

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Political Studies

Department of International Security Studies

**Master's Thesis**

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Institute of Political Studies

Department of International Security Studies

**Processes of radicalisation: Foreign fighters from  
Western Europe who fought for Islamic State**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2021

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 18. 04. 2021

Jana Truchlá

## References

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## Abstrakt

Uvědomění si, že hrozba terorismu již není jen jakousi vzdálenou záležitostí Blízkého východu, ale v podstatě se dá považovat za riziko pramenící z radikalizačního potenciálu lidí žijících přímo v Evropě, znepokojilo veřejnost a následně vyvolalo zvýšený zájem o výzkum zaměřující se na extremistickou radikalizaci. Teroristické útoky z 11. září nebo útoky v Londýně či Madridu vedly ke zvýšení mediální pozornosti fenoménu radikalizace, jenž se primárně týká mladých evropských muslimů. Na začátku nového tisíciletí představovala hrozba terorismu jednu z nejnaléhavějších bezpečnostních výzev, ať už pro politiky nebo vědce. Akademický a politický zájem o výzkum faktorů zvyšujících riziko radikalizace vedl k mnohým pokusům a snahám o pochopení a správné definování radikalizace. Klíčové bylo nastínit modely či schémata, na základě kterých bude s největší pravděpodobností probíhat radikalizační proces. Ve své diplomové práci stavím na předchozím odborném výzkumu, přičemž se zaměřuji na vliv a dopad faktorů přispívajících k násilné radikalizaci, jako jsou lokální či globální džihádistské sítě, nespokojenost se současnou realitou, morální rozhořčení, vliv rodinných členů a individuální rysy jedinců včetně potenciální kriminální minulosti. Vliv těchto faktorů jsem zkoumala v případových studiích tří západoevropských zemí - Belgie, Francie a Spojeného království. Kromě diskuse o možných směrech, v rámci nichž může radikalizační proces probíhat, nabízí tato práce i přehled teoretických východisek zaměřených na fenomén radikalizace, přičemž rovněž zkoumá problémy spojené s nejvýznamnějšími modely radikalizace, ať už fázovými modely, nebo modelem popisujícím primárně příčiny radikalizace.

### Klíčová slova

radikalizace, zahraniční bojovníci, džihádismus, Islámský Stát, terorismus, Belgie, Francie, Spojené království Velké Británie a Severního Irska

## **Abstract**

The awareness that the threat of terrorism is no longer linked only to the Middle East, but has home-grown nature and arisen from young people living on European soil, alarmed the public and subsequently provoked increased interest in radicalisation research. 9/11 or the European terrorist attacks in London or Madrid have led to the increasing media attention of the phenomenon of radicalisation occurring among young European Muslims. At the beginning of the new millennium, the threat stemming from terrorism embodied one of the most urgent security challenges, whether for politicians or scholars. The academic and political interest in research into factors that increase the risk of radicalisation to violent extremism has ended up in many efforts to grasp and properly define radicalisation, or to outline the expected pathways of radicalisation (Veldhuis, 2009: 1). In my thesis, I build on these efforts of prominent experts and I examine the effect of the factors contributing to violent radicalisation like social networks, dissatisfaction with current reality, moral outrage, family and individual characteristics including criminal backgrounds. I look at the impact of these factors in case studies of three Western European countries - Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom. Except discussing specific pathways to radicalisation, this thesis offers an overview of theoretical backgrounds focused on the phenomenon of radicalisation and dissertation also introduces the issues connected with the most prominent models of radicalisation either simple phase models or root cause model.

## **Keywords**

radicalisation, foreign fighters, jihadism, Islamic State, terrorism, Belgium, France, United Kingdom

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## **1. Introduction**

In a time of „global war on terror“, where no one can feel completely safe, the topic of radicalisation is attracting more and more attention, whether in the media or the ranks of experts. The issue of radicalisation and the fight against terrorism is an illustration of one of the most pressing and urgent security challenges at the international level because it can bring about a high number of casualties, the risk of recruiting and mobilizing jihadists from the West and the global threat to people across continents. Since 9/11, the risk of terrorist attacks in the West has become more tangible, creating a long-term threat and a virtually never-ending state of alert. A few years later, after terrorist attacks in London or Madrid, it is possible to observe the same scenario in Europe. The relevance of the choice of the topic is thus given by the nature of the conflict from which no one is excluded. „We can say that the need to understand the radicalisation phenomenon; that is, when, why, and how people living in a democracy become radicalised and susceptible to violent extremism, has been at the centre of academic and public debate for some years“(Gendron, 2016: 2).

In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to research on the phenomenon of radicalisation. Despite numerous analyses and studies in the field of radicalisation or counter-radicalisation, there is still uncertainty about the understanding of how particular individuals have been radicalized. There is a general consensus among experts, academics, and politicians alike that „more research is needed to understand the causes, processes, and mechanisms of radicalisation to be able to develop effective preventive and counter-measures“(Pisoui, 2016: 2). Further research is necessary to grasp the correlation between extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism. Thus identify risk factors of radicalisation, prevent a terrorist attack, and find a correlation between inputs - significantly contributing factors to radicalisation and outputs - radicalised individuals is in the interest of each of us.

### **1.1. Research aim and research question**

In my diploma thesis, I examine the root causes of radicalisation of foreign fighters from countries located in Western Europe with the highest numbers of recruited

jihadists – France, UK and the highest number of recruited fighters per capita – Belgium. In my research I will compare the distinct features of the radicalisation process in the three aforementioned Western European countries. Subsequently I will try to identify commonalities and differences between them. I suppose that a better understanding of the root causes of radicalisation could improve considerably the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies. In order to accomplish my research target, I have formulated the following research question - What were the principal factors affecting the number of radicalised foreign fighters from the UK, France, and Belgium who fought for the Islamic State during 2014-2019?

Thus in more detail, I would like to examine two partial issues. Firstly, I will investigate whether there is a connection between inputs (glocalism - the impact of neighbourhood and surroundings plus a link to jihadi individuals based abroad, dissatisfaction - with current reality or moral outrage, the role of family and social characteristics including criminal background) and output (number of jihadist foreign fighters per country - this number includes those who left and remained in Syria or Iraq, those who died and those who came back in their country). In particular, I will analyse the connection between inputs and output only in three Western European countries which I have chosen for my diploma thesis. Secondly, I will try to identify which model – behavioural or cognitive is more suitable for the explanation of radicalisation in three chosen countries based on research of inputs and testing hypothesis.

1. Ties with radicalised individuals in the neighbourhood or abroad increased the risk of radicalisation. (Decisive factor in the top-down model)
- 2.a Personal dissatisfaction with the current reality in the form of perceived or real discrimination or high rate of unemployment increased the risk of radicalisation (bottom-up model)
- 2.b Dissatisfaction as moral outrage in the form of perceived hatred from anti-Muslim or anti-immigration political parties increased the risk of radicalisation (bottom-up model)
3. The role of the family has a significant impact on the process of radicalisation (top-down model)

4. Individuals with certain characteristics like uneducated young males with criminal past are more prone to be radicalised (bottom-up model)

## **1.2. Limitations**

In my dissertation on the phenomenon of radicalisation, I have encountered several limiting factors and methodological limitations. Due to my current conditions, I was not able to obtain field research and conduct interviews with foreign fighters who returned from ISIS-controlled territory. Moreover, given the limited availability of quantitative and primary data related to the causes of radicalisation, it is very difficult to reach relatively generally applicable conclusions, because of the individual nature of the radicalisation process.

The point is that while secondary sources and official studies on Islamist radicalisation offer reliable and valid information on the socio-economic or demographic data of the jihadists, information on complex social processes or individual motives is very difficult to obtain. Another caveat is the limited size of the sample of jihadists that have been researched and the lack of conducted interviews with radicalised individuals due to difficulties in gaining access to those directly involved in terrorist activities (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 805). There is an overwhelming number of concepts and theories that focus on research into the radicalisation process, however, the problem is that there is only a limited amount of tangible evidence on the veracity of individual hypotheses (Pisoui, 2016: 3).

But the problem is not only a limited amount of empirical research focusing on radicalised individuals who have adopted militant Islamism. Because even from this relatively limited number of studies, most of them examine a sample of Islamic jihadists, which consists of foreign terrorist fighters as well as home-grown terrorists. Therefore, it was very difficult to filter information exclusively about the dataset of foreign fighters. I have proceeded by first relying on more general information about jihadists and only then if there were available more specific data, I have worked with information on a specific group of foreign fighters fighting for ISIS.

Moreover, I have worked only with the literature which was accessible in English or French language. It is needed to say that the detailed analysis of the overall security situation in the three examined countries is outside of the scope of my diploma thesis.

As well as worldwide research on the radicalisation of countries other than the three case studies is excluded from the scope of my dissertation. Finally, the research on de-radicalisation theories or analysis of countering violence programs are also out of the scope of my thesis.

### **1.3. Methodology**

In terms of methodology, my diploma thesis can be classified as a comparative case study that compares the radicalisation process in three different cases. In general comparative case studies focus on more general knowledge about research questions. They underline comparisons within and across contexts. Comparative case studies seem to be an appropriate methodological framework, especially when it is not possible to choose an experimental design of work or when “there is a need to understand and explain how features within the context influence particular processes” (Goodrick, 2014: 2).

My comparative technique will lie in testing which radicalisation model - behavioural or cognitive - is more explanatory in three distinct cases. I explore several inputs representing particular pathways to radicalisation. Firstly I need to verify whether chosen inputs actually lead to radicalisation. Secondly, I suppose that each input corresponds with one of the models, thus based on clarifying of connection between inputs and models I will be able to identify whether endogenous or exogenous factors are more decisive in the radicalisation process in three chosen countries.

As I am not able to obtain primary data and conduct interviews with former ISIS foreign fighters I will mainly work with secondary data such as qualitative and quantitative studies and analysis researched by scholars and experts specializing in jihadist radicalisation. Moreover, I will also work with demographic data about examined countries and jihadist samples provided by statistical databases like Pew Research centre. In my case studies, I will rely mainly on research reports published by Globsec Institute or the International centre for Counter-terrorism. More specifically to analyse Belgian foreign fighters, the research conducted by Van Ostaeyen and Van Vlierden seems to be a very useful source of information. In the case study of France, I will mainly build on the Marc Hecker study which can provide very valuable data and shed light on the radicalisation process of French jihadists. Finally, in the British case study, I

will primarily work with research focused on British jihadists engaged in global terrorist movements published by Institute for Global Change. Besides the mentioned sources and research, I will of course work with many other studies.

## **2. Radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism – definitions and correlation between them**

Radicalisation is not an entirely new phenomenon, however, before 2001 mentions of radicalisation in the press were quite rare (Sedgwick, 2010: 480). In contrast following September 2001 and after the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, the study of the process of radicalisation, its causes, and the contributing factors is becoming increasingly important, whether in Europe or worldwide (Dzhekova, 2016: 5). In general, the term radicalisation is considered very unclear and problematic. This confusion is stemming from the ubiquity, ambiguity, and complexity which surround the concept of radicalisation. The ubiquity of the term lies in the fact that it is used in various contexts or agendas. In particular, Sedgwick proposes that radicalisation is widely used in three different agendas – security, integration, and foreign policy agenda (Sedgwick, 2010: 485-488).

As the very complex nature of radicalisation, Hafez introduces the term radicalisation puzzle for covering the whole area of issues connected with this phenomenon. He suggested it for two simple reasons. First, radicalisation is a very perplexing form of deviation which needs to be explained, and second, the term puzzle is maybe an even more appropriate word than the term process which indicates a linear sequence of phases which is not precise because scholars mentioned that there is an absence of visible pattern in radicalisation (Hafez, 2015: 959). Despite the lack of consensus about the issues related to radicalisation, there are a few points on which the majority of scholars agree. Firstly it is generally accepted that radicalisation is a gradual „process“. The second point of convergence is that the process of radicalisation includes socialization in „extremist belief system“ and last but not least this system may or may not lead to violence (Hafez, 2015: 960).

On the other hand, according to Neumann, there are two crucial points of contention in defining radicalisation. First of all, it is the issue of end-points that indicates if the process of radicalisation ends either in the development of radical ideas or in committing violent acts. Second of all is the context of radicalisation which points out the relative nature of what is meant to be radical (Neumann, 2013: 850). Thus it is essential to realize that we cannot consider it as an absolute concept (Sedgwick, 2010: 480). The problem is that the term radical has no precise meaning on its own and it is highly context-dependent. This means that the terms extremist or radical need to be positioned on the one side of the continuum while on the opposite side of the continuum we can find the term moderate (Sedgwick, 2010: 481). It is needed to choose some benchmark or continuum based on which we can distinguish what is meant to be the mainstream and what radical (Neumann, 2013: 875).

## **2.1. Academic definitions**

To create effective and potent counter-radicalisation measures it is crucial to fully comprehend the correlation between the phenomena of radicalisation, violent extremism, and terrorism. There have been many debates about whether radicalisation can be considered a precursor to terrorism. In this chapter, I will provide several examples of definitions of radicalisation, violent extremism, and terrorism widely used in the academic literature and policy documents. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, differences between them were defined by experts researching radicalisation.

Neumann observes the difference between radicalisation and violent extremism. He claims that extremism represents the most basic version of radicalisation (Neumann, 2013: 874). Mandel contends that „radicalisation is a change in the degree of extremism” (Mandel, 2009: 111). Schmid adds that both concepts are considered as ideal-types as direct opposition to mainstream society (Schmid, 2011:630). According to Boetticher both radicalism and extremism have in common that they indicate socio-political tendencies on the peripheries of a liberal-democratic society. However, there exist several fundamental distinctions between them. Radical movements use violence more or less selectively, while extremist movements tend to adopt mass violence as a legitimate tool. Extremism is considered anti-democratic, radicalism is rather emancipatory than anti-democratic per se. Furthermore, radical movement is usually in

opposition to a particular establishment, while extremism is against anyone who disagrees with its concept of transformation of society (Boetticher, 2017: 2). To illustrate different definitions of extremism I provide an overview table.

<b>Extremism</b>	
Neumann	„Extremism refers to political ideologies that oppose a society’s core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights“ (2010: 12)
Mandel	„Radicalisation is to extremism as velocity is to position. That is, radicalisation is a (positive) change in the degree of extremism expressed by an individual or group“ (2009 :111)
Schmid	„while radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats“ and „although both terms can be seen as ideal types and explained in terms of deviation from the mainstream or the status quo, extremism has some distinguishing features such as the rejection of pluralism, use of force over persuasion, collective goals over individual freedom, compared to more rational radicals“ (2011:630)

Overview table of widely – used academic definitions of extremism

Another blurred borderline is between the concepts of radicalisation and terrorism. The problem lies in the fact that conflating between them thwarted opportunities to effectively counter against either of them (Borum, 2011: 2). Against these two terms are closely connected, we can observe significant distinctions between them. Veldhuis and Staun provide an explanation of this distinction - “terrorism is above all a political tool that, irrespective of its success rate, is used in an attempt to bring about political or societal change“(Veldhuis, 2009: 6). Radicalisation, on the other hand, is a „process of transformation that in itself does not serve a clearly defined purpose and that does not necessarily have to be related to violence” (ibid.). Furthermore, Sprinzak observes terrorism as the „product of the most extreme form of the radicalisation process“(Sprinzak, 1991: 51). Likewise, Borum considers radicalisation as only one possible pathway to terrorism. In a nutshell the majority of scholars advocates that terrorism can be seen as a possible end-product of the radicalisation process (Neumann, 2013: 879).

As I mentioned above „there are numerous definitions of radicalisation, and the term is highly contested in academic as well as policy discourses and the vast majority of experts consider it a poorly defined term“ (Dzhekova, 2016: 9). Moreover, the meaning of radicalisation can vary with particular context, place, and time.

<b>Radicalisation</b>	
Della Porta	“radicalisation referred to the actual use of violence, with escalation in terms of forms and intensity” (2012: 6)
Schmid	„radicalisation studies approach the field of extremism and terrorism by focusing on the processes through which individuals become socialized into engaging in political violence without moral restraints” (2011: 217)
Borum, Veldhuis, Staun	“ broader sense of radicalisation, put the emphasis on the active pursuit or acceptance of far-reaching changes in society, which may or may not constitute a danger to democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals,” and “ violent radicalisation, emphasizes the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of violence to attain the stated goal” (2011 : 4)
Barlett	non-violent/cognitive radicalisation – refers to “the process by which individuals come to hold radical views in relation to the status quo but do not undertake, or directly aid or abet terrorist activity referred to as radicals.“ On the contrary, violent radicalisation is “a process by which individuals come to undertake terrorist activity, or directly aid or abet terrorism“ (2010 : 10)
Dalgaard-Nielsen	„A radical is understood as a person harbouring a deep-felt desire for fundamental socio-political changes and radicalisation is understood as a growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to the existing order. Conversely, violent radicalisation is a process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts“ (2010:798)
Crosset	„radicalisation is the process by which an individual, group, or mass of people undergo a transformation from participating in

	the political process via legal means to the use or support of violence for political purposes“ (2010)
Wilner	„radicalisation is a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence“ (2010 : 38)

Table of widely – used academic definitions of radicalisation

Several fault lines are associated with the notion of radicalisation. Arguably the key challenge concerns the difference between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation. Despite the close link between radical views and violence, there is no automatic causal link between them because people and groups with radical convictions do not necessarily have to commit acts of violence. On the other hand, violent action does not have to be necessarily motivated by radical frames of thinking (Dzhekova, 2016: 7). Attitude-behaviour axis is observed as central regarding the definition of radicalisation by many scholars. Neumann and Borum distinguish between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation. They state that „ideology and action are sometimes connected, but not always.” (Borum, 2011: 30). Similarly, Sageman and Della Porta assume that radical behaviour and attitudes are linked but “cannot be understood as necessarily dependent” (Della Porta, 2012:7). The authors like Horgan and Borum strictly separate between cognitive radicalisation and political violence (Neumann, 2013: 886). According to them, cognitive radicalisation focuses on extremist beliefs and views while behavioural radicalisation stresses extremist behaviour and violent actions (Neumann, 2013: 873). They advocate that „action pathways as the actual involvement in terrorism are only one of many pathways towards terrorism“(Hafez, 2015: 961).

Regarding specific definitions of radicalisation, for example, Della Porta and LaFree underline earlier notions of radicalisation which were used in the academic community in the 1970s (Della Porta, 2012: 6). Schmid focuses more on radical actions and socialization in political violence (Schmid, 2011: 217). Borum, Veldhuis, and Staun differentiate between violent radicalisation and political radicalism when they stress that violent radicalisation, put the emphasis on the use of violence (Borum 2011: 4) in contrast with a broader sense of radicalisation, where the emphasis is placed on acceptance of changes in society, which may not necessarily lead to violence (ibid.). Similarly, Dalgaard-Nielsen distinguishes between broader terms of radicalism and

violent radicalisation (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 798). Other authors like Crosset or Spitaletta adopt sociological and psychological approaches toward radicalisation. Most recently Wilner observes radicalisation as a process of transformative learning.

Finally, we can distinguish between religion-inspired, mainly Islamist radicalisation, left or right-wing radicalisation, ethno-nationalist, or single-issue radicalisation (Dzhekova, 2016: 5). In my diploma thesis, I will focus solely on Islamist radicalisation, while other types of radical beliefs will be out of the scope of my research. Islamist radicalisation involves adopting a belief that, „to recreate an Islamic state, Muslims must not only adhere to a strict Salafist or ultraconservative interpretation of Islam but also wage jihad, defined as armed struggle against the enemies of Islam ” (Rabasa, 2010: 2).

## 2.2. Law enforcement definitions

Except for academic definitions, I will also provide some law enforcement definitions. In each of them, the emphasis is slightly different. For example UK and US definitions – each describes different types of radicalisation – UK stresses cognitive part of radicalisation refers to the adoption of ideology on the contrary US underlines behavioural one connected to violence. French definition underlines behavioural change of radicalised individuals and Belgian plan against radicalisation includes both mental change and also terrorist actions.

UK	Extremism is “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” and radicalisation is defined as a „process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups“ (Prevent strategy, 2016)
US	radicalisation is the “process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect social change” (US Department of Homeland Security, 2007)
France	“radicalisation is a change in behaviour that can lead some people to extremism and terrorism” (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2019)

Belgium	„a process during which a person or a group of persons experiences such influences that this person or this group of people will, at some point, be mentally molded or disposed to commit terrorist acts“ (Plan R : 2016)
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Table of policy definitions of radicalisation and extremism

I consider violent radicalisation of actions as the essential part of the radicalisation process since I will work with two specific models of radicalisation in my diploma thesis – PET and NYPD, whose fourth and final phase represents direct participation in a terrorist group. Therefore I assume that the radicalisation of actions is crucial for the needs of my dissertation. In contrast, the non-violent phase of radicalisation escalated only in accepting radical ideas and not in committing violent action will be out of the scope of my dissertation. That's why I will take into account only definitions of violent radicalisation. This type of definition provides authors like Dalgaard Nielsen, Borum, or Barlett. More specifically Barlett's definition seems to correspond most closely to the focus of my thesis because it describes the process during which individuals “undertake terrorist activity, or directly aid or abet terrorism” (Barlett, 2010: 10). Moreover given that I will analyse the radicalisation process in more detail in three specific countries (UK, France, Belgium), the definitions of the radicalisation of those countries will be also essential for me.

### 3. Islamic state and the phenomenon of foreign fighters

At the beginning of 2014, a new threat arose in the Middle East, the transnational radical Sunni organization Islamic State (Islamic State of Iraq and Levanta or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or Daesh), which on July 29, declared a caliphate in parts of Iraq and civil war-torn Syria (Prague student summit, 2014:2). Large areas of these two states were ruled and occupied by this Islamist insurgent and the terrorist group from 2014 to 2017. The group has formed a global network of supporters and jihadists, from terrorist groups in several other countries, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen (Blanchard, 2018: 17). David Kilcullen contended that for West, IS represents „ a larger, more unified, capable, experienced and savage enemy, in a less stable, more fragmented region, with a far higher level of geopolitical competition, and a much more severe risk of great-power conflict, than at any time since 9/11" (Jones, 2017: 15).

According to Moghadam, ISIS should be classified rather as an ideology than a religion. Gaub specified that ISIS is a cult and it went beyond the label of „terrorist organization or a proto-state with territorial ambition" (Gaub, 2016: 113). He argues that the method of recruitment and incorporation of new members, especially from Western states, is almost the same compared to the techniques of other well-known cults from the 60s or 70s (Gaub, 2016: 115).

ISIS is a symptom of the political bankruptcy of the Middle East, the fragmentation and delegitimization of state institutions, as well as the expansion of the civil war in Iraq and Syria. The cause of the development and growth of ISIS lies in the difficult political and social circumstances in Arab societies, as well as in regional or global rivalries. The key factor is the ongoing, decades-long crisis of government and the economy. The birth of the Islamic State was thus defined by four primary factors (Gerges, 2017: 23).

1.) ISIS can be understood as the expansion of al-Qaeda in Iraq, which arose as a result of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. By destroying state institutions, the invasion strengthened the general division by ethnic and religious lines, creating a particularly favourable environment for the birth and expansion of jihadist groups (Gerges, 2017: 24)

2.) The fragmentations of the post-Saddam political establishment and its inability to pursue policies that promote national identity have deepened the climate of mistrust between Sunnis and Shiites (Caris, 2014: 230)

3.) The disintegration of state institutions in Syria and its fall into total war (Gerges, 2017: 22)

4.) The failure of the Arab Spring - the Arab Spring became a moment of emancipation that could change the Arab Middle East in a progressive spirit. ISIS would not have succeeded without much interplay between authoritarian Arab rulers and their regional and global patrons (Gerges, 2017: 24)

### Goal

In general, we can observe that ISIS has a revolutionary and apocalyptic vision of the world, where ISIS supporters will overthrow the current world order and defeat the „anti-Christ" (Schmid, 2015: 48). Therefore the main official goal was to establish a state that would unite Muslim ummah and atone for the injustices created by the artificial creation of borders from the days of colonialism. But it is also about taking over power, influence, and territory. In general raison d'être of the Islamic State has long been primarily Pan- Islamic expansion (Prague student summit, 2014: 8). ISIS leaders and supporters want to introduce an orthodox form of interpretation of Islam, rejecting any innovation and adaptation of religion to the modern world. Anyone who disagrees with their religious ideology is labelled a heretic and severely punished. They fight purely for Sunni Islam, other offshoots of Islam are seen as heretical and hostile (The diplomat, 2014).

### Ideology

The ideology of IS fighters is most often based on Salafism (whose one of the main branch is jihadism) Wahhabism and militant Islamism (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 208) which is „centred on a narrative that Islam and Muslims are constantly attacked and humiliated by the West, Israel, and corrupt local regimes in Muslim countries." (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 798).

For this thesis, it is important to distinguish between jihadism as a „modern revolutionary ideology" and jihad as one of the cornerstones of Islam as such, denoting

all kinds of struggles from spiritual, political, religious, personal, or military (Neumann, 2014: 9). The characteristic feature of Jihadists is downplaying non-violent forms of jihad and, conversely, emphasizing the understanding of jihad in terms of the struggle for the liberation of the ummah (ibid.).

### **3.1. History of Islamism in Europe**

As for the tradition and roots of Islamist radicalisation in Western Europe, we can proceed from several preconditions which affected it, namely the immigration, colonial history, and the situation of Muslim immigrant minorities in the host countries. These aspects had a direct impact on a high number of foreign fighters from Western Europe who fought for IS. Previous research and studies have indicated that the process of penetration of jihadist networks or spreading radical Islam or terrorism in Europe has gone through four basic stages (Pisoiu, 2014: 773). The first phase in the 1980s was characterized by the fact that Europe played the role of a kind of marginal operational base. At that time, the biggest radical threat was small jihadist groups with a national orientation, whose main goal was to influence the political situation in their country of origin. The second phase in the 1990s was marked by the creation of international Islamic radical networks like the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), Hamas, Ansar al-Islam, or Hezbollah in many European countries such as France, Belgium, the UK, and Spain. The third period at the turn of the century is associated with the involvement of European states in the war in Iraq. Vidino called this period the home-grown phase (Vidino, 2011: 1-4). After 9/11, we can observe a significant change in jihadist networks around the world connected with the declaration of the War on Terror by the President of the US. Some authors label a fourth phase, the so-called „linkage phase, which is associated with the emergence of linkages between home-grown networks and al-Qaeda affiliated groups" (Dzhekova, 2016: 44). The apocalyptic ideology of the Islamic State, its revolutionary intent towards the strategic importance of the Middle East, and transnational terrorism have raised concerns among political figures around the world and sparked a global debate on strategies and political options for defeating this terrorist group (Blanchard, 2018: 1).

### **3.2. The concept of Foreign Fighters**

For the purposes of this thesis, it is needed to define the term foreign fighter. Again there is no generally accepted definition of this concept. This paper will use the definition of David Malet which describes foreign fighter 1) as an „agent who has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, 2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions, 3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and 4) is unpaid, which distinguishes foreign fighters from international terrorists" (Malet, 2009: 9).

The phenomenon of foreign fighters is currently most associated with Muslims, who have joined the jihad mainly for religious and ideological reasons, especially related to the feeling of suffering ummah. However, foreign fighters are involved in conflicts not only because of identity sharing. They often identify with the warring party of a given conflict based on ethnicity, the personal crisis they are currently going through, or because they want to experience the adventurous life of a warrior. Although the history of foreign fighters dates back to the Spanish or Russian Civil War it was the Afghan resistance to the Soviets in the 1980s that provided the framework for the foreign fighters of our time (Mendelsohn, 2011: 190).

Hegghammer offers several hypotheses why the phenomenon of foreign fighters became so popular only after 1980. Most often, foreign fighters engage in asymmetric conflicts, where at least one of the parties is a non-state actor, such as a guerrilla force or another irregular external group. They especially participate in interreligious and very bloody conflict or foreign interventions – and this type of conflict was very popular in the 1980s. Furthermore, the political status of the territory in which particular conflict occurs can also affect the number of foreign fighters – in this case invasion of independent countries is perceived by the Muslim public as a serious act of aggression which can lead to a higher level of mobilization of foreign fighters. The second hypothesis takes into account the type of local insurgents in a given conflict, whether they have, for example, certain qualities such as Islamic ideology or if there is a pre-existing link with some other countries. As well as an absence of government obstruction can ease the entry of foreign fighters in the conflict country. A fourth hypothesis is based on the mass mobilization of recruits which required widespread use of communications technologies, and social media. The fifth explanation of the greater motivation of foreign fighters builds on the fact that the Islamist movement has evolved during recent decades (Hegghammer, 2010: 65-68). Behind the growth of foreign

fighters in the IS, it is also possible to see the successes in conquering cities, for example, the occupation of Mosul caused their exponential growth (Gaub, 2016: 116). Hegghamer concludes that a combination of these factors led to an increase in the number of foreign fighters (Hegghammer, 2010: 68). Three-quarters of the foreign contingent comes from the following four countries - France, United Kingdom, Belgium, and Germany (Gaub, 2016: 116). Due to the high proportion of foreign fighters from these Western European countries, the situation regarding the radicalisation processes in the given countries (except Germany) will be elaborated in the empirical part.

## 4. Theories of radicalisation

From the theoretical perspective, I will lay out the main models of radicalisation based on which is radicalisation examined. According to Crossett and Spitaletta, sixteen theories are explaining the root causes and circumstances of radicalisation (Borum, 2011: 16). However, I would like to briefly analyse basic concepts of only three generally accepted and contributive theories. Namely social movement theory (top-down), social psychology (top-down), and conversion theory (bottom-up). In the second part of this chapter, I will take a look at empirical research which is not based on any theoretical foundations. This type of research represents a very valuable source of information about the common personal background of terrorists or radicalised persons. I have decided not to take into consideration the sociologist approach because it does not provide an answer to the question of why only a small segment of the population exposed to the same structural impacts eventually become violently radicalized (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 801).

### 4.1. Social movement theory and social network theory

One of the most significant theoretical frameworks for grasping the process of radicalisation is social movement theory (SMT) and social network theory (Dalgaard-Nielsen, Della Porta & LaFree, Sageman, Wiktorowicz). To clarify what exactly the social movement is Zald and McCarthy provide a definition - „social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population, which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (Zald, 1987). The theory as such has evolved dynamically over the last decades, resulting in the three most well-known contemporary influences - New Social Movement Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, and Framing Theory which is rooted in constructivist approaches and puts an emphasis on interpretation of social reality (Borum, 2011: 17-18). The SMT shed the light on the question which radicalisation experts have long sought to answer - how from activists become radical terrorists? This theory underlines that social or intersubjective processes are crucial motivating factors for radicalisation (Dalgaard, 2010: 802).

In general, these studies emphasize „the role of social bonds and networks and the individual's interaction with a radical group for radicalisation and recruitment processes

and alignment of the individual's with the group's frame of reference, values, and beliefs" (Veldhuis, 2009: 43). The essential contention of social movement/network theorists is that „violent radicalisation is about who you know—radical ideas are transmitted by social networks and violent radicalisation takes place within smaller groups, where bonding, peer pressure, and indoctrination gradually changes the individual's view of the world" (Sageman, 2004: 158). Moreover, this theory points out that to better understand radicalisation, it is necessary to analyse how a given group encourages potential members to participate, how recruitment networks are formed, and how radicalized individuals take over the group's interests as their own (Borum, 2011: 48). Related to radicalisation, initial contact with the radical movement often occurs through pre-existing contacts within personal relationships and networks. Only when a potential member of the group accepts the basic principles, a closer interaction within the movement begins (Wiktorowicz, 2004: 16).

Furthermore, recent SMT studies reveal that grievances are not solely preconditions of radical actions. Instead, radicalisation is defined as a social process through which the interaction with a radical group takes place. Through this process, the particular individual is gradually convinced by the radical movement that perceived grievances are sufficient reason to personally engage in violent actions. Adoption of extreme worldviews can be facilitated by social pressures and social bonding within peer groups (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 803). Therefore the biggest strength of the group lies in „a powerful rhetoric and recruiting strategy which may convince him/her to join the movement, even when the individual may lack motivation at the beginning" (Horgan, 2008: 80). After the potential members are fully integrated into the radical movement, the group provides them with a feeling of being accepted, a sense of belonging, and even with the meaning of life (Neumann and Rogers, 2007: 71).

It is needed to say that by identifying the current militant Islamism as the global social movement, the theory of social movement offers several new insights and sheds light on the process of radicalisation (Horgan, 2008: 20). Also, the fact that modern jihad can be considered leader-less without a central authority and hierarchical structure underlines the importance of group/friendship and kinship ties, which this theory regarded as crucial (Sageman, 2004).

## 4.2. Socio-psychological and psychological approaches

Another important stream of scholars explores the potential contribution of socio-psychological and psychological approaches to shed light on the conditions of violent radicalisation in Europe from the psychological perspective (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008). Social psychology is one of the subdisciplines of psychology and focuses mainly on group behaviour, group relationships, and group influences on the individual. One of the most prominent experts in the field of social psychology, Gordon Allport, defined this subdiscipline as "an attempt to understand and explain how individuals' thinking, feeling, and behaviour are affected by the actual, perceived or implied presence of others" (Allport, 1954: 5). In the case of radicalisation, social psychology concentrates on intergroup dynamics and the conflicts within them. Social psychology observes several visible impacts of groups in the process of radicalisation (Borum, 2011: 20):

First, in a group context, radical tendencies and attitudes of individuals are inclined to be more extreme. This phenomenon is called group polarization. Secondly, we can observe less rational and much more biased decision-making within groupthink. Similarly, in the group, there is often bias based on cleavage in-group / out-group. The members of the group tend to perceive their group much more positively than it is, and on the contrary, they ascribe significantly negative attributes to other people outside the group (Borum, 2011: 21). Another important point is that individuals feel less personally responsible for the actions of the group as a whole, compared to their individual actions. In the group, responsibilities have been dispersed over all members and the threshold for violent behaviour is lowered (McCauley, 1987: 231-256). A further reason why to join groups is the vision of rewards. These positive stimuli vary from individual to individual - it can be, for example, a search for the personal meaning of life, or a sense of belonging, a desire for adventure, or a way to meet material needs for survival. For compliance with group internal standards and members' thinking and behaviour, the group usually uses social pressure. Mainly based on social psychology, McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko have identified several crucial "mechanisms" of political radicalisation (ibid.).

From the psychological perspective, the two key psychological factors influencing whether a person enters the process of radicalisation are motive and vulnerability. „By definition, the motive is an emotion, desire, physiological need, or similar impulse that

acts as an incitement to action, and vulnerability refers to susceptibility or liability to succumb, as to persuasion or temptation" (Borum, 2004: 24). According to academics researching radicalisation neither of the two factors in itself is sufficient for the beginning of radicalisation process. However, the synergistic effect of these two dynamics can significantly increase the probabilities of radicalisation (Borum, 2004: 26). Based on recent studies and literature three motivational themes - injustice, identity, and belonging - seem to be the most „prominent and consistent" (Horgan, 2003: 43). The need to grasp vulnerabilities should not be confused with the quest for "terrorist personality" (ibid.). Horgan has observed the issue of vulnerability as "factors that point to some people having a greater openness to increased engagement than others" (Horgan in press).

### 4.3. Conversion theory

I also provide a brief insight into the topic of radicalisation through the lenses of conversion theory. This thread of theory development draws attention somewhat less to interactions in social networks or on power or activity of collective movement and „more on the individual process of transforming beliefs and ideologies—often regarded as conversion" (Rambo, 1993). "The intellectual mode of conversion begins with an individual, private investigation of possible new grounds of being or personal fulfilment, for instance by reading books, watching television, attending lectures, and other ways in which it is increasingly possible to adopt alternate ideologies and ways of life" (Lofland, 1981: 376). Conversion theory builds on Randy Borum's study that a radical individual is the result of the interaction of personal motives for radicalisation and a vulnerability to be radicalized. Representatives of the conversion theory Lofland and Skonovd also introduce two factors of radicalisation - predisposing conditions and situational factors. With this integrative notion of the process of radicalisation, they overcome the dualistic view of whether personal traits or situational contexts are more important for radicalisation. Moreover by using an „active conversion paradigm, perhaps a comparable array of radicalisation motifs might be conceptualized to help aggregate the many diverse radicalisation pathways" (Borum, 2011: 23).

Richardson and Kilbourne distinguish between two categories of conversion, active and passive. In the case of active conversion, a convert is considered a rational actor, who decides on the ground of a well-thought-through goal or motivation. Passive conversion,

in contrast, takes place based on a random decision resulting from a crisis that an individual is facing at a given time (Richardson, 1998: 1072). „As mentioned above, the conversion theory is not interested in the dynamics and efficiency of any social group but it focuses exclusively on the direct motivation of individuals and the analysis of their behaviour and their inner decision-making processes" (Wenlin, 2017: 60).

#### **4.4. Empirical approaches**

Finally, it is also possible to examine radicalisation from the outlook of empirical approaches. These studies and research are not based on any specific theoretical framework, but with their empirical data, they contribute to information about the processes and factors of radicalisation. „The empiricist studies first collect data from some case studies, then, based on the observed patterns and dynamics, point to the importance of social factors and connections, but also other factors, such as individual needs and inclinations" (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 806).

Based on the review of literature, the scholars like Marc Sageman, Edwin Bakker, Peter Nesser, or Thomas Hegghammer provide the most promising and contributive empiricist studies. For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to outline the outcomes from the datasets of Bakker and Sageman. I would also like to briefly mention Nesser's differentiation of roles in jihadist groups. To initially illustrate the European terrorist „profile", I picked the empirical studies of the authors who conducted empiricist research about the terrorists from all over Europe. In further chapters of my thesis, I narrow my focus only to radicalized individuals from Belgium, France, and the UK who fought for Islamic State. Peter Nesser, who conducted the empirical research on violent radicalisation, points out that within the radical group we can distinguish between different types of persons who have different motives and paths toward violent radicalisation. He draws the line between the radicalisation pathways of the role of leader, protégé, misfit, and drifter. Since the aim of my thesis is not to differentiate between the particular roles of radicalized individuals in ISIS I will not examine it in more detail (Nesser, 2004: 10).

Bakker who was methodologically inspired by Sageman analysed biographical data about more than 200 individuals charged with terrorism in Europe (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 805). He collected information in a time framework between the years 2001 and

2006. The analysed individuals varied widely in age (from 16 -59 years old), however, most of them were in their mid-twenties when have become engaged in militant jihadist activity. Almost all were European citizens (and joined the terrorist organizations in their resident countries), but the majority of them were from non-European countries of origin, mainly from the region of the Middle East and North Africa. More than half had a lower socio-economic background, which can be a reflection of the general socio-economic status of Muslim immigrants in Europe (Bakker, 2006: 52). Fewer than a quarter were raised in religious families, but most of them convert to Islam during their lives.

In contrast to Bakker, Marc Sageman observes that most of the jihadists came from middle-class families and raised in secular families (Sageman, 2004). Both authors agree that most of them had a high school level education. But fifteen percent were unemployed, and it is estimated that almost a third were worked in unskilled jobs. Bakker found out that only one in three appeared to be unmarried at the time of his arrest and nearly a quarter had a criminal background (Bakker, 2006: 55). On the contrary, Sageman claims that the criminal background of individuals in his dataset is very rare. Very important information is also that nearly a half was related through friendship and kinship (Sageman, 2004).

Bakker research showed that most of the people in his analysed sample were radicalized in the country where they currently live, and he emphasizes that the majority of the analysed radical group consisted of people of about the same age, or more - less the same residential area. He also notes that within groups, we can observe the self-recruitment pattern of radicalisation rather than recruitment through a formal terrorist / radical movement (Bakker, 2006: 52). His dataset also emphasizes a point that the individuals entered radicalisation process or involved with terrorism in Europe „vary widely in term of socioeconomic background, education, occupation, family status, previous criminal record, and so on" (Bakker 2006, 53). Therefore it is evident this variety of distinct personal traits cannot be explained solely based on socio-economic explanations of radicalisation.

Bakker empirical research confirms the premise of social network theory or social psychology that for understanding the violent radicalisation the group processes and socialization into the particular radical group are more important than „psychological

characteristics or socioeconomic deprivation" (Dalgaard, 2010: 805). However, on the account of the fact that in the studies of radicalisation we cannot consider anything as unequivocal without any ambiguity, there are also some caveats. In line with Sageman, Bakker emphasizes the same type of mobilization and recruitment – recruitment through social networks. According to them, the social bonds significantly facilitate the entry into armed jihad or Islamist movement (Bakker, 2006).

In a nutshell, when looking at these theories and approaches toward radicalisation, different theoretical points of departure emerge, each with distinct explanatory background factors of radicalisation. Social Movement or Social Network Theory has helped to emphasize the importance of social bonds and interaction between members of radical groups. Social psychology has transcended the study of human behaviour based on a preoccupation with individual traits, to emphasize the „ power of situations and social interaction, influence, and conflict at collective levels" (Borum, 2011: 31). Finally, conversion theory brings these concepts together, referring „to the importance of integrating predisposing conditions and situational factors in understanding causes of extremism" (ibid.). However, it is needed to conclude that none of the mentioned theories provides clear answers and no single theory is likely to clarify all violent radicalisations. Thus the explanation provided by reviewed scholars should not be considered as competing, rather as complementary since they focus on distinct aspects of the phenomenon of radicalisation (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 810).

## 5. Root cause model of radicalisation

The above-mentioned review of respected theories shows that to unequivocally stipulate which factors contributed to the radicalisation most significantly, is a very difficult task. Therefore this chapter will be devoted to research on levels within the framework of which radicalisation occurs. Furthermore, in the complex context of the radicalisation process, it is needed to examine the root causes of radicalisation from different points of view.

First of all, it is needed to clarify what does the root causes of radicalisation mean. Based on the literature these causes „ refer to causal factors without which the radicalisation process would not have occurred" (Veldhuis, 2009: 21). However, this does not mean that each of the causal factors is a necessary part of every radicalisation process. Which factors contribute to radicalisation depends mostly on a particular individual. On account of the difficulty of reaching a consensus among academic researchers, it exists a very high number of different alleged root causes. For example, The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research defined more than 50 causes. Therefore we can observe that the urgent need to come out with some organizational scheme for examining root causes has arisen (Schmid, 2011).

The root cause model is important because it provides a scope within which it is possible to examine how individual causal factors and variables at different levels relate to each other and how they affect the likelihood of violent radicalisation (Veldhuis, 2009: 22). "What we know about real terrorists suggests that there is rarely a conscious decision to become a terrorist. Most involved in terrorism are the result of gradual action and socialization towards extreme behaviour" (Horgan and Taylor, 2001: 64). From this perspective, terrorism is not the result of one particular decision, but the final stage of a dynamic process that gradually leads the individual to an increasingly strong commitment to violence. This process is not isolated from the broader context but rather takes place in the background of the wider political environment, like state or terrorist group (McCormick, 2003). Thus, when looking at the perplexing nature of radicalisation into violent extremism and numerous explanatory models of the causes of radicalisation and terrorism, many experts and scholars promote the use of three-level analysis. These types of frameworks aim to avoid of overemphasis on only one of the levels when examining causes and overlook others (Schmid, 2013: 4).

The three-level analysis described by Schmid involves micro, meso, and macro-level.

Micro-level (Schmid) / micro-individual level (Veldhuis and Staun) involving e.g. problems with personal identity, personality characteristics, failed integration, personal experiences which induce „feelings of alienation, marginalization, discrimination, humiliation stigmatization and rejection, sense of moral outrage or feelings of revenge;" (ibid.)

Meso-level (Schmid) / micro-social level (Veldhuis and Staun) includes a wider radical milieu – a supportive social space that forms the background for radicalisation leading to the formation of terrorist groups. Meso-level comprises e.g. social interaction and group processes, feeling of relative deprivation, and problems with social identity and self-categorization; (ibid.)

Macro-level (Schmid) i.e. the role of government and society, the emergence of radical political parties, tense relations between the majority and the minority, especially when it comes to isolated diasporas, lack of economic and social opportunities for immigrants, poor integration, and poverty of immigrants, the impacts of globalization and modernization and so on. All of this can lead to mobilization and subsequent radicalisation of dissatisfied individuals which could potentially escalate in the form of terrorism. (ibid.)

Other groups of scholars propose that radicalisation takes place at the intersection of the personal, pull and push factors. Push factors on the macro-level "overlap with the structural root causes of terrorism that drive people towards resorting to violence, and include, for example, state repression, poverty, and injustice" (Campana, 2011: 79). Pull factors on the meso level indicate aspects that make extremist groups and their lifestyles more attractive to some people and involve, for example, „ideology, group belonging, group mechanisms, and other incentives" (Vergani, 2018: 3). Personal factors on the micro-level referred to „more specifically individual characteristics that make certain individuals more vulnerable than their circumstantially comparable peers to radicalisation" (ibid.). Furthermore, the scholars propose that certain background and structural factors provide a fertile breeding ground for the process, while certain catalysts or trigger events can accelerate it (Schmid, 2011: 221). According to Crenshaw (1981: 24), it is necessary to distinguish triggering events from deep long-term factors that set the foundation for terrorism. Triggering events or precipitants, in contrast,

immediately precede and abruptly accelerate the occurrence of radicalisation into violent extremism. These triggers include events „that call for revenge or action, such as violence against in-groups, police brutality or even compromising speeches by public figures" (ibid.).

In this section, I will depict the principal root causes and trigger events on three distinct levels. Moreover, I will also take a look at the particular places or enabling environments where it is the most likely that the radicalisation occurs.

### **5.1. Macro level causes**

Factors at the macro level are closely linked to the integration of individuals into social structures and reflect, for example, demographic, cultural, political, or economic changes, „educational attainment or labour market participation." These contextual aspects are generally considered as preconditions for deviant behaviour or even crime (Veldhuis, 2009: 24). According to Pisoui, the roots of Islamist radicalisation can be found in perceived grievances such as hostilities between the Arab world and the West, colonialism, underdevelopment, the poor-rich gap and the anti-Western discourse (Pisoiu, 2014: 776). Macro factors thus create a broader structural context for radicalisation and grievances can explain how dissatisfaction, frustration, or anti-Western discourse can arise among disadvantaged social groups, for example among young Muslims who have difficulty finding employment (Gurr, 1970: 25).

The first problem at the macro level is the poor integration of immigrants from all over the world, who have settled in large numbers in Western Europe. A substantial part of these immigrants come from Muslim countries. Thus the main question is, „how well are Muslims integrated into Western societies?" (Veldhuis, 2009: 31) Generally, available research studies indicate that the socio-economic profile of Muslim immigrants differs significantly from the average population of a given Western country. Muslims tend to be less educated, often live in neighbourhoods with low socioeconomic status, and they face problems finding a properly paid job when they enter the labour market. However, the lack of integration is not only reflected in the socio-economic domain but in many European countries, Muslims are also poorly integrated into the political sphere (ibid.). Institutional discrimination against Muslims induces the perception of rejection by the host society and thus not only threatens their

economic and political integration but also poses a threat to the cultural and social integration of Muslims (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006).

The second point connected with radicalisation at the macro level is poverty and economic deprivation. These aspects are usually considered facilitative factors in the early stages of terrorism rather than causative ones. However, the question arises as to whether any correlation actually exists (Franz, 2007). Although I would like to avoid over-generalization, I consider as necessary to mention several aspects that may have contributed to the disillusionment of the Muslim minority in Western Europe. This includes, for example, a high unemployment rate that consistently exceeds the unemployment rate in the rest of the population. Unemployment, together with segregation, leads to the formation of ethnically and religiously homogeneous neighbourhoods where we can find high levels of criminality and poor housing conditions (Hafez, 2015: 962). Moreover, „the place of residence might offer the location where people first encounter extremist thoughts, either from within their own family or peers or from others within the community" (Precht, 2007: 45). Based on the experience of the NYPD, the existence of isolated ethnic communities results in the creation of parallel societies that serve as ideological sanctuaries for radicals with a high level of tolerance to extremist subcultures (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 22).

The image of these homogeneous neighbourhoods subsequently provides a breeding ground for the creation of usual stereotypes of uncivilized immigrants (Hardy, 2018: 88). From the empirical perspective, research has proven that, although most radicalized Muslims in Western Europe come from socio-economically lower backgrounds, radical Muslims are distributed across all socio-economic strata of society (e.g., Sageman 2004; Bakker, 2006). However, this correlation between poverty and radicalisation is far from direct, as it is largely dependent on social and individual factors or relationships. Based on this, scholars drew the attention not to absolute deprivation as a possible cause of radicalism but rather on relative deprivation. „As relative deprivation refers to a subjective perception of being unfairly disadvantaged concerning reference groups" (Krueger, 2003: 334). This phenomenon will be closely examined in the section about meso level causes of radicalisation.

Another root cause of radicalism at the macro level is globalization and modernization. One of the significant consequences of globalization is that it strongly facilitates the „emergence of transnational ideological movements" (Veldhuis, 2009: 34). The global dissemination of information leads to the creation of large communities, within which their messages are rapidly transmitted, new members are recruited and collective activities are organized. Wiktorowicz assumes that Salafism is one of the fastest expanding Islamic movements, and has a global influence on the ideological orientation of Muslims around the world (Wiktorowicz, 2001). This ideology „frames personal and collective grievances" (Neumann, 2009) into a broader political framework of criticizing the status quo and demonizing enemies by justifying the use of any violence against them. Such a dynamic spread of radical interpretations of Islam symbolizes the widespread expansion of global virtual networks, which primarily serve the purpose of a kind of platform for the transnational formation of attitudes and recruitment into radical jihadist movements. At the same time, however, it is very important to mention that globalization is also considered as a cause of conflicts in the Islamic world through which Islamist fundamentalism is likely to emerge. This universal radical Islam is very attractive especially for young Muslims who feel isolated and excluded in host society in Western countries (Roy, 2004).

## **5.2. Macro level catalysts**

One of the triggers at the macro level could be, for example, the scandal over the treatment of political prisoners and terrorist suspects in the Iraqi Abu Ghraib prison. This trigger is considered one of the key events in the spread of Islamist fundamentalism (Veldhuis, 2009: 36). Based on an overview of the causes leading to radicalism at the macro level, I aimed to illustrate that these factors are structural preconditions for radicalisation and provide a breeding ground for engagement in jihadist groups. However, macro-level causes cannot explain why some people are radicalizing and others are not.

## **5.3. Meso level causes**

There is nothing new on the assumption that individuals are significantly influenced by their social environment. It is particularly important to understand radicalisation as an individual circumstance taking place in a social context. It is, therefore, necessary to

examine the placement of individuals in their social environment, ranging from direct and personal social networks to wider social contexts (Sageman, 2004). To emphasize the centrality of the individual, within the micro-level Veldhuis identifies two additional layers - social and individual. Social factors primarily describe the relationships of the individual to others. As it will be further discussed the term „others" does not mean only the persons with whom the individual comes into direct interaction or forms a group, but it also includes people from other social groups (Veldhuis, 2009).

Self-categorization and social identity are key elements influencing the occurrence of radicalisation at the meso level. We can say that one of the most researched objects of socio-psychological approaches to radicalisation is the relevance of the perception of group membership from the perspective of the individual. Research has shown that the identification of an individual with social groups is a particularly important predictor of social behaviour. The social identity that the individual considers most important provides the framework through which he analyses and interprets the surrounding world. Thus, social identity indicates the basic direction of thoughts, feelings, and actions (Spears, and Doosje, 2002).

In the case of Muslim immigrants it is believed that they go through an identity crisis that is rooted on the one hand in a sense of weak belonging to their cultural or ethnic origins and on the other hand they simultaneously feel alienated and excluded from the host society (Malik, 2007). „Compounded with experiences of discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage in European societies the state of identity search is termed by some authors double sense of non-belonging" (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 800). As a result, they are looking for identity in a transnational Muslim community – the so-called ummah. In the light of this new satisfactory identity, which binds them with other Muslims, the national identity becomes irrelevant from their point of view. When identifying themselves with the narrative of the constantly suffering ummah, individuals adopt the collective emotions. They feel these emotions even when they relate to events and issues that do not concern them personally but refers to a particular social group which is ummah, in this case (Smith, Seger, and Mackie, 2007).

From the point of view of radicalisation into violent extremism, the context of group processes and social interactions appears to be equally important. Radical individuals, like everybody else, are integrated into intricate interaction systems within which their

individual opinions and attitudes are generated. Whom they interact with strongly influences what they believe and how they behave. These social networks show one essential feature - internal socio-demographic and opinion homogeneity (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). As for the initial motivation to join the radical group, Wiktorowicz in his research claims that the basic prerequisite for joining the group is the so-called frame-alignment of values. This means that an individual joins the group only under such conditions that the ideological direction of the group corresponds to his previous interest of the seeker (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Secondly, social influence encourages individuals to fully embrace the attitudes of others within a given social network (Okamoto and Sussman, 2007). Mutual support or, conversely, punishment in network structures leads to the adoption of internal standards and norms within groups. According to Sageman (2004), group processes in radical groups can head towards violent behaviour and terrorism. Moreover, he points out the critical nature of friendship bonds and contacts.

In this section, I will also introduce opportunity factors on the group level which can serve as „enabling environments and support structures encompassing physical and virtual settings such as the Internet, social media, prisons, mosques or other social environments that can deepen the commitment of radicalizing individuals to radical milieus" (Hafez, 2015: 961).

Recent studies are paying more and more attention to the role of the Internet in the process of radicalisation of young Muslims. For the purposes of this thesis, the Internet is included among the factors of radicalisation at the social level rather than at the macro level. The rise of online social platforms and the spreading of the Internet have ensured to make contact between people from different cultural or religious backgrounds around the world (e.g., Katz, Rice, and Aspden, 2001). The Internet is, therefore, an important facilitator of network forming and interaction between various groups. It also offers opportunities for mobilization and active participation in collective actions (Postmes and Brunsting, 2002). For jihadist movements, the Internet offers important contributions, for example, that it provides easy access to a wide potential audience, ensures the anonymity of communication, and provides a kind of platform for the dissemination of propaganda, videos, or texts (Weimann, 2006). The Internet primarily provides a virtual community that eases the emotional stress on young

Muslims experiencing problems with integration and „feeling a need to maintain their religious identity" (Schweitzer, 2005: 31). Although it appears obvious that the Internet could act as a catalyst in the radicalisation process, there is a very little evidence to back up the contention that it can play a dominant role during the radicalisation (Neumann and Stevens, 2009: 12).

As well as prisons are considered as a fertile breeding ground for radicalisation (Silber and Bhatt, 2007). In the hostile environment of prisons, can be essential for inmates to become members of physically and morally supportive and protective groups. These groups usually arise based on ethnic and religious cleavages and can be very vulnerable to recruitment or radicalisation (Gonzalez-Cabrera, 2009). Also, it is necessary to mention the important position of imams in prisons, who often have a very strong influence on prisoners (Veldhuis, 2009: 46).

Recent terror cases revealed that mosques seem to be an environment that is strongly conducive to radicalisation. These cases exposed that even terrorists who were not very religious and ideologically based had some connection with the local mosque. Based on the empirical research it is evident that mosques play a primary role in the early stages of radicalisation and also serve as a place to recruit new members. However, given that most mosques fail to lead young Muslims to adopt a moderate form of Islam (as controversial issues are often forbidden to discuss and the whole system is largely rigid), „radicalized individuals are withdrawing from the mosque environment to carry out meetings in private homes, student clubs, schools, cafes, bookshops, gyms, etc" (Precht, 2007: 65). These informal social settings "provide an opportunity for radicalisation and might serve as incubators for further radicalisation" (ibid.). The fact that mosques have been replaced by other social settings and no longer serve as a meeting place for young Muslims is a great advantage for radical preachers. The point is that the isolation of young people guarantees recruiters complete freedom in presenting Islam from a radical and jihadist point of view, without conflicting views or interpretations being included (ibid.).

Relative deprivation is the last root cause of radicalisation on the meso level, which I will address. Firstly it is needed to note that most empirical research has not confirmed that countries with higher levels of poverty also have higher levels of terrorism (Piazza, 2011). A socio-economic disadvantage, however, can still play a pivotal role in the

radicalisation process. This disadvantage can potentially lead to a critical perception of the injustice of a particular individual in the host society (Christmann, 2012). If the individuals feel relative deprivation, they perceive a „discrepancy between what they believe they are rightfully entitled to and what they expect to obtain" (Gurr, 1970). Indeed, hostility towards host Western societies and religious fundamentalism often prevail among seemingly well-integrated and highly educated members of the Muslim minority (Tolsma, 2009). It has also been shown that minorities from higher socio-economic classes were more likely to feel discriminated against and rejected by the host society (e.g., Jaspers and Lubbers, 2005).

#### **5.4. Meso level catalysts**

When it comes to recruitment, we distinguish between two basic types. The first one is the top-down process of recruitment in which radical groups are actively seeking and recruiting new members (Veldhuis, 2009). Charismatic leaders or radical spiritual preachers play a particularly important role in this type of recruitment. Imams are very successful in influencing the belief systems of young Muslims, as they speak to them from a position of religious and ideological authority (Hardy, 2018: 53). The other type was described by Sageman (2008) who observes recruitment as the bottom-up process. He contends that the jihadist threat no longer stems from hierarchically organized terrorist networks, but from self-organized bunches of guys who are ideologically inspired by Al Qaeda. These individuals are not recruited by any outside force, but they are actively motivated to join a terrorist organization by themselves.

The question of whether the theory of bottom-up recruitment is more prevalent than top-down radicalisation has long been one of the key scholarly debates. In particular, the centrality of this question has been evident between the two prominent American experts on radicalisation Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman (Hoffman and Sageman, 2008). I am inclined to the opinion of Veldhuis and Staun, who argue that both top-down and bottom-up recruitment processes are important ways of radicalisation and should not be treated as mutually exclusive but rather complementary processes. Regarding trigger events at the meso level, I can mention any disruption of group processes, for example in the form of the arrest of a group member or the „repeated

failure of friends to find a job or achieve goals can ignite a feeling of general discontent and contribute to radicalisation" (Silber and Bhatt, 2007).

### 5.5. Micro level causes

The first point connected with radicalisation at the micro-level is the personal characteristics of individuals. In the previous decades, it was widely believed that radical members of terrorist groups were mentally ill. Nowadays, there is a consensus that radicals are no fundamentally different from other people. As a result, there is no uniform socio-demographic or psychological profile of members of radical groups (e.g., Sageman, 2004; Bakker, 2006), „which makes it increasingly difficult to identify potentially vulnerable individuals" (Veldhuis, 2009: 54).

Second of all, it is needed to analyse the importance of childhood and adult personal experiences. „Just as there is no single terrorist personality or profile, a specific constellation of life experiences is neither necessary nor sufficient to cause terrorism" (Borum, 2004: 38). However, people often make decisions based on specific personal experiences and major life events that have somehow influenced the lenses through which they look at the world. For example, some scholars claim that radicalisation may be the consequence of traumatic childhood experiences (Akhtar, 1999). As well as the periods of incarceration and imprisonment can provide the individual with the experiences of injustice, humiliation, and abuse (Della Porta, 1992: 118). These experiences can act as facilitators of engagement in terrorism and mechanisms for adopting militant ideology (Borum, 2004).

Anger and aggression can result from perceptions of discrimination or exclusion from society. As an example of such a process, I can mention the commission of a suicide attack based on the absence of a sense of self-significance, frustration, and personal traumas. In response to this lost significance, individuals might turn to jihadist ideologies that allow them to restore personal significance (Veldhuis, 2009). The interaction of individuals with their environment affects how they perceive the world around them and, consequently, their behaviour (Bandura, 1990). „People's subjective interpretation of society, rather than the objective reality, can thus lead to radicalisation and terrorism" (Crenshaw, 1988). When the behaviour of people conflicts with their personal beliefs, there could arise a psychological phenomenon of so-called cognitive

dissonance. The natural reaction to such a condition is that people tend to increasingly believe what they say. For example, the more often people make radical statements that are much more radical than their own opinions, the more they believe in the accuracy of those statements (Veldhuis, 2009: 57).

Other scholars have pointed to the significant impact of emotions in the process of radicalisation and terrorism. Sarraj (2002), for example, indicates that feelings of guilt, desire for revenge, or shame were crucial motivations for suicide attacks. Additionally also repeated feeling of humiliation is not a negligible driving force for the radicalisation of Muslims (Richardson, 2006).

One of the ways to explain the motivation to engage in terrorism is also based on rational and strategic choice. This choice should therefore arise from a strategic consideration of the real benefits and limitations associated with group membership. Although this theory may shed light on certain contexts within the radicalisation processes most experts believe that rational choice theories cannot sufficiently explain the phenomenon of violent radicalisation (Ferrero, 2002).

## **5.6. Micro level catalysts**

In general, triggering events at the individual level are unique depending on each individual and on his/her perception or interaction with the environment (Bandura, 1998). More specifically it can include „disruptive events like a frustrated attempt to find a job, the sudden death of a relative or friend, personal experiences with discrimination, or imprisonment could accelerate radicalisation" (Benschop, 2005: 59).

To sum up we can distinguish between different conceptual scopes of analysis of radicalisation's root causes. Despite the high level of variations, there is some agreement between scholars. Generally accepted differentiation of predictors of radicalisation to three distinct levels (either micro, meso, macro or push, pull, personal) can help to better understand this phenomenon and make the radicalisation research more transparent and comprehensible.

## 6. Simple phase models

This chapter discusses the most commonly used phases models, „the top-down model used by the Danish intelligence services (PET, 2009) and the bottom-up model used by the New York Police Department (NYPD)” (Silber and Bhatt, 2007). Needless to say, phase models have their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore in the chapter, I will discuss, on the one hand, their considerable contribution to the understanding of radicalisation process, but on the other hand also their methodological and substantive shortcomings, which experts say they suffer from (Veldhuis, 2009: 12).

Simple phase models can be considered as an alternative to the root cause model which I have already described in the previous chapter. The phase models aim to shed the light on the process during which individuals can become vulnerable to violent radicalisation. The disproval of the fact that radicalisation is the result of straightforward causes, such as mental disorders, religious ideology, and fanaticism, or low socioeconomic status, has shifted the attention of the scholars to alternative and more comprehensive ways of explaining radicalisation (ibid.). „The idea that once we understand every next step towards radicalism, we can find ways to prevent this next step from occurring," (Veldhuis, 2009: 13) led to the creation of synoptic models of the radicalisation process, the aim of which is to understand the initial and final stages of radicalisation as well as each state between them. Thus I have decided to choose two of the most prominent phase models which I will describe in more detail.

### 6.1. PET model

One of the most well-known phase models applied in practice is the model used by the Danish intelligence services - PET. This model distinguishes four phases of radicalisation, which the individual goes through during the radicalisation process becoming increasingly radical. The process begins with an individual susceptible to radical ideas and beliefs meeting with a radicalizer and adopting new religious practices, including behavioural changes. „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" (Danish Security and Intelligence Services, 2009). The biggest strength of the PET model is that for each

phase it is possible to design and apply specific de-radicalization and preventive measures or activities (ibid.).

Figure 1: PET phase model  
Danish Security and Intelligence Services (PET, 2009)

<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Phase 3</i>	<i>Phase 4</i>
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

## 6.2. NYPD model

The second widely circulated phase model was invented by the NYPD (Silber and Bhatt, 2007). Likewise PET model, NYPD model also distinguishes four principal phases that describe the process of radicalisation of Muslims in the West and highlights the framework of „intergroup dynamics whereby radicalisation is supposedly cultivated" (Silva, 2018: 3). Because the NYPD model illustrates a radicalisation process as a bottom-up process, it is considered as an opposing model towards the top-down PET model. The NYPD model finds the pre-radicalisation phase as crucial. This phase involves the period of life of individuals before the radicalisation process actually begins. In particular, it describes their lifestyle, pedigree, socio-economic situation, neighbourhood, or religious beliefs before the radicalisation (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 23). „Despite the absence of a psychological profile of a likely candidate for radicalisation, there is a commonality among a variety of demographic, social, and psychological factors that make individuals more vulnerable to the radical message" (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 22).

The second phase, called as self-identification phase describes the opening of individuals towards the radical interpretation of the world and exploring radical Islam (Veldhuis, 2009). The catalyst for this phenomenon of religious seeking can be a cognitive event or crisis that challenges the former beliefs and worldview of a given

individual while opening the way for a new view of the world and facilitating the possibility of adopting a new ideology (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 30). This stage represents a point of departure in the process of abandoning the former identity and forming a new one (Veldhuis, 2009: 15). Therefore, the most vulnerable are those individuals who are at the crossroads in life or experiencing a certain crisis. An example of such crises may be economic crises like losing a job, a social crisis such as discrimination or racism, a political crisis like perceived atrocities against Muslims, and a personal crisis in the form of the loss of a loved one. Moreover, for illustrating „progression along the radicalisation continuum" (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 31) the NYPD report offers two key indicators within this second phase - progression towards Salafi Islam and regular attendance at a Salafi mosque.

During the Indoctrination phase, the individuals wholly embrace the Salafi-jihadist ideology and redefine their direction in life (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 36). One of the central aspects of this phase is the „acceptance of a religious-political worldview that justifies, legitimizes, encourages, or supports violence against anything kufr, or un-Islamic, including the West, its citizens, its allies, or other Muslims whose opinions are contrary to the extremist agenda" (ibid.). This stage can include withdrawal of the individuals from the mosque because their extremism surpasses the teachings in the mosque and politicization of new beliefs leading to the perception of global events through the lenses of extremist ideology.

In the last - Jihadization phase the individuals accept their duty to participate in violent jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors. This phase includes planning and executing the terrorist attacks (ibid., p. 43). It is needed to note that while the previous three stages usually take place gradually during the years, the jihadization phase can occur quickly sometimes as a change from day to day.

Figure 2: NYPD phase model.

<i>Pre-radicalisation</i>	<i>Self-identification</i>	<i>Indoctrination</i>	<i>Jihadization</i>
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'

### 6.3. Comparison between models

Although both models primarily seek to capture the chronology of the radicalisation process in four consecutive phases, these models differ in several respects. First, the NYPD model suggests that the radicalisation process begins with a pre-radicalisation phase, emphasizing that radicals are „normal" people who have been misled by something. Thus, through the lenses of this model, the radicalisation process is perceived as slightly longer than from the point of view of the PET model (Veldhuis, 2009).

Second, the models differ in their perception of the direction of radicalisation either as the bottom-up process (NYPD) or top-down process (PET). The PET model emphasizes the role of a radicalizer, such as a radical imam or other external force that affects the individual and leads him to radicalisation. However, this role of the external radicalizer is one of the problematic features of the PET model. This model assumes that the person undergoing the process of radicalisation has been inspired to do so by some other person or organization, „rather than this being of his or her own doing" (Danish Security and Intelligence Services, 2009). Such a top-down process may in part reflect the recruitment process of a terrorist organization, but may not necessarily correspond to the joining process introduced by Marc Sageman with his bunch of guys concept,

from which implies that „the process of joining the jihad is more of a bottom-up than a top-down activity" (Sageman, 2008). This is better captured in the bottom-up NYPD model, which understands radicalisation as a process of self-radicalisation, in which aspects like cognitive opening or catalysts in the form of personal crisis are supposed to be susceptible to radicalisation.

#### **6.4. Critique of the phase models**

The phase models developed by NYPD or PET were among the first models which attempt to provide a chronological and very detailed description of the radicalisation process in consecutive phases. Thus, they can be considered as important milestones in examining and identifying the root causes of radicalism. On the other hand, these models also face a significant portion of criticism from the ranks of experts. „First, simple phase models make a methodological error referred to as 'selection on the dependent variable' (Geddes, 2003), which leads the researcher to select cases with a particular value on the dependent variable to find patterns that result in the same outcome." Just as the outbreak of revolutions cannot be explained solely based on the research of revolutions, so the phenomenon of radicalisation cannot be explained only by the study of radical individuals. However, phase models approach the study of radicalisation in exactly this way. They select "successful" cases of radicalisation in which individuals have undergone a radicalisation process and try to describe this process in retrospect. This procedure is prone to biased results and is therefore not considered appropriate by experts to test hypotheses (Veldhuis, 2009).

Phase models cannot explain any deflection from the linear process of radicalisation, which has a prescribed development from the initial to the final phase. They cannot explain why someone radicalizes only in a non-violent direction, leaves the radicalisation process at an early stage, or does not radicalize at all. The main shortcoming of these models is that they describe the radical development of the individual within conducive stages, regardless of the political, social, or cultural background of the individual or his personal life set in a specific environment. However, the fact that one is in a particular phase of the radicalisation process does not mean that he or she automatically moves to the next phase. Because when people are following a different path than that described in phase models, these models are losing their relevance and explanatory power (Veldhuis, 2009: 18).

The second critique of phase models has a substantive rather than methodological nature. The risk with phase models is that there may be statistical discrimination due to their inability to prove that the particular phases which the model examined, apply exclusively to "successful" cases of violent radicalisation. „Statistical discrimination occurs in this context when general traits are used as a signal of other unobserved traits that relate to radicalisation" (Posner, 2005). According to phase models, people who are in one of the phases of the process are automatically suspected that their radicalisation will move towards committing violence, „even though people who are not radicalising at all, or who are radicalising but not in a violent direction, might display similar behaviour - phase models at least cannot prove otherwise" (Veldhuis, 2009: 18). As a result, innocent people may be suspected of radicalisation solely based on religion, ethnicity, or a particular behaviour.

By prioritizing the general characteristics of radicalized individuals as the main signal of radicalisation, there is a risk that phase models can create a radical identity that includes people who do not necessarily have to be radical, which may lead to the notion of radicalisation as a self-fulfilling prophecy. To overcome the shortcomings of phase models related to selection bias or statistical discrimination, they should focus more on individual characteristics and circumstances that have led to radicalisation. Thus, simple phase models can only explain cases that have led to violent radicalisation and, conversely, cannot clarify those that deviate from the prescribed linear path. However, it is needed to say that „individuals who do pass through the entire process described by phase models are quite likely to be involved in a terrorist act" (Silber and Bhatt, 2007: 6).

## 7. Radicalisation inputs

To identify the root causes of radicalisation I will apply four dominant pathways to radicalisation suggested by Globsec Policy Institute on two models mentioned above. Due to the lack of primary sources, I will mainly work with the data offered by the Globsec research team, International Center for Counter-terrorism, or Institute for Global change.

The first pathway is described as radicalisation through glocalism which means, on the one hand, the impact of neighbourhood and surroundings and on the other hand parallel link to jihadi individuals based abroad. The second pathway is defined as „dissatisfaction with current reality or moral outrage, which develops simultaneously with views such as that the West is at war with Islam". (Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 5) The third pathway emphasizes the „role of the family of a given individual in the process of turning her/him into a jihad" (ibid.) and the fourth is the so-called "criminal" pathway.

Experts from Globsec Institute initially proposed another four pathways including the thuggish pathway, pathway through prisons, mosque pathway, and travel bureau pathway. But after further research, they observed that their impact is more modest than in the case of factors mentioned in the previous paragraph. Globsec research team examined these pathways which were selected based on data collection for the totality of the 310 jihadists. Subsequently, they have selected and looked in more detail at the pathways of 56 individuals from six countries included the jihadists from three Western European countries which I have chosen for my diploma thesis. These cases were chosen by the Globsec institute mainly because of the „availability of information related to their jihadist pasts" (Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 4), and because their life stories provide a realistic demonstration of the radicalisation process in the current European environment.

More recently, Globsec Policy Institute examined also a dataset of 107 foreign terrorist fighters who participated in the Middle Eastern battlegrounds mainly those who fought for the Islamic State (Globsec European Jihad, 2020: 10). Therefore after the brief analysis of European jihadi terrorists, I will narrow my focus on the radicalisation processes of foreign fighters from Belgium, France, and the UK who fought for ISIS.

I will investigate whether there is a connection between inputs (glocalism, dissatisfaction - with current reality or moral outrage, role of family and social characteristics including criminal background) and output (number of jihadist foreign fighters per country -this number includes those who left and remained in Syria or Iraq, those who died and those who came back in their country). Secondly, I will try to identify which model – behavioural or cognitive is more suitable for the explanation of radicalisation in three chosen countries based on research of inputs and testing hypothesis. For clarification of the correlation between inputs and output, I have selected several hypotheses which represent both – top-down and bottom-up models.

1. Ties with radicalised individuals in the neighbourhood or abroad increased the risk of radicalisation. (Decisive factor in the top-down model)

2.a Personal dissatisfaction with the current reality in the form of perceived or real discrimination or high rate of unemployment increased the risk of radicalisation (bottom-up model)

2.b Dissatisfaction as moral outrage in the form of perceived hatred from anti-Muslim or anti-immigration political parties increased the risk of radicalisation (bottom-up model)

3. The role of the family has a significant impact on the process of radicalisation (top-down model)

4. Individuals with certain characteristics like uneducated young males with criminal past are more prone to be radicalised (bottom-up model)

For providing a complex picture of the radicalisation process in Belgium, France, and the UK, it is needed to briefly introduce the inputs based on which I will illustrate which factors are decisive for radicalisation, which pathways for becoming radical are the most usual, and which models can be applied on the specific radicalisation processes.

In general, it is possible to say that profiles of violent radicals do not exist or are very difficult to find, however, there are several ways to at least map out the pathways to radicalism and to identify cases that are particularly vulnerable to engage in terrorist groups. Therefore, I find it more than useful to look for certain patterns among these cases and, on that basis, to suggest how Western European countries should prevent the

input side of jihadism „i.e., the motivations for joining global jihad while living in Europe" (Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 6). As for the representation of the output in the form of European foreign fighters, the Globsec crime-terror nexus dataset seems to be very helpful, as it offers a sample of individuals who „had been at the proverbial tip of the spear of European jihad" (ibid.).

### Glocal pathway

The first pathway leading to radicalisation that will be the subject of my interest is the glocal pathway. The paradox of jihadism is that we can define it as a phenomenon with global or international networks and ties, but at the same time it can also be considered a local phenomenon, which spreads across the European towns and cities due to social interactions within particular neighbourhoods (Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 18). In short, glocalism of jihadi recruitment can be explained as „a situation in which one's given radicalising trajectory bears the hallmarks of a local and home-grown process, sometimes conducted in one's immediate neighbourhood and surroundings and with a simultaneous link to jihadi individuals based abroad, usually in conflict zones" (Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 5).

### Dissatisfaction and outrage pathway

The intersection of Horgan's analyses of risk factors or Sageman's individual characteristics of radicalized individuals is a common theme connected with either dissatisfaction with the current reality or a sense of moral outrage caused by feelings of injustice or oppression (Roy, 2017). Therefore dissatisfaction and outrage indicates a „situation in which a given individual is originally set on jihad due to his/her dissatisfaction with current reality or moral outrage, which develop simultaneously with views such as that the West is at war with Islam (Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 5).

### Family pathway

Family members can also play a dominant role before or during the radicalisation process. This finding that European jihadism can indeed be considered a family affair has been also confirmed by extensive Globsec research on terrorist networks in Europe. As a result, people are introduced into terrorist networks through members of their families or extended family ties (Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 19). However, the Globsec research highlights the fact that the „role of the family of a given individual in the

process of turning him/her into a jihadi comes in many forms either in direct or indirect way" (Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 5).

### Criminal pathway

The last crucial path towards violent radicalisation is the so-called criminal pathway which describes a „situation in which a given jihadi has a criminal past, marked by an earlier arrest" (ibid.). Concerning Globsec research almost one-third of examined jihadists have had criminal pasts before direct participating in terrorist groups. However, there is no specific type of crime that would increase the vulnerability to joining a terrorist organization. This means that these two phenomena can converge into the crime-terror nexus but „it does not account for the overrepresentation of criminals in the ranks of the European jihadists" (Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 19) since for the completion of the process of radicalisation into violent extremism, the other factors are needed.

To sum up, it is not surprising that, the picture from the Globsec Policy Institute analysis of the different pathways to jihad shows that there is no single profile of a radical jihadist. Therefore I aim to apply those subpathways to radicalisation processes in Belgium, France, and the UK in the next empirical part of my thesis.

## 8. Picture of European jihadists and foreign fighters

This chapter will be primarily devoted to the common features of European jihadists and foreign fighters. Subsequently, I will focus on the specific pathways to the radicalisation of foreign fighters from Belgium, France, and the UK. As I have already mentioned Globsec's research on pathways to jihad seems to be a very useful source of information for demonstration the average background of European radicalized individuals. Concerning to radicalisation processes of foreign fighters from particular Western European countries I will among others use the articles published by the International centre for Counter-terrorism or Institute for Global Change.

I have decided to focus on the foreign fighters from Western Europe for two simple reasons. Firstly, Western Europe can be considered as a hotbed for jihadists who are fighting in terrorist organizations namely under the flag of Daesh. Concerning the number of foreign fighters, the only region of the Middle East and North Africa represents a more significant source of foreign jihadists (Schmid, 2015: 11). More specifically the main reason why I have chosen namely Belgium, France, and the UK is that a majority of foreign fighters engaged in the ISIS conflict „are residents of those countries. Moreover, Belgium has the highest per-capita foreign fighter contingent (Boutin, 2016: 3).

Secondly, as citizens of the European Union, we can perceive potential security or more specifically terrorist threat which is stemming from the returning individuals with professional military training abroad, because as the ICCT research revealed more than „30 percent of foreign fighters have returned to their countries of departure" (ibid.). Therefore „the worry is that returning foreign fighters might become sleepers or are domestic terrorists in the making" (Hegghammer, 2010: 6). Additionally, based on available EU documents it is possible to identify four basic aspects to the threat posed by foreign fighters. Firstly persons traveling from the EU to the territory controlled by ISIS to become a foreign fighter. Secondly, foreign fighters returning from Iraq or Syria back to the EU. Thirdly „impact of the foreign fighter phenomenon and related terrorism on social cohesion within the EU" (Boutin, 2016: 4) and lastly lone-wolf terrorists who can be inspired by foreign fighters terrorism.

## 8.1. European jihadist

At the outset, it is needed to outline some general characteristics of European jihadists and potential perpetrators of terrorist attacks. Globsec research (2019) reveals that many jihadists, especially those from France and Belgium, are second-generation immigrants who have already been born in Europe. Secondly, they mostly come from isolated Muslim neighbourhoods where jihadist entrepreneurs operate and where we can find widespread recruitment networks and ties to radical imams. Thirdly, family environment or a very close social circle can play a leading role in a radicalisation process across the spectrum of European countries, acting as a radical echo chamber for future jihadists. The researchers also underline the specific nature of European jihad which is not only global but also local, „as many of the future jihadists from radicalising clusters amongst their school friends or colleagues and sometimes move between different criminal worlds (ordinary crime and terrorism) together in a classic crime-terror nexus trajectory" (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 7). As well as evidence about feelings of discrimination or moral outrage with Western policies has been found.

Concerning to demographic profile of European terrorists, it is evident that the vast majority are men with an average age of 29 years old. Another common feature is that they are mostly uneducated and not very successful in their professional careers (Globsec European Jihad, 2020: 16). The Globsec research on the picture of European jihadism also reveals that the assumption that prison is an important hub of jihad is overestimated. It is important to note that radicalisation can be a result of a mix of various factors and it holds true for this dataset too" (Globsec European Jihad, 2020: 21).

## 8.2. European foreign fighter

A number of European foreign terrorist fighters who travelled to the war zones in the Middle East has reached its peak in the period of Islamic State expansion (Globsec European Jihad, 2020). This phenomenon of foreign Islamist jihadists who were fighting for ISIS has grown enormously in numbers from less than 1,200 in 2011 to more than 25,000 in 2015. Since the declaration of the Caliphate in summer 2014, around a thousand foreign fighters per month have joined ISIS (Schmid, 2015: 3). On

the contrary, when Global Coalition against Daesh was established and consequently the ISIS Caliphate crumbled the attention of the international community has turned to returnees. The Globsec dataset comprises 107 foreign fighters of which 92 operated within the areas of Iraq or Syria. Regarding nationality, there were the highest numbers of inhabitants from Belgium (41), France (33), and the UK (12). 101 of the foreign fighters were male and the average age of the foreign fighters was around 26 years old which is younger age than in the case of jihadists (Globsec European Jihad, 2020: 10).

The ICCT research indicates that the majority of foreign fighters come from large metropolitan areas in which they live on the outskirts of the suburbs (Boutin, 2016). „Interestingly, the foreign fighter subset manifested more criminality than the whole dataset, with almost a third having criminal careers before their arrest or death" (Globsec European Jihad, 2020: 10). An important finding was also the degree to which foreign fighters were connected and networked. 86 of them had friends who were already active in terrorist groups, and 58 fighters had made more than one trip to a war zone in Islamic State-controlled territory (ibid.). Moreover, almost all fighters from the dataset declared their allegiance to ISIS. These statistics point out that foreign fighters can act as multipliers of tactical force for jihadi entities.

## 9. Case study of Belgium

Of the total number of 40,000 foreign terrorist fighters, of which about 5,000 are Europeans (Robinson, 2017) „the share of Belgians is disproportionately large" (From *Criminals to Terrorists and Back, Belgium* vol. 2, 2019: 10). Renard and Coolsaet assume that the current phenomenon of jihadist foreign fighters from Europe, and especially from Belgium, can be considered unprecedented (Coolsaet, 2018: 19).

In this empirical part which is providing principal aspects of radicalisation processes in Belgium, I will mainly build on the research conducted by Van Ostaeyen and Van Vlierden and the Globsec research about Belgian foreign terrorist fighters. Van Ostaeyen and Van Vlierden (2018) identified that from the Belgian Foreign Fighter Database of 716 foreign fighters, „595 related to the Belgian and Syrian-Iraq conflict reached the conflict zone" (Van Ostaeyen & Van Vlierden, 2018: 3). „472 have been fully identified, 73 were stopped abroad and 26 were stopped in Belgium" (ibid.). A quarter of them (152) returned to Belgium and 165 individuals are presumed to be dead (From *Criminals to Terrorists and Back, Belgium* vol. 2, 2019: 10).

To limit their scope of the research Van Ostaeyen and Van Vlierden focused on individuals with „Sunni jihadist affiliations and a clear departure status" (Van Ostaeyen & Van Vlierden, 2018: 3). This subset was comprised of 683 individuals, whereas information on nationality was known in the cases of 505 foreign fighters. Van Ostaeyen and Van Vlierden found that Belgium was the best-represented nationality with 387 individuals which means 76.6 percent. Among these 387 Belgian citizens, „320 are known to have some kind of foreign background – as immigrants, descendants of immigrants, children stemming from a mixed marriage or adoptees" (Van Ostaeyen & Van Vlierden, 2018: 4).

### 9.1. Social ties and jihadist networks

The recruitment of ISIS jihadists in Belgium was mainly organized through three networks - Sharia4Belgium, Resto du Tawheed, and the Zerkani network (Van Ostaeyen, 2019: 4). Although Sharia4Belgium can be seen as a relatively new radicalisation hub (founded in 2010), it was actually the first Belgian group that begins with recruitment processes of potential radicals. The territories within which has been

this neo-Salafist group most active were Antwerp and Vilvoorde, where its leader Fouad Belkacem acted as a public preacher of radical Islam. Furthermore, this group has been highly engaged on the Internet or social networks. The group was attractive to young people from a variety of backgrounds, from delinquents with experience in minor crimes to people with a university degree (ibid.). It is important to say that Sharia4Belgium was initially considered as a legitimate Muslim organization, however, in 2012, the degree of their extremism was revealed and the authorities began to act against it, culminating in the arrest of its leader – Belkacem, and designation of this group as a terrorist organization (Teich, 2016: 29). Unfortunately during those two years, this organization has „successfully" radicalized several hundred of its supporters, who have reached such a high stage of the radicalisation process from which there is no return (Varvelli, 2016: 36).

As for the specific type of recruitment of Sharia4Belgium, its activist mode helped to create a strong group identity, so that the members of the group found a long-sought sense of belonging (Coolsaet, 2015: 21). Its sister network, Resto du Tawheed, operated mainly in the northern part of Brussels and was led by Jean-Louis Denis (Van Ostaeyen, 2019: 4). And finally the third recruitment ring – the Zerkani network operated in the Molenbeek district of Brussels, or in the historical centre of the city where pickpocketing the tourists (Van Ostaeyen, 2019: 4). This network, named after its Moroccan founder Khalid Zerkani, a veteran of the Afghan-Pakistani terrorist camps, is often considered a network of gangster jihadists or Islamist extremists. This is due to the high proportion of criminals involved in this group. In no other network has the link between crime and terrorism been as evident as in this group.

The Zerkani network has attracted the attention of the international community, especially after its direct involvement in the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels (Van Ostaeyen, 2019: 8). Thus, Zerkani's network focused mainly on unemployed people from poorer Brussels neighbourhoods who had little or no Islamist background (Micieli, 2018). The recruitment of the Zerkani network was completely different. The main Brussels network had no logo or website. Despite this slightly old-fashioned image, this network has sent a few dozens of foreign fighters to Syria or Iraq, including the three perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels - Abaaoud, Akrouh, and Laachraoui. In terms of the profile of its followers, the Zerkani network consists of a few jihadists who had long been active in jihadist circles, in contrast to the less

experienced followers of the Sharia4Belgium group. Although we can find the fundamentally different modus operandi of these two radical networks, the effectiveness of their way of recruitment is comparable and corresponds to the tremendous share of Belgian foreign fighters recruited for ISIS (Varvelli, 2016: 55).

Based on the several qualitative studies, the subset of Belgian foreign fighters represents a strongly networked tangle of individuals flowing into the ranks of jihad from a variety of pre-existing and wide-ranging structures (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019). In a fact, the three aforementioned radicalisation networks accounted for the significant share of recruited Belgian foreign fighters. „Some 35.2% of all Sunni jihadists who at least have tried to leave Belgium for the Syrian-Iraqi conflict were connected to Shariah4Belgium, 25.8% to the Zerkani network and 11.1% to the network of the Brussels convert Jean-Louis Denis" (Van Ostaeyen & Van Vlierden, 2018: 7).

Therefore we can observe the phenomenon of glocalism in the case of Belgium where three simultaneously operating radicalisation networks based on charismatic leaders - Belkacem and Zerkani operated out within the territories of the cities of Antwerp and Brussels. „Thus, the main radicalising ground in Belgium was 45 km or a 35 min train ride axis from Brussels to Antwerp" (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 18).

In addition to locally evolving networks, we can also find strong international or global ties, especially between Belgian-French jihadists and radicals. Namely the members of the Brussels-based Zerkani network „maintained social ties with the French jihadists" (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, Belgium vol. 2, 2019: 5).

Also, we cannot omit the friendship ties between jihadists, as it has been shown that a relatively high number of foreign fighters have grown up together or had been building close connections for a long time (ibid.). These ties depend on factors such as „geographical proximity, membership to sports clubs, studying at the same school or attending the same Mosque" (Micieli, 2018: 21). As well as Globsec research team emphasizes the role of peer recruitment (radicalisation through friends who are already part of a particular jihadist network) or top-down recruitment („active recruitment by a radicalising agent“) (Bakker, 2015: 848) of Belgian foreign fighters from their dataset. Based on this information, it is possible to say that the previous interactions between like-minded friends contribute significantly to active participation in jihadist groups (Micieli, 2018).

To conclude an examination of the places of origin of fighters who went to fight for ISIS (most of them originated from neighbourhoods, where these groups were very active like Brussels districts of Molenbeek and Schaerbeek or Antwerp) showed that these recruitment or radicalisation hubs played a key role in the phenomenon of foreign fighters (Coolsaet, 2015).

## 9.2. Perceived and real discrimination

According to Micieli, Islamic radicalisation, in the form we are facing today, can be described as a „process that is linked to the degree of exposure to definitions or discourses in favour of jihadism and the degree to which an individual has experienced feelings of discrimination, anger, and stigmatization in the past" (Micieli, 2018: 45). As well, Coolsaet (2016) emphasizes the importance of perceived discrimination and feelings of exclusion or injustice in the radicalisation process and the individual's final decision to participate in a jihadist organization. He argues that if we look at the phenomenon of radical foreign fighters from a broader context, these feelings of grievances are key elements to understand the high level of radicalisation in Belgium (Coolsaet, 2016: 81).

In general, foreign-born Belgian citizens face strained environmental conditions in the country. One such condition might be a high level of unemployment (Van Ostaeyen, 2019). Assuming that jihadists are rational individuals, poor economic conditions could lead to „fewer prospects of economic advancement (Blomberg, 2004), which tends to make individuals more sensitive to extreme messages since opportunity costs of joining terrorist activities (Freytag, 2010) or to leave the country are diminished" (Voortman, 2015: 11). The point is that Belgian immigrants have an unemployment rate of more than twice of native Belgian citizens, and discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of immigration status does not seem to be exceptional. Also, their low level of education can be another potential source of strain for Belgian Muslims (Van Ostaeyen, 2019). The first who pointed out the connection between the high number of foreign fighters from Belgium and structural inequality which they face in their home country was Jozef De Witte – director of the Belgian Equal Opportunity Centre. He observed that „in Belgium, the gap between natives and immigrants (from outside the EU) in terms of employment and education is higher than anywhere else in Europe" (De Morgen, 2014: 16).

Another environmental strain might be the previously poor integration of Muslims into Belgian society because before integration policy became a priority on Belgium's national political agenda, studies found many indicators of poor integration. The study revealed that Muslim immigrants still identify with their country of origin and not with Belgium. While more than 70 percent of young Muslim males „felt unaccepted by Flemish society; and over 50 percent of Belgian Muslims youths had personally experienced racism" (Teich, 2016: 39). Thus it seems that intolerance or discrimination against Muslims by native-born Belgian citizens can be considered as one of the main impediments to the successful integration of Belgian Muslims who are still feeling as not included into the host society (Van Ostaeyen, 2019).

Even though many foreign fighters were born and raised in poorer conditions, many of them are rather from Belgian-Moroccan families who have managed to improve their socio-economic status. This suggests that a more important role in the radicalisation process than economic deprivation plays the feeling of rejection of immigrants or Muslims or the absence of belonging or a combination of both (Varvelli, 2016: 56). Because although some families have lived in Belgium for three or four generations and most have already acquired Belgian nationality, they are still confronted with their foreign origins and are frequently labelled migrant communities (Coolsaet, 2015: 14) Sharia4Belgium leader Belkacem published on Facebook that the main motivation for founding his organization was "the arrogance and deeply-rooted Islamophobia of the Belgian state" (Statement by Fouad Belkacem, 2014). He also mentioned that Belgian Muslims with foreign roots had been humiliated for more than 50 years and they are considered asylum seekers even if they have been living in the country for several years (Van Ostaeyen, 2014).

The last aspect which is needed to take into account when we are discussing the radicalisation among Belgian Muslims concerns the fractionalization of the country in the form of the absence of national unity due to North-South rivalry. „This has altered Belgian's identity leading to a divided population exacerbating the difficulties Muslims immigrants have had fitting in" (Voortman, 2015: 23).

When we are analysing the concentration of the phenomenon of foreign fighters in Belgium and we are trying to identify where most of the recruitment took place, we can find some common features of those places. For example, based on the previous studies

more than eighty percent of the Belgian foreign fighters originate from „municipalities with a per capita income below the Belgian average, while 35% lived in Belgium's ten poorest towns" (Statistics Belgium, 2013). As a concrete example of an underprivileged and isolated municipality, which is considered a breeding ground for Belgian foreign fighters, I can mention the neighbourhood of Molenbeek, also nicknamed the "European capital of Jihad" (European Institute of Peace, 2017). As well as other Brussel municipalities like those of Schaerbeek and Laeken can be considered as difficult urban areas „with a high proportion of the low-income population with a foreign background, mostly Muslims" (Micieli, 2018: 43). These municipalities represent the parallel societies or ghettos where specific cultures with a distinct language, religion or ethnicity have developed independently from the host society (Voortman, 2015).

In order to take into consideration also some quantitative research about the link between perceived discrimination and higher vulnerability to become radicalized I briefly analyse the results of Frounfleker's study (2019) which examines the relationship between perceived discrimination and vulnerability to violent extremism or radicalism among young people between the ages of 16 and 30 in Belgium. This quantitative research aimed to test the link between the socio-demographic profile, the experience of perceived discrimination, and the number of points on the Radical Intention Scale. More than half of individuals who identified themselves as Muslims reported that they had experienced some form of discrimination, and also participants who had at least one parent born outside Belgium reported experiencing discrimination more often than first-generation immigrants. The research also revealed that the phenomenon of perceived discrimination was associated with higher scores on the Radical Intention Scale. So the hypothesis of this study that there is a relationship between perceived discrimination based on socio-demographic characteristics and a higher score on the Radical Intention Scale was confirmed (Frounfelker, 2019).

To conclude there is no doubt that bad socio-economic situations have never directly lead to extremism or even terrorism. But the sense of injustice and inequality that derives from them significantly contributes to the estrangement of youngsters from society. Becoming a jihadist foreign fighter gives them an escape from this situation and at the same time offers them the opportunity to move from zero to hero (Coolsaet, 2015).

### 9.3. Anti-Islam political parties

Assuming that a feeling of rejection could be one of the most significant drivers leading to radicalisation, it is necessary to examine the hypothesis if the existence or even electoral success of far-right, anti-immigrant, or anti-Islam parties will affect the number of jihadist foreign fighters in Belgium (Varvelli, 2016: 56).

Firstly it is needed to say that along with the aforementioned fractionalization of the country, nationalist political parties with anti-immigrant, racist, and xenophobic agendas have emerged in Belgium. The main and most successful Belgian anti-immigrant political party, Vlaams Belang, supports repressive measures against immigrants and has even proposed the deportation of Muslims who do not renounce their faith (Winsor, 2014). Surprisingly this is not a new political party since it has its breakthrough 25 years ago. As examples of its slogans I can mention "Fit in or leave", "Our own people first" and "Freedom or Islam: dare to choose" (Varvelli, 2016: 58). The party won a record 25 percent voter support in the 2004 Flemish regional elections and won more than 15 percent of Flemish votes in 2009 (Voortman, 2015). Although this party has never found a coalition partner, „even from within the opposition, it has had a profound impact on the attitude towards Islam and immigrants in Belgian society" (Meuleman, 2016: 37).

Interestingly what we can observe in Belgium is in line with the findings of Martha Crenshaw from the early '80s. She identified key variables that could lead to an increase in terrorism in the particular country. Among them, I can mention the „existence of discriminatory policies or concrete grievances among a subgroup of a larger population, and the lack of opportunity for political participation or political persecution and repression" (Crenshaw, 1981). Thus we can say that this situation is a bit what we observe in the case of Belgium.

### 9.4. Family environment

In general, some publications point out the importance of the family environment in the radicalisation process, emphasizing that families can play a supportive role in the radicalisation of children by creating an enabling environment that motivates intolerance and violent extremism. Moreover, the main fact that emerges from general

sources about the root causes of radicalisation is that the key driver of active participation in jihad is the involvement of older family members in terrorist movements (van San, 2016). In this case, it is necessary to mention that the most common scenario of radicalisation in the family is among brothers. Well-known examples are the cases of the Abdeslam brothers and the Abaaoud cousins (Micieli, 2018). Furthermore, the Globsec research team emphasizes that in the dataset of foreign fighters, it is possible to identify the influence of family bonds mostly in the form of married couples who went abroad to fight in jihad together (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, Belgium vol. 2, 2019).

However, Wiktorowicz (2005) argues that the role of the family is not only relevant in the case of direct connection of family members with violent jihad, but also the case of cognitive opening of individuals due to family crises. For an illustration of the extent of influence of family bonds on the likelihood of radicalisation into the violent extremism and direct participation in jihad as a foreign fighter, I have found Van San's ethnographic study focused on the Belgian and Dutch families whose daughters and sons have left to fight for ISIS as very useful. This ethnographic research has shown that the majority of potential foreign fighters did not study Arabic or follow Quran lessons. Therefore these families had very limited knowledge of Islam as such. Many foreign fighters came from divorced families or families where we can observe some problems in the past. Most of them had also experienced family crises which most often concerned their parents' alcohol or drug abuse. Moreover, there has been domestic violence or serious financial problems in several families.

Based on this ethnographic fieldwork involving 26 families, of which at least one member was actively involved in the armed struggle in Iraq or Syria, no indications have been found that families directly supported their children's decision to engage in terrorist organizations. Nor has it been shown that young people who have become foreign fighters are brought up under the values and norms that justify violent jihad (van San, 2016). However, research has shown that young people who become members of terrorist groups or participate in an armed conflict as foreign fighters come from dysfunctional families or families with weak family structures or backgrounds. Therefore, some family climate seems to indirectly provide a fertile breeding ground for radicalisation in this way (ibid.).

To sum up, the results of the research do not seem to support the hypothesis that „youngsters taking part in the armed struggle receive support from their families,” (van San, 2016: 3) as concluded in some literature. Also, there were almost no indications that the role model of an older family member who participates in an extremist group could be an inspiration for youngsters. Although direct support of parents to enter their children in armed jihad is more or less rare, it is clear that the „family climate in certain families offered a fertile ground for radicalisation" (Silke, 2008: 99).

### **9.5. Personal characteristics of Belgian foreign fighters**

To examine the general profile of Belgian foreign fighter it is needed to outline the geographical dispersion of Muslims in Belgium because „Belgium hosts a large Muslim population, in a fact the second-highest per capita in Europe" (Teich, 2016: 3). Most Belgian Muslims came from Morocco, with half of all Moroccan immigrants living in the Brussels Capital region and more than a quarter in Antwerp, which means that the two largest Belgian cities represent three-quarters of the total number of Moroccan immigrants. It is important to mention that these two cities provided an operational centre where the two largest recruitment networks for terrorist organizations were active, and it is a fact that from these two cities has emerged the highest number of Belgian foreign fighters (Van Ostaeyen & Van Vlierden, 2018).

Regarding the personality profiles of the Belgian contingent of foreign fighters, in 2015 Peter Van Ostaeyen (2015) provided detailed numbers showing that less than 10 percent of the examined sample were women, about 6 percent were individuals converted to Islam, the average age is around 25 years and in terms of origin, almost half of the individuals from the dataset comes from Brussels, a quarter from Antwerp and the rest comes from places such as Vilvoorde or Mechelen (Kern, 2014). For a large part of the Belgian contingent of foreign fighters, street violence, and petty crime was a common part of their lives (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019). In this chapter, I will address this significant aspect of the previous criminality background of Belgian foreign fighters in more detail.

The socio-economic characteristics of the Belgian contingent of foreign fighters are offered by research conducted by the Globsec Institute. This study shows that more than

50 percent of the individuals were unemployed, while those who had a job were usually employed in less skilled works. Another official source of data about foreign fighters is the Belgian Federal Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre - Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis. The centre was established in 2006 in response to the growing threat of Islamist terrorism. According to the fusion centre, about 80 percent of foreign fighters are men between the ages of 20 and 30 (van der Veer, 2019).

Most studies on the demographic profile of Muslim immigrants in Belgium point to high levels of unemployment, low educational attainment, high levels of discrimination, or weak integration, and inconsistent government funding for the Muslim community. This poor demographic image of the Muslim community may be one of the key aspects in providing a fertile breeding ground for the recruitment and radicalisation of members of Islamic organizations (Bakker and De Bont, 2016). Nowadays, however, the situation related to weak integration legislation at the federal level has changed and Muslims are increasingly involved in Belgian political life (Teich, 2016).

## **9.6. Crime-terror nexus**

Data from the Belgian Ministry of Justice reveal that almost half of the incarcerated individuals come from Muslim backgrounds. Thus, this study points out that there is a visible link between prisons and Islamic radicalism, or between crime and radicalism. It also demonstrates the fact that a large proportion of members of jihadist networks consist of young delinquents. As an example of jihadists with a criminal background, I can cite members of the international French-Belgian network, most of whom had a criminal record for trafficking in drugs, street violence, or other petty crimes.

It was the connection between delinquency and radicalism that led to the designation of this phenomenon as gangster Islam (The New York Times, 2016). This penetration between the criminal and terrorist milieus can occur either directly in prisons or isolated high-crime areas such as Molenbeek. The main point is that individuals with experience in crime are better prepared to participate in the activities of terrorist organizations (Van Ostaeyen, 2016). For example, Zerkani took advantage of these criminal skills in the process of recruitment of newcomers to his jihadist network (Micieli, 2018). Compared to the Zerkani network, the criminal background of members in Sharia4Belgium is rather rare (Varvelli, 2016). It is needed to say that a „total of 70% of the jihadists

sampled had criminal backgrounds ranging from petty crimes," (Van Ostaeyen, 2016: 40) robberies, carjacking and „drug trafficking to large-scale organized crime or involvement in terrorist activities" (ibid.).

The Globsec research team also confirmed the criminal background of those convicted of terrorist offenses. Of the 25 personal profiles of examined Belgian jihadists, 12 had previous experience with crime. This was affirmed in particular in the case of the recruitment of delinquents in the Brussel-based Zerkani network when the leader of the group actively encouraged his recruits in petty crimes to raise money for jihad (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, Belgium vol. 2, 2019: 10).

Furthermore, „prior research indicates that studies based on official (police) sources and which cover full populations (rather than samples) generally lead to significantly higher proportions of individual criminal histories than (smaller) studies based on open sources" (Weenink, 2019).

## 9.7. Conclusion

Belgium is one of the main hotbeds of foreign fighters who have been actively involved in the Syrian-Iraqi conflict on the ISIS side. „It has the highest per capita number of Western Europe and has already contributed substantially to the terrorist threat that some of the returning fighters pose" (Van Ostaeyen & Van Vlierden, 2018: 1). When examining the motivations behind the radicalisation of a high number of young Muslims from Western Europe, it seems that the only link of foreign fighters with Islam is „the religion they inherited from their parents and grandparents. Thus in the vast majority of cases, it does not prove any connection between previous extremist religious background and active involvement in terrorist organizations (Micieli, 2018).

It is a fact that almost three-quarters of Belgian foreign fighters who had been engaged in the Syrian-Iraqi conflict come from Brussels, Antwerp, or cities on the axis between them. The explanation of this high concentration of radicals may appear to be the existence of already mentioned active recruitment networks, which have their „headquarters" in these two large cities (Varvelli, 2016: 132). Thus the importance of pre-existing group structures in the Belgian sample of foreign terrorist fighters is in line with the assumptions of social network theory and social psychology.

A case study of Belgium seems to have confirmed what Sageman and Bakker have already suggested in their empirical research. Most of the studies focused on Belgian foreign fighters underline the role of peer or top-down recruitment where the presence of radicalising agents or friendship ties in a particular group appears to be crucial. Concerning to glocal nature of Belgian jihadism, we can say that the majority of Belgian local networks like Sharia4Belgium or Zerkani networks have established strong connections with global terrorist organizations mainly with the French ones. This means that the first hypothesis was confirmed.

Regarding the general background of Belgian Muslims, they are usually poorer and less well educated which can lead to the fact that they may face „systematic discrimination in the labour market" (Coolsaet, 2016). As a consequence, they may have the feeling that they are confronted with certain kinds of injustice and it can evoke a sense of revenge. From the information mentioned above, one gets the impression that their situations can be largely caused by the milieu in which they grew up (ibid.). Thus all the things like feelings of exclusion, social injustice, high unemployment rate, or absence of belonging can significantly contribute to the isolation and relative deprivation of many Belgian Muslim immigrants, even the second or third generation immigrants who have been born in Belgium and have parents of Belgian nationality. It seems that isolated and economically deprived neighbourhoods might be ideal radicalisation hubs for foreign terrorist fighters.

However, not only dissatisfaction with current reality might be essential when it comes to increasing vulnerability to the launch of the radicalisation process in the pre-radicalisation phase but also moral outrage strengthen by anti-Islam sentiment spread by political party Vlaams Belang may increase the chances of radicalisation into violent extremism. This radical right-wing party was very successful on a regional level and even from within the opposition, it has had a profound impact on the attitude towards Islam and immigrants in Belgian society" (Meuleman, 2016: 37). These findings indicate that both parts of the second hypothesis have been confirmed.

Although we can find a few examples in the Belgian sample where the family bond played an important role in the radicalisation, such as in the case of the Abdeslam brothers or the Abaaoud cousins, support for family members or parents in the radicalisation process still seems rather rare. On the other hand case study of Belgium

demonstrated the indirect supporting role of dysfunctional families in radicalisation. Therefore the role of the family is not only relevant in the case of direct connection of family members with violent jihad, but also the case of cognitive opening of individuals due to family crises. Thus we can say that the third hypothesis about the supportive role of families during the radicalisation process is only partially confirmed.

In terms of demographic profiles of Belgian foreign fighters, almost all of them are young Belgian citizens with foreign backgrounds and Sunni affiliation. Belgian terrorists mainly come from Brussel or Antwerp – cities with the highest concentration of Muslims. At the same time, these two cities provide background for the violent activities of the two most influential Belgian terrorist networks. The most of Belgian sample of foreign terrorist fighters consists of individuals with low educational attainment who are either unemployed or employed in less skilled works. It seems that in the case of Belgium we can find a visible crime-terror nexus since a significant part of Belgian foreign fighters have criminal backgrounds. Moreover, radicalisation can take place either within radical groups – a good example is a Zerkani network which is often considered as a network of gangster jihadists, or in Belgian prisons since according to available data, more than 50 percent of inmates are Muslims.

The analysed information about the radicalisation process of Belgian foreign fighters, therefore, shows that violent jihadization is the result of a combination of various factors at all three levels. On the macro level, I can mention economic deprivation, living in the isolated diasporas, or poor integration to some extent also associated with the fractionalization of the country or with the emergence of the radical anti-Islam party. Whereas the feeling of relative deprivation and group processes within glocal terrorist networks seems to be decisive on the meso level. Last but not least personal experience of young Belgian Muslims of foreign origins who often induce feelings of alienation, marginalization and real or perceived discrimination are examples of the root causes of radicalisation on a micro or individual level. Moreover, the sample of Belgian foreign fighters indicates that situational factors alongside certain predisposing conditions in the form of specific demographic profiles of most foreign fighters are both important and complementary elements of the „successful" radicalisation process. In terms of the direction of radicalisation, the centrality of peer recruitment within Belgian jihadist networks and socialization into particular radical groups indicates the significant impact

of external influences on the radicalisation process. However, the importance of the pre-radicalisation phase mentioned in the NYPD model should not be underestimated.

### 9.8. Testing hypotheses

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Confirmed/falsified</b>
H1. Ties with radicalised individuals in the neighbourhood or abroad increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H2.a Personal dissatisfaction with the current reality in the form of real or perceived discrimination or high rate of unemployment increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H2.b Dissatisfaction as moral outrage in the form of perceived hatred from anti-Muslim or anti-immigration political parties increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H3. The role of the family has a significant impact on the process of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed only in the case of indirect support, direct support seems to be insignificant
H4. Individuals with certain characteristics like uneducated young males with criminal past are more prone to be radicalised	hypothesis confirmed

## 10. Case study of France

At the outset, I would like to provide some basic information on jihadism and the perception of Muslims in France. First of all, it is needed to mention that nowadays, it is difficult to estimate the absolute number of Muslims living in France, as a law passed in 1978 forbids the collection and processing of data on „racial or ethnic origin, political, philosophical and religious beliefs“ (Nguyen, 2018: 6). Moreover, France is a state which in general refuses to provide governmental or official statistics on religions (Vampuille, 2011). Despite these limitations, the statistical website states that in 2020, 5.43 million people identified themselves as Muslims in France. This number may not be accurate, but it roughly means that about 8 percent of the French population are Muslims, which makes Islam the second religion of France (Statista, 2020). Based on the opinion poll conducted by Pew research centre, about two-thirds of non-Muslims French citizens say that „they would accept a Muslim in their family“ (Pewresearch, 2019). By comparison, just slightly over half of the British adults would accept a Muslim as a family member. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate in this chapter, the majority of French Muslims feel rejected and alienated from mainstream society.

„Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, France has proved itself to be the "first provider" of the EU in terms of foreign terrorist fighters" (Center for the analysis of Terrorism, 2017). Also, French foreign fighters are significantly more involved in terrorist attacks than returnees from other European countries. Specifically, in 2016, almost 11 percent of French foreign fighters who returned from ISIS-controlled territory were involved in terrorist attacks on European soil, while in the case of the European average; this number is around 3 percent. France has thus provided a large number of jihadist foreign fighters and is also one of the most frequent targets of attacks by terrorist groups (Bindner, 2018: 2).

Data from Marc Hecker's dataset revealed that in 2018 up to 20,000 individuals were considered radicalized by the intelligence services in France. Approximately 1,300 „French citizens were involved in jihadist networks in Iraq and Syria“ (Nguyen, 2018: 8). Furthermore, studies have shown that 74 percent of jihadists grew up in a Muslim family and 26 percent were those who converted to Islam (ibid.). However, knowledge of Islam was superficial for most of the terrorists. About 500 prisoners are detained in French prisons for terrorism, and 1,100 prisoners are showing signs of radicalisation

(Service de Presse de Matignon, 2018). Finally, the proportion of Muslims in French prisons reaches an alarming 70 percent of the total prison population (Alexander, 2015).

In terms of the radicalisation processes, the Globsec research shows that, „the biggest category of the French cases in the dataset has undergone a multifaceted and complex radicalisation,“ (Who are the European Jihadis, 2018: 30) with some combination of friends, prison environment, jihadi mentor or other supportive members of the terrorist cell playing a role in the process. However, there were also some cases when the radicalisation process was more private in nature but mentioned dataset contains a very low number of individuals whose radicalisation progressing solely within the wall of a family home without any influence of external force (ibid.).

### **10.1. Social ties and jihadist networks**

Regarding the study of the history of jihadism in France, both Gilles Kepel and Sageman emphasize the centrality of the peer group. Through jihadist networks and groups, warmth and comfort lacking at home can be found. Sense of group belonging and identification with group identity is gradually leading to increased participation in political violence, while paramount are not personal motives, but rather group motivational factors (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019).

In terms of the location of terrorist networks within France, most are concentrated in the northernmost and southernmost parts of France, with cities such as Paris and Toulouse being considered important strongholds of jihadists. Most of these terrorist hubs are active mainly in periurban areas such as Champigny-sur-Marne and Pontacarré in the suburbs of Paris, Mirail in the Toulouse area, and Lunel in the Montpellier area (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, France, vol. 2, 2019). It is important to say that we do not find a single terrorist axis in France, as was the case in Belgium between the cities of Brussels and Antwerp. In the case of France, traces of jihadist and terrorist activity are „scattered throughout the country from Roubaix in the northeast, through Vannes and Redon in the west, to Toulouse in the south, and Albertville together with Montpellier and Nice in the southeast“ (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 18). Interestingly, jihadist centres are not always located only in the biggest urban centres (ibid.). Conversely, some jihadist groups will also settle in small rural areas, such as the group operating around Artigat. These areas are usually poorer with a less educated

population and with considerable economic deprivation, which creates a fertile breeding ground for radicalisation (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, France, vol. 2, 2019). Same as in the case of Belgium, the location in which the terrorist cell is based is primarily linked to the activities of local terrorist leaders such as Djamel Beghal, Olivier Corel, and Fabien Clain, whose networks were mostly part of the crime-terror nexus (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 18).

Specific examples of French cities which have a long tradition in recruiting jihadists are the very poor city of Roubaix and Artigat. The first jihadist group in Roubaix known as the Roubaix Gang consists mainly of the terrorists who had extensive experience in petty crime and this group was already active in the 1990s when it served as a radicalizing hub for Bosnian jihad. Whereas the small town of Artigat was particularly active in Algerian jihad. These terrorist cells were allegedly dissolved, but within the French radical communities, they have maintained their influence to this day. Experts consider strong group dynamics as one of the most important aspects contributing to their longevity (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, France, vol. 2, 2019). As already mentioned in the case of the Roubaix group, the French sample of jihadists provides clear evidence of the phenomenon of crime-terror nexus, as a large proportion of French jihadists or foreign fighters have a criminal history and therefore have easier access to weapons or illegal sources of funding. Besides the Roubaix Gang, the French terrorist group in Pontcarré is also an illustrative example of a crime-terror hybrid group. This group was composed of four members, three of whom had a previous criminal record and the main sources of funding came from illegal trade or robberies (Colomina, 2019: 4).

Concerning to global dimension, French jihadist networks usually originate in home-grown networks, but many radicalized individuals have been part of the international Franco-Belgian network. Most French terrorist centres in „Buttes-Chaumont, Artigat, Toulouse and Roubaix have had strong ties to Belgian groups in Charleroi, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean and Schaerbeek for decades" (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, France, 2018: 4). French jihadists mainly travel to Belgium because of the preparation for the hijra, to establish contact with other recruits, or plan to leave to the territories controlled by ISIS. According to experts, the neighbourhood of Molenbeek is an example of a successful radicalisation hub, which should be replicated in the French banlieues (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, France, vol. 2, 2019). A number of

terrorist cells in France have also expanded to other neighbouring countries. In particular, cells operating in the northern part of France have established links with jihadist networks in Luxembourg, Germany, or even the United Kingdom. These cells use radical flows in Europe to make their activities more efficient (Bigot, 2012: 41).

In terms of the links within transnational networks outside Europe, it is most common for French jihadist groups to establish contacts with terrorist networks operating in the former French colonies. The most frequent are ties with Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan networks. France became a „jihadist territory, where the former colonial persecutions" (From Criminals to Terrorists and Back, France, vol. 2, 2019: 5) in Algeria were to be avenged. In the cities of Toulouse and Roubaix, for example, the majority of the Muslim population is comprised of immigrants of Algerian origin. Likewise, within the French department of the Alpes-Maritimes, we can see a high number of departures to Syria or Iraq. Most Muslims in this area are of Tunisian descent, mainly from the southern or eastern coast of Tunisia, which is the poorest and most radical area of Tunisia. For instance, one of the perpetrators of the terrorist attack on Bastille Day in Nice (Alpes-Maritimes) came from Tunisia. The Haute-Garonne department also has a large Muslim minority, but in this case, the Muslims are of Moroccan descent. In a fact, they are the most developed French jihadist networks that tend to have connections with Morocco (ibid.). Another North African Muslim organization in France is the Muslim Brotherhood, which is very active and influential, especially within the Union of Islamic Organizations of France. Moreover, members of the Muslim Brotherhood also indirectly control other smaller Muslim associations throughout France (Bigot, 2012).

The research of the Globsec team focused on the snapshot of French jihadists also confirmed the assumption that in France we can observe a very strong effect of prominent (sometimes transnational) terrorist networks and the study also emphasized the importance of the role of influential radicalizing agents and recruiters (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019).

Among the enabling environment which serves as breeding grounds for the emergence and operation of terrorist networks, I can mention mosques, prisons, and sports grounds. It should be mentioned that the radicalisation potential of mosques is already declining considerably. It is mainly the result of several accusations by mosques of recruiting

foreign fighters into terrorist groups. These circumstances have led security forces to closely monitor the activities of individual mosques, which could potentially pose a threat (Neumann and Rogers, 2007). For example, in 2011 the Pentagon accused a mosque in Lyon of participating in the recruitment of foreign fighters of Al-Qaeda in France (Bigot, 2012: 30). Another example of the former important role of the mosque in the radicalisation process shows the so-called group of the 19th district, formed by a network of Islamist militants who recruited French foreign fighters fighting in Iraq. The central role of the mosque declined in 2005 when the group was dismantled and its activities suspended (ibid, p. 36.). It seems that nowadays mosques are mainly used to provide a space for the initial socialization of recruiting agents and potential recruits and not for the recruitment centres as such (Nguyen, 2018: 9).

„The problem of radicalisation has become closely tied with the issue of imprisonment" (Neumann, 2010: 2). Firstly, it is striking to see how high the concentration of Muslims is in French prisons. In fact, in these isolated places, almost 70 percent of inmates are Muslims (Alexander, 2015). Even in the prisons located in the banlieues of Paris, the percentage of Muslims is higher than the aforementioned 70 percent (Moore, 2008). The rate of conversion to Islam in the prison environment is also alarming. According to French security services, it is a particularly high probability of the radicalisation of delinquents who have established connections with radical Islamists and become part of a jihadist network (Nguyen, 2018). „Moreover, French prisons are very sensitive to the spread of Islamism in prisons," (Bigot, 2012: 38) because prisoners are not isolated, depending on the crimes they have committed. Thus, radical individuals convicted of terrorism are detained along with those who have committed non-terrorist offenses.

Sports clubs can also provide a base for networking between potential radicals and future foreign fighters. It turned out that most jihadists gathered in sports grounds or gyms (Fauveau, 2018). „In 2017, about 829 cases of radicalization were reported in French sports clubs" (Rodineau, 2018: 10).

## **10.2. Perceived and real discrimination**

The Globsec research team revealed that a large proportion of individuals in the dataset have feelings of dissatisfaction and outrage, most of which stem from real or perceived personal discrimination. As well, political grievances in the form of alleged unjust

Western policies against the Muslim world represent an important aspect contributing to the feeling of dissatisfaction (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019). For example, some jihadists emphasized the illegality of the US intervention in Iraq in 2003 or condemned participation and military involvement of France in the international coalition against ISIS (Bindner, 2018). Others openly supported the killing of French citizens and considered it as legitimate based on the perception of France as part of the Western world, which is responsible for many crimes against Muslims.

Islam as such has been part of European society since the days of European colonization and the massive waves of immigration to Europe. Even then, many Muslim immigrants became second-class citizens (Nguyen, 2018: 5). In terms of perceived discrimination in France, the fear of Islam and its extremist forms cannot be considered as a new phenomenon. The terrorist attack on the Paris Metro in 1995 led the French to perceive radical Islamism as a serious threat. Subsequently, a series of terrorist attacks on European soil (Madrid, London) provoked a wave of populism and xenophobia (Boukhars, 2009). Moreover, the Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France published a study in which it pointed out the constantly increasing level of Islamophobia in recent years (Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France, 2012).

Although it might seem that the first generation of immigrants, in particular, will have some problems with the integration it was their descendants who represented the second or even third generation of immigrants who had the most serious difficulties in the integration process. Albeit these people were already born as French citizens, they remain on the margins of society. Compared to the rest of the population, they have a lower level of education, face more difficulties in the labour market, and often suffer from unemployment (Institut National de la statistique et des études économiques & Institut Nationale d'Etudes Démographiques, 2008). This situation of Muslim immigrants in France is likely to provoke anger and a lack of confidence in French society (Nguyen, 2018).

According to scholars, identity problems appear to be among the key drivers of radicalisation. Research has shown that French jihadists and foreign fighters used to have a sense of belonging to a double culture. Therefore in the radical interpretation of Islam, we can observe a visible aspect of identity. „Being "born between two cultures", called "children of immigrants in France" and "children of abroad in Morocco", some of

them feel they belong to "an uprooted generation without reference", and find a substitute identity in Islam" (Thomson, 2014). Thus the collective identity is rather found in the universal Muslim nation and not in the French nation (Bindner, 2018).

The difficulties with the integration of Muslims into French society are linked primarily to the fact that Islam has never been part of the debate on relations between the state and the church (Kastoryano, 2004). France should therefore reopen these discussions with the participation of Muslim representatives. The problem, however, is that „Islam and the French state consider each other with fear" (Bigot, 2012: 15). On the one hand, French society perceives Islam as a threat that it is in conflict with France's identity, the laws of the Republic, women's rights, and the basic secular values of the state in the form of *laïcité*. „While French people largely have a positive perception of Islam<sup>28</sup> in general, they do not, however, believe that Islam is compatible with democracy" (Andre, 2015: 300). Moreover, one of the basic premises is that dual belonging threatens the cohesion of French society. On the other hand, Muslims fear that these characteristics of the French state will be an obstacle in their process of integration into French society. In short, Islam brings new challenges for a secular state like France. Political institutions may have to be reformed to fully integrate Muslims into French society (Kastoryano, 2004).

Another pervasive phenomenon that the research has revealed is the lack of perspective of immigrants in terms of career opportunities or the prospect of not being able to acquire a foothold in French society. This form of uncertainty can be an important mechanism leading to extremism. The fact that the majority of French Muslim immigrants are struggling with a difficult economic situation is also shown by an ICT study, which pointed out that „36 percent are unemployed, 22 percent are with a precarious job; 13 percent are simple workers and only 2 percent belong to superior professions" (Nguyen, 2018: 16).

Besides the problems connected with a finding a job, there are also significant discrepancies between the average hourly wages of Muslim immigrants and the mainstream French population (Bigot, 2012: 17). The level of education attained also varies considerably for immigrants and the rest of the French population. „Only 17 percent of the mainstream population has no or low qualifications, while among immigrants this proportion reaches almost 40 percent" (Bigot, 2012: 16). This

proportion varies significantly among particular communities of immigrants, for example, it reaches around 45 percent for immigrants from Morocco or Tunisia and 43 percent for Algerian immigrants (ibid.). Indeed, a weak economic situation can, in turn, increase the likelihood that an individual may suffer from feelings of social exclusion or anger against society, which may lead to higher vulnerability to extremism or Islamist ideology. According to some experts, France is a victim of its own failure „in the social and economic integration of Muslim immigrants to the French society" (Pietrasanta, 2015).

Moreover, French social policy has increased the isolation of Muslim communities by involuntarily relocating them to peripheral parts of cities, which demonstrates their position on the fringes of society (Cesari, 2012: 36). Thus just as in the case of the sharp differences in the economic situation between the Muslim minority and the rest of the French population, their spatial integration also remains a problem. Most of the Muslim communities live in the suburbs known as banlieues in France. However, this concept does not only refer to the spatial dimension. It also has a visible social and cultural dimension. Therefore the concept of banlieues is associated not only with geographical space but also with the phenomenon of social exclusion. Except for being places with a high concentration of poverty, the ethnic origin of their inhabitants also leads to racial or religious discrimination (Institut national d'études démographiques, 2015). This led to the fact that the youth living in banlieues is often „equated with thieves" or described as "veilers" or even "scum that has to be simply scrubbed out" (Eric Macé in *Le Monde*, 2005). According to experts, these difficult conditions of the inhabitants of banlieues and subsequent ghettoization of these neighbourhoods are the result of French repressive policies, which have created a gap between these suburbs and the rest of France and led to the creation of parallel societies living independently of the ideology and principles of the French Republic (Boukhars, 2009: 299). „The contradiction between the ideal of the French Republic and the reality of life at the border for the children of immigrants has provoked a feeling of rejection in many second- or third-generation immigrants" (Bigot, 2012: 18).

Numerous cases of discrimination against the Muslim minority, whether in the economic, cultural, or spatial dimension, have shown that the integration of these minorities into French society has failed on many levels. This failure is the most visible in the case of the „confrontation of Muslim communities with the French identity, from

which they feel rejected" (Institut français d'opinion publique, 2010). It seems that the integration of Muslims is still limited, which may lead to the isolation and alienation of some Muslims from the rest of society. Subsequently, these individuals are more prone to find refuge in extremism or radicalism. Therefore the recruitment agents in jihadist networks focus on these vulnerable people and promise them an opportunity and belonging (Wattles, 2018). „In other words, Muslim radicalization in France is not caused by a long process of religious indoctrination or maturation, but by political marginalization at home and perceived Western injustices against Muslims abroad" (Boukhars, 2009: 307).

### **10.3. Anti-Islam political parties**

As I have already mentioned, French secularism and stance on religion are one of the most common grievances in official jihadist propaganda. This specific stance on religion has been interpreted in terrorist networks as a manifestation of aggression against Islamic ideology. As a result, the French far-right political scene began to instrumentalize secularity and assert claims that Muslim communities could not be successfully integrated into French society (Kepel, 2015: 86).

For example, in 2011, the French right-wing party Union for a Popular Movement launched a debate entitled convention on Islam and Laïcité. This convention has been widely criticized for focusing exclusively on Muslims, arguing that the Muslim community will never become a full part of the French Republic, for its incompatibility with French fundamental values, especially for laïcité culture (Bigot, 2012: 21). More precisely, ultra-secular sub-frames of far-right political parties „stress the impossibility of reconciling Islam with laïcité" (Froio, 2018: 703). For example, Riposte Laïque, which is an extreme right secular movement, explains that "Islam is indeed incompatible with France and its secularism" (ibid.). The ultra-republican party Parti de la France also depicts Islam as illiberal religion and suggests the incompatibility of Islam with French identity and traditional republican principles in the spirit of the well-known motto - Freedom, Equality, Fraternity (Froio, 2018).

The most successful radical right populist party in France is the Front National, which is extremely active either on the Internet or on the streets (Favell, 2016). This political party was founded in 1972. Since its beginnings, the party strongly supported

nationalism or controlled immigration and it did not hide its xenophobic views. In the 1990s, the Front National established itself as an important and influential political party in French politics. The party openly presented immigration from Muslim countries as a security threat to France. Marine Le Pen led the party to significant political results, and in the 2011 cantonal elections, the party won in several districts. Marine Le Pen also finished in third place in the 2012 presidential election. And even in the European Parliament elections in 2014, the party finished first (Ray, 2017). As for the political agenda, the Front National argues that, from a political-civic or cultural point of view, immigrants should not belong to French society (Hutchins, 2018). Following the deadly terrorist attack in Paris in 2015, the Front National focused mainly on the anti-Islamic agenda as anti-Islamic sentiment increased significantly within France (Ray, 2017). The party claims that Muslim immigrants are neither able nor willing to integrate into French society, as they hold conflicting values compared to the French nation. (Halikiopoulou, 2013) According to Abdallah Zekri – general delegate of the Conseil français du culte musulman „the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment in France could be partly explained by the tense socio-political atmosphere in France being driven by a resurgence of the far-right" (France24, 2012).

#### **10.4. Family environment**

Qualitative data from the Globsec research team shows that in many cases, "the move into crime and later the shift to jihadism was caused by personal failure, trauma related to, for example, divorce, and a broken home or abuse" (Who are the European Jihadis, 2018: 31). Thus it seems that in France we can find the same pattern of family influence as in Belgium. Therefore we can observe that the indirect impact associated with experiencing a family crisis, financial problems, or a lack of family background may lead to a higher vulnerability to cognitive opening to radicalism and the subsequent adoption of extremist ideology (Globsec - Who are the European Jihadis, 2018: 30).

Regarding the religious background of potential jihadists or foreign terrorist fighters the ICT study revealed that even though these individuals grew up in a Muslim family, their knowledge of Islam or religious faith as such was very weak. More than a quarter of the terrorists who converted to Islam came from families where Islam was not practiced at all. However, it is very important not to confuse radicalisation with conversion to Islam. Because studies show that radical individuals are much more radical in their religious

practices than Muslims, while still having a very superficial knowledge of Islam (Pietrasanta, 2015).

Although Globsec's research has found in a French dataset of terrorists and foreign fighters individuals who had parents or siblings involved in violent jihad, the family's direct supporting role in the process of radicalisation was only partially confirmed (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019). The indirect role of dysfunctional families, which created an enabling environment for the radicalisation of their children, was more significant. This influence was also confirmed by Globsec (2019), which provided a more detailed snapshot of the examined sample of French jihadists where divorce of parents, convictions of parents for criminal activities (such as drug trafficking), an unstable or violent family environment, or moving between foster homes have been identified as the most important triggers for moral outrage of potential terrorists (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019: 11).

### **10.5. Personal characteristics of French foreign fighters**

Regarding the demographic background of French terrorists or foreign fighters I will mainly proceed from the research of the Globsec research team (2019), the Marc Hecker study (2018), and the sociological trends demonstrated by the French Coordination Unit of the Fight against Terrorism. Unsurprisingly „there is little point in trying to depict a typical jihadist profile" (Bindner, 2018: 10).

The French jihadists constitute the largest single contingent in the Globsec dataset of European jihadists. Specifically, the French subgroup consists of 58 individuals. This high ratio of radicals reflects the fact that Europol declares the highest number of terrorism arrests in France (Europol, 2015). In particular, the French terrorist contingent accounts for more than 90 percent of the overall dataset (Bouvier, 2018). Moreover, a high proportion of French jihadists have experienced an ordinary crime. In fact, half of the French subgroup can be considered criminals with a criminal background and history of previous arrests (Globsec - Who are the European Jihadis, 2018: 30).

As for the citizenship of French terrorists, almost all are EU citizens (mostly French, but also Belgians) and a few have dual citizenship (Hecker, 2018). The average age of the jihadists is 28 years and more than half of the contingent is foreign fighters (53 percent) The phenomenon of criminal past is also evident in the case of foreign fighters since

half of the foreign terrorist fighters have previous criminal backgrounds (Thomson, 2016).

„One of the main characteristics of French Muslims is their relative sectarian homogeneity with the great majority being Sunni Muslims, even if their ethnic and national backgrounds are diverse" (Andre, 2015: 296). The most of the French Muslim community came to France from the countries of former French colonies mainly from the Maghreb countries of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, which have gained national independence during the last century (Hecker, 2018: 22). Due to the lack of official data on the geographical dispersion of Muslims within France, ICT has decided to analyse this phenomenon through the location of important mosques, which could indicate a higher concentration of the Muslim community in the particular area. The ICT index shows a higher concentration of the Muslim minority in specific areas (Bigot, 2012: 9) in the eastern part of the country and they also tend to live predominantly in urban areas in the west or north of France (Andre, 2015: 297). It can be stated that Muslims, in general, are more present in large metropolises and their suburbs, especially in „Paris but also in Lille, Roubaix, Lyon, Marseille, Strasbourg, and Bordeaux" (Bigot, 2012: 9).

Marc Hecker, director of publications of the Institut Français des Relations Internationales, is one of the experts who clarified the common demographic characteristics of French jihadists. Based on the dataset consists of 131 individuals he found that they were mostly young male French citizens, with parents born outside France (Hecker, 2018: 23). The fact that most of the terrorists do not have native France-born parents means that the phenomena of radicalisation and terrorism are linked with immigration and failure of integration. Hecker's study also revealed that almost three-quarters of radicalized French terrorists grow up in Muslim families (Hecker, 2018: 24). „Nonetheless, it was observed that it is a lack of knowledge and ignorance of Islam that favours religious extremism" (Khosrokhavar, 2014: 112). Other common features are low educational attainment, unfavourable economic situation, and delinquent or criminal past of these individuals (Hecker, 2018: 20). In particular „47% have no diploma, 36% were unemployed and 22% occupied precarious jobs" (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, France, vol. 2, 2019: 6). Similarly 40 percent of Hecker's dataset „come from deprived neighbourhoods" (Hecker, 2018: 18).

The French Coordination Unit of the Fight against Terrorism examined a sample of 265 French jihadists killed in Iraq and Syria. The average age of terrorists is 28, with more than half having an immigrant and criminal background. These individuals usually belong to the second or third generation of immigrants. Moreover, 56 percent of the sample come from neighbourhoods with socio-economic problems (Molinie, 2017).

The basic demographic profile of French foreign fighters who fought in terrorist organizations, most often for ISIS, is more or less the same as for jihadists. Unsurprisingly, ethnic French who converted to Islam through the ideology of Salafi-jihadism or jihadist networks account for almost a quarter of the French contingent of foreign fighters (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, France, vol. 2, 2019: 5). While many French foreign fighters are young men with a previous criminal background, „there is also a growing contingent of women who aimed to settle in the Caliphate (Pietrasanta, 2015: 34).

#### **10.6. Crime-terror nexus**

Concerning criminal backgrounds, 46 percent of French subset examined by Globsec research team have previous criminal record, what makes from French dataset one the most „criminally infested terrorism contingent" (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 15). Interestingly, only slightly more than 10 percent of individuals from those who had a criminal history and spent some time in prison were radicalized directly behind bars (ibid.). The creation of crime-terror hybrids may be the result of a high proportion of jihadists who hail from localities where we can find „a significant number of individuals rotating in and out of prison" (ibid.). This may help to normalize the prison experience for many of the future jihadists.

In general data from the particular researches on the French contingent of jihadists, or more specifically foreign fighters, confirm the correlation between crime and terrorism. However, it seems that the French crime-terror nexus „is composed of in-betweeners rather than hardened criminals: low-to-mid-level delinquents and polycriminals who seized opportunities" (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, France, 2018: 2). Concerning the criminal past of French terrorists, the most common types of crimes were non-lethal petty crimes, like thefts or assault. No individual in the dataset had any previous military experience before departure for Iraq or Syria (ibid.).

To conclude individuals with a criminal background are more vulnerable to radical Islam, not only because they could potentially go through the radicalisation process behind bars, but also because they felt alienated and rejected by French society after this experience (Nguyen, 2018).

## 10.7. Conclusion

As in the other two case studies, the phenomenon of radicalisation in France may be the result of various factors at three different levels. These radicalisation aspects can be clarified through the lenses of all three before-mentioned theories - social movement theory, conversion theory, and social psychology. In terms of the social movement theory or social psychology, we can say the assumptions of these theories are also found as true in the case of a French sample of foreign fighters. The centrality of meso level indicators of radicalisation such as peer group, sense of group belonging, and identification with group identity cannot be overlooked in the French case. Moreover, research has confirmed that most of the examined jihadists concerned individuals with pre-existing social ties that they had acquired before engaging in violent jihad, through mosques, community relations, family ties, or friendships (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, France, 2018: 2).

Concerning to glocal dimension, French jihadist networks usually originate in local networks, but many radicalized individuals have been part of the international Franco-Belgian network (ibid.) or even cooperated within transnational terrorist networks with former French colonies. Thus it seems that the first hypothesis about the importance of both – local and global has been confirmed. The analysed researches highlight the importance of the role of influential radicalizing agents and recruiters (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, vol. 2, 2019) which indicates the prevalence of a top-down scheme of recruitment.

As for the second hypothesis I have found evidence of both moral outrages with foreign policies like US intervention in Iraq or membership of France in the anti-ISIS coalition and also dissatisfaction with current reality because of the real or perceived discrimination or economic deprivation. The main problems remained macro-level issues like Islamophobia, poor integration of Muslim minorities, feelings of social exclusion, or perceived incompatibility between French values like secularism and

Islam. Furthermore, discrimination in the spatial dimension in the form of isolated neighbourhoods on the fringes of society which are called banlieues has shown that the French integration project has failed. Beliefs of the French society that democratic values of the French republic and Islam are in conflict led to the instrumentalization of secularism by political parties. The most successful radical anti-Islam party in France is Front National which has reached great success in spreading anti-Muslim sentiment, which can be illustrated based on several electoral successes at the level of cantonal, presidential, or EU Parliament elections. These findings of discrimination and hatred spread radical political party indicates that both parts of the second hypothesis have been confirmed.

Regarding family ties and the supportive role of family members, it appears that in France we can find the same pattern of indirect family influence as in the case of Belgium. Thus the experience of family crises or financial problems may facilitate the cognitive opening to radicalisation into violent extremism. Therefore the third hypothesis about the family support in the radicalisation process has been confirmed only partially - in the indirect form.

In terms of micro-level individual characteristics of French foreign fighters, most of the sample consists of young French Muslims with foreign backgrounds who have low educational attainment and live in deprived banlieues. With respect to the crime-terror nexus, criminal background among the French jihadist is very frequent. Interestingly, even though 70 percent of inmates in French prisons are Muslims, the majority of foreign fighters go through the radicalisation process in radical networks of petty criminals and not really behind the bars. From the perspective of external influences, it seems that the radicalisation process of French foreign fighters has a very complex nature with a combination of several supportive factors like prison experience, friends, jihadi mentors, or other members of the terrorist cell.

## 10.8. Testing hypotheses

Hypothesis	Confirmed/falsified
H1. Ties with radicalised individuals in the neighbourhood or abroad increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed

H2.a Personal dissatisfaction with the current reality in the form of real or perceived discrimination or high rate of unemployment increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H2.b Dissatisfaction as moral outrage in the form of perceived hatred from anti-Muslim or anti-immigration political parties increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H3. The role of the family has a significant impact on the process of radicalisation	partially confirmed – only on the indirect level
H4. Individuals with certain characteristics like uneducated young males with criminal past are more prone to be radicalised	hypothesis confirmed

## 11. Case study of UK

After the 7/7 terrorist attacks, Islamist radicalisation and domestic terrorism have become one of the most serious and enduring security threats in the UK. As a multi-ethnic and multicultural country with a high concentration of Muslim minorities, the UK has „become an ideal base for Wahhabi radicalisation formed in mosques, schools, and cultural centres funded and influenced by the Saudi government and its charities" (Wojtowicz, 2012: 45). Moreover, the UK provided political asylum to foreign radicals who immigrated to Britain during the 1980s and 1990s and became influential ideologues spreading the extremist interpretation of Islam. These include Abu Hamza al Masri, Omar Bakri Mohammad, and Abu Qataba, who have established jihadist networks across the UK (Silber, 2012: 24).

The UK's Home Office, in its Counter-Terrorism Strategy known as CONTEST, defined radicalisation as "the process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism, and in some cases then to join terrorist groups" (U.K. Home Office, CONTEST, 2011: 36). In fact, the UK Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism stated that it is not possible to deduce one specific and universal motivation for all foreign fighters. Nevertheless, British security services have identified several factors that can contribute to the radicalisation process (Vidino, 2012). These factors are mostly associated with personal trauma or weak social status which makes individuals more vulnerable to ISIS message (Boutin, 2016). As well as a large influx of immigrants including extremist individuals, and „highly tolerant political, social and policing culture of state multiculturalism" (Vidino, 2012: 11) create a fertile breeding ground for radicalisation in the UK.

### 11.1. Social ties and jihadist networks

The phenomenon of jihadist networks in the United Kingdom is equally scattered across several areas. In the long run, there are several nodes in which terrorist networks operate and where a plethora of prominent Islamist ideologues recruit new members of jihadist groups. These terrorist hubs can be found in suburban areas of London, Birmingham, Bradford, and Walsall (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 18). Moreover, data provided by the Globsec research team revealed the presence of ad hoc individual terrorist cells in smaller cities such as Mold, Burton upon Trent, Lancashire, or Stoke on Trent (ibid.).

„In fact, British jihadism stretches from north-west England to Birmingham and then towards London, creating an almost straight line that cuts through western England" (ibid.). The smaller group of British foreign fighters from many cities outside London like Brighton, Cardiff, or Portsmouth often cluster in terrorist cells and travel together to Syria or Iraq (Bryson, 2016: 26).

The sample of British jihadists examined by the Institute for Global Change (2016) confirms that the highest concentration of terrorist networks is in London. London areas such as Ladbroke Grove, where operated the jihadist group London Boys, or also Luton, Acton, St. John's Wood, and Willesden serve as radicalisation hubs for dozens of potential militant Islamists (ibid.).

The United Kingdom has been a magnet for radical Islamic preachers who were publicly preaching radical interpretations of Islam since the mid-1980s. Among the most famous ideological leaders, I can mention individuals such as Abu Hamza al Masri, Abu Qatada, Omar Bakri Mohammed, Abdullah el Faisal, Anjem Choudary, and Hani al Sibai (Weeks, 2016: 64). The Research of the Institute for Global Change points out that more than two-thirds of their dataset were directly or indirectly linked to at least one of the six people mentioned above. The three of them - Abu Hamza, Abu Qatada, and Omar Bakri Mohammed, collectively characterized as the unholy trinity, all were active at the Finsbury Park Mosque in north London which played an important role in the history of British jihadism (ibid.) while Abdullah El-Faisal was the main preacher at Masjid Ibn Taymeeyah mosque in south London. These charismatic ideologues were in turn tied with the transnational terrorist networks and global jihadi leaders (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 18). Unsurprisingly, radical preachers usually targeted young second-and third-generation Muslim immigrants who on the one hand felt isolated and alienated from the host's society, and on the other hand, they did not fully fit into their parents' religious practices (Varvelli, 2016: 64).

In the case of the UK, Islamist networks serve as recruiting pools. Based on the Institute for Global change study almost 80 percent of their sample „were associated with non-violent Islamist groups and networks before turning to jihadism" (Bryson, 2016: 6) either directly through the social ties with particular jihadist groups or indirectly by personal connections to individuals who spread the radical ideology.

From a historical perspective, three influential local jihadist organizations operated in the UK - Hizb al-Tahrir, Al-Muhajiroun, and Islam4UK (Wojtowicz, 2012). Hizb al-Tahrir's supporters were mainly representatives of Muslim immigrants who lacked a sense of belonging with British culture and society. After 9/11, this British radical group declared that all Muslims should participate in the war against the West, especially against the United States and the United Kingdom, which declared war on Islam (Ahmed, 2012: 23).

In 1996, another prominent extremist group was formed in London - Al-Muhajiroun. The group was founded by an ex-member of the Hizb-al Tahrir - Omar Bakri Mohammad and Anjem Choudary. This jihadist group openly supported Islamist extremism and organized public events or even university events in support of terrorism. Its main goal was the establishment of the Islamic state in the UK under Sharia law and legitimizing violent activities in defence of Islam in Britain or abroad (Ahmed, 2012: 66).

As the British security services stopped and banned the activities of the Al-Muhajiroun group, in 2009 the Islam4UK was formed, which is considered an offshoot or splinter group of Al-Muhajiroun. This group was founded by Anjem Choudary (Wojtowicz, 2012: 62) who is known as the leader of pro-Islamic discourse in Britain. Choudary was also one of the principal lecturers at the London School of Shari'a (Islam4UK, 2010). This jihadist group has been accused of encouraging its members to engage in militant jihad and sending its members to Iraq and Syria as foreign terrorist fighters. Based on the study carried out by the Centre for Social Cohesion, „15% of all those convicted in the UK of terrorism-related offenses were either members of, or have known links to, the organisation" (Raymond, 2010: 11). Even the data provided by British security services indicated that Anjem Choudary is connected to as many as 500 British jihadists in Syria (Evans, 2016). It is needed to mention that this organization is supposed to have been the inspiration for one of the most influential and the most dangerous terrorist groups in Belgium - Sharia4Belgium (Wojtowicz, 2012). In fact, also the Islam4UK has been banned since 2010 in the UK „and as such the government had to take action against this organization (Raymond, 2010: 21). However, this group is still able to continue to promote extremist ideology through organizations such as „Need4Khilafah, al-Ghurabaa, the Shariah Project, Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'aah, Muslims Against Crusades, Saviour Sect, and the Islamic Dawah Association" (Bryson,

2016: 25). Only the name of the network or organization may change to evade the law, but the ideology and key individuals operating in these groups remain the same.

In terms of the glocal dimension, there are several transnational jihadist organizations in the UK, such as the Algerian group *Islamique Armée*, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and *al-Gamma al-Islaamiya* (Wojtowicz, 2012: 55). Among the countries that maintained close contact with British jihadist groups and provided generous financial resources for British terrorists, two Middle Eastern countries played an important role - Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Wojtowicz, 2012: 70). As for Saudi Arabia, the country has funded a number of radical Muslim clerics who have been active preachers in the UK, mainly through charities. It has been shown that Saudi Arabia provided financial resources for preachers who misinterpret the faith to young British Muslims by preaching radical versions of Islam and spreading hateful literature. British security forces have revealed that more than a quarter of British mosques propagate such radical and hateful forms of Islam and spread the extremist Salafist-jihadist ideology (Blanchard, 2012: 5). It was reported that it is the Saudi government that has ties to these British mosques, which have been suspected of acting as a radicalisation hub for foreign terrorist fighters (*ibid.*).

As for the most prominent Muslim organizations in Britain that have been linked to transnational terrorist groups, I can mention the Muslim Council of Britain, which was affiliated with Al Qaeda (MCB, 2012), and the Muslim Association of Britain, which was the main initiator of British demonstrations against the war in Iraq (Wojtowicz, 2012: 21). This organization is considered to be the British representative of the Muslim Brotherhood's transnational network (*ibid.*).

In terms of enabling environment which provides a breeding ground for recruitment or radicalisation into violent extremism, the most important role was played by the British mosques. In fact „a majority of mainstream mosques in the UK have taken on the Saudi Arabian interpretation of shari'a law from official Saudi books" (Wojtowicz, 2012: 36). For example, the aforementioned mosque in Finsbury Park became infamously known as the "Suicide Factory" and for many years served as a point of contact with people linked to Al Qaeda (Silber, 2012: 26). However, during the ISIS boom, the mosque was already under the strict surveillance of British intelligence services because it was repeatedly investigated for allegations connected to terrorism or the promotion of radical Islamic jihad (*ibid.*)

Institute for Global change revealed that at least 17 percent of their jihadist dataset „attended talks by Islamist preachers at Finsbury Park Mosque in north London" (Bryson, 2016: 24). The mosque in Birmingham was also severely criticized under the rule of David Cameron for the alleged spread of Islamic extremism and jihadist violence in the UK (Ali, 2012). The al-Manaar Mosque in West London was also frequently visited by jihadists from the sample. In particular, the mosque was attended by terrorists involved in an ISIS cell known as The Beatles, including two well-known jihadists, Alexandra Kotey and Mohammed Ewazi alias Jihadi John (Bryson, 2016: 24). Although no direct evidence has ever been found that the leadership of the mosque supports radicalisation, it is clear that key links have been established here (ibid.).

Interestingly, other types of places and localities, not just mosques, are worth mentioning when analysing radicalisation hubs in Britain. Here, the British case stands out since a high number of jihadists from the examined sample first encountered radical ideology because „of another individual whom they had met while attending the same paintball centre or working at the same charity oriented towards sending aid to war-torn Syria" (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 21). Universities and student campuses may be other places where it is possible to build jihadist networks. For example, Anjem Choudary focused mainly on a university environment, claiming that he lectured at several prestigious British universities, including the London School of Economics (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2010). While according to British officials „40 universities were under the risk of radicalization or recruitment on campus" (Slack, 2012). Moreover, British jihadists and foreign fighters have also been shown to have ties to bookshops that sold Islamist literature (Bryson, 2016).

## **11.2. Perceived and real discrimination**

The Globsec research team has revealed that the British sample of foreign fighters is particularly outstanding in linking a sense of individual moral outrage with foreign policy grievances in the form of the narrative that the West is at war against Islam. This strong sense of moral outrage among British jihadists stemmed from the UK's view as one of the strongest Western players involved in the war on terror (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019). The UK's involvement in intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, or open opposition to Assad's regime in Syria, provided plenty of reasons for dissatisfaction from the point of view of potential British jihadists (ibid.). This connection between the

personal and global dimensions took two basic forms - either it was a direct connection in the form of the death of family members or loved ones in these military interventions, or it was an indirect connection caused by frustration with British foreign policy. This feeling of moral outrage and dissatisfaction was mainly because British Muslims perceived UK foreign policy in the MENA region as a repressive force that contributes to the oppression of Muslim masses by dictatorial regimes in the Middle East (ibid.). Radical Islamist ideologues emphasized not only the „failures" of British foreign policy but also the ills and moral declines of domestic British society, such as drinking and drugs. Their goal was to provoke moral outrage among young radical Muslims over this decline in their host society (Weeks, 2016).

From the historical perspective, the thorn in the side of British Muslims was the conflict in Kashmir where many Pakistani descendants living in Britain have family ties, publication of satanic verses, and the decision of Britain not to intervene in Bosnia during the ongoing war and genocide (Zimmerman, 2009: 19). Later it was, in turn, the Gulf War which caused a wave of dissent among British Muslim immigrants. These perceived political grievances activated Muslim political engagement and created room for the emergence of a strong opinion base promoting a new social and political order was needed (ibid.). In general, among young British Muslims, we can find anti-imperialist and colonialist sentiment. This historical anger together with perceived social injustice can potentially lead to radicalisation (Change Institute for the European Commission, 2008). Furthermore, there is a feeling in British Muslim communities that they have been „vilified, marginalized and dictated to as to what religious practices and beliefs are acceptable and which are not" (Lynch, 2013: 241).

From the perspective of British demography, in 2019, the official total population of the UK was estimated at 66.65 million, of which approximately 3.37 million Muslims, (ONS, 2019) representing more than 5 percent of the total population of the UK. According to the Pew Research Foundation, the UK has the third-largest Muslim minority in Europe after Germany and France (Pew research center, 2018). The growth of the Muslim community may be the result of several factors such as immigration, conversion to Islam, or an increased tendency to self-identify as a Muslim due to the ongoing War on Terror (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 117).

The presence of the Muslim community in the UK is not a new phenomenon. It dates back to the period of British colonization of Muslim countries. As early as the 1800s, many people from Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East lived in Britain. The period between 1940 and 1960 is called the golden age of Muslim migration, mainly from East and South Africa. And in the 1970s and 1980s, most Muslim migrants came from North Africa (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 47).

The geographical concentration of Muslims in the country is diverse and includes Muslim immigrants from different countries. The largest Muslim communities in Britain are usually in metropolitan or industrial areas of larger cities that offer greater employment opportunities. Most Muslims are concentrated in London, which for several centuries has served as a centre for immigrants and safe haven for refugees from around the world (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2012). The Muslim minority in London is geographically very diverse in terms of language, ethnicity, social class, or politics. Especially in the poorest neighbourhoods of Newham and Tower of Hamlets live the highest numbers of Muslims in London (Wojtowicz, 2012: 9). However, to estimate which area is more receptive to the IS message than another is very problematic. The main reason is that Muslim communities in the UK are extremely heterogeneous (Weeks, 2016). Birmingham is the second biggest city with the largest Muslim population outside London. Numerous Muslim communities are also found in the „East and West Midlands, East Lancashire, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire" (Review of the Evidence Base on Faith Communities, 2012).

In terms of ethnicity, most of today's British Muslims come from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, more than 10 percent were ethnic British who have converted to Islam and about 6 percent come from Asia (Wojtowicz, 2012: 10). It is needed to mention that although British Muslims faced more, scrutiny, criticism, or perceived discrimination than any other religious minority, thousands of Britons convert to Islam every year (The independent, 2012). „According to professor Gilliat-Ray at least 50% of the current British Muslim population was born in the UK and a large majority, regardless of their country of origin hold British citizenship" (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 121-122).

With respect to the segregation of minority communities in the UK, it is interesting that not only that British Muslim communities lived in the neighbourhoods which are isolated from the host society, but the individual Muslim minorities were also

segregated from each other (Zimmerman, 2009: 23). „This is reflected in settlement patterns: Bangladeshis in London's inner East End; Pakistanis and Kashmiri people in the Midlands and industrial cities in the northwest, etc" (ibid.). Thus British society has been fragmented as a consequence of immigration. Therefore displacement of Muslim communities or the tension between Western secularism and the traditional religious values of Muslims can lead to intergenerational strains that leave a young generation of Muslims in the UK trapped between two identities (O'Duffy, 2008).

Regarding the socio-economic indicators of British Muslims, data from a study conducted by ICT (2012) show that the Muslim community is more likely to be disadvantaged than other minorities in Britain. According to available data, British Muslims face difficulties associated with higher unemployment rates or low levels of qualification (Wojtowicz, 2012). Other indicators of the socio-economic problems of the Muslim minority include „low home ownership, large families, a higher percentage in poor and social housing, incidence of overcrowding and a high percentage of residence in deprived localities (Islam in the United Kingdom, 2012). Moreover, Office for National Statistics in Britain provided information that individuals from the Muslim minority of working age are more likely than other British religious groups to be economically inactive (Office for National Statistics, 2012). According to Open Society Institute's EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program Muslims in the UK „are the most disadvantaged faith group" (Open Society Institute, 2010).

As for the British integration system, the UK implemented a policy of multiculturalism, which had a significant impact on the relationship between government and minorities. Multiculturalism is usually perceived as „a step towards integrating immigrants, accepting all cultural differences, achieving equality, and expanding opportunities for minorities to create a sense of belonging" (Wojtowicz, 2012: 18). According to opinion polls, ethnic minorities showed very similar membership of British nationality as white British (British Politics and Policy, 2012). However, a large proportion of ethnic Britons do not agree that anyone could have two identities - a British identity and a minority cultural or religious identity (ibid.). A survey carried out by the Pew Global Attitudes Project has shown that, despite generally good relations between British society and minorities, Muslim minorities living in Britain have a more „negative view towards westerners than Islamic minorities elsewhere in Europe" (Borger, 2012). Moreover, British Muslims accuse Western countries of growing tensions between religious

minorities and mainstream society, considering them arrogant, immoral, and violently enforcing their cultural system (ibid.). Despite several efforts to make the British integration system more efficient, the debate regarding the capability of Muslim integration into British society still continues (Wojtowicz, 2012).

Many British experts or politicians, including former Prime Minister David Cameron, have described the policy of multiculturalism as a failed project which, by supporting minorities in fostering their culture and own identity, „reinforcing, therefore, Islamist tendencies to separateness and isolation of " (Kuenssberg, 2012) or may even lead to Islamic extremism. To illustrate the long-term and problematic nature of relations with the Muslim minority in the UK I can mention that after the 7/7 terrorist attacks, the Institute for Racial Relations saw an increase in personal attacks by British citizens on Muslims (Institute of Race Relations, 2012). The 7/7 bombing seems to have led to a deepening of real or perceived discrimination and even further alienation of minorities living in Britain (ibid.). Moreover, a Gallup Academy survey found that almost half of Britons do not see Muslims as loyal citizens to Britain (The Gallup Coexist Index, 2012).

Unsurprisingly, it appears that after each terrorist attack, mutual suspicion between the majority society and the Muslim minority increases. The attack on Lee Rigby in Woolwich was no exception. Polling agency YouGov, then proved that only less than a fifth of British citizens believe that virtually all British Muslims are peaceful citizens who deplore terrorist attacks. As many as 14 percent said believed that most British Muslims did not feel loyal to the country and were prepared to commit terrorist attacks (Dahlgreen, 2013). Another 2015 YouGov survey found that more than half of British citizens perceive the incompatibility of British and Muslim values (YouGov Survey Results, 2015). „Exacerbated by the rise of the Islamic State (IS), the security environment in the UK is decidedly tense" (Weeks, 2016: 63). The seriousness of the terrorist threat came to the forefront of the British political scene, which resulted in more security legislation which caused further tension in relations between the Muslim community and the British government „ and in some cases facilitated more radicalism, not less" (ibid.). This is not to say that radicalism in the UK is a consequence of government policy, rather it is the result of a very complex relationship that is influenced by several domestic and international factors.

### 11.3. Anti-Islam political parties

Among the British far-right political parties with anti-immigration and anti-Islam agenda UKIP most stands out. UKIP was founded in 1993. This party consisted of two main factions - the eurosceptic and the radical right-wing faction with a predominantly anti-Islamic agenda (Busher, 2018). Its best-known leader was Nigel Farage, under whose leadership the party scored the greatest success „becoming the first party in more than a century, other than Labour or the Conservatives", (Independent, 2017) to win in the European elections in 2014 with a gain of almost 27 percent of the vote (ibid.). UKIP in its election campaigns has „openly opposed multiculturalism and referred to tackling 'extremist Islam,' implying that Islam was antithetical to 'Britishness' and advocated policies targeting Muslims, including bans on face veils, 'radical preachers' and 'sharia courts" (Busher, 2018: 16). Among the party leaders, the anti-Islamic and anti-immigration agenda was promoted mainly by Anne Marie Waters, who is the co-founder of the anti-Islamic social movement Pegida UK and the chair of Sharia Watch (Busher, 2018). Waters also supported anti-Muslim activists affiliated with the English Defence League. The main goal of this far-right faction was to advocate far-reaching reforms to the UK immigration law and to spread the view that Islam and Muslims pose a dangerous threat to Britain (ibid.). The former leader of the UKIP party - Batten even described Islam as a death cult and proposed special security screenings for Muslim immigrants or Muslim-only prisons (The Guardian, 2018).

There are also other far-right parties with an anti-Islamic agenda in the UK, such as Britain First or For Britain Movement. Concerning Britain First, the party's agenda is openly anti-migration. This party regularly protests against the construction or extension of mosques. Members of the party proclaim that they oppose „all alien and destructive political or religious doctrines" (Busher, 2018) in the UK. Britain First declares that they want the British people „to come first, before foreigners, asylum seekers or migrants" (ibid.). And they add that „the rapid growth of militant Islam is leading to the suppression of women, freedom of speech and racist attacks" (ibid.). Another anti-Islam political party in the UK is For Britain Movement which is in their own words, „a pro-British movement that believes in preserving the culture and values of a decent British majority and passing these on to future generations" (VK, 2019).

## 11.4. Family environment

The British sample of jihadists, including foreign fighters, seems to be more closely linked to family ties than samples from other countries. Data provided by Institute for Global change (2016) points out that almost a quarter of the sample which consists of 113 individuals have „siblings engaged in jihadi activity, comprising 14 families" (Bryson, 2016: 7). Siblings from the same families usually join the same jihadist groups and travel together to territories controlled by terrorist groups as foreign fighters. In total, 30 percent of the dataset have a family link to jihad which means that they have at least one family member involved in terrorism (Bryson, 2016). Family ties between British jihadists have been also confirmed by the Globsec research team (2019) that came to similar conclusions. Furthermore, Globsec emphasizes the role of married couples that „could jointly plot terrorist attacks, with the wives acting as domestic jihadist entrepreneurs, urging their husbands to follow them in their jihadist pursuits" (Globsec Pathways to Jihad, 2019: 19).

As in the case of other countries, the UK dataset also indicates signs of indirect support of dysfunctional families in the radicalisation process of its young members, mainly due to social or financial problems of particular families. Globsec also points out that interestingly, the family factor in the case of UK jihadists may even be contradictory, as they noted a case where a father who was previously imprisoned for terrorist offenses alerted the authorities to prevent his son from running off to join militant jihad and becoming an ISIS foreign fighter (Globsec Pathways to Jihad vol. 2, 2019: 13).

## 11.5. Personal characteristics of British foreign fighters

According to the Globsec research team, jihadism in the UK is almost exclusively a domestic affair. All British jihadists from the dataset which included 30 individuals are EU citizens and almost 90 percent are British citizens (Globsec-Who are the European Jihadis, 2018). The average age of British jihadists is 29 years, and these mainly intent on traveling to ISIS-controlled territory (ibid.). Another important source of information was the Institute for Global Change whose research „examined the biographies of 113 British foreign fighters who engaged in the Syrian conflict or fought for ISIS" (Bryson, 2016: 34). Based on the data provided by this research women tend to be more vulnerable to online radicalisation than men (ibid.).

Concerning to education of jihadists, research conducted by the Institute for Global Change has shown that the phenomenon of highly educated jihadists is mainly connected with leaders and leading ideologues of jihadist movements, of which almost half have attended university. The universities with the largest number of jihadists from the data set are predominantly based in London. „Of those who attended university, 23 percent went to the University of Westminster, Greenwich University and Brunel University" (Bryson, 2016: 30). Moreover, part of the examined sample was also radicalised on university campuses (ibid.).

The Globsec research team also confirmed that the educational level of British terrorists was significantly higher than in other studied countries (Globsec-Who are the European Jihadis, 2018: 16). In particular, 6 individuals out of the sample have university experience. Nevertheless, as many as 11 of the 30 jihadists were unemployed at the time of the arrest (ibid.) In general Globsec's research revealed that the unemployment rate of an examined sample of British jihadists is significantly higher than the unemployment rate in the UK (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, UK, 2018).

Concerning to specific subgroup of the dataset which consists solely of foreign fighters, Globsec research demonstrates a „significant attempt by most of the individuals in their sample to engage in foreign-fighting activities" (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, UK, 2018: 13). ICCT report showed that most foreign fighters are males between 18 and 30 years of age, with the majority being in their early 20s, often with university experience and a connection to a radical Islamist network in his place of residence in the UK (Boutin, 2016).

Data from both the ICCT report and O'Duffy's study, which examined 43 individuals connected with terrorism, showed that the majority of them are second-generation Muslims of Pakistani origins (ibid.). Furthermore, the ICCT report revealed that the examined sample consists of both, highly educated staff and less qualified individuals. Most foreign fighters were from socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Muslims such as Greater London, Leeds/Bradford area of West Yorkshire, or Birmingham in the West Midlands (ibid.). In particular London based foreign fighters usually „came from just five areas of the city: Hammersmith, Willesden, Barkingside, St John's Wood, and Acton" (Bryson, 2016: 7).

Globsec, in turn, focused on the indicator of the size of the cities where British foreign fighters live. Research has shown that all of the British samples lived in a town with a population higher than 10,000 (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, UK, 2018: 12). Almost 90 percent were from cities with more than 100,000 people, and almost 60 percent lived in areas with a population of more than 500,000 (ibid.). This finding indicates that urbanized neighbourhoods in the metropolis might have a higher radicalisation potential.

Based on several studies, it can be said that all foreign fighters considered themselves Muslims and promoted a radical Islamist ideology. However, as in the previous cases of France or Belgium, it has been proved that the knowledge of religious ideology or Islam as such was very superficial to almost all jihadists or foreign terrorist fighters (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, UK, 2018). Although the exact number of foreign terrorist fighters from the UK is unknown, „estimates suggest that around 850 supporters of the Islamic State left the UK by 2017, placing the UK as one of the largest European sources of foreign fighters" (Barrett, 2017: 19).

### **11.6. Crime-terror nexus**

Based on the data collected, the Globsec research suggested that a significant proportion of British jihadists have a criminal background (Globsec-Who are the European Jihadis, 2018). More than a third of those examined had previously been arrested for some type of ordinary or petty crime. However, it cannot be said that „they had enjoyed truly long-term criminal careers" (Globsec-Who are the European Jihadis, 2018: 31). The most common crimes included drug possession or attempted burglary. However, more than half of jihadists with a criminal background have been in prison for a relatively long time before becoming foreign fighters. „Contrary to other studied countries, data coming from the United Kingdom does not confirm the theory of prisons as a breeding ground for radicalisation" (ibid.), since it has not been proven that „UK prisoners had been exposed to a radical ideology during their time in prison" (ibid.).

Thus, the data do not show a link between the criminal past and involvement in a terrorist group. In terms of the experience of jihadists with professional armies, one member of the sample had previous military experience since he was in the British

Army. Moreover, the military applications of another three individuals of the examined dataset were rejected (From Criminals to Terrorists and back, UK, 2018: 3).

Based on Globsec research, it appears that peer-to-peer recruitment to jihadist groups plays a significant role for individuals with a criminal background. This finding highlights the importance of the influences of like-minded individuals in British radical groups, which are often associated with petty crimes. Therefore in the case of the UK, petty crimes lead to the establishment of contacts in criminal groups, which often promote Islamist radicalism. Thus, concerning to connection between crime and terrorism in the UK, it is not about radicalisation in prisons, as it was in France, but rather about links between crime-terror groups.

### **11.7. Conclusion**

The radicalisation process in the UK can be explained on the backgrounds of all three chosen theories – social movement theory, social psychology, and conversion theory. Each theory clarifies some part of the radicalisation process of examined individuals. Concerning the first hypothesis about the glocal nature of British jihadism, we can say that this was confirmed and the samples of various studies conducted by research institutes reveals that „British jihadi movement is connected to the global movement, whether through direct activities overseas or support for international groups from the UK" (Bryson, 2016: 14). Thus the radicalisation of the majority of British foreign fighters was conducted in the immediate neighbourhood or local jihadist network which usually has a simultaneous link to transnational terrorist organizations based abroad (Globsec Pathways to Jihad vol. 2, 2019).

According to O'Duffy the importance of the interaction between individual jihadist cells and the considerable influence of the group environment and group thinking on the individual corresponding to the assumptions of social network theory and social psychology. Many times the prerequisites for the emergence of global violent jihad are charismatic leaders who recruit young alienated Muslims. These estranged individuals are indoctrinated by the ideas of a bipolar world in which the war between the West (especially the UK and the US) and Islam is taking place (O'Duffy, 2008) which indicates relatively strong influence of moral outrage in the form of perceived foreign policy grievances among British jihadists or specifically foreign terrorist fighters.

The important role plays also dissatisfaction with the current reality of young Muslims. This dissatisfaction usually stems from relative deprivation or in many cases also from real socio-economic deprivation. In general, the Muslim communities in the UK face long-term difficulties like the higher unemployment rate, low-income professions, poverty, alienation from society, or living in isolated and poor neighbourhoods. According to prominent British politicians, the system of integration and the culture of multiculturalism have been failed projects that need to be reformed. They claim that multiculturalism supports the separatist tendencies of Muslim minorities or may even lead to Islamic extremism. Muslim minorities, which consist of young, unemployed, or religiously poorly integrated individuals into the host society, are ideal objects for Islamic radicalisation.

However, British jihadists do not necessarily have to be members of these socio-economic deprived societies. According to MI5, it is not unusual for suicide bombers or foreign terrorist fighters to be highly educated individuals with a university degree and from middle-class backgrounds (Wojtowicz, 2012). Moreover, UKIP, the British political party which was accused of spreading hatred against Muslims is a very successful party when it comes to the EU parliament election and it used to be also very powerful in terms of political influence in the UK. Thus it seems that the second hypothesis about moral outrage and dissatisfaction with current reality is also confirmed.

With respect to family ties British sample of jihadists seems to be quite closely linked to family relations. The family members of particular families, the most often siblings or married couples engaged in a jihadi activity and travelled to ISIS territories together. However, parents' support for the radicalisation of their children has not been proved. Thus we can say that the third hypothesis about the importance of the role of the family in the radicalisation process is confirmed.

The last hypothesis has been only partially confirmed. The data showed that the majority of British foreign fighters consist of young Muslim males of immigrant's origin, who has been usually living in deprived neighbourhoods. But it is necessary to mention that the sample represents a mix of highly educated individuals with university experience as well as low-qualified workers with a low level of education. Therefore we

cannot generalize the personal characteristics of British foreign fighters. Furthermore, scholars also draw attention to the growing number of women engaged in violent jihad.

In the case of the UK, the crime-terror nexus appears to be less obvious than in other examined countries. It is mainly because the radicalisation usually does not take place in prisons but rather in jihadists groups that involved a relatively high number of petty criminals. The data showed that the majority of British foreign fighters were not arrested for crimes related to terrorism and they were behind bars long before radicalisation occurred.

Unsurprisingly, it seems that the complex radicalisation processes of British jihadists were the result of the interaction of many factors at all three levels. On the macro level were more decisive factors like poor integration and economic deprivation while on the meso level I can mention group membership as an important aspect of radicalisation. Among the most enabling environment for radicalisation in the UK, I can mention sports centres or mosques. However, in the case of mosques, we can rather say that they used to be very important radicalisation hubs a few years ago, but due to several allegations connected to terrorism, the most influential mosques in the UK have been under the surveillance of security services.

### 11.8. Testing hypotheses

Hypothesis	Confirmed/falsified
H1. Ties with radicalised individuals in the neighbourhood or abroad increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H2.a Personal dissatisfaction with the current reality in the form of real or perceived discrimination or high rate of unemployment increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H2.b Dissatisfaction as moral outrage in the form of perceived hatred from anti-Muslim or anti-immigration political parties increased the risk of radicalisation	hypothesis confirmed
H3. The role of the family has a significant impact on	difficult to verify, but

the process of radicalisation	partially confirmed – significant indirect impact of families
H4. Individuals with certain characteristics like uneducated young males with criminal past are more prone to be radicalised	only partially confirmed because the foreign fighters sample involved highly educated individuals with university experience

## 12. Conclusion

In my diploma thesis, I dealt with the very complex phenomenon of radicalisation into violent extremism. The concept of radicalisation in my thesis excludes other forms of radicalism than jihadist extremism, which culminated into violent acts, namely involvement in the fight for the Islamic State as foreign fighters. In radicalisation research it is very difficult to find some clear lines of connection or some correlation between specific causes and outcomes. That's why I have selected only a few potentially contributing factors of radicalisation and I have tried to verify whether there is a link between them and radicalised individuals.

Regarding different radicalisation theories such as social movement theory, social psychology, or conversion theory, it is needed to say that no single theory is likely to clarify all violent radicalisations. Hence the theoretical explanation provided by reviewed scholars should not be considered as competing or mutually exclusive but rather as complementary since they focus on distinct aspects of the phenomenon of radicalisation (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 810). Although the phase models (PET and NYPD) have been heavily criticized, they have considerably contributed to the field of radicalisation research. Moreover, I have decided to use them in my thesis, since many world policymakers have based their policies on these two models. However, in order to at least partially understand the radicalisation process, it is necessary to involve another model - the root cause model - in the research. Thus to avoid certain problems related to phase models, it is useful to examine the causes rather than the courses of the radicalisation process (Veldhuis, 2009: 10).

During my radicalisation research, I encountered several pitfalls. The limited scope of empirical testing of various theoretical assumptions makes it very difficult to draw any valid conclusions about the specific causes of the violent radicalisation of individuals from Western Europe living in democratic countries. This results in the fact that the empirical basis for understanding the aspects leading to jihadism is very limited. Furthermore, within the academic community dealing with Islamic radicalisation, there is no consensus on models offering the most promising ways of further research (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008: 17).

Concerning specific outcomes implying from the testing of hypotheses and conducted research focused on three Western European countries, there are several apparent tendencies. For example we can see a visible declining trend of mosques as enabling environment for radicalisation. Likewise, it seems that prisons do not play a primary role in radicalisation. Although Muslims account for the majority of inmates, mainly in the cases of France or Belgium, prisons appear to be secondary in recruiting new members of terrorist groups and radicalisation does not occur behind bars in most cases. Nevertheless, the crime-terror nexus is a very significant phenomenon in all the examined countries. Therefore, it is necessary to mention that the radicalisation process will take place predominantly in the environment of radical, extremist peer groups, which involved a high number of petty criminals.

The samples of Belgian and French jihadists basically met theoretical assumptions about demographic characteristics of radicalized individuals. Most of them were young Muslim males from isolated and deprived neighbourhoods, who were often unemployed and have low educational attainment. In this case, a sample of British jihadists stood out, representing a mix of highly educated individuals with university experience and less qualified ones.

A common denominator of all examined countries is macro-level problem connected with difficult integration of immigrants, and partial failure of integration systems, whether multiculturalism or assimilation. Other problematic issues on the macro-level include geographical and spatial isolation of socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods, or high unemployment rates and potential discrimination in the workplace. These issues alone do not lead to someone becoming a jihadist, but they can substantially contribute to the cognitive opening to radical ideas.

Furthermore, the radical right-wing political parties strengthen the hatred and anti-Islam sentiment among the public and instrumentalize perceived incompatibility between democratic values of host societies and Islam. Whether it is Vlaams Belang or Front National, and UKIP all parties put in opposition native-born citizens and Muslim immigrants.

Interestingly, although almost all foreign fighters declare themselves to be Muslims, jihadist ideology does not seem to be paramount in the process of radicalisation. And deeper ideological knowledge of Salafi-jihadist ideology is usually found mainly in the

cases of leaders of local terrorist groups. On the contrary, social networks - both local and transnational - seem to play a central role in the process of radicalisation.

Regarding the role of families, the analysis showed that the influence of family members or parents is more-less indirect and that dysfunctions, problems, and crises in the family environment can result in isolation of individuals and loss of belonging, which can subsequently lead to greater openness to radical ideas. I assume that in the examined samples of three chosen countries, played peer-group recruitment a very important role. However, the pre-radicalisation phase described in the NYPD model cannot be underestimated and in many cases might be considered as a critical moment in the whole radicalisation process.

According to the experts, there is no such thing as a single or even predominant cause or motivation that leads to radicalisation at the individual level. Besides, based on the available literature it is possible to identify only a limited number of factors that contribute to explanation why certain types of people become radicalised. Despite these limiting factors, however, it is possible to verify, at least in part, whether my hypotheses contribute to the radicalisation or whether their influence is reflected in the radicalisation process only in a very negligible way.

For some, radicalisation seems to stem from the search for meaning and belonging, for some it seems to be the result of the search for a community or social group. Based on the analysis of hypotheses in three case studies focusing on Belgium, France, and the UK, I can conclude that the pre-radicalisation phase appears to be especially important. The social, personal, or religious status of a person greatly influences his perception of objective reality and external society. Research of hypotheses shows that Muslim immigrants are often on the margins of society and face problems of integration or discrimination. Of course, it cannot be said that the problem is only on the side of the country's immigration policy. It is often really difficult to reconcile differences between different cultures and fully integrate Islam into European democratic structures. Therefore, radicalisation can be frequently found in the cases when people who internally disagree with the foreign policy of their host country and perceived them as grievances, socialize with like-minded individuals. So the role of social groups and networks is equally important because groups often consist of petty criminals; bring together frustrated and angry individuals who are in this way more prone to adopting

radical ideas. In addition, since crime-terror nexus has been demonstrated in all three cases, the transition from petty criminal to violent extremist can essentially be considered as a quite natural process.

I agree with the authors who argue, that peer - recruitment, in which the influence of friends or significant others plays a key role, is an important source that ensures a constant influx of radicalised foreign fighters (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 810). That makes me think that the radicalisation process is „rooted in concerns about macro-level conditions like integration, foreign policy, or global political, cultural, and economic developments" (Veldhuis, 2009: 63) but simultaneously is also „driven by individual or micro-level factors linked with social interaction dynamics" (Veldhuis, 2009: 64). Consequently it seems that problems with social identity are usually closely associated with the membership in radical social groups at the periphery of social context. Is very hard to say which factor either identity crises or social networks contributed more to the radicalisation of individuals.

Based on my case studies I assume that the vast majority of ISIS foreign fighters engaged in radical social networks. It makes the impression that macro-level causes like problems with integration or anti-Muslim political parties together with micro-level factors like perceived discrimination or family crises are much more important than the ideological beliefs of young Muslim individuals. So it appears that radicalisation in Western European countries does not start with ideological convictions but rather as a product firstly of social interactions and secondly a „long history of events that have challenged Muslim identity, worldview, and agency" (Weeks, 2016: 74).

From the perspective of phase models, the pre-radicalisation phase seems to be crucial, because the real or perceived discrimination, economic deprivation in terms of unemployment, lack of integration, or anti-Muslim sentiment spread by radical right-wing parties can significantly contribute to the potential launch of the radicalisation process. On the other hand, the social contact with radical individuals either in the local networks of petty criminals or at the sport centres can be an example of a top-down radicalisation process in which the main role is played by the person of the radicaliser or the whole group of radical individuals.

In a nutshell, I argue that there is a connection between chosen inputs and output in the form of the radicalised foreign terrorist fighter. I suppose that in the pre-radicalisation

phase, there is an increase in the vulnerability to acquire radical ideas and beliefs, but this is not sufficient for radicalisation into violent extremism. The key turnaround occurs mainly within radical groups, where there are many individuals with a criminal background for whom social identity concerns may or may not be present. These individuals are under the strong influence of other peers in the group or the charismatic leader of the group, and they are becoming potential jihadists, whose gradual change of behaviour might lead to the involvement in militant jihad and active participation in terrorist groups.

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