terror Strikes France: Strasbourg Christmas Market Attack*. The Soufan Center, 2018.12.13. Available at: https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-terror-strikes-france-strasbourg-christmas-market-attack/ (accessed on 1 June 2022).

The complexity of the phenomena was further exacerbated by mental health issues among the offenders, making it more difficult to detect at an early stage and highlighting the importance of including healthcare professionals in the preventative work.

6.6. 2019

According to Europol's annual Terrorism Situation and Trend Report the jihadist terrorist attacks decreased slightly in 2019 compared to the previous year; the TE-SAT 2020 reports a total of 7 attacks that were carried out (three completed and four failed) in the European Union.[522] The attacks were committed by members of a younger age group (20-28 years) and were all but one carried out by lone actors.[523] Among the targets were targeted personnel of military and law enforcement agencies. Only one successful attack was claimed by the Islamic State in 2019, although Europol presents several prevented cases in Germany, in Bulgaria, Great Britain, which were inspired by the Islamic State.[524]

6.6.1. The Utrecht attack (18 March 2019)

On 18 March 2019 a 37-year-old man killed four people and seriously injured two others, when he shot fellow passengers in a tram in Utrecht (Netherlands). It is believed that the perpetrator acted alone. He used a silencer that he had inscribed with texts referring to Islam, likely in emulation of the right-wing terrorist attack in Christchurch (New Zealand) on 15 March. He also left a note in a stolen getaway car, stating in Dutch that "[I] am doing this for my religion. You kill Muslims and you want to take our religion away from us, but you will not succeed. Allah is great". The suspect was known to the authorities as a (sometimes violent) repeat offender and possibly a psychologically unstable or disturbed individual, but not as an extremist. Two weeks before the attack he was on trial for a sex offence committed in 2017, and his provisional detention was conditionally suspended. The suspect's brother has been

[522] EUROPOL (2020): *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020 (TE-SAT)*. Europol, 2020. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/european_union_terrorism_situation_and_trend_report_te-sat_2020_0.pdf (accessed on 10 March 2022), p. 5.
[523] EUROPOL 2020
[524] EUROPOL 2020

linked to a Turkish extremist network, known as the Caliphate State group or Kaplan Movement.

In 2019, the terrorism situation in Europe continued to be influenced by the circumstances in conflict zones outside of Europe. Numerous Europeans connected to the so-called Islamic State were still present in Iraq and Syria. While shedding, IS maintained its global network of affiliates while transforming from its last stronghold in Syria to a covert rebel organisation operating in Iraq and Syria. Al-Qaeda once more expressed its desire to attack Western targets.[525]

6.7. 2020

According to Europol, there were 10 jihadist terrorist attacks during 2020 (in Austria, France and Germany).[526] Although they represent only a sixth of all attacks in the EU, jihadi terrorists were responsible for more than half of the deaths (12) and nearly all injuries (47). The total number of fatalities and injuries in the EU doubled from 10 deaths and 27 injuries in 2019 to 21 deaths and 54 injuries in 2020.

6.7.1. The murder of middle-school history teacher Samuel Paty, 16 October 2020

Less than a month after the Islamist attack outside the former headquarters of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, on 16 October 2020 in the French town of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, 30 kilometres from Paris, middle-school school history teacher Samuel Paty was brutally beheaded by an 18-year-old. The perpetrator was identified as Abdullah Anzorov, a man of Chechen origin, who came to France as a refugee with his family at the age of 6 and lived with his family and six brothers in Évreux.[527] Having left high school relatively young, he worked on construction sites and was known to the police for acts of damage to public property and

[525] EUROPOL 2020

[526] EUROPOL (2021): *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2021 (TE-SAT)*. Europol, 2021. Available at: https://kbb9z40cmb2apwafcho9v3j-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/tesat_2021.pdf (accessed on 1 June 2022).

[527] ONISHI, Norimitsu – MÉHEUT, Constant (2020): *A Teacher, His Killer and the Failure of French Integration*. The New York Times, 2020.10.26. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/26/world/europe/france-beheading-teacher.html (accessed on 3 August 2022).

violence.[528] His former third grade head teacher referred to him as a „difficult, cold and violent student, the kind of schoolboy that a teacher does not forget in his professional career".[529]

According to online news sources, the radicalisation of Anzorov was neither silent nor sudden. Quoting elements of investigations of the anti-terrorist sub-directorate (SDAT) and the general directorate of internal security (DGSI), Anzorov was portrayed as a person proselytizing with his family, rejecting women, messaging advocating *jihad*, in other words a person who did not hide his switch to radical Islamism for at least six months or even a year prior to the attack.[530] "Despite these signs of sectarian aberration, this 18-year-old Chechen from Evreux remained under the radar of the intelligence services: he was neither "file S" nor "monitored", according to news sources.[531]

The attack was allegedly revenge against Mr Paty showing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad to his class, which has been part of a lesson on freedom of speech.[532] After the lesson, a father of one of Paty's students, Brahim Chnina, accused Paty of Islamophobia on social media. On October 16, two weeks later, Anzorov arrived at the College du Bois d'Aulne in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, where Paty worked. Anzorov did not know Paty prior to the attack and asked students to point out the teacher. He then proceeded to stab and behead Paty in broad daylight outside the school.[533] Anzorov filmed the moments before the attack and the attack itself, which he uploaded to the Internet. Before police arrived at the scene, Anzorov uploaded video and photos of the attack to other IS-supporters and stated that his deed is "[i]n the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. From Abdullah, the Servant of Allah, To Macron, the leader of the infidels, I executed one of your hellhounds who dared to belittle

[528] PARIS-NORMANDIE (2020): Le tueur de Samuel Paty, qui vivait à Évreux, a été enterré en Tchétchénie. paris-normandie.fr, 2020.08.12. Available at: https://www.paris-normandie.fr/id148792/article/2020-12-08/le-tueur-de-samuel-paty-qui-vivait-evreux-ete-enterre-en-tchetchenie (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[529] DÉCUGIS, Jean-Michel *et al* (2021): *Le tueur de Samuel Paty, un élève froid, imprévisible et violent : «Sa présence était un poids psychologique»*. Le Parisien, 2021.10.14. Available at: https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/le-tueur-de-samuel-paty-un-eleve-froid-imprevisible-et-violent-sa-presence-etait-un-poids-psychologique-14-10-2021-6J4DO6YMBBGINAU74VKB2MSX4U.php (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[530] Le MONDE (2020): *Attentat de Conflans: sept personnes mises en examen dans le cadre de l'enquête sur l'assassinat de Samuel Paty*. Le Monde online, 2020.10.21. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/10/21/attentat-de-conflans-lors-de-son-audition-samuel-paty-a-nie-avoir-voulu-stigmatiser-les-musulmans_6056814_3224.html (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[531] Le MONDE 2020

[532] COUNTER EXTREMISM PROJECT: Abdoulakh Anzorov. 2020. Available at: https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abdoulakh-anzorov, accessed on 3 August 2022.

[533] COUNTER EXTREMISM PROJECT: Abdoulakh Anzorov. 2020.

Mohammed, calm his fellows before you are inflicted harsh punishment".[534] Anzorov was subsequently shot and killed by the police. No terrorist organisation claimed responsibility for the attack, but online IS-followers started sharing pictures of Paty's corpse that Anzorov published before police shot him.

Not only did the incident yet again spark a debate on French integration, but the brutal attack also served as a reminder of the harmful power of social media and how radicals might use it to target specific people in a way that might have fatal consequences.[535] The unsettling role that social media played in this situation was further underscored by a subsequent statement by Mr. Paty's coworkers, who voiced their conviction that online gossip contributed to the teacher's passing. According to this interpretation, Mr. Paty passed away because of an online hate campaign that has been linked to some of Anzorov's accomplices, who were detained shortly after the murder for links to the perpetrator via social media.[536] After the murder, nearly 100 letters of support for Anzorov occurred online.

According to online news sources it seems that the French security agencies were unaware of Anzorov as a potential extremist threat.[537] But the preliminary investigation – most notably the arrests of the terrorist's associates and the proof of outside funding support – revealed that Anzorov had connections to a larger network both in France and elsewhere. Anti-terrorism investigators established that Anzorov had been in contact with at least two Russian-speaking foreign fighters in the jihadist stronghold of Idlib in northwestern Syria,[538] which also demonstrates the significance of transnational connections between Islamist extremists is illustrated by the purported relationship between Anzorov and certain jihadi elements in Syria.

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[534] JOHNSON, Bridget (2020): *ISIS Magazin Published Photo of French Teacher's Head, Calls for More Attacks on Freedom of Expression*. Homeland Security Today, 2020.10.19. Available at: https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/isis-magazine-publishes-photo-of-french-teachers-head-calls-for-more-attacks-on-free-expression/ (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[535] BLACKWELL, S. (2020): Death of Samuel Paty and the implications for radical Islamism in France. *TRENDS Research and Advisory*, 2020.10.27. Available at: https://trendsresearch.org/insight/death-of-samuel-paty-and-the-implications-for-radical-islamism-in-france/ (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[536] FRANCE24 (2021): *French police detain seven over beheading of teacher Samuel Paty*. France24 online, 2021.01.13. Available at: https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210113-french-police-detain-7-over-beheading-of-teacher-samuel-paty (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[537] BLACKWELL 2020

[538] DÉCUGIS, Jean-Michel *et al* (2020): *Attentat de Conflans: l'ultime échange du terroriste Anzorov avec un 2e combattant en Syrie.* Le Parisien, 2020.10.23. Available at: https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/attentat-de-conflans-l-ultime-echange-du-terroriste-anzorov-avec-un-combattant-en-syrie-23-10-2020-8404579.php (accessed on 3 August 2022).

Some months prior to the attack, the new edition of the English-language monthly magazine *Sawt-al-Hind (*'The Voice of Hind')[539] exhorts readers to "race" to replicate the 2015 attack on the Paris offices of satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, arguing that governments were not doing enough to punish those whom the terror group viewed as blasphemers. The seventh issue of the magazine, released online by IS' supporters in India, tells Muslims that "[t]he governments you live under are providing full support and protection to every person who attacks our beloved prophet, under the pretext of freedom of expression".[540] The propaganda magazine swiftly responded to the terrorist attack by Anzorov with a full-page graphic in the issue released in October 2020.[541]

6.7.2. The Vienna attack (2 November 2020)

On 2 November 2020, lone perpetrator Kujtim Fejzulai, of Albanian descent from North Macedonia, but born and raised in Austria, opened fire in a district of the Austrian capital. The location of the attack was symbolic: it began in front of the synagogue in Vienna. The attack ended with the death of the assailant. During the attack, four civilians lost their lives and another 22 people were injured. The perpetrator was not unknown to the Austrian authorities; he was previously convicted of a crime related to terrorism after he wanted to travel to Syria to join the

[539] The *Voice of Hind* is an English language monthly magazine published by al-Qitaal Media Centre, a pro-Islamic State media channel, that focuses on India. The Voice of Hind, is a propaganda magazine similar to Dabiq and Rumiyah, online magazines used by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for propaganda and recruitment purposes. Sawt al-Hind only consists of ten to fifteen pages per issue, whereas Dabiq and Rumiyah are lengthier (approximately 40-80 pages). This English-language magazine is produced by the pro-Islamic State al-Qitaal Media Centre, established by the jihadist group Jundul Khilafah, which is based in Indian-administered Kashmir. One of its notable issues was a "lockdown special" edition that encouraged steps to "annihilate the disbelievers" including stabbing people with scissors and expending "less effort" by spreading COVID-19. Sources: KARACAN, T. B. (2020): Refraiming Islamic State: Trends and themes in contemporary messaging, *Danish Institute for International Studies*, 2020. Available at: https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/3547031/Reframing_Islamic_state_DIIS_06_2020.pdf (accessed on 3 August 2022). BUNKER, R.J., - BUNKER, P.L. (2020): The Appearance of Three New Radical Islamist English-Language Online Magazines: Al Risalah, One Ummah & Voice of Hind. *Small Wars Journal*. 2020. Available at: https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/appearance-three-new-radical-islamistenglish-language-online-magazines-al-risalah-one (accessed on 3 August 2022).

[540] The below cited 27th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of United Nations (UN), released on February 3, 2021 expressed concern at the rising number of ISIL sympathizers in cyberspace in South Asia. In this regard, the report particularly named the 'Voice of Hind', the only regional ISIL English-language outlet, which was started in early 2020 and is regularly published. The report is available at the following link: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/000/98/PDF/N2100098.pdf?OpenElement, paragraph 69.

[541] *Voice of Hind*, Issue 6, October 2020.

Islamic State. Because of this, he was sentenced to 22 months in prison, but was released after only 9 months due to his young age. At that time, he not only received housing and financial support from the Austrian authorities, but also participated in a state deradicalisation program. Fejzulai was a member of a jihadist network calling itself the 'Lions of the Balkans', whose other members are also active in German-speaking areas (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland), the majority of whom are second-generation immigrants with roots from the Balkans. There are also converts among the members of the network.

Although the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the Vienna attack a day later and published a picture of the perpetrator posing with the weapons used in the attack, it is still unclear what *de facto* connection the perpetrator – or the network he was part of – had with the Islamic State. In international media reports following the assassination, much emphasis was placed on a new generation of European jihadists who, like the Vienna attacker, were clearly radicalised by the propaganda of the Islamic State, but who are at best loosely connected to the terrorist organisation and (apparently) act independently. The attack in Vienna was the first European terrorist attack by the self-proclaimed "Lions of the Balkans" jihadist network.

A UN report[542] last February was the first official document to include the name "Lions of the Balkans"; according to some sources, neither the authors nor the analysts they called upon had come across this name before writing the report. In the report, the name of the organisation appears in connection with the already mentioned assassination in Vienna, according to which the assailant himself "[b]elonged to a terrorist network called the 'Lions of the Balkans'", which the report describes an "international network, which at most operates in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Western Balkan countries". The report further describes how members of this group were connected through a Tajik citizen called Komron Zuhurov to a Tajik IS cell in Germany (hereinafter referred to as the Takim cell), which planned the attack(s) on US and NATO military facilities in Germany.

The *modus operandi* of the Vienna attack, as well as the selection of the targets, is similar to those seen in recent European jihadist-motivated terrorist attacks: a lone actor attacking civilians in a symbolic location (in front of the Vienna synagogue). Furthermore, the perpetrator used similar firearms as in the attacks in France in 2015 (as at the Bataclan or against the

[542] "Twenty-seventh report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities," United Nations Security Council, February 3, 2021.

editorial office of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo). Compared to other jihadist-motivated attacks by lone actors in Europe, which were mainly carried out with knives or vehicles (ramming), the Vienna attack was more sophisticated. The weapons used by Fejzulai (Zastava M70 automatic rifle and Tokarev pistol) are prohibited in the European Union; these could most likely have entered through organised criminal networks – also illustrating the nexus between organised crime and jihadist networks.

Regarding the radicalisation process of Fejzulai, media reports claim that he became radicalised as a teenager at the Melit Ibrahim Mosque in Vienna and was further radicalised by the propaganda of the Islamic State. Fejzulai had reportedly been a member of the local salafi and jihadi milieu from his early teens and had – together with his friends – frequented several radical mosques, which were known to be heavily inspired by militant Salafis. It is significant that Fejzulai was connected to these, as a preacher who was influential in radicalising a generation of Austrian Islamist extremists oversaw each of them. Austrian security and intelligence services knew about Fejzulai and most of his friends as members of the jihadi milieu and prior to the Vienna incident a number of them had been in the focus of criminal investigations.

6.8. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

With the benchmark in the conceptual models and theories presented in the two previous chapters, it becomes clear that radicalisation is a gradual process that occurs in a person's life with individual causal factors paving way for what some scholars call "cognitive opening", resulting in the receptivity for accepting radical ideas and violent solutions.[543] The initial analysis of the backgrounds above exposes some characteristics shared by all, where common factors seem to be the question of identity and belonging, the seeking for higher purposes, the criminal lifestyle, early experiences with violence (and, hence, the relatively low threshold towards the further use of violence), the full embracement of the ideology and justification as presented by jihadi Salafi narrative, leading to indoctrination and a fearless hatred towards what is interpreted as "the enemy".

Process-tracing applied on the profiles above also illustrate how young men of secocond generation Muslim descent (the majority in the examples above originating from North Africa)

[543] WIKTOROWICZ 2004.

and with a history of petty crime become increasingly violent – a behaviour that is later legitimised and fuelled further by jihadist ideology. Most of them were radicalised through social network (Fejzulai, the Abdeslam brothers, the Ripoll-cell in Catalonia, Amri) or family members (Nzohabonayo, Abedi, the Ripoll-cell), confirming what analysts and researchers have been observing at least since the Madrid bombings almost two decades ago (2004) long ago, namely that the network remains one the most important sources of recruitment.[544]

The interpersonal links among the persons in the jihadist milieus remains an important factor in the radicalisation process leading to potential acts of terrorism, as illustrated by the case of several of the profiles above (the al-Bakraoui brothers, the Abdeslam brothers, the several pair of brothers in the Ripoll-cell). The interpersonal links are also of importance regarding the support for the religious component, as it was through social ties – and what may be assumed as a developing social identification with the ingroup as portrayed through the militant Islamist narrative – that some of the perpetrators are believed to have stepped on the pathway of radicalisation. The networks and close ties between the persons in the jihadi milieus and particular cells demonstrate the character of the radicalisation as a social process, which occurs not in a vacuum, but very much through interaction with other like-minded persons. This is relevant also considering the social identity theory, emphasising the role of the group, its identity and values, which eventually needs to be protected against the "others", who are not members of this group.

Another important factor to consider based on its significance in this context, is the question of second and third generation young Muslims in Europe. I have previously argued that these groups still constitute the primary target of militant Islamist radicalisation and recruitment, and the narrative of the terrorist group is shaped in a way to address perceived grievances by certain members of this group. This sheds light on the importance of identity and a sense of belonging as a factor crucial for the stability and well-being of the individual, as most of the profiles analysed above were born in the country of residence, holding a citizenship from the same country. This search for an identity and a place to belong is especially clear in the history of Salman Abedi, who kept travelling back and forth between Libya and the United Kingdom but did not really feel at home anywhere.

[544] ALONSO, Rogelio – REINARES, Fernando (2006): Magreb immigrants becoming suicide terrorists: a case study on religious radicalisation processes in Spain. In: PEDAHZUR, A. (ed): *Root Causes of Suicede Terrorism - The globalization of martyrdom*. New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 191.

Tracing further relevant points in the radicalisation process, the compilation above support that prisons remain hotbeds of radicalisation, which, in the past couple of years have truly become one of the most significant places to radicalise and recruit new members to the jihadi Salafist cause across (Western-) European prisons.[545] Of the backgrounds above almost each and every one has served one or several sentences in prison, and several of them are known to have encountered radical Islamists while being incarcerated (Abaaoud, Amri, Massod, Fejzulai). The role of radical preachers as an indicator of the religious component is also present in many of the backgrounds listed above (Butt, Amri, Abedi, Abaaoud, Fejzulai).

Following Precht's process tracing, the changes in lifestyle as a potential indicator or a change towards a more religious attitude are also identifiable in some of the cases. In the case of the youngsters in Ripoll it was clear that many of them gradually started changing their behaviour by more frequently attending the mosque, as well as changing their appearance to grow beards and wear more traditional clothes, which was also the case of Nzohabonayo, who was a convert to Islam. The backgrounds of the terrorist profiles above also demonstrate the different phases of the conceptual models of radicalisation, where the first step is a sort of dissatisfaction with life or society, the second step the encounter with others who share the same views, yet, the linearity of events is not an automatic explanation for the radicalisation eventually leading to acts of violence. Rather, I argue, the linearity of certain events is present in all cases, but it is rather the dynamic interplay between all the underlying factors identified above (background as second or third generation immigrants, history of petty crime, network of relatives and/or friends also part of radical milieus, personal grievances and failures, time spent in prison – and in some cases even mental illness) that will eventually make the individual take the step toward the use of violence. In this final last step, the religious component plays an important interconnecting role, as the majority of the cases above show the impact of a radical preacher or the jihadist propaganda arguing in terms of religious duties that eventually connects all the root causes and channels them into acts of violence.

Finally, another important conclusion must be drawn regarding the significance of the background as second or third generation Muslims. Examining the specific traits of the target group in question, the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants in Europe, it becomes clear that the radicalisation process is a complicated interplay between a variety of factors on different levels, including issues of self-identification, religious identity, a sense of belonging,

[545] ALLEN 2007

perceived grievances and potential feelings of discrimination and exclusion.[546] The recruiters have proven to be masters in targeting people who frequently feel excluded and discriminated against by offering a feeling of dignity and purpose, combined with a narrative of redemption for those with a criminal record. All these factors have proven to be a fruitful breeding ground for terrorist propaganda, radicalisation, and recruitment.

The majority of the perpetrators grew up in suburbs densely populated by immigrants and areas characterised by what is often described as socio-economically marginalised and high unemployment rate. This is important to note bearing in mind how such environments may serve as potential breeding grounds considering the underlying factors of radicalisation on individual and group levels, but also specifically in the context of Jihadist-inspired radicalisation. As referred to above, Silber and Bhatt note that "[e]nclaves of ethnic populations that are largely Muslim often serve as ―ideological sanctuaries for the seeds of radical thought. Moreover, the greater the purity and isolation of these ethnic communities, the more vulnerable they are to be penetrated by extremism--under the guise that it represents a purer, more devout form of Islam".[547] The deliberate targeting of second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants in mainly non-Muslim countries with their recruitment and propaganda both al-Qaeda affiliated organisations as well as ISIS are seeking to exploit the loss of identity, purpose, and values that may be prevalent among certain members of these groups,[548] hence the question of Muslim parallel societies need to be discussed further in the context of Jihadist-inspired radicalisation. The way IS has exploited socio-economic grievances of certain Muslim communities in the West, for the purpose of recruiting and inciting them to engage in terrorist activities has also been underlined by Europol, noting that "[I]S ideology has a certain appeal amongst segments of the Muslim population in the EU, sometimes expressing admiration for "martyrdom". Motivations may generally include a belief that Islam is under attack from the West."[549]

[546] VIDINO, Lorenzo (2007): The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30.7 (2007), pp. 579-592. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10576100701385933?scroll=top&needAccess=true (accessed on 7 September 2017).
[547] SILBER – BHATT 2007, p. 23.
[548] SCHUURMAN *et al* 2016
[549] EUROPOL 2017, p. 31.

CHAPTER 7

CASE STUDY: FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS FROM EUROPE 2014-2020[550]

One of the most severe aspects of militant Islamism and its expansion in Europe from the perspective of violent radicalisation and terrorism perspective is the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. As already stated above, I use this term throughout my research referring to foreign individuals who join militant Islamist groups in war zones to participate in an armed conflict in which their own state is not directly involved.[551] The most affected battlefield during the past years was the one in Syria during the so-called Caliphate proclaimed by the Islamic State, which during its peak attracted nationals from more than eighty countries to fight under the banner of militant Islamist organisations.[552] Although exact figures are nearly impossible to present, the number of individuals - both men and women - who have travelled from Europe to Syria is believed to be thousands[553] and doubled between 2014 and (since the declaration of the Caliphate).[554]

The first terrorist attack in Europe committed by a foreign fighter returning from Syria was the attack by perpetrator Mehdi Nemmouche at the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014.[555] The case of Nemmouche confirmed and strengthened already existing perceptions among counterterrorism professionals and policymakers regarding the threat a trained and skilled foreign fighter would pose upon return to continue the violent struggle.[556] Although the

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[550] Present chapter is based on the following publication: HORVÁTH-SÁNTHA, Hanga (2018): Returning Forreign Terrorist Fighters, Their Wives and Children. *National Security Review*, Issue 2. 2018, pp. 4-32.
[551] ARANY, Anett – N. RÓZSA, Erzsébet – SZALAI, Máté (2016): *Az Iszlám Állam kalifátusa. Az átalakuló Közel-Kelet*. Budapest, Osiris Kiadó és Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet, 2016, p. 17.
[552] THE SOUFAN GROUP (2015): *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq.* The Soufan Group, New York, 2015. Available at: https://www.cvereferenceguide.org/sites/default/files/resources/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf (accessed on 1 January 2022).
[553] NEUMANN, Peter (2015): *Foreign fighter total in Syria/Iraq now exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s*. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 2015. Available at: https://icsr.info/2015/01/26/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/ (accessed on 25 May 2019).
[554] THE SOUFAN GROUP 2015, p. 4.
[555] See Chapter 6 above.
[556] PERLIGER – MILTON 2016, p. 2.

phenomenon of persons travelling abroad from European countries of residence to join militant Islamist groups is not new, the growing interest in the foreign fighter phenomenon resulted in numerous studies examining potential factors pushing seemingly ordinary individuals to leave their homes and travel to places they knew little about and participate in violent activities in the name of an ideology they did not know all too much about prior to their departure.

In many cases, individual stories can be traced on social networking sites, from departure to arrival at the destination, and then to reports of daily life there. What emerge from these individual stories are not just a sense of adventure and a subjective understanding of individual duty in armed conflict, but more than that, a search for deeper rooted belonging and purpose.[557] Just as the previous parts, this chapter seeks to map out factors facilitating radicalisation with the help of process tracing, and the decision of individuals to join terrorist organisations in conflict zones and – where possible, compare the factors identified in line with what has been stated above in the previous chapter.

7.1.1. Definition: foreign (terrorist) fighter

Some argue that including the word "terrorist" in the notion of foreign fighters already labels the individual prior to any form of legal procedure.[558] In contrast to this, I have in Chapter 2 argued why it is important to consider the phenomenon of foreign fighters within the broader framework of terrorism and radicalisation research. Hence, throughout the text the term 'foreign terrorist fighter' (FTF) will be used in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014), identifying an FTF as anyone who "[t]ravels to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training".[559] Hence, with the regard to the male departees, the focus of the notion selected is the involvement in military training and combat operations, and not on the ones who are not engaged in fighting.

[557] THE SOUFAN GROUP 2015, p. 10.

[558] Such as for instance the European Parliamentary Research Service in its evaluation entitled "The return of foreign fighters to EU soil" from May 2018. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf, (accessed 18 June 2019), pp. 26-27.

[559] UNITED NATIONS Security Council Resolution 2178. 24 september 2014. Available at: https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SCR-2178_2014_EN.pdf (accessed on 3 June 2019).

7.1.2. Background of (Western) European foreign terrorist fighters

The following subchapter seeks to outline some of these characteristics outlined through empirical studies, however, without suggesting that there is one single profile for law enforcement agencies to solely focus on. The studies on the general characteristics conducted so far give a valuable insight to individuals and groups that may be more susceptible to the type of jihadist-inspired radicalisation than others, but much more importantly many of them underline the importance of social networks for the radicalisation and recruitment process. In several of the countries examined the radicalisation of individuals did not occur in a geographically highly diffused manner but was rather concentrated to local groups of already pre-existing networks. Considering that these local networks generally already comprise like-minded individuals, where group thinking is encouraged and peer pressure used (often in combination with social status as reward for participation serving a radical cause), it is not difficult to see how they can become fertile breeding ground for bloc recruitment for purposes such as fighting abroad.

Compared to the other focus countries in the study, relatively little information seems to be available in open sources regarding the background of the French foreign fighters. However, a note from 2017 by the French Co-ordination Unit of the fight against terrorism (*Unité de coordination de la lutte antiterroriste, UCLAT*) outlined the background of 265 French jihadists killed in Syria.[560] The persons were mostly second and third generation immigrants and of a relatively low average age when killed (28 years). 48 per cent had a criminal record and 56 per cent came from so called "priority neighbourhoods"[561] (previously known as "sensitive urban zones", a designation that currently covers more than 1,500 neighbourhoods and some 5 million people across the country), an area that has been identified as deprived (and as such received more support to achieve economic development, social cohesion, and the life of the inhabitants). Another study examining the background of 137 persons (of which 131 were men and only 6 women) convicted of jihadist-related offences in France between 2004 and 2017 came to similar conclusions.[562] The study was based on original judicial sources from their trials and showed

[560] MOLINIÉ, William (2017): *Quels sont les profils de 265 djihadistes français tués en Irak et en Syrie*. TFI Info, September 2017. Available at: https://www.tf1info.fr/international/info-lci-quels-sont-les-profils-de-265-djihadistes-francais-daech-tues-en-syrie-2063073.html (accessed 16 July 2019)

[561] *Quartier prioritaire* in French.

[562] HECKER, Marc (2018): 137 Shades of Terrorism. French Jihadists Before the Courts. *Focus stratégique, No. 79 bis*, April 2018, Institut Francais des Relations Internationales. Available at: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/hecker_137_shades_of_terrorism_2018.pdf, accessed 16 July 2019.

that the 40 per cent of the persons convicted came from priority neighbourhoods, their average age at the time of the offence was 26 years, had a low level of education (significantly lower than the French average) and showed a low labour market integration.[563] 40 per cent had a criminal record, the most common convictions included violence, theft or fraud, drug trafficking and traffic violations.[564] An examination of the nationalities of 130 of the total 137 persons in the study showed that 90 were French citizens, 29 held dual citizenship (14 French-Moroccans, 10 French-Algerians, and 5 French-Tunisians) and 11 were foreigners (3 Moroccans, 3 Algerians, 3 Tunisians, 1 Indian and 1 Pakistani).[565] This trend of home-grown radicalisation and terrorism is completely in line with the other focus countries of this study. A large majority of the convicted were born in France and grew up there, but the origin of the families of the persons reveals a significant dominance of the Maghreb-region. Also 74 per cent were born in Muslim families. The author of the study therefore concludes that migration "is a factor that plays an important role in the jihadist phenomenon".[566]

In an analysis from 2014 (supplemented in 2016) the German domestic intelligence service (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz,* hereinafter: BfV) analysed the background of 784 persons from Germany who travelled to Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2016.[567] 79 per cent of them were men and 21 per cent female. The average age at the date of departure was 25.8 years, the largest age group being the one of 22-25 year-olds.[568] The persons traveling came from a total of 162 German cities and municipalities with different characteristics (metropolitan areas, large as well as small towns and village). Although these cities and municipalities are distributed over the entire federal territory, the BfV underlined that regional hotspots are emerging, especially there were only 13 cities out of which a double-digit number of people had left (minimum 11 and maximum 107 persons).[569] 61 per cent were born in Germany and 62 per cent held a German citizenship at the time of travel. Those born abroad came from 38 countries with the main countries of origin being Turkey, Syria, Russian Federation, Morocco, Lebanon, and

[563] HECKER 2018, pp. 18-19.
[564] HECKER 2018, p. 19.
[565] HECKER, pp. 22-23.
[566] HECKER 2018, p. 24.
[567] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ (2016): Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. Oktober 2016. Available at: https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/analyse-der-radikalisierungshintergruende-fortschreibung-2016.pdf (accessed on 11 June 2019), pp. 1-61.
[568] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ 2016, p. 12.
[569] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ 2016, p. 14.

Afghanistan. 27 per cent held dual citizenship, the largest dual national groups being the German-Turks (21 per cent), German-Moroccans (17 per cent), German-Tunisians (13 per cent), German-Afghans (11 per cent) and German-Syrians (7 per cent).[570] 72 per cent had attended primary school, with 36 per cent having graduated from high school. According to the information available, 96 per cent of the persons examined were known from the Salafi environment. Hence, a clear majority of the departed persons were already involved in local networks, which is important information not at least from both a preventative as well as a repressive point of view. 134 persons were converts to Islam – of these two thirds had converted before the age of 22.[571] Approximately two thirds of the persons in the study had a criminal record.

Regarding the underlying places and processes of radicalisation – followed by motivation to travel to conflict zones – the BfV found the following factors of importance: friends, regular visits at certain mosques, the internet, so called Islamic seminars, family and events were the *Qur'an* was distributed (such as for instance by the Salafi organisation "*Lies!*").[572] The conclusion regarding the importance of friends and social networks in the BfV study was confirmed by Reynolds and Hafez in 2017.[573] Their study, analysing push and pull factors in the case of 99 German foreign fighters (who had travelled to or attempted to travel to Syria), found that interpersonal connections and peer-to-peer groups were the most significant mobilisation factor. Interestingly, the researchers also emphasised that there was little evidence to support the often-cited theory claiming that radicalisation is mainly caused by integration deficit, among other factors contradicted by the large per centage of persons holding German citizenship. Nor did they find significant evidence to support that radicalisation mainly occurs through social media.[574] Reynolds and Hafez especially took note of the large number of converts to Islam among the German foreign fighters: overall 23 were converts to Islam (of which 13 were of native German origin – with both parents having German ancestry), a high per centage in comparison to the other countries affected by the foreign fighter phenomenon.[575]

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[570] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ 2016, p. 15.
[571] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ 2016, p. 17.
[572] BUNDESAMT FÜR VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ 2016, p. 20.
[573] REYNOLDS, Sean C. – HAFEZ, Mohammed M. (2017): Social Network Analysis of German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq. *Journal Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2017. Available at: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/81223714.pdf (accessed on 6 June 2019).
[574] REYNOLDS – HAFEZ 2017, pp. 21-22.
[575] REYNOLDS – HAFEZ 2017, pp. 9-10.

The statistically high number of native Germans also suggests that more research needs to be conducted regarding the theory of poor integration as a major factor behind radicalisation.

Creating their own database on Belgian foreign fighters, researchers van Ostaeyen and van Vlierden analyse the background of 716 individuals, focusing on ancestry and citizenship.[576] The dataset was limited to persons who at least had made an attempt to travel to the conflict zone, overall 85 per cent managed to reach it.[577] The information available on the citizenship of these persons showed that the vast majority (slightly more than 76 per cent) were Belgian citizens, followed by Morocco (6.5 per cent), Russia (5.3 per cent), France (4.2 per cent), Algeria (2.4 per cent), Italy (1.4 per cent) and the Netherlands (1.2 per cent). However, in the case of the ones enlisted as Belgian citizens it is important to note, that dual citizenships were not taken into account, but the researchers counted an individual living in Belgium holding dual citizenships as only Belgian.[578] The ancestry of the ones listed as Belgian citizens however give a better appreciation of the background of the individuals: the majority (more than 62 per cent) – i.e. almost half of all the foreign terrorist fighters from Belgium - were of Moroccan origin.[579] The Moroccan dominance is in correlation with the fact that Moroccans represent the largest group among Belgium's Muslim population – but also with the figures showing that Moroccans are the largest component in the overall foreign population in Belgium with near half million residents born as Moroccan citizens.[580] In an attempt to search for answers with regard to the high number of persons of Moroccan descent among the foreign terrorist fighters from Belgium - in comparison with the Turkish diaspora, which counts for the second largest groups of Muslims in Belgium and yet only accounts for 10 per cent of the foreign terrorist fighters - another study found that, despite a relatively similar socio-economic situation and experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation, Moroccans were more susceptible for rebellion and violence. [581]

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[576] OSTAEYEN, Pieter van – VLIERDEN, Guy van (2018): Citizenship and Ancestry of Belgian Foreign Fighters. *ICCT Policy Brief*. International Center for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. May 2018. Available at: https://www.icct.nl/publication/citizenship-and-ancestry-belgian-foreign-fighters (accessed 4 July 2019).

[577] OSTAEYEN – VLIERDEN 2018, p. 4.

[578] OSTAEYEN – VLIERDEN 2018, p. 4.

[579] OSTAEYEN – VLIERDEN 2018, p. 4.

[580] Data collected by Belgian sociologist HERTOGEN, Jan (2015). Available at: http://www.npdata.be/BuG/282-Migratie-gewest/ (accessed 4 July 2019)

[581] PASCARELLI, Paige (2017): Identities 'Betwixt and between': analyzing Belgian representation in 'homegrown' extremism. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*. 10 September 2017. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19434472.2017.1374988 (accessed 4 July 2019).

Ostaeyen and Vlierden identified three major networks as the main hubs of recruitment (Shariah4Belgium, the Zerkani-network and one organised around the Brussels convert Jean-Louis Denis), partly overlapping each other and involving more than 83 per cent of the persons in the database over Belgian foreign terrorist fighters. Almost half of the Moroccans in the database were living in the big city areas of the Brussels Capital Region and Antwerp. The average age for the entire dataset was 29 years.[582] Considering the total numbers, these two areas represented two third of all cases.[583] When assessing the threat posed by Belgian foreign fighters, researchers found that the ones of Moroccan descent were responsible for most terrorist threats, both regarding attacks committed against Western targets as well as suicide attacks in Syria or Iraq.[584]

A study conducted in 2015 concluded that a wide range of motivational factors can be found among those who choose to leave Belgium and join the Islamic State. In many of the cases the feeling of joining a more welcoming environment was dominant, along with general feelings of not being able to cope with everyday difficulties, not seeing a future for themselves, the need of activism and search for heroes to look up to, as well as pure adventure seeking – or simply a malicious intent.[585]

In a comprehensive study published by the Swedish Defence University, the background of 267 foreign terrorist fighters from Sweden was analysed.[586] The study showed that most of them came from the big city regions across Sweden with very few people having an actual connection to Syria. Often, they were born in Sweden (34 per cent) but at least with one parent born abroad. 75 per cent held Swedish citizenship. Many of them belonged to the same families or circle of friends – a trend in line with similar patterns from other European countries. More than 70 per cent of them came from socially exposed neighbourhoods, defines as areas with high criminality, most of the immigrant-born population and generally low socio-economic status. Two thirds of the Swedish foreign terrorist fighters had also been involved in criminal activity

[582] OSTAEYEN – VLIERDEN 2018, p. 10.
[583] OSTAEYEN – VLIERDEN 2018, p. 8.
[584] VLIERDEN, Guy van – LEWIS, Jon – RASSLER, Don (2018): Beyond the Caliphate: Islamic State Activity outside the Group's Defined Wilayat – Belgium. *West Point: The Combating Terrorism Center*, February 2018. Available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2018/02/CTC-Beyond-the-Caliphate-Belgium.pdf (accessed 5 July 2019), p. 8.
[585] COOLSAET, Rik (2015): What drives European to Syria and to IS? Insights from the Belgian case". *Egmont Paper* 75, March 2015. Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations. Available at: http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2015/03/75.pdf?type=pdf (accessed 5 July 2019), p. 17.
[586] GUSTAFSSON – RANSTORP 2017.

prior to their travel (i.e., they had been suspected of at least one crime).[587] This is a higher ratio compared to other countries. Several motivational factors may be found behind the traveling; among others the belief that traveling to IS was a religious duty, but it may very well be for pure adventure-seeking purposes.[588]

There is little information found publicly on the background of the Dutch foreign terrorist fighters. Early research from 2015 suggests that the majority is male and under the age of 25 and come from a lower or lower-middle class socio-economic background.[589] Most of them come from The Hague or the conglomeration of the city.[590] Apart from these initial similarities other factors show a wide spread: some of the persons are well educated, while others experienced difficulties at school, just like some have a criminal background, but far from all.[591] Some have reportedly experienced mental health issues, potentially making them more susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment.[592] The mental health issues discussed and experienced in the context of the Dutch foreign terrorist fighters does not equal a psychotic disorder, making them unable to function properly in society. Rather the theory of social exclusion was used as a potential explanatory factor, implying that negative experiences of being excluded from the majority group may lead to certain feelings of stress and the disruption of the dopamine system – that in its turn may contribute to radicalisation.[593] The study mentioned further potential risk factors in this regard, such as ethnic minority status, urban upbringing, low IQ, childhood traumas and substance abuse, hereby specifically mentioning the Dutch-Moroccan community as the population facing most of these risks.[594] It may be fair

[587] ROSTAMI, Amir *et al* (2018): The Swedish *Mujahideen*: An Exploratory Study of 41 Swedish Foreign Fighters Deceased in Iraq and Syria. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 2018. pp. 1-14.
[588] SWEDISH SECURITY SERVICE 2014, p. 56.
[589] BAKKER, Edwin – GROL, Peter (2015): Motives and Considerations of Potential Foreign Fighters from the Netherlands. *ICCT Policy Brief*, July 2015. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ICCT-Bakker-Grol-Motives-and-Considerations-of-Potential-Foreign-Fighters-from-the-Netherlands-July2015.pdf (accessed 5 July 2019)
[590] GINKEL, Bibi van – MINKS, Simon (2018): Addressing the Challenge of Returnees: Threat Perceptions, Policies and Practices in the Netherlands. In: RENARD, Thomas – COOLSAET, Rik. (eds). Returnees: *Who are they, why are they (not) coming back, and how should we deal with them?* Egmont Paper 101. 2018. pp. 55-71, p. 60.
[591] GINKEL – MINKS 2018, p. 60.
[592] PAULUSSEN, Christophe – NIJMAN, Janne – LISMONT, Karlien (2017): Mental Health and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon: A Case Study from the Netherlands. *ICCT Report*, March 2017. The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ICCT-Paulussen-Nijman-Lismont-Mental-Health-and-the-Foreign-Fighter-Phenomenon-March-2017.pdf (accessed 5 July 2019).
[593] PAULUSSEN *et al* 2017, p. 13.
[594] PAULUSSEN *et al* 2017, p. 13.

to assume that this may be true also for the case of the Belgian-Moroccan individuals mentioned above.

7.2. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Examining the underlying causes to why individuals from West decide to join armed conflicts in remote areas is of pivotal importance for the preventative work and the conclusions so far contains the important message to governments still struggling with the issue not to focus on one sole theory but to rather see the radicalisation process from a holistic perspective and adjust their measures accordingly, often on a case-by-case basis. In many cases, politicians, decision-makers, stakeholders and even researchers tend to claim that there is no general profile of a foreign terrorist fighter. Using the same process-tracing method as in the previous chapter, however, it becomes quite clear that there indeed are several significant commonalities, which would be a mistake not to consider when it comes to the preventative work – not at least from a safeguarding and vulnerability perspective.

This conclusion is supported firstly by the fact that the majority of the FTF's in the overview above are born in (often broken) immigrant families, having a criminal record and mostly a low education, living unstable lifestyles before embracing radical Islam.[595] The empirical data referred to in the chapters above outline a similar portrait of a person being susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment – and to eventually travel for terrorist purposes: a young man between 18-30 years, with one or both parents born abroad, living in a certain urban area with an immigrant-majority population characterised by low socio-economic status. Albeit these similarities it is, however, important to bear in mind that there is no general socio-economic or ethnic profile that may offer valuable clues to why certain individuals travel abroad to participate in armed conflict.[596]

Some researchers refute the theory claiming that terrorism necessarily springs from poverty in the context of the foreign fighters. Instead, they point to the fact that the (Western) foreign fighters who have joined the Islamic State originate from highly prosperous countries with high levels of economic development and low income inequality, as well as well-functioning

[595] HECKER 2018, p. 9.
[596] REYNOLDS – HAFEZ 2017, p. 3.

political institutions.[597] Rather they claim it is a matter of politics, ideology and the question of feeling excluded in an ethnically and linguistically homogenous country. One thing is sure, though: there is no one-size-fits-all model to explain why people join terrorist organisations such as IS, but rather it should be seen as interplay between several different underlying causes and motivational factors. This also supports what has been said above regarding the conceptual models of radicalisation and the role of religion and identity as interconnecting factors in the dynamic process of adopting violent ideas and behaviour.

As noted above, the average foreign fighter holds a citizenship of the country he is leaving behind. Holding a Western government-issued passport may also contribute to the foreign terrorist fighters being able to return largely unnoticed. It is also likely that he (or she) has joined together with – or due to – either family members or friends, which yet again proves the importance of networks and social peers in the radicalisation process and contains and important conclusion from a prevention perspective, namely that extra effort should be made to identify other persons from the same network who may also be at risk of either radicalising or being recruited to travel for terrorist purposes.[598] Reaffirming the importance of social networks as a significant pull factor for the mobilisation and recruitment of foreign fighters – in comparison to the theories about integration deficit, social deprivation and the power of social media in the radicalisation process – may also contain an important message to governments: from a prevention perspective it may be easier to map out and dismantle and individual's social network rather than for instance engaging in expensive so called counter-narrative campaigns in the rapidly evolving social media sphere. The importance of belonging as well as the socio-psychological character of the radicalisation process is also underlined by the fact that most individuals recruited in Europe have become attracted to radical Islamism through personal contacts. It has been presented above with significant support how recruiters are often charismatic individuals who consciously select vulnerable individuals living in an identity crisis and relative isolation, seeking for purposes, identity, and a sense of belonging.[599]

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[597] BENMELECH, Efraim – KLOR, Esteban (2016): *What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?* The Kellogg School of Management Northwestern University and NBER. Available at: https://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/benmelech/html/BenmelechPapers/ISIS_April_13_2016_Effi_final.pdf (accessed 12 June 2019)

[598] ROSTAMI *et al* 2018.

[599] UK Prevent Strategy. 2011. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf (accessed on 6 March 2016), p. 19.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is an obvious decline regarding the number of persons travelling to Syria it still should be underlined that IS and al-Qaeda-affiliated groups continue to pose a major threat to the Western societies as they have an on-going intent and capability to carry out attacks.[600] Some studies[601] make an attempt to prove based on statistics available so far that it is unlikely that large numbers of foreign terrorist fighters will launch major attacks on European soil upon return. However, as attacks such as the 2015 November Paris attacks show – already the presence of one foreign terrorist fighter (in this case Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the alleged ringleader and "mastermind" behind the attacks) – can cause tremendous harm and sever casualties. The lone perpetrators also remain a source of concern as they – inspired and perhaps even supported by IS – show willingness to carry out attacks with unconventional means in the West.

After the collapse of the so-called Caliphate and the successful pushback of the Islamic State, Europe – as well as other parts of the world – may in some way sense a relief. However, researchers and security experts warn that this may be a false sense of security, as not only do the returning foreign terrorist fighters pose a serious threat to European societies, but this time of relative decrease in terrorist activity also implies that it should be used to consolidate already existing initiatives, measures, and policies to continuously combat the aforementioned threat. There is also plenty of evidence indicating that the jihadist networks in Europe are currently in a phase of reorientation, focusing on keeping these groups alive, spreading their ideas and recruiting new members to join the cause. This increased activity is especially vivid after the military defeat of IS – and has in some cases resulted in an exceptional growth as they are many times bigger than before the war in Syria broke out.[602]

Through the analysis regarding the FTF's from Western Europe I have found further support to not neglect the specific characteristics of the second and third generation of Muslim immigrant, especially in terms of religion and identity (a religious identity as a combination of both). Just as noted regarding the terrorist profiles in the previous chapter, it becomes clear that the radicalisation process is a complicated interplay between a variety of factors on different levels,

[600] EUROPOL 2018, p. 26.

[601] For instance: ZUIJDEWIJN, Roy (2014): *Fearing the Western Muslim Foreign Fighter: The Connection between Fighting the Defensive Jihad and Terrorist Activity in the West*, MA Thesis, Utrecht University, January 2014, pp. 40-49; QURESHI, A. (2014): *Blowback – Foreign Fighters and the Threat They Pose*. London, CAGE, 2014, p. 12; BYMAN, D. – SHAPIRO, J. (2015): *Be Afraid, Be a Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria*. Washington DC, Brookings, 2015.

[602] EUROPOL 2019, p. 40.

including issues of self-identification, religious identity, a sense of belonging, perceived grievances and potential feelings of discrimination and exclusion.[603] Hence, there is a need to explore a dynamic model explaining the radicalisation process in which, parallel to the focus on linear phases focusing on the gradual changes in behaviour, the components of religion and identity are seen as interconnecting all the other underlying factors.

Although it falls outside the scope of this research, another important question has to be noted in this context, namely the fate of the wives and children of the foreign terrorist fighters. There is yet little experience and understanding in how to deal with them and there is no consensus on to what extent (if any) they pose to their original home societies upon return.

[603] VIDINO 2007

CHAPTER 8

CASE STUDY: RELIGIOUS IDENTITY – A STUDY OF YOUNG SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRIA[604]

Current case study was conducted for the sake of exploring the religious identity among a group of second generation Muslim immigrant. Hence, in a broader context, the study seeks to explore potential correlation between the existence of a firm religious identity rejecting other forms of authority, and other factors significant in the radicalisation process, which have been thoroughly examined in previous chapters. That said, it must be noted and underlined that current research does not automatically link the religious identity to the process of violent radicalisation, but rather seeks to explore to what extent and through which mechanisms religion and perception of (religious) authority may or may not present an obstacle to adaption to and/or integration in the host society as a first step. To broaden the understanding of the second (and third) generation of immigrants, a complementing literature review is presented on questions related to religious identity and identification as well as the concept of "mutual affiliations" or dual loyalty, and the question of how (religious) identity may severe the process of integration if the religious affiliation predominates over all others, creating a minority group predominantly bonded because of this particular affiliation.

Seeking to explore the correlation between religious identity and radicalisation, previous chapters have presented conceptual models of the interplay between different factors in the radicalisation process of second and third generation Muslims in the West. In addition to the examination of root causes on the individual level (including psychological, societal, and environmental factors), more research has begun to see the daylight regarding the breeding ground of radicalisation in a broader sense, through questions such as religious identity, identification, perception of authority and integration among the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants. These studies focus among others on reactive religious identity, generational differences in relation to religious identification, further on how religion impacts the integration and/or adaptation to the host societies. Most of the studies offer not only a

[604] The findings of the case study were presented by fellow researcher SPEIDL, Bianka (2018) In: BELHAJ, Abdessamad – SPEIDL, Bianka: *Migration as Disruption: Politics, Society and Media.* MTA-SZTE Research Group For The Study Of Religious Culture, Szeged, 2018, pp. 69-89.

comparative analysis of Muslim immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds living in Western European societies, but also a wide range of answers to different issues including the definition of (religious) identity, the stability of identification as well as to what extent and through which mechanisms religion facilitates or hinders socioeconomic and cultural integration of immigrants.[605]

Present chapter presents a case study conducted by Speidl and Horváth-Sántha in March 2016 investigating questions related to religious identity among second generation immigrants between 16-18 years in a public school in Vienna, Austria. The study attempts to contribute to on-going debate on religious identity among second generation Muslim immigrants and to explore the possible correlation between religious identity and the question of radicalisation.

8.1. BACKGROUND RELEVANT TO THE CASE STUDY

8.1.1. Muslim population in Europe: figures

To understand the spread of radical and militant Islamism in Europe, it is first and foremost necessary to map out the wider background, including the contemporary presence of Islam in Europe, the formation, and characteristics of Muslim communities in Europe and the dynamics of the different generations. Regarding the presence of Islam in Europe, it is important to state already at the outset that there is not one united Muslim community in Europe, but several communities with political, economic, social, and cultural differences and specificities,[606] hence the study of identity formations among European Muslims need to take into account this diversity.

[605] KOGAN, Irena – FONG, Eric – REITZ, Jeffrey G. (2020): Religion and integration among immigrant and minority youth, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46:17, pp. 3543-3558. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1620408 (accessed on 7 March 2022).
[606] ROSTOVÁNYI, Zsolt (2008): *Az európai muszlim közösségek differenciáltsága*. Budapest, Corvinus Egyetem. 2008, p. 125.

It is estimated that Europe[607] had a Muslim population around 25.8 million in 2016,[608] then making up to almost 5 per cent of the total population.[609] These numbers, as presented by the Pew Research Center in 2017 are the most recent and official numbers currently available. Estimates by the very same research centre also show a steady increase in the number of Muslims in Europe as well as a younger European Muslim population compared to native Europeans.[610] The median age of Muslims throughout Europe was 30.4 in 2016, which is 13 years younger than the median for other Europeans (43.8).[611] According to the figures presented by the Pew Research Center 50 per cent of all European Muslims are under the age of 30, compared with but 32 per cent of non-Muslims in Europe.[612] Additionally, the average Muslim woman in Europe is expected to have 2.6 children, one child more than the average non-Muslim woman (1.6 children).[613]

The figures presented above suggest that if the growth rate follows the same trends, the Muslim population in Europe is expected to double by 2025. Already almost two decades ago Muslims made up most of the immigrants in Western European countries such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.[614] Hence, questions of identity, religious culture, attitudes toward the host societies as well as integration are of pivotal importance as the Muslim population is estimated to increase over the coming decades.

In a study presented by the above research centre three scenarios were modelled to envision how the size of the Muslim population in Europe would change.[615] According to the first scenario, where all migration to Europe would immediately and permanently stop ("zero migration scenario"), the Muslim population would still continue to increase due to the fact that

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[607] Europe here is defined as the 27 Member States of the European Union, plus Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

[608] PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2017): *Europe's Growing Muslim Population*. Pew Research Center, 27November 2017. The Muslim population in Europe was estimated around 3.8 percent of the total population in 2010. Available at: https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/ (accessed on 21 February 2022).

[609] PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2017

[610] HACKETT, Conrad (2017): *5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe*. Pew Research Center. 29 November 2017. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/ (accessed on 7 March 2022).

[611] HACKETT 2017

[612] HACKETT 2017

[613] HACKETT 2017

[614] LEIKEN, Robert. S. (2005): Europe's Angry Muslims." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 4, 2005, pp. 120–135. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/20034425 (accessed on 7 March 2022).

[615] PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2017

Muslims is Europe are younger than the average (with 13 years) and have higher fertility rate (one average with one more child per woman).[616] This scenario foresaw the Muslim population increasing from the above mentioned level of 4.9 per cent to 7.4 per cent by the year 2050. The second scenario envisioned a medium-level migration with refugee flows would stop after mid-2016 but regular (i.e., legal) migration would continue. According to this scenario the Muslim population would reach 11.2 per cent by 2050. The third and final scenario projected the high influx of asylum-seekers in 2015 and 2016 to continue indefinitely and with the same religious composition (a majority of the asylum-seekers being Muslim). This, together with the regular flow of migrants would increase Europe's Muslim population to 14 per cent by 2050, nearly three times as much as the current share.[617]

In their paper from 2019 Rostan and Rostan estimated the number of years the European Muslim population would be in majority among 30 European countries.[618] The researchers envisioned the same three scenarios as above and used wavelet analysis combined with the Burg model to forecast the population growth. The study found that among the three scenarios, the most likely mid-point migration scenario identified 13 countries where the Muslim population will be majority between years 2085 and 2215: Cyprus (in year 2085), Sweden (2125), France (2135), Greece (2135), Belgium (2140), Bulgaria (2140), Italy (2175), Luxembourg (2175), the UK (2180), Slovenia (2190), Switzerland (2195), Ireland (2200) and Lithuania (2215). The 17 remaining countries would – according to the researchers – not reach Muslim majority in the next 200 years. The study found that the growing Muslim population will change the face of Europe socially, politically, and economically. From the perspective of the present research, the relevance of such figures related to a very distant future may be rightfully questioned. Hence, it should be noted that they are not destined to pave way for far-reaching conclusions, but simply to illustrate a potential demographical shift in the make-up the European population.

Koopmans' study in 2009 of 9,000 Muslims in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden came to the conclusion that even if the vast majority of Muslims are

[616] PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2017

[617] PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2017

[618] ROSTAN, Pierre – ROSTAN, Alexandra (2019): When will European Muslim population be majority and in which country? *PSU Research Review*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 2019, pp. 123-144. Available at: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/PRR-12-2018-0034/full/html (accessed on 21 February 2022), p. 5.

not Islamists, there is a sizable proportion of them who are 'fundamentalist' in the sense that they take their holy scrip literally.[619] Koopmans noted that

> "[t]hese findings clearly contradict the often-heard claim that Islamic religious fundamentalism is a marginal phenomenon in Western Europe or that it does not differ from the extent of fundamentalism among the Christian majority. Both these claims are blatantly false, as almost half of European Muslims agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, that there is only one interpretation of the *Qur'an*, and that rules laid down in it are more important than secular laws. […] Of course, religious fundamentalism should not be equated with the willingness to support, or even to engage in religiously motivated violence. But given its strong relationship to out-group hostility, religious fundamentalism is very likely to provide a nourishing environment for radicalisation."[620]

Schmid confirms this conclusion; using public polls as a tool to measure support and sympathy for jihadism in Muslim-majority countries as well as in West, he concludes that „[t]here is a sizeable radical milieu in both Muslim-majority countries and in Western Muslim diasporas, held together by the world wide web of the internet".[621] Comparing Salafist Jihadism (*al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya*) with Fascism and Communism, Schmid argues that this ideology successfully managed to establish itself as „the dominant ideology of rebellion in the early 21st century".[622] What will happen on the physical battlefields of *jihad* will be important, but just as important as the fallout of these physical battles is the question of 'hearts and minds' of Muslims worldwide.

In conclusion, a better understanding of Muslim population is – or should be – of utmost importance to European governments and policymakers; in the context of the present thesis for the sake of preventing violent radicalisation potentially leading to acts of terrorism.

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[619] KOOPMANS, Ruud (2013): Fundamentalism and out-group hostility Muslim immigrants and Christian natives in Western Europe. *WZB Mitteilungen*, December 2013. Available at: https://www.wzb.eu/system/files/docs/sv/iuk/koopmans_englisch_ed.pdf. (accessed on 20 February 2022), p. 5.

[620] KOOPMANS 2013

[621] SCHMID, Alex. P. (2017): Data to Measure Sympathy and Support for Islamist Terrorism: A Look at Muslim Opinions on Al Qaeda and IS. *ICCT Research Paper*, April 2017, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague 8, no.2. Available at: https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2017/02/ICCT-Schmid-Muslim-Opinion-Polls-Jan2017-1.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2022)

[622] SCHMID 2017, p. 27.

8.1.2. Muslim Immigrants in Europe in the 20th century

Muslim immigration to Europe can broadly be divided into two groups: those arriving from former (European) colonies and those from other third countries attracted by labour market shortages.[623] Immigration from Muslim countries to Europe began in the decades after World War II, as post-war reconstruction required cheap and unskilled labour, hence to meet this demand several countries implemented programs to recruit and resettle guest workers from third countries.[624] Although labour market immigration from Muslim countries began already in the 1950's, the growing immigrant communities remained rather invisible both culturally and politically in the coming decades.[625] The evolution of research within this reflects this development: not until the 1980's did the question of Islam in Europe become an important area for academics.[626]

The guest-worker programs (just like the term itself) in Western Europe were intended to follow a seemingly simple logic: immigrants could stay in the host country as long as they had a job. They will return home when the economy stagnates, but if the economy recovers, they can return just as easily. In the late 1960s, this formula proved still workable, but the oil crisis of the 1970s and the subsequent recession resulted in measures to curb immigration in several countries. As part of the restrictive measures the simplified return promised to former migrant workers was abolished (such as in the case of Germany for instance), hence the majority of migrant workers chose to remain in the host country despite losing their jobs.[627] A similar situation developed in other countries employing guest-workers (such as Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands).

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[623] HANSEN, Randall (2003): *Migration to Europe since 1945: Its history and its lessons*. Oxford, United Kingdom, The Political Quarterly Publishing Co. Ltd, 2003, p. 25.
[624] CSIKI, Tamás – JUSTH, Krisztina (2010): Az iszlám Európában – integráció vagy konfliktus? *Nemzet és biztonság*, 2010. december, pp. 39-45. Available at: http://www.nemzetesbiztonsag.hu/cikkek/csiki_tamas__justh_krisztina-az_iszlam_europaban_____integracio_vagy_konfliktus_.pdf (accessed 16 March 2017), p. 39.
[625] PAREKH, Bikhu (2009): Feeling at Home: Some Reflections on Muslims in Europe. *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 8 (2009), pp 51–85, p.52.
[626] Some events that illustrate the new strand within research is for instance a Europe-wide project in the mid-1980s sponsored by European Science Foundation focusing on Islam in Europe and also an international conference called The New Islamic Presence in Europe convened by Sweden in 1986.
[627] HANSEN 2003, p. 26.

Migrant workers were eventually followed by their wives and other family members through family reunification programs; however, host societies still did not place enough emphasis on integrating immigrants.[628] Politicians expected the migrant workers to return home sooner or later, but this was in most cases not an option due to the still unfavourable economic conditions in the countries of origin. Settled guest-workers were - mainly because of the economic stagnation - gradually displaced on the outskirts of large cities, where ethnic enclaves began to form. In many cases, social inclusion was hampered not only by the lack of public incentives but also by the voluntary segregation of the immigrants themselves.[629] Few spoke the language of the host community, rarely had contact with the culture of the host society – and among the ones originating from former colonies the first generation had a sense of inferiority.[630] The separation thus took place partly along a civilisational-cultural, and partly along an economic, political and social fault line.[631]

8.1.3. The Second and Third Generation of Muslim Immigrants in Europe

With the advent of the second generation of Muslim immigrants in Europe, the so-called generation continuity become important, namely the transmission of culture, religion, and language – especially in a society that has defined itself as a Christian, but where religion did not play a prominent role in everyday life.[632] The second generation has already – in terms of geography – been separated from the country of origin as well as from its everyday culture, which has been named by researchers as one of the reason to the strengthening of the Muslim identity (in comparison with the ethnic identity).[633] This growing 'Muslim consciousness' was highlighted by a survey conducted by a Pew Research Institute (Pew Global Attitudes survey) in the European Muslim community, in which the majority of Muslims surveyed tended to identify with their religion, as opposed to indigenous Europeans who referred to their nationality as the main component of their identity.[634] But the growing Muslim self-awareness

[628] CSIKI – JUSTH 2010, p. 40.
[629] MIAH, Shamim (2015): Self-Segregation and the Muslim Problematic. In: *Muslims, Schooling and the Question of Self-Segregation*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137347763_2 (accessed on 7 March 2022)
[630] PAREKH 2009, p. 52.
[631] ROSTOVÁNYI 2008, p. 125.
[632] PAREKH 2009, p. 52.
[633] PAREKH 2009, p. 52.
[634] PEW RESEARCH INSTITUTE (2011): *Muslim-Western Tensions Persist*. Pew Research Institute, 2011. Available at: http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/07/21/muslim-western-tensions-persist/ (accessed on 10 April 2022)

is also partly due to the recognition that – in order to achieve greater advocacy and political effectiveness in host societies - an Islamic identity, independent of nation as well as the culture of a given country is needed with which a larger number of persons can identify with.[635] The second generation was less attached to the country of origin of their parents, knew how to organise themselves and find their way around in the political systems of the host countries.[636] Hence, first-generation immigrants who had been perceived as "quiet" were, with the advent of the second generation, contrasted with Muslims who were raised in Europe and who claimed religious identity in public spaces. As one of the well-used methods to claim religious identity in public spaces is the use of the haram-halal distinction to delineate what is sacred or acceptable in society (and what is not is). Tietze point to the fact that this clear delineation also serves the purpose of the (in this context: the Turkish-Muslim) community, as it is a way of using religion to organise their lives in the "disorder of the [German] society".[637]

International events also contributed to the growing consciousness an emphasis on Muslim identity. These events – such as e.g., the revolution in Iran, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan as well as 9/11 and the aftermath of the attacks, the continuous Arab-Israeli conflict, the invasion of Iraq are all examples of events that brought together Muslims across the globe. In terms of identity Maalouf underlines that people have the tendency to identify themselves through the affiliation that is most under attack.[638] According to Maalouf "[t]he affiliation that is a cause – colour, religion, language, class – invades the whole identity. Those who share it feel solidarity; they gather, mobilise, encourage each other and take sides. For those, affirming their identity becomes inevitably an act of courage, an act of liberation".[639]

As large parts in the European discourse on radicalisation and terrorism have included the question of Islam and religion as the most important driver to the current wave of terrorism incident across the continent, Cavanaugh describes this as the "othering" of Islam, claiming that "[t]he myth of religious violence helps to construct and marginalize a religious Other, prone to fanaticism, to contrast with the rational, peace-making, secular subject".[640] Along the

[635] PAREKH 2009, p. 53.
[636] PAREKH 2009, p. 53.
[637] TIETZE, Nikola (2002): *Jeunes musulmans de France et d'Allemagne. Les constructions subjectives de l'identité*. Paris, Editions L'Harmattan. 2002, p. 258.
[638] MAALOUF 1998, p. 34.
[639]MAALOUF 1998, p. 34.
[640] CAVANAUGH, William T. (2009): *The Myth of Religious Violence*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 4.

argumentation of the "othering", Khosrokhavar argues that young Muslims in Western diasporas may have been influenced to adopt extremist religious ideas by this "othering" of religion in generally secular regimes as demonstrated for instance in domestic political debates.[641] These theories of reactive religiosity claim that Muslims' religiosity tends to rise – both in terms of identification and the degree of religious practice – in an environment of intense public discussion about issues relating to the integration of Islam into Western society are much-discussed in academic writing. Closely related to the topic, Schmidt argues that it is believed that the Muslim community offers a dematerialised homeland and a space of identification separate from national attachments.[642] Käsehage notes that albeit some of these Muslims initially may have been unaware of fundamentalist religious interpretations of Islam, "[d]aily prejudice against them because they wear certain clothing, such as the *hijab* or the *jellabiya*, and media depictions of Islam as a violent religion can be seen as contributing to the radicalisation of some young Muslims in Europe", with radicalisation (also) being a form of protest.[643] In opposition to the position of Cavanaugh and Khosrokhavar, Schmid indicates the existence of a type of violence specifically related to Abrahamic religions.[644]

In the very same second generation, the problems rooting in a lack of integration became tangible as early as the late 1980s and as some of these young adults grew into an increasing group of poor urban youth of Muslim descent who, unlike their parents, proved much more receptive to radical ideas.[645] Leiken notes in the context how appealing to feelings of exclusion and discrimination, al-Qaeda began to deliberately recruit second-generation European Muslims.[646]

The third generation of Muslims in Europe possess – similar to the second – a combination of European self-awareness and the vulnerability of immigrant counter-interest and defiant resistance.[647] Rostoványi characterises this dichotomy with "[t]he repulsion of Europe and the

[641] KHOSROKHAVAR, Farhad (2014): *Radicalisation*. Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2014.
[642] SCHMIDT, Garbi (2004): Islamic Identity Formation among Young Muslims: The Case of Denmark, Sweden and the United States. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 2004, 24, pp. 31–45.
[643] KÄSEHAGE 2020, p. 292.
[644] SCHMID, Alex P. (2020): Religion and Violent Extremism - with a Focus on Islamist Jihadism. In: HOCK, Klaus – KÄSEHAGE, Nina (eds.): *Militant Islam' vs. 'Islamic Militancy'? Religion, Violence, Category Formation and Applied Research. Contested Fields in the Discourses of Scholarship*. Berlin and Zürich: LIT-Verlag, 2020, p. 53.
[645] KEPEL 2007, p. 31.
[646] LEIKEN 2005.
[647] LEIKEN 2005.

attraction of Islam",[648] which has proved to be an ideal breeding ground for the acceptance and mastery of the radical Islamist worldview in the lives of many young Muslims. Precht also notes that "[r]ecruitment for violent action among young people has proved to be a noticeable tendency, in particular among ethnic minorities most likely to be second or third generation immigrants or descendants in their country of residence".[649] The potential for recruiting among second and third generation Muslims in Europe has also been recognised and exploited by the Islamic State.

8.1.4. Religious identity – a theoretical framework

Numerous surveys and research have looked at the issues of religious identity, reactive religious identity, generational disparities in ethnic and religious affiliation, and the influence of religion on the ability of second-generation Muslim immigrants to integrate into host society. Most articles compare and analyse Muslim immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds who live in Western European societies and the findings offer a wide range of explanations to issues such as the definition of identity, the stability of identification, further the impact of the context as a facilitator or as an obstacle to integration and the relation between a cultural vis-à-vis a religious identity.

In a study conducted in 2015 among 198 Muslims in the United States focusing on the role of cultural identity in the radicalisation process Lyons-Padilla *et al* found that immigrants who could neither identify with culture, nor the heritage they were living in (a phenomenon the researchers called 'cultural homelessness') felt marginalised and insignificant.[650] This marginalisation resulted in a lack of sense of belonging, which could be exploited by groups affirming their self-worth and offering them a firm identity.[651] Lyons-Padilla *et al* also found that the marginalisation in combination with experiences of negative events such as discrimination, humiliation, loss of job could make things worse in a sense that the person in question would more easily find relief in radicalism, promising sense of belonging as well as a life purpose.

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[648] ROSTOVÁNYI, Zsolt (2008): *Az európai muszlim közösségek differenciáltsága*. 2008. 130.
[649] PRECHT 2007
[650] LYONS-PADILLA, Sarah *et al* (2015): Belonging nowhere: Marginalization & radicalisation risk among Muslim immigrants. *Behavioral Science & Policy, 1*(2). 2015, pp. 1-12.
[651] LYONS-PADILLA *et al* 2015, p. 2.

The reinforcement of a religious identity through – among others - the negative attitude[652] (here: at the level of world politics towards Muslims) in the aftermath of the process of 'deculturalisation' was confirmed by Parekh.[653] Maalouf also suggests that in times of stress of uncertainty there is a tendency to identify with the one part of the identity that is perceived to be under the fiercest threat or attack,[654] which may be an important factor in understanding the turn towards a violent and fundamentalist form of Islam among second and third generation immigrants in Western Europe. The development of a reactive identity in this context illustrate how the immigrant children separate themselves from the culture and community at large, reaffirming a distinct religious identity in response to social exclusion and discrimination experiences.[655] Karlsen and Nazroo argue that in situations similar to these, religiosity may serve the purpose of supporting a socially stigmatised identity.[656] Muslims may retaliate in this situation by asserting their Islamic identity in an effort to elevate what has been devalued.[657]

However, Torrekens and Jacobs argue against the suggestion that Muslim religiosity is affected by a negative discursive climate; examining whether countries with a more open discursive climate show lower levels of Muslim religiosity and more restrictive discursive climates lead to higher levels of Muslim religiosity, they concluded that "[t]he discursive climate does not seem to mechanically impact on the overall level of Muslims religiosity".[658] Comparing ex-

[652] For instance, the riots that erupted in immigrant-majority suburbs in several parts of Europe (France, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden), reinforcing right-wing anti-immigration voices in society, as well as a number of policy measures launched to curb Islamic manifestations from public places (e.g. French and Belgian laws banning the wearing of 'full-body clothing' in public places (which do not name the traditional masks and niqabs that cover women's faces in some Muslim countries, but clearly refer to them), or the 2009 ban on minaret construction in the Swiss referendum.

[653] PAREKH 2009, p. 59.

[654] MAALOUF 2011

[655] TORREKENS, Corinne – JACOBS, Dirk (2015): Muslims' religiosity and views on religion in six Western European countries: does national context matter? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2015. 42, pp. 1-16. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283583298_Muslims'_religiosity_and_views_on_religion_in_six_Western_European_countries_does_national_context_matter (accessed on 2 July 2017)

[656] KARLSEN Saffron – NAZROO, James Y. (2015): Ethnic and Religious Differences in the Attitudes of People towards Being 'British.' *The Sociological Review*, 2015;63(4), pp. 759-781. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-954X.12313?journalCode=sora (accessed on 1 August 2022)

[657] BRUBAKER, Rogers (2013): Categories of analysis and categories of practice: a note on the study of Muslims in European countries of immigration, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36:1, 2013, pp. 18. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2012.729674 (accessed on 1 August 2022).

[658] TORREKENS – JACOBS 2015, p. 8

Yugoslav, Moroccan, Turkish and Pakistani Muslims, Torrekens and Jacobs rather supported the thesis of "the country of origin influence."[659]

In sum, considering the fact that the Muslim population in Europe is steadily growing and that Muslims in Europe at present are already much younger than the median for all Europeans,[660] there is an urgent need to discuss the question of identity as a prominent issue among Muslim communities and second as well as third generation Muslim immigrants in Europe, especially as evidence show that the a failure to find a balance between a Western identity and a religious and/or ethnic identity inherited through the family may occasionally lead to an identity crisis.

8.2. BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDY

The aim of the case study was to produce a comparative analysis of the perceptions of immigrant adolescents in Austria regarding culture, religion, society and family structures. The country was selected not only because of its geographical proximity to Hungary, but also because of Austria being home to a relatively large number of Muslims compared to its overall population (more than 8 per cent of the overall population of approximately 8.9 million being practicing Muslims),[661] and because of the high numbers of foreign fighters from Austria joining the so-called the Islamic State (more than 300 – which is among the highest per capita in Europe).[662] The selection of the secondary school was based on its experience with students having been influenced by radical imams as well as the propaganda of the Islamic State. The findings in the case study are based on a series of in-depth oral interviews conducted in Vienna with 34 secondary school students of immigrant background (Christian as well as Muslim) aged between 16-18 years. The interviewees were questioned on their feelings toward the host culture, as well as its society and different integration programs currently available. The aim was to detect how religious culture impacts the perceptions and strategies in negotiating between family traditions and the values and opportunities offered by the secular host environment. In the answers given by the respondents, common patterns and statements were identified and clustered into four themes: the importance of religion and religiosity as well as

[659] TORREKENS – JACOBS 2015, p. 14.
[660] HACKETT 2107
[661] STATISTA (2021): *Muslime in Österreich*. Statista, 2021. Available at: https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/312152/umfrage/anzahl-der-muslime-in-oesterreich/ (accessed on 21 January 2022).
[662] GINKEL – ENTENMANN 2016, pp. 23-25.

attitudes towards parental, institutional and charismatic authorities. Identifying religion as a dominant marker of identity illustrated its direct impact on the perception of authority and consequently, its influence on the approaches towards the norms of the host environment (i.e. the integration itself). Based on these findings, this analysis contributes to a better understanding of how religion affects the perception of authority and integration among immigrants in Europe.

8.2.1. Aim of the case study

By contrasting the process of cultural adjustment and attitudes of Muslim and Christian adolescents, the case study intends to shed light on the role of religion in the perception of authority and integration. The question of authority is, in the words of Njegovan Ratković, "[o]ne of the most complex principles of social organization in a modern society, and the most important relationships between individuals or groups are based on some type of authority".[663] Hence, by understanding the attitudes towards the basic types of authority among members of a society, conclusions can be reached also within the context of social relations and social cohesion during a particular period in time.

It provides a comparative examination of Christian and Muslim adolescent attitudes living in Vienna and studying at the same high school, an institution where more than 80 per cent of the pupils originate from other countries. Furthermore, we were interested in learning how religion influences how individuals negotiate between family traditions and conventional authority perceptions, as well as the values and opportunities afforded by the secular host context in which they currently dwell. We were also interested in learning how their religious affiliation influences their attitudes regarding the host society's institutional authorities.

8.2.2. Context: Muslims in Austria

Exact numbers on the Muslim population in Austria are difficult to collect, as the Austrian census changed to a register-based approach in 2011, and religious data has not been collected

[663] RATKOVIĆ NJEGOVAN, Biljana *et al* (2011): Characteristics and Types of Authority: the Attitudes of Young People. A Case Study. *Sociológia 43*, 2011, No. 6, pp. 657-673. Available at: https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/120811162%20studia.pdf (accessed on 25 May 2019)

ever since.[664] According to the latest estimates (from 2016) around 700,000 members of Islamic faith communities lived in Austria, which is significantly more than in the early 1970s.[665] This growth can be explained primarily by immigration from Turkey, the Muslim areas of the former Yugoslavia and, in recent years, refugees from the Arab and North African regions. Their share of the population increased accordingly from 0.3 per cent in 1971 to 8 per cent in 2016. This means that since the 1970s, the Islamic religious community is the fastest growing of all religious communities in Austria and today Islam the most widespread religion among foreigners living in the country.[666] The first large influx of Muslim migrants arrived in Austria as guest-workers in the 1960s, mostly from Turkey and Yugoslavia. Refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Chechnya arrived later.

A study from 2010 on Islam in Austria found that the Islamic community is characterised by higher birth rates compared to the indigenous population and underlined that a further increase was to be expected, in particular due to the possibility of family reunification in the case of foreigners who have been living in Austria for a long time.[667] The study also found that the proportion of new-borns with at least one parent of Islamic faith will continue to increase. In February 2019, there were 78 Islamic associations and mosques in Vienna, more than in any other federal state, and a total of 278 Muslim institutions belonging to various umbrella organisations were listed in Austria.[668] A survey on the religiosity of Muslims in Austria conducted between July 2016 and March 2017 showed – based on the answers on various religious aspects – that a total of 42 per cent of the Muslims surveyed were considered highly religious.[669] The findings were based on Austrian data of the Religion Monitor in 2017, and examined how Austrians without a migration background (natives) and Muslims living in

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[664] SPERINGER, Markus – BAUER, Ramon (2014): Residential Patterns by Religion and Ethnicity in Vienna. In: BRIAN J. *et al* (eds.): *Yearbook of International Religious Demography*. Leiden, Brill, 2014, pp. 157-166.

[665] STATISTA: Anzahl der Muslime in Österreich von 1971 bis 2016. Available at: https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/312152/umfrage/anzahl-der-muslime-in-oesterreich/#professional (accessed 25 May 2022).

[666] JANDA, Alexander – VOGL, Mathias (2010): *Islam in Österreich*, Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, 2010. Available at: https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/AT/Downloads/Publikationen/Zusammenfassung_Islam_in_OEsterreich.pdf (accessed on 10 May 2022), p. 3.

[667] JANDA – VOGL 2010, pp. 8-9.

[668] STATISTA: Islamische Vereine und Moscheen in Österreich nach Bundesländern 2019. Available at: https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/297196/umfrage/moscheen-und-islamische-gebetsraeume-in-oesterreich-nach-bundeslaendern/ (accessed on 26 May 2022)

[669] HÖLLINGER, Franz (2022): Religiosität in Österreich: Einheimische und Muslim*innen im Vergleich, *Z Religion Ges Polit*, 2022. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s41682-022-00102-7 (accessed on 26 May 2022)

Austria relate to religiosity and how they perceive the religiosity of the other group. The results showed that the religiosity of natives and Muslims developed in different directions: while the religious practice among younger native respondents was declining sharply, this was not the case with Muslim respondents. The study also found that Muslims were also much more likely to hold the view that there is only one true religion and only one correct interpretation of religious commandments.[670] Because of the different meanings of religion for locals and Muslims, as well as the cultural traditions and ways of life associated with secularised European Christianity on the one hand and Islam on the other, both sides, particularly Austrian natives, have reservations about the other group's religious beliefs and lifestyles.[671]

8.2.3. Methodology

The interviews were conducted in March and April of 2016 with 34 secondary school students of immigrant background between 16 and 18 years. 19 of the respondents were female and 14 of them were male. English and German were the languages of conversation. Among the students, 22 were Muslims and 10 identified themselves as Christians – namely, Catholic, Serbian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox, and one Protestant (Baptist). One Chinese girl said she has no religious affiliation, and a Hungarian boy expressed that religion has no impact on his life. The interviews were carried out in the school during teaching time with the permission of the principal and the staff. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes. Countries of origin included: Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Chechnya, China, Croatia, Egypt, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Syria, and Turkey. The participants volunteered for the interview and their anonymity will be preserved. Regarding their status, only two of them held Austrian citizenship but all of them had residency status in Austria. Out of the 34 respondents, 13 students were born in Austria, one Pashtun boy had arrived only 8 months prior to the interview – therefore there is no reference to his views in the study. Approximately half of the students migrated to Austria between the ages of 2 and 12 (16 out of 34 students).

The interviews were structured around the following topic areas:

1. family (composition, history, religion, parents' job, financial situation);

2. social life (use of language, making friends);

[670] HÖLLINGER 2022
[671] HÖLLINGER 2022, pp. 16-17.

3. experience in Austria (discrimination, support, justice, tolerance) and its comparison with the situation in their country of origin;

4. values (priorities, the impact of religion on everyday life, practice, authority, role models;

5. future expectations and perspectives (opportunities, obstacles).

The fact that the interviews were conducted in the second (German) or third (English) language of the participants was taken into consideration when the students volunteered for the interview. The command of language of the volunteering students proved to be sufficient enough to explain their views in a simple but clear manner. The use of language – in the case of English – was preserved in citations, only those mistakes were corrected that risked misunderstanding. German conversations were translated by the researchers.

Regarding the analysis the influence of religion was measured qualitatively, most especially emphasised by the readiness to follow its rules and laws, the strictness of religious practice, as well as the presence of religious references used in accepting or refusing inherited values and those offered by the host environment. By highlighting the reasoning behind the choices and answers given to the questions, the focus was placed on what religiosity meant for the Muslims and Christian interlocutors and how it specifically and/or generically affects their life choices. Remarks on religion and culture were selected from the accounts of the students. This was followed by detecting dominant themes in the speakers' explicit statements such as the centrality of religion, religiosity as a cultural marker, the family as a primary transmitter of religion, immigrant experience and views on Austria. The researchers were also interested in how religion influenced the interlocutors' perceptions of integration and inclusion.

8.2.4. Definition of integration

Recognising how religion and its impact in immigrants' adaption to their new home countries are crucial topics that have been scarcely examined. Constant et al. distinguished between two models to measure the ethnic identity and, as a result, integration; a one- and a two-dimensional

model.[672] The one-dimensional model examines ethnic identification from the standpoint that attachment to one's homeland and attachment to one's adopted homeland are mutually exclusive. That is, a larger attachment to the host country must imply a lesser connection to the home country, and vice versa; any combination of the two ideas is feasible as long as they add up to one. The two-dimensional model presents a more realistic scenario claiming that attachments to the host and home countries are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and more complicated combinations are possible. Under the two-dimensional model, Constant *et al* list four possible ways of adapting one's ethnic identity: assimilation (which is complete adjustment to or absorption by the host country while cutting all ties to the home country); integration (adjustment to the host country while simultaneously maintaining ties to the home country); separation (not adjusting to the host country but withholding strong connections to the home country); and marginalisation (not adjusting to the host country but withholding strong connections to the home country).[673] While the one-dimensional model categorises respondents as either integrated or not, the two-dimensional method distinguishes between more and less integrated respondents. Language, culture, societal interaction, migration history, and ethnic self-identification were found as five factor groupings in both methodologies.[674]

For the aims of the present case study, we found this differentiation between assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation highly useful and relevant.

8.2.5. Research setting

The interviews took place in a school in Vienna's 10th district, where the immigrant population ratio is one of the highest in the city. The school, which is one of the largest in the capital, has around 1.500 students. It is a business school that focuses on commercial education. Approximately 80 per cent of the students are of immigrant origin. The school's multi-ethnic makeup is mirrored in its curriculum, which includes mediation sessions, mentoring programs, and integration classes for students who arrived as part of the migrant wave in 2015 (i.e. the

[672] CONSTANT, Amelie *et al* (2006): *Clash of Cultures: Muslims and Christians in the Ethnosizing Process*. The Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA), Discussion Paper No. 2350, September 2006. Available at: https://docs.iza.org/dp2350.pdf (accessed on 25 May 2022).
[673] CONSTANT *et al* 2006, pp. 3-4.
[674] CONSTANT *et al* 2006, pp. 3-4.

year before the study was conducted). The teachers at the school have received training as part of the Austrian government's program to prevent radicalisation.

Upon enrolment in the school, the student's parents must sign a contract agreeing to follow the institution's code of conduct (*Hausordnung*). The code of conduct provides relatively wide freedom in terms of dress code and as a result there are female students who dress in a purely secular manner, as well as those who wear black hijabs to cover their bodies and hair. The flexibility of the rules did however not satisfy all parents. The principle cited several examples of parents who knowingly breached the contract by refusing to allow their daughters to engage in sports instruction or by reporting their child sick right before a prolonged school excursion. Further, the principle emphasised the significance of intuition while dealing with Muslim children and their parents, acknowledging the necessity to accommodate often unpredictable scenarios.

According to two members of staff, Muslim students typically observe a strict code of conduct because they come from families where tradition is maintained even among the second generation in the host society. Due to insufficient language skills most parents of the children with immigrant background are not able to follow the children's educational progress of their children and as a result, they struggle to assist their children in preparing for post-secondary school. Parents frequently require their children to act as interpreters in a variety of formal situations, ranging from dealing with bureaucracy in all-day life to visiting doctors. The school encourages parents to use German as much as possible in their homes in order to aid in the integration of their families as a whole and individually.

The institution provides generous assistance to new immigrants, but because they are not accustomed to independent labour, the youngsters are unable to pursue and complete higher education in most cases. Another source of issues is early, arranged weddings, which can occur as soon as a person reaches the age of majority. Girls are frequently engaged before they reach the age of majority, preventing them from pursuing their education.[675]

[675] A study published in March 2020 confirmed the trend of so-called "sharīʿah-compliant marriages" winning ground on European soil, where "multiple techniques of management of cross-border Islamically-compliant matrimonial nuptial forms have been developed by both state institutions and Muslim transnational family members". The article investigated the so-called "child marriages" of first- and second-generation migrant Muslim partners in Italy and the United Kingdom and noted the challenges that these marriages pose to Western European legal systems. SONA, F. (2020): Reformulating Transnational Muslim Families: The Case of *Sharīʿah*-Compliant Child Marriages, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2020, 40:1, pp. 84-103, DOI: 10.1080/13602004.2020.1744840.

According to the teachers interviewed in the case study, political events in the regions of origin (Middle East, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Balkans) have visible effects on the students, as most of them have extended families in their countries of origin. During the 2015-2016 academic year, ten asylum seeker student who arrived through the migrant wave of 2015 were accepted to the school. In 2014 two female students aged 15 and 17 left the school to join the Islamic State after what was claimed to have been a rapid radicalisation process.[676]

When the interviews were performed in 2016, there had been no racial, religious, or political dispute in the school.

8.3. ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

Muslim students tended to resort to religious argumentation even if the issue in question fell under the scope of cultural expectations or rational considerations rather than religious dogmas, in other words: the supreme authority and the principal reference of orientation remained religion itself. In their view the religious requirements are deemed as universally applicable. What is impermissible under the religious obligations, on the other hand, was to be refused and objected. Christians tended to be critical of certain social norms and practices, but their argumentation lacked references to religious doctrines or scriptures, further, religious doctrine had no major influence on the practising Christian adolescents and their perceptions of authority and integration. Religious norms and values are principally transmitted through customs within the family and community, later to be 'delegated' to the private sphere.

[676] In April 2014 the two Austrian citizens Sabina Selimovic (15) and Samra Kesinovic left Austria to join the Islamic State in Syria. Sabina Selimovic was 15 years old and Samra Kesinovic was 16 years old at the time of departure. They were both born in Austria, were Austrian citizens, and were members of the Muslim Bosnian diaspora. Prior to their departure both girls are said to have visited the Altun-Alem mosque, in which the Salafist extremist Mirsad Omerovic, better known as Ebu Tejma, preached. The families of the girls deny that they had been indoctrinated by the radical preacher and instead claim that they were radicalised 'on the streets'. Omerovic himself denied his involvement in the indoctrination and further radicalisation of Selimovic and Kesinovic and successfully sued against two Austrian newspaper tabloids in this regard. Despite denying his involvement, Omerovic was later convicted by an Austrian criminal court to 20 years of imprisonment due to his participation in a terrorist organisation, terrorist crimes, and general participation in organised crime. Selimovic and Kesinovic disappeared in 2014, leaving written letters for their families stating that they 'will go to Syria and fight for Islam'. In 2019, several reports confirmed that both girls were dead. The children of Selimovic were sent to Austria from the Al-Hawl refugee camp and taken into custody by Sabina's grandmother after a DNA test proved kinship.

Absence of certain values and stable norms in the host society was an often repeated judgement among the Muslim respondents, while Christian students were more critical of spiritual negligence and the neglect of religious legacy in Austria. All students described themselves as tolerant, however, their definition of tolerance largely vary. In the case of the Christian respondents, it is interpreted as a lack of concern for all that had no direct impact on their lives, while for the Muslims students, tolerance was conditioned to their being accepted the way they are and as such. Therefore, tolerance cannot be considered as a proof of value integration.

Both Muslim and Christian respondents identified religion at the heart of how they define themselves. However, because religion plays a different role in the two communities' respective cultures, the acceptance or rejection of particular persons or institutions as authoritative shows notable differences. The main distinction is how they employ religious references to support a particular viewpoint or decision. This demonstrates how religion has a different influence on how the two groups make decisions, which is directly tied to how they view authority. As a result, religion appears as a point of cohesion and authority.

The findings of the study show that in the case of the Muslim respondents, the obligations connected to Islam increase the upholding of social and religious boundaries, which, in turn preserves the integrity of the religious community and its separation from the non-Muslim environment. Hence, Islamic obligation related to e.g. religious practice and customary behaviour not only make integration into the host community more challenging, but also increases the risk of social injustices (the most flagrant example of the latter one would be the case of the girls who are not allowed to participate in swimming courses or school trips, for instance). In the case of the non-Muslims, religiosity also prevents some secular or liberal norms from being internalised, although it has no direct impact on societal contact, which is essential for the integration process.

The findings further show that the respondents generally link authority to religion and family. Authority is considered as a process outside other institutions, which creates a tension between institutional authority in the host society and an institutional authority justified by the traditions of their community. This tension risks authority outside the community (such as teachers and administrative employees) to be seen as illegitimate and thus challengeable, resulting in the adolescents questioning this external authority if it contradicts the doctrines they receive from religious or traditional authorities. On the other hand, religious-based authority may offer self-assurance and confidence, "freeing the individual from doubt", and increasing its abilities.

	Christians	Muslims
Parental authority	Customary / Rational	Religious / Customary / Rational
Institutional	Authority prevents chaos / The freedom to question is important	Authority is good if it is in accordance with Islam
Religious / moral	Only if it accords with rational considerations Authority must merit to be respected	If it is Islamic it deserves respect

9. Figure. *Main factors of the legitimisation of authority as perceived by Christian and Muslim students.*[677]

8.4. COMPARING THE RESULTS TO SIMILAR CASE STUDIES IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Regarding the context of Muslim youth in German-speaking countries, there is an existing body of research primarily focusing on the question of religion from a variety of angles, which have been important benchmarks when conducting the case study above. With respect to the diversity of Muslim religiosity, efforts have been undertaken to categorise different forms of Muslim religiosity using surveys, particularly qualitative interviews. Typically, young people, adolescents or young adults are the focus. Karakaşolu[678] investigates the religious influences on educational ideas among Turkish student teachers; Klinkhammer[679] examines the experiences of young second-generation Turkish women. As one of the earliest studies on the growth of religiosity among second-generation migrants in Austria, Ornig[680] confirmed empirical findings such as "[r]eligious convictions that are too traditional and ethnically based"

[677] SPEIDL 2020, p. 83-84.

[678] KARAKAŞOĞLU, Yasemin (2000): Muslimische Religiosität Und Erziehungsvorstellungen: Eine Empirische Untersuchung Zu Orientierungen Bei Türkischen Lehramts- Und Pädagogik-Studentinnen in Deutschland. *Interdisziplinäre Studien Zum Verhältnis Von Migrationen, Ethnizität Und Gesellschaftlicher Multikulturalität* 2000. Available at: https://www.uni-bremen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/fachbereiche/fb12/fb12/pdf/A-IB/Karakasoglu/Publikationen/Downloadbereich/Diss_Yasemin.pdf (accessed on 20 May 2018)

[679] KLINKHAMMER, Gritt (2000): *Moderne Formen islamischer Lebensführung: Eine qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung zur Religiosität sunnitisch geprägter Türkinnen der zweiten Generation in Deutschland*. Marburg, Diagonal, 2000.

[680] ORNIG, Nikola (2006): *Die Zweite Generation und der Islam in Österreich. Eine Analyse von Chancen und Grenzen des Pluralismus von Religionen und Ethnien*. Graz, Grazer Universitätsverlag. 2006.

and "[I]slam as a self-evident guiding framework", which – ten years onwards also confirmed the findings of my own research. Focusing on the significance of Islam for second-generation Muslims in Austria, Khorchide[681] came to similar conclusion. Closely related to the issue of religious identity among young, second-generation Muslims in Austria, a further study by Khorchide examining Islamic religious education in Austria,[682] found that a quarter (25.3 per cent) of the Islamic teachers would prefer self-isolation and more than a fifth (21.9 per cent) of them see democracy as contradictory to Islam and therefore refuse to teach it. Further 14.7 per cent of the teachers surveyed believe that Islam is not compatible with the Austrian constitution and therefore reject it.[683]

Tietze contrasted the religious identities of young Muslim men in Germany and France, emphasising that in both cases, religious identities are constructed over time (in the course of religious life), in space (in the suburbs and neighbourhoods of major cities such as Paris, Strasbourg and Hamburg), and in an eminently subjective way.[684] Importantly, Tietze notes that in diaspora situations, identities are also constructed in contexts that are strongly marked by existing histories, 'socio-political traditions" and 'legal structures', and how this, combined with real or perceived racial and economic discrimination lead to the construction of a conflictual relationship ("us-them") toward the majority society.[685]

Analysing the impact of religion on young, third-generation Turks in Germany in a quantitative analysis, Heitmeyer came to the conclusion the fundamentalism is widespread among Turkish Muslims adolescents; they reject modernity and the Western way of life, asserting the superiority of Islam, and they are willing to use violence against non-believers.[686] Comparing young Muslims in Denmark and Sweden, Svensson notes how strong Muslim family tradition

[681] KHORCHIDE, Mouhanad (2007): Die Bedeutung des Islam für Muslime der zweiten Generation. In *Leben in zwei Welten. Zur sozialen Integration ausländischer Jugendlicher der zweiten Generation*. Edited by Hilde Weiss. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2007, pp. 217–44

[682] KHORCHIDE, Mouhanad (2009): *Der islamische Religionsunterricht zwischen Integration und Parallelgesellschaft*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91510-4_11 (accessed on 20 April 2017).

[683] KHORCHIDE 2009, p. 16.

[684] TIETZE, Nikola – UTZ, Ilse (2001): *Islamische Identitäten: Formen muslimischer Religiosität junger Männer in Deutschland und Frankreich*. Hamburg, Hamburger Ed. 2001.

[685] TIETZE – UTZ 2001

[686] HEITMEYER, W. – MÜLLER, J. – SCHRÖDER, H. (eds.): Verlockender Fundamentalismus. Türkische Jugendliche in Deutschland. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp. 1997.

shapes young persons' core values and influences their personal lifestyle.[687] Comparing Islamic identity formation among young Muslims' in Sweden, Denmark and the United States, Schmidt argues that Muslims' religiosity tends to rise, both in terms of identification and the degree of religious practice, in an environment of intense public discussion about issues relating to the integration of Islam into Western society.[688] Similar results were presented in a study conducted among young Muslims in Brussels, where most of the interviewees proclaimed their Muslim identity as the only identity they could identify with.[689] According to the study, a majority of the participants did not frame a strong, significant, and proud Muslim identity as being exclusive of other simultaneously claimed identities, or as being opposed to or in conflict with that of others. The researchers stated, however, that it is obvious that for a minority, it represents a reactive identity.

Bearing in mind the questions of identity as a significant factor, here Koopmans study from 2013 already cited above needs to be mentioned: analysing data from a representative survey among immigrants and natives in six European countries (Germany, France, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Sweden) he drew the conclusion that religious fundamentalism is not a marginal phenomenon in Europe, but rather widely spread.[690] Summarising the findings of the survey, Koopmans concludes that "[a]lmost 60 per cent agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, 75 per cent think there is only one interpretation of the Koran possible to which every Muslim should stick and 65 per cent say that religious rules are more important to them than the laws of the country in which they live".[691]

In the light of the above summarised, selected pieces of research related to the religious identity among young (second and/or third) generations of Muslims in several Western European countries hosting large Muslim communities, it becomes clear that the results presented in my own case study above are in line with similar studies, regardless of the time (sometimes up to almost two decades) period between the different studies and the countries included. Another

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[687] SVENSSON, L. *Muslimska ungdomars relation till religion och modernitet i Sverige och Danmark En genomgång av två aktuella studier*. Uppsala Universitet, Teologiska Insitutionen, 2014. Available at: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:740608/FULLTEXT01.pdf (accessed on 20 April 2017).

[688] SCHMIDT 2004

[689] TORREKENS, Corinne – BENSAID, Nawal – KAVADIAS, Dimokritos (2021): Young Belgian Muslims: Between religious reactivity and individualisation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *45*(11), 2021, pp. 2049-2068. Available at: https://innoviris.brussels/sites/default/files/documents/policybrief_22_secur.pdf (acessed on 20 January 2022).

[690] KOOPMANS 2013

[691] KOOPMANS 2013, p. 2.

important common trait is the direct or indirect conclusion that Muslims' lives have many cultural, social, and political facets that cannot be reduced to solely religious practice. Islam as perceived in the Muslim communities in Europe is dynamic; it is seemingly continually changing and adapting to the circumstances in which it finds itself, as opposed to being a monolithic and homogeneous set of activities.

8.5. THE NEXUS BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION IMMIGRANTS AND THE QUESTION OF RADICALISATION

In the context of violent radicalisation, Sageman already in 2011 drew attention to the fact that 80 per cent of the terrorist profiles with links to al-Qaeda he examined were first-, second-, or third-generation immigrants. Regarding the European context Bakker confirmed in his study from 2008 that a majority of the persons having been involved in terrorist activities were mostly of North African descent.[692] These are just two examples illustrating the relatively high proportion of migrants among those who participated in jihadist-related terrorism activities, but they also show that the target group for this type of radicalisation and recruitment needs more exploring. To this we can add that even particular regions within a specific country can play a significant role in terms of social integration in the host country. Belhaj notes in this context that the non-urbanised areas in Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa are "[s]paces-in-conflict with the idea of a central state",[693] resulting in certain migrants from rural areas, whether consciously or unconsciously, importing oppositional ties with the state and the centralised social or cultural institutions one encounters in the modern nation-states, as these persons typically tend to maintain the same family and clan social relations. This can be seen in the dissolving attitude of certain immigrant populations that deliberately isolate themselves from the metropolis and refuse to integrate into its social fabric, but also in the manner through which agents who export and impose foreign norms, laws, and traditions may exhibit this by considering certain areas of the city to be home to a specific non-indigenous ethnic or religious population.[694]

The supply in terms of radicalisation and recruitment is continuous; Europol (based on the information received from the Member States) regularly confirms that recruitment of militant

[692] BAKKER 2013.
[693] BELHAJ – SPEIDL 2018, p. 58.
[694] BELHAJ – SPEIDL 2018, pp. 58-59.

Islamist groups among Muslim immigrants in Western countries is an on-going issue.[695] In recent years, a number of studies and research have sought to answer the question of why the ideology and creed of radical Islamism may be attractive to individuals born, grown, and socialised in Europe. Some studies discuss the combination of an almost institutionalised lack of belonging, the search for lofty goals, and a subjective interpretation of individual religious obligations, while others claim that individual traumas and grievances, feelings of perceived or actual discrimination, and inadequacy of personal conflict management mechanisms may be contributing factors to the radicalisation process. Bearing in mind the questions of identity as a significant factor, here Koopmans famous study from 2013 needs to be mentioned: analysing data from a representative survey among immigrants and natives in six European countries (Germany, France, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Sweden) he drew the conclusion that religious fundamentalism is not a marginal phenomenon in Europe, but rather widely spread.[696] Summarising the findings of the survey, Koopmans concludes that "[a]lmost 60 per cent agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, 75 per cent think there is only one interpretation of the Koran possible to which every Muslim should stick and 65 per cent say that religious rules are more important to them than the laws of the country in which they live".[697]

In the case study I shed light on how, in a limited group of 34 adolescents, the obligations connected to Islam increase the upholding of social and religious boundaries, which, in turn preserves the integrity of the religious community and its separation from the non-Muslim environment. The complementing studies examined also imply that the tendency of religious identities being reinforced among second and third generation Muslims is important also from the point of assessing the potential breeding grounds for radicalisation. That said, it has be noted that current research claims no automatic correlation between a Muslim religious identity in general and the process of violent radicalisation, but rather wishes to explore this component as a potential factors significant for the individual process towards adopting extremist ideas and violence.

[695] Eg. EUROPOL 2018, pp. 5-8.
[696] KOOPMANS 2013
[697] KOOPMANS 2013, p. 2.

8.6. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The radicalisation process of persons with immigrant background born and raised in (Western) Europe joining militant Islamist group has been subject to vast research in the past couple of years. One of the most important questions have been to what extent religion, identity, and ideology (and the interplay thereof) have an impact on the process of accepting violence as legitimate means, and whether any of the mentioned factors play a particularly important role.

The focus of the present chapter is the dynamics of the second and third generation Muslim immigrants in Europe, and examines specific questions related to this group, such as issues of identity, self-identification, and perception of religious authority. Discussing these areas is significant not only in the context of violent radicalisation, as recent experience show that certain members of this group have proved to be particularly receptive to radical impulses potentially leading to violent extremism,[698] but also within the larger framework of integration in the host societies.

The chapter briefly reviews the history of contemporary Muslims immigrants in (Western) Europe and examines the characteristics of the different generations in terms of attitudes towards the host society, religiosity, and self-identification. To present a concrete example of the mentioned attitudes, a case study was conducted in an immigrant-majority high school in Vienna, Austria, with the aim of producing a comparative analysis of the perceptions of immigrant adolescents with regard to culture, religion, society and family structures. Applying the findings by Njegovan Ratković[699] et al on how authority is perceived by members of society and its impact on social cohesion, our case study concluded – based on in-depth interviews with 34 adolescents -, that religious authority is perceived by both Muslim and Christians students as a factor increasing self-assurance and confidence. However, the obligations deriving from this authority differ in the view of both groups. In the case of the Muslim students the obligations deriving from Islam increased the upholding of social as well as religious boundaries around the members of this community, increasing its separation from the non-Muslim environment. In the case of the Christian students' religiosity plays the role of preventing certain secular or liberal norms from being internalised within that particular

[698] WALDMANN, Peter K. (2010): *Radicalisation in the Diaspora: Why Muslims in the West Attack Their Host Countries.* Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid, 2010. Available at: https://media.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/dt9-2010-waldman-radicalizacion-diaspora-musulmanes-occidente-acogida.pdf, (accessed on 7 March 2022).
[699] RATKOVIĆ NJEGOVAN *et al* 2011, p. 657.

community, however, it did not directly impact on societal contact with the surrounding environment, which is significant for the integration process.

In sum, the importance of examining question around Muslim identity – especially among adolescents – lies in what has been described in the chapter(s) above; namely that being split between several identities (the traditional Islamic identity of the parents and the secular-liberal, multi-cultural society in the country of residence) has proved to be a potential breeding ground for the adoption of radical ideas in some cases leading to acts of violent extremism and terrorism. For this very reason, home-grown radicalisation and terrorism remain high on the security agenda of several European states,[700] especially considering the increased and continued recruitment of Muslim immigrants in Western countries by militant Islamist groups.[701] The deliberate targeting of second and third-generation Muslim immigrants in mainly non-Muslim countries with their recruitment and propaganda both al-Qaeda affiliated organisations as well as the so-called Islamic State are seeking to exploit the loss of identity, purpose and values that may be prevalent among certain members of these groups – and to focus on the tendency to overcompensate these with a reactive religious identity.

Through this chapter and the case study in particular I have found evidence supporting my second hypothesis, namely that second third generations of young Muslims constitute and will continue to constitute a preferred target group for radicalisation an recruitment to jihadi Salafist organisations due to factors on both individual as well as group levels, whereby the question of religious identity as a potential barrier to integration (and thereby as a first step to self-isolation and to adapting a set of extremist beliefs as a potential second step) has to be considered when discussing the future of jihadi Salafist radicalisation in Europe.

[700] KIS-BENEDEK 2016, p. 50.
[701] EUROPOL 2017

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1. SUMMARY – FINDINGS AND HYPOTHESIS

Through the above, I have sought to explore both the conceptual as well as theoretical frameworks addressing the question of why certain people, particularly young people, engage in jihadist-related activities. With the help of this systematic review of mainly international sources, I have found that the phenomenon cannot be answered through monocausal explanatory theories, but rather through a dynamic model illustrating how the underlying factors of radicalisation can be managed comprehensively and dynamically in relation to each other. The analysis of the profiles of jihadist-inspired terrorists shows that a variety of causes, many of which are intricately linked, can give rise to radicalisation. This intricacy, however, is often lost in divisive public discussions that either attribute all acts of terrorism to government policy, socio-economic marginalisation and/or feelings of discrimination or attribute all acts of terrorism to passages from Islamic religion.

Having made an effort above to define radicalisation and lay out conceptual models of violent radicalisation, I have analysed the theoretical foundations of intrinsic causal factors related to – among others – psychological propensities. As discussed in the analysis above, conceptual models of radicalisation building on an orderly sequence of events towards radicalisation may be misleading, I argue for the need of a complementing theory, in which radicalisation rather resembles a dynamic mosaic, in which key elements and additional elements may be identified, but where religious identity as well as social identity serve as an explanation of the interconnectedness of variables related to factors explored within the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation (such as messages of grievances towards vulnerable audiences, forming relationships with like-minded people, exposure to extremist ideology, and a sense of belonging to a discriminated and oppressed group). By analysing the potential pathways to radicalisation of jihadist-inspired perpetrators over a period of 7 years, including foreign terrorist fighters from several EU Member States, with the help of process-tracing, I have shown that the reasons of radicalisation are more similar to dynamic forces of interaction, rather than static, unchanging components that invariably produce the same result.

Process tracing allowed me to find several commonalities, firstly that the radicalisation of an individual is the result of a synergetic relationship with the immediate environment. Therefore, I believe that no significant analysis can be made without considering the person and the larger context in which he or she lives and acts. Although most studies on conflict drivers and/or radicalisation reasons use this type of cumulative inquiry, there is still a difference in emphasis. This is also underlined by the fact that neither the literature review nor the models presented above show that any single factor can be said to be the sole causal factor of the radicalisation process.

Hence, as a synthesis of existing conceptual models of radicalisation, I have suggested radicalisation to be interpreted as a mosaic, building on the need for a dynamic model to develop behavioural patterns reliable to predict violent action, focusing on the connectivity between the factors not on a linear and a sequential basis, but rather on a nonlinear basis, where one event does not necessarily or clearly follow another. The analysis of the background of the terrorists behind jihadist-inspired attacks between 2015 and 2020 and foreign terrorist fighters during the same period also supports this hypothesis regarding the dynamic model focusing on the interaction between the different factors rather than one a line of sequences in the radicalisation process. I have argued that religion and identity constitute the components responsible for interconnecting the other individual root causes.

Regarding the second hypothesis, I firstly demonstrated how and why second and third generations of young Muslims constitute and will continue to constitute a preferred target group for radicalisation and recruitment to jihadi Salafist organisations due to underlying factors on both individual and group levels. Also, examining the background of jihadist-inspired terrorists, foreign terrorist fighters as well as young adolescents of immigrant background in Europe also gave support to the importance of the background as second and third generation (Sunni) Muslims. Secondly, by reviewing the history of contemporary Muslims immigrants in (Western) Europe and examining the characteristics of the different generations in terms of attitudes towards the host society, religiosity and self-identification, as well as analysing psychological factors and group-level factors specific to these groups relevant in the context of radicalisation, I have revealed important indicators to why certain members of these groups may be particularly susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment attempts. Thirdly, I have proven why a focus on members of these particular groups is of pivotal importance, as militant Islamist/jihadi Salafist terrorist organisations have over the past decade actively targeted these very groups with their propaganda and recruitment. To this end, I have presented a thorough

analysis of the underlying jihadi Salafist ideology as well as the narrative used in the propaganda of the so-called Islamic State aiming to resonate among members of Muslim diaspora communities based on the factors on individual and group levels mentioned above. I have shown in my analysis how the jihadi Salafi narrative interprets current world political events (e.g., the Iraq war, the war in Afghanistan, the Libyan intervention, the Syrian war) as a continuation of this ongoing subjugation, making it therefore the individual duty of every faithful Muslim, regardless of geography, to fight for Islam.[702] As examples of this interpretation, militant Islamist narrative often highlight policies to curb and tighten immigration in Europe aimed at reinforcing feelings of discrimination and dissatisfaction among Muslims in the West so that they can recruit more successfully.[703] The importance of the real or perceived experience of personal discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds as a contributing factor to violent radicalisation has also been demonstrated through several of the cases analysed above.[704]

To further explore the question of religious identity within the context of radicalisation as a potential psychological factor of importance, I conducted a case study examining the sense of belonging and religious identification among 34 adolescent immigrants in an immigrant-majority suburb of Vienna, Austria, in which I sought to explore how religious identity serves as an active (and influential) component of identity, and if or how this may or may not be considered as a barrier to integration. I found the results presented in the case study to be consistent with similar studies, regardless of the time (sometimes up to almost two decades) period between the different studies and the countries included, meaning that the question of a religious identity as a contributing factor to voluntary separation from the norms of the society at large remains an existing issue – even decades after the first studies related to the subject where conducted. The fact that these issues are here to stay is moreover illustrated by the demographic dynamics of the Muslim communities in Europe, implying that – compared to the native populations – these groups will continue to grow exponentially. Moreover, through the case study as well as the in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the second and third

[702] See for instance the arguments presented by Pape claiming that Islamic extremism results from the experience of direct exposure to Western-led military interventions/occupation/drone attacks and foreign policies in Muslim countries. PAPE, R. A. (2006): Suicide terrorism and democracy: What we've learned since 9/11. Policy Analysis, 2006 November, pp. 1–18.

[703] As examined under Chapter 4 discussing the underlying ideology.

[704] See for instance the scientific results presented by Lyons-Padilla, who found that marginalisation and discrimination may lead to feelings of insignificance, which became stronger with the experience of more discrimination and would, in turn, predict an attraction to fundamentalist groups and their extreme behavior.

generation of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe, I found support for my hypothesis that within the context of jihadist-inspired radicalisation the question of religion and identity are significant, especially if they are considered as opposing to the loyalty towards the state. The systematic analysis of pathways towards violent radicalisation in the case studies regarding the profiles of jihadist terrorist and foreign terrorist fighters also confirmed that identity and religion may be – and has been - largely exploited by charismatic leaders in order to radicalise and recruit new members for the cause. This underlines that this particular target group is and will most probably remain subjected to radicalisation and recruitment by militant Islamists. Raising awareness on questions related to religious identity among second (and third) generation Muslim immigrants as well as to what extent and through which mechanisms religion may or may not present an obstacle to adaption to and/or integration in the host society may help to increase the understanding of certain risk factors of violent radicalisation.

9.2. NOVEL SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS

Through the above findings I have:

1. Systematised the theoretical framework of violent radicalisation in the field of jihadi Salafism focusing on conceptual models, complementing it with relevant (but in some cases potentially overlooked) sociological as well as psychological theories, and, based on process tracing analysis of over 20 terrorist profiles acting in Western Europe between 2014 and 2020 suggested an own model synthetising previous theories, emphasising the nature of radicalisation as a nonlinear dynamic mosaic, with no necessary hierarchy between the different components and where the sequences or steps in the radicalisations process may not come orderly but where the interplay of different components might indicate the occurrence of violent action.

2. With the help of a thorough analysis of factors on different levels (micro, meso and macro) as well as an in-depth description of the underlying ideology of jihadi Salafism found significant support for why the religious component of the radicalisation process in this context should not to be neglected.

3. Explored social identity theory in the context of contemporary radicalisation, and by applying it in the context of second and third generation immigrants in Europe and jihadi Salafist radicalisation, found support for how how identity serves as an interconnecting factor of variables related to messages of grievances towards vulnerable audiences, forming relationships with like-minded people, exposure to extremist ideology, and a sense of belonging to a discriminated and oppressed group.

4. Addressed an explored an issue important in the context of early prevention of jihadist-inspired radicalisation by conducting a case study aimed at investigating the questions of self-identification and religious identity, i.e. how religious identity is shaped by social factors among a group of adolescent immigrants in Vienna, concluding that the perception of religious authority may serve as a barrier to integration and constitute a base of voluntary segregation, where loyalty towards the own group precedes loyalty of the state of residence.

9.3. PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and new scientific results, present thesis contains the following three recommendations for policymakers, stakeholders and key actors relevant to the preventative work:

1. Violent radicalisation is a social process as well as an interplay between a variety of factors on three different levels (micro, meso and macro), hence awareness-rising measures on the indicators and early signals need to reach a wider range of actors to be efficient. This includes members of the armed forces who – through their deployment in third countries – may encounter the phenomenon of violent radicalisation.

2. When dealing with the question of militant Islamist and jihadi Salafism, an analysis of the underlying religious and ideological justification behind the attacks needs to be disseminated to a wider range of key actors relevant to prevent.

3. The question of religious identity, self-identification and how charismatic leaders (in many cases religious leaders) are using these in their radicalisation and recruitment

activities is of pivotal importance, as it is of significance for the question of integration and continued irregular migration towards Europe.

4. Exploring factors impacting the process of violent radicalisation and thereby identifying potential early signals of radicalisation contribute to raise awareness on the importance of decoding these at an early stage – something that may be of use in the context of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), civil-military coordination (CMCO) or the Hungarian defence Forces Civil-Military Cooperation and Psychological Operations Centre (HDF CMCPOC)[705].

9.4. RECOMMENDED TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Examining underlying risk factors and root causes of violent radicalisation is an area that will most certainly continue to interest researchers for some time to come. The complex nature of the phenomenon demonstrates the need to incorporate the necessary methodological aspects from several disciplines when assessing the individual cases; hence I would recommend the following areas for further research:

i. if and to what extent the existence of parallel societies might be a contributing factor in the initial phase of violent radicalisation, particularly as experience show that these might function as sanctuaries for extremist ideology;

ii. if or how self-identification, religious identity and the question of religious authority may interact with other risk factors in the case of violent radicalisation based on the mosaic theory presented above;

iii. based on the evidence supporting that jihadist-inspired narrative has – in some cases – had a strong impact on persons with a record of mental health issues, the question of how and to what extent health institutions and professionals may be included in the prevention of violent radicalisation;

[705] As of 31 December 2021 the unit is integrated in the Hungarian Defence Forces Cyber and Information Operation Center (HDF CIOC).

iv. radicalisation among converts to Islam, as evidence suggest that although converts represent a small per centage of Western Muslim diasporas, they are significantly overrepresented in Islamist extremism and terrorism;

v. how multi-agency cooperation between key actors important to prevent violent radicalisation looks like in practice, what good practice there are – and how the armed forces may be included in this network of inter-agency information sharing.

9.5. CONCLUSIONS

Looking back on the past few years it becomes evident that the level of jihadist activity in Europe has been on a historically high level.[706] Though it is difficult to predict with certainty how the jihadi milieus and network will develop in the upcoming years, certain trends affecting the development are visible already now. These are, among others – as identified by Hegghammer in 2016 – the economic underachievement on a growing young Muslim population in Europe, the return of foreign fighters from conflict zones, continued armed conflicts in the Muslim world and continued "operational freedom" on the Internet.[707]

From the *modus operandi* and the terrorist profiles briefly analysed above it is possible to draw the first and obvious conclusion that society will never be able to fully protect itself from such violent events. As the weaponisation of everyday life is neither desirable, nor entirely feasible in practice, methods to combat the phenomenon must include a more effective and coherent preventative strategy. Further, some conclusions suggest that we may face new patterns regarding the radicalisation processes as well as the selection of targets, while others confirm existing knowledge on – among others - hotbeds of radicalisation, the potential misuse of the irregular migratory flows towards Europe by persons with malicious intent and how the jihadi Salafist ideology continues to attract persons from different backgrounds and with different personal motives and underlying psychosocial root causes to justify brutal acts of violence. However, the background of the perpetrators still shows the common feature that the majority of the ones committing attacks in Europe in the name of the self-styled Islamic State are second generation immigrants with a majority having a criminal past, yet again confirming the nexus

[706] HEGGHAMMER, Thomas (2016): The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Volume 10, No 6. 2016. Available at: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/566/html (accessed on 12 June 2017).
[707] HEGGHAMMER 2016

between terrorism and criminality as well as the fact that the Islamic State is increasingly targeting persons with a criminal record. According to estimates by some researchers around 50-80 per cent of the Europeans in IS have a criminal record, which is significantly higher than in the case of al-Qaeda, where the same figures stand around 25 per cent.[708] The listed profiles and the personal links between them also confirm the significance of social as well as family ties in the European radicalisation and recruitment of the Islamic State. Rather than being radicalised by entirely strangers – either physically or online – this pattern is consistent with the research suggesting that the importance of close personal ties between the radicaliser and the radicalised.[709]

Potential intelligence failures and lack of political dedication to firmly address the breeding ground of Jihadist radicalisation have most often been subjects to public debates following the recent terrorist attack across Europe. However, the accelerated radicalisation processes behind the perpetrators' acts as well as the selection of rather simple means in carrying out the attacks pose a new challenge also for intelligence and security services that may face an intelligence and surveillance deficit while continuously being put to the test. Without physical or virtual contact with like-minded persons in a certain cell, or a drawn-out planning preceding an attack it inevitably becomes increasingly difficult to prevent attacks. However, because a majority of the perpetrators mentioned in the study were known to intelligence and security services, the question of why they could not be prevented remains open. This is also true for the above listed two examples of persons entering as irregular migrants who in both cases were known as sympathisers of radical Islamism to the authorities. These gaps need to be identified and filled urgently.

At the same time the number of plots thwarted is not to be forgotten or diminished either, although these are rarely the ones creating headlines in the media. According to the Metropolitan Police in the United Kingdom 13 plots have been thwarted since 2013, which means that police have disrupted a terrorist attack every fourth month.[710] Further statistics by Member States provided to Europol show that 718 people were arrested on suspicion of jihadist

[708] GAUB, Florence – LISIECKA, Julia (2017): *The crime-terrorism nexus.* European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2017. Available at: http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Brief_10_Terrorism_and_crime.pdf (accessed on 5 June 2017), p. 1
[709] SOUFAN, Ali – AND SCHOENFELD, Daniel (2016): Regional Hotbeds as Drivers of Radicalisation. In VARVELLI, Arturo (ed): *Jihadist Hotbeds – Understanding Local Radicaliztaion Processes*. Milano, Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), 2016, p. 29.
[710] MAHER 2017

terrorism related offences during 2016 which is an increase with 31 persons compared to the previous year.[711]

Considering the selection of targets there is an increase in the selection of mass social events (clubs and concerts) where many persons are found in a fairly uncontrolled area. The attack on the Bataclan concert hall in Paris in November 2015, the attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida in June 2016 and the attack at the Manchester Area in May 2017 all fit into the jihadist strategy of targeting places of mass gathering and social events – which in the mentioned cases also represent integral parts of "Western culture". While it – according to some security analysts – still is somewhat rare that other cities than capitals are being targeted due to the capitals' symbolic significance, the question remains whether the selection of other geographical locations is a new phenomenon or a pattern here to stay. The Manchester attack represents yet another level of cruelty because many of the concert goers where children (and – consequently – several of the victims, too). The deliberate selection of children as targets may not be entirely new in the history of terrorism; we only need to back a couple of years to 2004 to remember the massacre in Beslan where Chechen terrorists took more than 1,100 hostages, including 777 children, but it is certainly entirely new in the European context. The fact that jihadi Salafist ideology has its own justification even to why children, too, are to be considered as legitimate targets makes it even more important not only for European policy makers, but also for intelligence and security services to understand the role of the ideological and religious arguments in the radicalisation process. Alarmism has never proved to be a feasible way, but neither has the unproportionate underestimation of a growing societal and security problem.

After the collapse of the so-called Caliphate and the successful pushback of the Islamic State, Europe – as well as other parts of the world - may in some way sense a relief. However, researchers and security experts warn that this may be a false sense of security, as not only do the returning foreign terrorist fighters pose a serious threat to European societies, but this time of relative decrease in terrorist activity also implies that it should be used to consolidate already existing initiatives, measures, and policies to continuously combat the aforementioned threat. There is also plenty of evidence indicating that the jihadist networks in Europe are currently in a phase of reorientation, focusing on keeping these groups alive, spreading their ideas, and recruiting new members to join the cause. This increased activity is especially vivid after the

[711] EUROPOL 2017, pp. 22-23.

military defeat of IS – and has in some cases resulted in an exceptional growth as they are many times bigger than before the war in Syria broke out.[712]

Notwithstanding the fact that there is an obvious decline regarding the number of persons travelling to Syria it still should be underlined that IS and al-Qaeda-affiliated groups continue to pose a major threat to the Western societies as they have an on-going intent and capability to carry out attacks.[713] Some studies[714] make an attempt to prove based on statistics available so far that it is unlikely that large numbers of foreign terrorist fighters will launch major attacks on European soil upon return. However, as attacks such as the 2015 November Paris attacks show – already the presence of one foreign terrorist fighter (in this case Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the alleged ringleader and "mastermind" behind the attacks) – can cause tremendous harm and sever casualties. The lone perpetrators also remain a source of concern, which – inspired and perhaps even supported by IS – show willingness to carry out attacks with unconventional means in the West.

Although the Islamic State may have been defeated on the ground the dream of a utopian Caliphate and the ideology tightly connected to it continue to live. The organisation has been successful in slowly transforming back to an underground movement from where it is possible to prepare for resurgence. As AIVD points out – in its character of an underground movement it will most likely have a destabilising effect on countries across the Middle East and North Africa in the long run,[715] which will inevitably have an impact on Europe as well.

In many cases, politicians, decision-makers, stakeholders and even researchers tend to claim that there is no general profile of a foreign terrorist fighter, hence attempts to analyse common traits may lead to ill-advised and short-sighted conclusions. Nevertheless, examining the background and motivational factors of foreign terrorist fighters from Western Europe it becomes quite clear that there indeed are several significant commonalities, which would be a mistake not to consider when it comes to the preventative work – not at least from a safeguarding and vulnerability perspective. By systemising research as well as relevant threat assessments by security and intelligence services across the most affected Western European states, I have found support that these persons all share the common traits of being born in

[712] EUROPOL 2019, p. 40.
[713] EUROPOL 2018, p. 26.
[714] ZUIJDEWIJN *et al*, op. cit.
[715] AIVD (2018b): *Syria's Legacy. Global jihadism remains a threat to Europe*. AIVD, 2018, p. 19.

(often broken) immigrants families, having a criminal record and mostly a low education, living unstable lifestyles before embracing radical Islam.[716] The empirical data referred to in the chapters above outline a similar portrait of the person being susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment – and to eventually travel for terrorist purposes: a young man between 18-30 years, with one or both parents born abroad, living in a certain urban area with an immigrant-majority population characterised by low socio-economic status. However, despite these similarities it is important to bear in mind that there is no general socio-economic or ethnic profile that may offer valuable clues to why certain individuals travel abroad to participate in armed conflict.[717] Some researchers refute the theory claiming that terrorism necessarily springs from poverty in the context of the foreign fighters. Instead, they point to the fact that the (Western) foreign fighters who have joined IS originate from highly prosperous countries with high levels of economic development and low-income inequality, as well as well-functioning political institutions.[718] Rather they claim it is a matter of politics, ideology and the question of feeling excluded in an ethnically and linguistically homogenous country. One thing is sure, though: there is no one-size-fits-all model to explain why people join terrorist organisations such as IS, but rather it should be seen as interplay between several different underlying causes and motivational factors.

Further, the average foreign fighter holds a citizenship of the country he is leaving behind. Holding a Western government-issued passport may also contribute to the foreign terrorist fighters being able to return largely unnoticed. It is also likely that he (or she) has joined together with – or due to – either family members or friends, which yet again proves the importance of networks and social peers in the radicalisation process and contains and important conclusion from a prevention perspective, namely that extra effort should be made to identify other persons from the same network who may also be at risk of either radicalising or being recruited to travel for terrorist purposes.[719] Reaffirming the importance of social networks as a significant pull factor for the mobilisation and recruitment of foreign fighters – in comparison to the theories about integration deficit, social deprivation and the power of social media in the radicalisation process – may also contain an important message to governments: from a prevention perspective it may be easier to map out and dismantle and individual's social

[716] HECKER 2018, p. 9.
[717] REYNOLDS – HAFEZ 2017, p. 3.
[718] BENMELECH – KLOR 2016
[719] ROSTAMI *et al* 2018.

network rather than for instance engaging in expensive so called counter-narrative campaigns in the rapidly evolving social media sphere.

But even with the almost entire military defeat of the terrorist organisation on Syrian and Iraqi soil the history is far from an end. The ideology will most probably remain and continue to exploit vulnerabilities to lure people to join the global jihadist movement.

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