



STUDENT PAPER SERIES

20



**Terrorism in Europe.** Explaining the disparity in the number of jihadist foreign fighters between European countries

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Master's in International Relations

Academic year 2014-2015



INSTITUT  
BARCELONA  
ESTUDIS  
INTERNACIONALS

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Word count with bibliography: 10.778 words

Word count without bibliography: 9.249 words

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## **ABSTRACT**

Related to the recent rise of terrorism in Europe and the phenomenon of jihadist foreign fighters, this study aims at understanding why some European countries have more fighters leaving for Syria and/or Iraq than others in the region. The present mixed-methods analysis takes into account economic, social and political factors. First of all, bivariate and multivariate regressions carried out on 22 European countries consider the impact of wealth, unemployment, the size of the Muslim community, education, the quality of democracy and the ideological position of the governments on the foreign fighters' phenomenon. The analysis shows that the only variable that has a significant and relatively certain influence is the size of the Muslim community in a country. Those empirical findings are complemented in a qualitative manner with a case-study of Belgium. Plausible explanations to the radicalisation of young Muslims arising from that study include historical immigration trends, integration issues, the fractionalized political structure and political trends as well as the weak foreign policy of the country regarding the Syrian conflict.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, it is common to hear about young Westerners leaving their country in order to join terrorist groups, most of the time in Syria or Iraq. The name of those transnational terrorists fighting for a return to the most traditional and pure form of Sunni Islam: “Jihadist foreign fighters”. While terrorism exists since the Antiquity (Chaliand and Blin, 2007) and has evolved throughout history, the phenomenon has developed mainly in the 1980s with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan where many foreigners joined the battle in order to defend their religious ideology (Saltman and Winter, 2014). However, since 2013, the movement is unprecedented in size. Therefore, it has become, today, one of the greatest threats to national and/or international security.

Nevertheless, the movement is not uniform. Indeed, while a global trend can be observed, Europe is the Western region the most hit by the extremist movement. According to the head of Europol, Mr. Wainwright, the number of European jihadists in Syria and Iraq was estimated to be between 3000 and 5000 in January 2015 (Holden, 2015). Interestingly, this number varies significantly across European countries as well, leading to the core subject of this thesis.

This paper aims at analysing the European jihadist foreign fighters’ phenomenon by asking: “Why are there proportionally more foreign fighters in some European countries than in others?” In order to answer this research question, a cross-country empirical study is first conducted on 22 European countries and several factors are taken into account: Economic factors such as countries’ economic development and unemployment rate, social factors such as the size of the Muslim community and the human capital as well as political variables such as the democracy level and the ideological position of the government. After that, an in depth case analysis of Belgium is carried out in order to also illustrate the impact some other qualitative variables may have on the radicalisation of the Muslim youth. In brief, this dissertation uses a mixed methods research design.

The findings suggest that it is very complicated to identify the root causes of the European foreign fighters’ phenomenon. Indeed, the regression models demonstrate that five of the six variables have statistically no significant impact on the variable studied. Thus, this paper

concludes that neither economic factors, human capital, nor political factors<sup>1</sup> are explanatory variables for the phenomenon analysed. Moreover, uncertainty is too high to take their influence seriously into account. However, the size of the Muslim society is the only variable that shows some significance and a relatively certain correlation with the number of foreign fighters. The Belgian case study carried out afterwards, shed light on historical factors, integration issues, domestic political tensions and foreign policy as other possible explanations for Muslim youth radicalisation.

The research question raised in this paper is particularly relevant as understanding the reasons why those young Europeans decide to turn to terrorism will permit to better know how to respond to the threat and help policymakers to make more efficient choices concerning counter-terrorism efforts. Indeed, the misperceptions of terrorists motivations or causes prevents governments to address the real roots of the issue and leads them to pursuit counterproductive courses of actions (Krueger, 2007, p.4-5). In addition, understanding in depth the phenomenon will enable politics to counter the radicalisation of new young Europeans by extremists but also help security forces to better predict terrorist attacks perpetrated by jihadists coming back<sup>2</sup>, thus, assure protection and security of the European populations.

The thesis is divided in four main parts. The first chapter explores the literature on terrorism and jihadism by providing the lector with a brief conceptual framework, followed by a summary of what the terrorism literature has already identified or debated concerning the root causes of extremism. The chapter is ended by the statement of the six hypotheses studied in the empirical research. Chapter two explains how the quantitative cross-national study is carried out and provides more information about data collection. In the third chapter, results of the regression models are analysed and discussed. In addition, the case of Belgium is tackled and studied by using other non-quantifiable variables. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main outcomes of the research and brings forward some limitations and policy recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> This is only true for the multivariate regressions since the variable “ideological position of the government” shows an interesting correlation with the number of foreign fighters per country when analysed using a bivariate correlation or regression.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Madrid train bombing (2004); Mehdi Nemmouche attack of the Brussels Jewish Museum (2014) or “Charlie Hebdo” attacks in Paris (2015).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Conceptual framework: Terrorism and Jihadism

Before entering into the discussion tackled in this dissertation, it is essential to explicate the main concepts used, terrorism and jihadism, since both are often misunderstood by the general public due to their subjectivity and multifaceted nature.

While *terrorism* is far from being a new phenomenon, the concept still lacks full consensus on its definition (Krueger, 2008, pp.14-15), due to the subjective nature of the phenomenon (Cronin, 2009, p.6; Hoffman, 2006, p. 23) and the constant evolution of the concept throughout history along with key historical events, socio-political evolutions and movements as well as technological developments.

However, contemporary terrorism<sup>3</sup> seems to have four characteristics that are essential to bear in mind: the political nature of terrorists' aims and motives, the premeditated (Krueger, 2007, p.14) and symbolic use of, or the threat to use, violence, the purposeful targeting of non-combatants, and, finally, the non-state nature of terrorist groups (Cronin, 2009, p.7). Their tactics are designed in a way that will have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target (Hoffman, 2006, p.60, Krueger, 2007, p.15), so that when the audience suffer sufficient anxiety, they pressure their governments to comply with terrorists' political, social or ideological demands (Blomberg, et al., 2011, p. 4).

*Jihadism* can be considered as a subgroup of terrorism. Rising during the Afghan war but entering into common usage only in the late 1990s with the rise of al Qaeda, jihadism has, like terrorism, ever since been a contentious concept (Neumann, 2014, p.9; Brachman, 2009, p.4).

While trying to define jihadism, authors (e.g. Brachman, 2009; Neumann, 2014) have identified two main characteristics that differentiate the movement from the traditional Islamic Jihad, referring to religiously inspired efforts towards a goal that can be spiritual, personal, political or military by nature (Esposito, 2002, p.5). Firstly, the jihadist movement advocates and justifies the use of armed struggles and brutal acts of violence, downplaying the more spiritual and non-violent connotations of the "Jihad", in order to defend Muslim lands

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<sup>3</sup> Modern and international terrorism is considered as having emerged on the 22th July 1968 when three armed Palestinian terrorists belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked an Israeli commercial flight from Rome to Tel Aviv (Hoffman, B. 2006, p.64).

and liberate the *ummah*<sup>4</sup> (Neumann, 2014, p.9). Secondly, the movement follows the Salafism doctrine, which promotes an extremely narrow and puritanical interpretation of Sunni Islam, dictates its vision of a society and rejects all kinds of man-made laws and democracy (Neumann, 2014, p.9).

In this paper, jihadism is understood as defined simply by Neumann (2014, p.9): “A modern revolutionary political ideology mandating the use of violence to defend or promote a particular, very narrow vision of Sunni Islamic understandings.”

While it is estimated that from 1980, i.e. the beginning of the jihadist foreign fighters’ movement (See Appendix A for brief historical background) to the mid-2010, between 10.000 and 30.000 foreign fighters left their countries to participate in Islamist armed conflicts (EPRS, 2015), the Syrian civil war and the associated expansion of IS’ influence clearly intensified the movement and attracted more fighters than ever before, numbers exceeding 20.000 foreign combatants in Syria and Iraq (Neumann, 2015), of which between 3000 and 5000 are Europeans (Wainwright, 2015).

Concerning jihadists’ profile, it is essential to make clear that, like terrorists in general, there is no uniformity among people taking part in those activities (Sageman, 2004; Bakker 2006). In 2006, Bakker (pp.52-53) concluded his study by stating that European jihadists are mostly single males, born and raised in Europe and coming from relatively poor Muslim originated families. They tend to have criminal records and are not especially young, between 25 and 35 according to Barrett (2014, p.16). This is quite contradictory with Sageman’s (2004) research, in which he found evidence that European jihadists tended to be married, with children, middle-class and educated men.

About the more recent European foreign fighters joining IS in Syria and Iraq, their profile indicates that “*the huge majority are young [between 18-29 years old (Barrett, 2014, p.16)], male and usually single. Many are unemployed or are in low-paid jobs. A rather large number of them have criminal records and a troubled personal history, coupled with problematic family situations*” (Stellini for EPP, 2015). However, some of them followed a higher education cursus and are employed in high-earning jobs (Stellini for EPP, 2015). Furthermore, many combatants are second or third generation immigrants with Muslim origins and only 6% of them recently converted to the Islamic religion (Barrett 2014, pp.16-17). In Europe, Mosques, prisons and internet are the most often cited places where

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<sup>4</sup> The Community of Islamic believers



radicalisation happens (Spence, 2007). Particularly, internet and social media have appeared to be very powerful to radicalize and recruit foreign fighters around the world (Saltman and Winter 2014, p.37-43).

## **2.2.Theoretical framework**

After this conceptual overview of terrorism and jihadism, the paper now moves on to what the literature has already studied and identified as key explanatory variables of the phenomenon. Since researches targeting specifically the recent phenomenon of European foreign fighters are almost inexistent and even more at cross-national level, this chapter focuses on the studies and main outcomes from the terrorism literature. This theoretical framework provided by several terrorist scholars and political scientists will delineated the route map towards the paper's research design. In this chapter, particular attention is dedicated to understand who becomes a terrorist and why, at individual and country level.

The first main wave of researches on terrorism causes was carried out from the 1960s to the mid-1980s and was mainly offering theoretical arguments of psychological nature (e.g. Hacker, 1976; Silke, 2003) based on subjective interpretations of observations (Victoroff, 2005, p.3) at individual level. At that time, terrorists' behaviours and motivations were believed to be a consequence of internal psychological disorders (O'Connor, 2004; Kurganski and Fishman, 2006, p.194), which demarcated them from non-terrorist. However, while some "lone wolves" may suffer from some kind of psychopathology, *"thirty years of research has found psychopathology and personality disorder no more likely among terrorists than among non-terrorists from the same background"* (McCauley, 2002). Indeed, with the need to be more organized, effective and important in size, terrorist organizations often have intense screening processes in order to look for cooperative, loyal, discrete and sociable partisans, qualities not beard by people suffering from mental-illnesses (O'Connor, 2004). Therefore, John Horgan (2003, p.114) points out that *"despite their attractiveness, personality traits are useless as predictors of understanding why people become terrorists"*.

As psychological explanations were refuted by the majority of terrorist authors, political scientists and scholars started looking at external root causes, such as socio-economic variables, to explain the phenomenon at micro-level. Indeed, from political personalities like President G. Bush (2002), to religious figures and public intellectuals, economic deprivation

or the lack of education became easy and popular explanations to terrorism (Krueger, 2007, p.2). Alberto Piazza (2006) explains that this popular and politically attractive assumption rests on a reasonable principle: *“If citizens of a country are denied the means to satisfy their basic human needs, are deprived of access to reasonable economic opportunities, or are faced with glaring levels of socioeconomic inequality; they will become hopeless and enraged and may view political violence as an acceptable mean for redressing their grievances”*. This correlation was also inspired by the results of studies in other political violence fields such as Collier and Hoeffler (2004) that found a positive relation between economic variables and civil wars or Alesina and Perotti (1996) suggesting that poor economic conditions increase the likelihood of political coups.

Nevertheless, empirical researches (e.g. Hudson, 1999; Krueger & Maleckova, 2003; Abadie, 2004; Krueger, 2007; Post, 2010) on terrorism have demonstrated almost unanimously that individual material deprivation and inadequate education have to be rejected to explain support or participation in terrorism (Krueger, 2007, p.2). Indeed, on the contrary, those micro-level studies have even shown that terrorists tend to be drawn from well-educated, middle-class or high-income backgrounds, as illustrated by Hassan in her research on Hamas participants (2001), by Krueger and Maleckova (2003) on Hezbollah supporters, or by Sageman on al Qaeda members (2004). In his book (2007, p.47), Krueger explains this observation by the fact that richer and better educated people, even if they have a higher opportunity cost of time, have a better access to information and grant more importance in participating and influencing politics than lower-income and low educated people. Therefore, elites, caring more for the cause and ideological factors than for material ones, are more often supporters of extreme ideas and are easier to radicalize. Also, on the demand side, terrorist organizations prefer recruiting members from those socioeconomic levels in order to optimize the effectiveness of their operations and minimize costs of failure, as claimed by Benmelech and Berrebi (2007) in their study showing that better educated terrorists are more effective in the fulfilment of complicated tasks.

After this short literature review on the definition of a possible terrorist profile at micro-level, it is even more interesting in the case of this research paper to have a look at authors that have analysed plausible variables that could explain terrorism at national or macro-level, i.e. why some countries suffer more from terrorism than others. In this particular field, two divergent views can be notified.

On the one hand, scholars such as Krueger & Maleckova (2003), Abadie (2004; 2006), Piazza (2006), Krueger (2007) or Krueger & Laitin (2007) defend the view that socio-economic aspects are not useful for the understanding of terrorism root causes at national level. Indeed, while wealthier countries are more likely to be targeted by terrorist attacks, Krueger and Laitin (2007) have shown that economic performance (GDP per capita) is statistically not a good predictor of which country extremists emerge from (de Mesquita, 2008, p.2), while controlling for political regime. In addition, the authors (Krueger & Laitin, 2007) found no statistical significant correlation between GDP growth, the volume of international trade, education variables or religions and terrorism in their cross-country analysis. Also, Li and Schaub (2004) did not find any correlation between FDI or portfolio investment and terrorist violence, but demonstrated that economic development, on the contrary, plays a role in the reduction of terrorism in a country. Furthermore, in his more statistically and technically advanced study, Abadie (2004; 2006) confirms the idea that GDP per capita has no significant relationship with terrorism risk but he also demonstrated the insignificance of inequality measures (GINI) or human development indicators, which is backed by Krueger (2007, p.86). Finally, James Piazza (2006) also rejects unemployment, poverty or economic growth to be explanatory variables for terrorism.

On the other hand, Martha Crenshaw (1981, p.381) argues that economic modernization is a significant permissive cause of terrorism by creating opportunities and vulnerabilities due to an increased complexity at all levels of the society. Freytag et al. (2010) argue that socioeconomic factors play a role in the development of domestic terrorism and claim that in countries where economic growth is slow and institutions are poor, opportunity costs of terror are low, raising the likelihood of terrorist activities and their support from the population. They also found that human capital, i.e. education, trade openness and GDP per capita are positively correlated with terrorism. Those results are even more relevant when a certain level of development has been reached by the country such as in OECD or European countries. Finally, Burgoon (2006) argues that a country's welfare efforts are negatively correlated with terrorism activities. Thus, the strengthening of social welfare policies in a country may help to diminish domestic and international terrorism by reducing inequality, economic insecurity, poverty and religious-political extremism. Also, he has shown that government capacity is positively correlated with terrorist attacks but that trade openness has no relationship with terrorism incidents in a country.

In the last part of this literature review on terrorism, the paper draws the attention of the reader to some political variables that scholars have analysed in their cross-country studies in order to explain terrorism root causes. One of the first authors that tried to explain terrorism with political variables is Martha Crenshaw (1981). She believes that the lack of government terrorist prevention and the absence of effective security measures are key preconditions for terrorism. Also, she identifies the existence of discriminative policies or concrete grievances, i.e. related to minority rights, among a subgroup of a larger population and the lack of opportunity for political participation or political persecution and repression as key variables leading to the increase of terrorist activities in a country by creating dissatisfaction. While Krueger and Laitin (2007) as well as Krueger and Maleckova (2003) found no explanation using economic variables, conversely, their empirical study has shown that terrorists tend to come more from countries suffering from political oppression, i.e. where civil liberties are neglected. In the same spirit, Abadie (2004; 2006) also argues that increased political freedom has a negative impact on terrorism, after a certain point. Furthermore, in his study on captured terrorists in Iraq, Krueger (2007, pp.86-87) found out that greater civil liberties and political rights were negatively correlated with the country of origin of the foreign fighters.

The conclusion of the literature review on the determinants of terrorism is that no consensus among scholars has been met until now and that still today, it is not possible to draw an exact terrorist profile.

At micro-level, authors have found no statistical significant relation between economic variables or social variables and participation in terrorism. On the contrary, empirical evidence seems to favour the idea that terrorists tend to be wealthier and more educated than the average population where they come from.

At macro-level, the majority of the authors argue in the same way, i.e. that poor socio-economic conditions are not the root for terrorism activities. Mainly, they have demonstrated that poorer countries or less educated populations do not tend to have more people taking part in extremist or radical activities on their soil than wealthier countries and better educated populations. Those relationships are inexistent or even in some studies slightly positive (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003, p.142). As Krueger wrote (2007, p.90), this is finally quite logic as terrorism is supposed to be a political phenomenon rather than an economic one. However, a small group of authors do not follow this view and, conversely, claim that socioeconomic conditions are important determinants for terrorism as terror is more easily generated in bad socioeconomic environments by reducing costs of terror.

Finally, the only variables that seem to be somewhat explanatory for terrorism at national level are of political nature. Indeed, studies have shown that countries where the population is more oppressed, persecuted or repressed, thus, where civil liberties or political rights are limited, tend to generate more terrorists than real democracies.

In order to finish accurately this literature review on terrorism, it is important to add that the field has still some gaps. Indeed, the literature still lacks comprehensive databases on terrorists and their background, which diminish the quality of quantitative and qualitative researches carried out by scholars. Therefore, a particular effort should be done for accurate data collection in order to better understand the root causes of the terrorism and improve considerably the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies. In addition, while quite a lot of studies have been carried out on terrorism profile at micro-level, researches on causal explanation at cross-country level are still limited, even more on jihadi foreign fighters.

### **2.3.Variables and hypotheses**

Now that concepts used have been clarified and literature on terrorism screened, the subsequent section directs the reader to the variables and main hypotheses considered in the empirical study.

The following cross-national statistical analysis is conducted in 22 European countries. Since the goal is to explain variation across European countries regarding Islamist foreign fighters, this paper aims to study plausible relationships between the number of foreign fighters that have joined IS in Syria and/or Iraq and different variables. As no cross-country empirical study has been carried out about the phenomenon until now, hypotheses will mainly be based on what the terrorist literature has provided but applied to the specific case of European foreign fighters.

The dependent variable is the number of jihadist foreign fighters per country. This number includes those who left and are currently fighting in Syria or Iraq, those who died and those who came back in their country. As we want this data to be comparable, the dependent variable is the number of fighters per capita.

Concerning the independent variables, three categories of explanatory variables are explored. The first category is of economic nature and aims at studying the impact of economic conditions on terrorism, since the debate among scholars is still unsolved and the relationship

unclear. However, in general, limited support is found for the hypothesis linking economic deprivation and terrorism (Krieger and Meierrieks, 2010).

*Level of economic development.* This variable, expressed in this paper as Gross Domestic Product per Capita (GDP per capita), measures the relative wealth of a country. The comparison with the other countries of the region permits to determine whether poor countries tend to favour more or less the emergence of terrorism, and specifically jihadism activities. On this topic, the literature is divided among scholars (e.g. Krueger and Maleckova, 2003; Piazza, 2006; Abadie, 2004 and 2006) that reject economic factors as possible causes and the authors that defend economic deprivation as explanatory for extremism and radicalisation (e.g. Freytag et al., 2010) as wealth disparities makes it more likely that people feel economically disadvantaged, resulting in the use of violence in order to enforce economic change (Gurr, 1970 in Freytag et al., 2010). In addition, countries where economic deprivation prevails, terrorists should find more easily followers and supporters by inciting frustration and decreasing opportunity costs of violence (Krieger and Meierrieks, 2010, p.5). However, a priori, this variable should not have any statistical significance as terrorism is, by definition, a political movement by nature (Krueger & Laitin, 2007). Moreover, jihadism is even more unrelated to economic conditions as it is a purely religious inspired action. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this paper states that: *“In comparing European countries, the poorest of them will not tend to have proportionally more foreign fighters than the wealthier ones.”*

*Unemployment rate.* This second economic variable, unemployment rate as percentage of total labor force, also enables the analysis of the influence of economic deprivation on terrorism. As explained by Caplan (2006) the costs, benefits and opportunity costs of extremism have an important influence on radicalisation, if we assume that terrorists are rational individuals. Therefore, unemployment, as a result of poor economic conditions and growth leading to fewer prospects of economic advancement and participation (Blomberg et al., 2004), tends to make individuals more sensitive to extreme messages and movements since opportunity costs of joining terrorist activities (Freytag et al., 2010) or to leave the country are diminished. Thus, the second hypothesis tests: *“In comparing European countries, those with high unemployment will tend to have proportionally more foreign fighters than those with low unemployment.”*

The second category of independent variables analysed is of social nature. As it is the case for economic factors, the importance of social causes for terrorism is also subjected to great debate among authors.

*The Muslim population.* The first social possible explanation for the variation of foreign fighters across Europe tests the impact of the Muslim society's size compared with the local population. Along with popular assumption (Stellini, 2015 in EPP), a priori jihadism should be correlated with the size of the Muslim community in a country as it is an Islamic-type of terrorism, even if Krueger and Laitin (2007) found very little support linking religion and terrorism. Thus, the greater the Muslim population in a country, the easier it is to spread the Islamist message and the more likely it is for people and Muslims to get radicalised and become foreign fighters. This is even truer when Muslims are poorly integrated in the domestic culture, creating close-knit communities easy to access for extremists. This assumption can also be strengthened by saying that religious fractionalization resulting from minorities' immigration in another culture increases possible identity conflicts (Huntington, 1996). The third hypothesis studied is: *"In comparing European countries, those with a large Muslim community will tend to have proportionally more foreign fighters than those with a smaller Muslim community."*

*Human capital.* As explained in the literature review, some authors (e.g. Krueger and Laitin, 2007) suggest that there is no link between a lack of human capital, i.e. education, in a country and the rise of terrorist activities and that this relationship may even be positive. However, others (e.g. Freytag et al., 2010) argue that, on the contrary, human capital matters and even more in developed countries such as OECD or European countries as it increases the opportunity costs of terror. This idea can also be strengthened by assuming that educated people might be more able and aware than less educated people that a lot of other alternatives exist in order to defend their political or religious ideology before falling into political violence. This is measured by the total enrolment in tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6), regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the five-year age group following on from secondary school leaving (Worldbank). This data is based on figures from 2007 because the research aims to identify whether those current foreign fighters tend to be well-educated, i.e. tertiary education, or not. Since from 2013 till today they are on average 25 years old, in 2007, they were on average in age (+- 20 years old) to follow or not a tertiary education. Hence, the fourth assumption in this paper states that: *"In comparing European countries, those with low human capital will tend to have proportionally more foreign fighters than those with high human capital."*

The last category of independent variable studied in this paper is of political nature. Indeed, as summarized in the literature review, several authors (e.g. Crenshaw, 1981; Krueger and Laitin, 2007; Krueger and Maleckova, 2003; Abadie, 2004) have emphasized the importance of the political environment in the emergence of terrorist activities. They are also supposed to be more statistically significant in explaining the emergence of terrorism than economic factors (Krieger and Meierrieks, 2010).

*The level of democracy.* The first political variable tackled in the paper analyses the power of democracy on terrorism. Indeed, some scholars such as Krueger and Laitin (2007) or Abadie (2004; 2006) have demonstrated that politics and terrorism are related. Both concluded that countries where individuals are more repressed and oppressed, i.e. where civil liberties and political freedoms are low, tend to have more terrorism activities than countries with greater institutions. However, in Europe, political institutions are almost of same quality across countries. Therefore, and in the same spirit, this paper studies the effect of liberty and freedom in a broader sense, through the quality of democracy. Indeed, democracy may impact “negatively” terrorism by enhancing minority rights, freedom of association and expression. As a result, discrimination, isolation or identity conflicts (Huntington, 1996) should be limited and reduce the number of young people getting radicalized and leaving the country. A priori, thus, institutional quality increases opportunity costs of terror (Kurrild-Klitgaard et al., 2006) and offer cost-efficient means of non-violent conflict resolution (Krieger and Meierrieks, 2010). This is also supported by several authors’ empirical studies (e.g. Krueger and Laitin, 2007; Burgoon, 2006) showing that more liberal and democratic countries are significantly less likely to produce transnational terrorism (Krieger and Meierrieks, 2010). However, conversely, greater democracy also means constrained counter-terrorism efforts (Li, 2005), easier recruitment processes as freedom of expression and association make it possible for terrorist organizations inside a country to organize and legally act as well as spread their message. Nevertheless, the paper will analyse the relationship between democracy and terrorism based on the hypothesis that: *“In comparing European countries, those with a lower democracy level will tend to have proportionally more foreign fighters than those with higher democracy level.”*

*Government ideological (Left-Right) position.* The last variable that is tested in this paper tries to draw a link between a government’s colour and terrorism. Indeed, this variable aims at measuring if a certain political ideology tends to favour the emergence of terrorism. This is measured thanks to a rating of governments on a scale from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme



right). Very few studies have been carried out on this subject until now but Burgoon (2006) argues that leftist governments should decrease the likelihood of terrorism emergence. Indeed, social policies should diminish terrorism preferences by decreasing multiple kinds of inequalities and poverty in the population, increasing economic security and reduce religious-political extremism, which increases the opportunity costs of terror. Thus, leftist governments, who are supposed to offer better welfare systems, should impact negatively terrorism and the number of individuals leaving the country to fight with IS. Also, right-wing governments tend to be more conservative, nationalist and racist, increasing the risk of identity conflicts and discriminations towards people originated from other countries, which is particularly interesting in the case of Europe and jihadism since a great majority of them are coming from immigrated families. Thus, the last hypothesis states that: *“In comparing European countries, those with right-wing governments will tend to have proportionally more foreign fighters than those with left-wing governments.”*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research strategy

The goal of this paper is to explain disparities in the number of foreign fighters between European countries. Therefore, the research strategy chosen is a mixed-methods design. First, the objective is to use a multivariate regression analysis in order to explore the hypotheses quantitatively. However, since the number of cases, i.e. 22 European countries, for the statistical analysis is not very high, a quite low robustness and fit of the models is expected, reducing the research and results' quality.

Hence, this quantitative analysis is followed by an in-depth case study of Belgium, the European country with the most foreign fighters per million of habitants. The qualitative analysis permits to analyse other variables that could have triggered the radicalisation of Muslims in the country and which could not be tested in the quantitative research.

#### 3.2 Data collection

This paper develops empirically an analysis comprising 22 countries. This number includes EU member states as well as other countries from the region for which the number of fighters is publicly obtainable (See Appendix B). The information concerning the dependent variable is the latest available and comes from primary and official sources, i.e. government data, gathered by RFE/RL journalists<sup>5</sup>. These figures, often underestimating the truth, are based on information gathered by governmental bodies from social media, investigations and community sources (Barrett, 2014, p.11).

Concerning the independent variables, this table provides a good summary of what are the variables, how they are measured and where the information is found. Note that most of the data has been gathered in 2013, which is done on purpose because it is at that time that IS started to call for Muslim fighters from all over the world to join the Syrian revolution.

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<sup>5</sup> Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (<http://www.rferl.org/>)

Variable	Indicator	Source
H1: Wealth	GDP per capita (current US\$), 2013	Worldbank
H2: Unemployment	Unemployment, total (% of total labor force, modelled ILO estimate), 2013	Worldbank
H3: Muslim Community	Proportion of Muslims in the population (%), 2010	Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life
H4: Human capital	School enrolment in tertiary education (% gross), 2007	Worldbank
H5: Democracy	Global democracy ranking 2013-2014: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Politics (50%)</li> <li>- Gender (10%)</li> <li>- Economy (10%)</li> <li>- Knowledge (10%)</li> <li>- Health (10%)</li> <li>- Environment (10%)</li> </ul>	Democracyranking.org
H6: Government ideological position	Score calculated for each government in office in 2013. Weighted average (number of ministers) of the score on the L-R scale* obtained by each party part of the Cabinet**. (see Appendix C )	* <a href="http://www.parlgov.org/#data">www.parlgov.org/#data</a> or <a href="https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/datasets">https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/datasets</a> ** <a href="http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/index.html">http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/index.html</a>

## 4. MAIN FINDINGS

### 4.1. Data Analysis and interpretation

The following section provides the main findings of the empirical study as well as the interpretation of data obtained and draws conclusions. First, two tables are summarizing the results attained by the multivariate regressions (Table 1) and by the bi-variate analyses (table 2). Note that in each model of the multivariate regression, new variables are added. The standardized coefficient (B) is the most useful parameter to look at in order to compare the impact of the different independent variables on the dependent variable.

TABLE 1: Results of the quantitative/multivariate regression analysis.

		Dependent variable					
		Number of Foreign Fighters					
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	
Independent variables	<b>Economic</b>						
	Wealth						
		<b>b</b>	1,852	3,8662	3,6815	-7,263	-7,063
		(SE)	(3,735)	(3,3714)	(3,5402)	(6,902)	(6,615)
		<b>B</b>	1,8486	3,8598	3,6754	-7,251	-7,051
	Unemployment rate						
		<b>b</b>	-1,259	-0,4247	0,0271	-2,387	-1,81
		(SE)	(6,510)	(5,7250)	(6,1503)	(5,928)	(5,693)
		<b>B</b>	-0,7213	-0,2433	0,0155	-1,367	-1,037
	<b>Social</b>						
	Muslim Population						
		<b>b</b>		4,9204*	5,3268°	7,241*	5,861*
		(SE)		1,9082	(2,5439)	(2,613)	(2,656)
		<b>B</b>		6,9748*	7,5509°	10,264*	8,308*
	Education						
		<b>b</b>			3,9398	13,748	17,045
		(SE)			(15,7207)	(15,727)	(15,219)
		<b>B</b>			1,0138	3,537	4,386
	<b>Political</b>						
	Level of democracy						
	<b>b</b>				56,446°	41,353	
	(SE)				(31,191)	(31,421)	
	<b>B</b>				10,935	8,011	
Government political position							
	<b>b</b>					-14,125	
	(SE)					(9,072)	
	<b>B</b>					-4,863	
	<b>Intercept</b>	-3,787	-32,6895	-48,4669	-215,487	-141,622	
	<b>N</b>	22	22	22	22	22	
	<b>Residual SE</b>	13,66	11,99	12,32	11,57	11,08	
	<b>Adjusted R-squared</b>	-0,07014	0,1751	0,1298	0,2325	0,2952	
	<b>AIC</b>	182,24	177,32	179,24	177,14	175,85	

Significance: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '°' 0.1 ' ' 1

All independent variables are standardized

b = coefficient

SE = standard error

B = Standardized coefficient

Thumb rule: red = too high uncertainty concerning results, green = acceptable certainty

TABLE 2: Results of the bivariate analysis.

	Bivariate Correlation	b	(SE)	Intercept	Adjusted R-squared	
Independent variables	<b>Economic</b>					
	Wealth	0,2167	0,0001	(0,0001)	8,145	-0,0006
	Unemployment rate	-0,1979	-0,3713	(0,4112)	16,3841**	-0,0088
	<b>Social</b>					
	Muslim Population	0,5088	0,3773*	(0,1427)	8,7123**	0,2219
	Education	-0,0978	-0,0882	(0,2)	17,664	-0,039
	<b>Political</b>					
	Level of democracy	0,2368	0,2449	(0,2246)	-5,6536	0,0088
	Government political position	-0,5405	-3,728**	(1,297)	34,282***	0,2568

After having carried out 5 different regression models (Table 1) and analysed model fit, the conclusion is that model 5 holds most explanatory power. Indeed, with the lowest residual standard error (11.08), the highest adjusted R-Squared (0.2952, i.e. this model explains 29,5% of the FF variation) and the lowest AIC number (175.85), this model is the more robust. Therefore, the subsequent data analysis is based on the results emanating from this model. Moreover, at first sight, the Muslim population variable seems to be the most explanatory variable since it has the highest standardized coefficient (B) in Model 5. However, based on the bivariate analysis (Table 2), we expect the Muslim community as well as government's political position to be correlated with the number of FF since the correlation is quite high and amounts to 0.5 and -0.54 respectively, which is significant.

The analysis reports that the level of *economic development* or level of wealth is not a statistically significant parameter to explain the disparity between the number of FF across European countries. This is true for every single model (Table 1). This conclusion is also corroborated by the bivariate analysis verifying the none relationship between wealth and FF (Table 2). Thus, we reject differences in wealth and GDP per capita across countries as explanation for the European FF phenomenon and confirm the first hypothesis stated in this paper.

Furthermore, the regression suggests that *unemployment* is not correlated with the number of FF for the same reasons as wealth: no statistical significance of the results in any model. In addition, the bivariate analysis carried out between unemployment and FF corroborates the outcomes of the regressions. Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected.

Conversely, the study lends support to the hypothesis that the greater the *Muslim community* in a country, the more likely it is to have FF. Indeed, when the Muslim population variable is added to the regression (Model 2 to 5 in table 1) and other variables are controlled, its coefficient has a positive sign and it proves to be always statistically significant at minimum 0,1 level and at 0,05 level in Model 5. The regression shows that an increase of 1 standard deviation in the Muslim population is expected to increase the number of FF in a country by 8,3 standard deviations. Also, in order to corroborate those findings, a bivariate regression is undertaken (Table 2) and the results, indeed, shows a positive association (an increase of 1% of the Muslim population is expected to increase the number of FF by 0,37) at 0,05 significance level and a bivariate correlation of 0,5. When the Muslim population is equal to 0, the expected value of the number of FF in a country is 8,71 at 0,01 significance level. This independent variable also explains 22,1% of the FF variation. Therefore, this paper concludes that the size of the Muslim community in European countries matters. Hence, the third hypothesis is met.

Results pertaining to the *education* hypothesis show that the percentage of tertiary enrolment has no statistical significance while dealing with FF. The outcome of a bivariate analysis confirms the inexistent relationship between education and terrorism. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is rejected.

The same conclusion can also be drawn for the *democracy level* since no statistically significant result emerge from the regression neither from the bivariate analysis. Therefore, this paper concludes that the level of democracy plays no role in supporting the FF movement in Europe.

Finally, the analysis of the *ideological position of governments* illustrates that when this variable is included in the regression (Model 5), no significant correlation arises. However, interestingly, while carrying out a bivariate analysis with the number of FF, outcomes indicate that there is actually a strong relationship between those two variables. Indeed, when the government's ideological position increases by one unit, i.e. becoming a little bit more right-wing, the number of FF in a country is expected to decrease by 3.72 with a significance level of 0.01. Even more significant, when the government is completely left-wing, i.e. score equal to 0, the number of jihadists is expected to amount to 34.2 at 0.001 level. This variable also explains 25% of the FF variation. Hence, conversely to the sixth hypothesis, left-wing

cabinets tend to enhance more the emergence of FF than right-wing governments. However, those results are only conclusive at bivariate level because when controlling for economic and social variables as well as democracy level, the variable is not explanatory anymore.

TABLE 3: Summary of main findings of the quantitative analysis.

Hypotheses	Findings
Hypothesis 1: Wealth	No significant correlation
Hypothesis 2: Unemployment	No significant correlation
Hypothesis 3: Muslim population	+, significant correlation
Hypothesis 4: Education	No significant correlation
Hypothesis 5: Democracy level	No significant correlation
Hypothesis 6: Government political ideology	No significant correlation

In short, jihadism has neither economic nor educational root causes. Those findings are quite consistent with the literature in which the majority of terrorist authors have rejected socio-economic variables to be explanatory for terrorism. Concerning political variables, the literature lends support to the influence of greater liberties and freedom in decreasing terrorism, which is contradictory with the results emanating from this analysis on the democracy level. Concerning governments’ colour, findings are also inconsistent with the very few studies carried out on that topic and terrorism. Indeed, at bivariate level, results clearly show a negative correlation between jihadism and more right-wing governments, conversely to Burgoon’s (2006) conclusion that left-wing governments tend to reduce terrorism. Finally, along with popular assumption, the size of the Muslim society is the only significant explanatory variable for the FF phenomenon. All those results are quite intuitive since jihadism is a purely ideological movement, conversely to terrorism, and should, thus, only be influenced by religious factors, here the size of the Muslim community reflecting the importance and impact of that religion in a country.

While interesting conclusions can be made after this cross-country statistical analysis, it is important to bear in mind some limitations. Firstly, model fit is low as residual standard error is quite high and adjusted R-squared always quite low even in Model 5. A bigger sample would improve the robustness of the study. Secondly but not least, coefficients (b) are most of the time, except for the Muslim Community variable and government’s colour in the bivariate analysis, lower than two times the associated standard error (thumb rule), which means that uncertainty is too high to make conclusions about the variable’s explanatory power or its impact on the dependent variable. Finally, hypotheses were based on assumptions provided by

the literature on terrorism, which is a much broader concept than jihadism and, thus, did not really take into account the more specific aspects of jihadism. In addition, certain variables that could play a role in the number of FF per country are of qualitative nature, thus they are not quantifiable and cannot be tested through regression models. Therefore, some of those variables are now explored in a short qualitative case-study of Belgium.

#### **4.2. Case Study: Belgium**

After this cross-national research on plausible quantitative variables affecting the number of FF in a country, the paper moves on to a case study: Belgium, the European country with the highest estimation of FF per capita. As the quantitative study has concluded, the foreign fighters' phenomenon seems to be correlated with the size of the Muslim population in a country. While this small Western European country is consonant with this finding, the case study of Belgium aims at understanding why this relationship may exist. Based on Veldhuis and Staun's (2009) assumption that macro-level causes, such as political, economic or social causes<sup>6</sup>, are preconditions for a climate conducive to radicalisation, the subsequent section conducts a qualitative study bringing out variables that could explain the radicalisation of Muslims on the Belgian soil. Therefore, immigration history, integration policies, the political structure and trends as well as foreign policies are examined.

After the Second World War, Belgium has been the destination of thousands of people originated from Muslim countries such as Morocco, Turkey, Algeria or Tunisia (Euro-Islam, 2015), who, altogether, represent today almost 6% of the Belgian population (Archick et al., 2011). This immigration trend was not a homogeneous regional trend. Indeed, whereas central European countries such as Belgium but also France, Great Britain, the Netherlands or Germany are countries in which second and third generation of immigrated Muslims are reaching adolescence today (Neumann and Rogers, 2007), Southern Europe experienced Muslim immigration only recently.

This historical disparity in *immigration history* is particularly relevant as observations show that radicalisation is much more of an issue in countries with a long-lasting Muslim community, such as in Belgium. Neumann and Rogers (2007) explain this by arguing that countries in which Muslim immigration took place only a couple of decades ago, like in South European countries (Italy, Spain, etc.), identity conflict between Western society and the

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<sup>6</sup> Poor integration, poverty, international relations, globalization and modernization (Veldhuis and Staun 2009 :30-37)



traditional Islam culture as well as language are less of an issue. As stated by Stellini (2015), many young Muslims from second or third generation immigrants have the feeling that they neither belong to the European society nor to their heritage country. Even if they were born and raised in Europe, they still perceives themselves as foreigners in their own country and excluded from the Western society, yet they also no longer identify with their parents' origin culture (Neumann and Rogers, 2007, pp.16). As a consequence, the Islamic radical message of becoming a citizen of the *Ummah*, the virtual Islamic nation removed from territory and national culture, may be very appealing and attractive for those identity-lost young Muslims like in Belgium.

This first point leads us to a second one tackling the integration issue, which, if successful, would probably reduce the jihadist phenomenon. Indeed, as it is undoubtedly the case for all European countries, the complete integration of Muslim immigrated populations in Belgium has failed during the last decades. In Europe and especially in Belgium, most Muslims are coming from the lowest levels of the society and socioeconomic disadvantaged backgrounds (Camatsos, 2012). This can be explained by the fact that immigrants typically escaped from underdeveloped countries for economic and political reasons (Camatsos, 2012). Consequently, the majority of them lacked the adequate skills to meet their European host country's labour market characteristics such as literacy, language skills or minimum education levels, blocking them into poor socioeconomic environments. That reality, combined with discrimination by native populations, has led to sub-average economic conditions for European Muslims (Camatsos, 2012), making them more sensitive to Islamist messages. This is coherent with the theoretical perspective provided by Sageman (2008, pp.83-84, 89-108) on the root causes of radicalisation who argued that socioeconomic disadvantages among Muslims in the West increase the risk of radicalisation as the jihadist ideology is more likely to resonate with their personal background. An article published by the European People's Party (Stellini, 2015) also puts forward the lack of employment opportunities leading to frustration among the Muslim community, as well as external factors like domestic issues and debates (e.g. Headscarf debate), the failure of integration policies or other socioeconomic problems among Muslims leading to radicalisation.

In Belgium, integration policies were different in the North and the South of the country. While in the North, the integration model relies on the Dutch one based on "pillarization" and "multiculturalism" by enhancing tolerance and accommodation in order to preserve minorities' identity and cultural diversity, in the Southern region of Wallonia, the

approach is more similar to the French republican view, entailing easy access to equal citizenship rights for Muslim immigrants as individuals but avoiding official recognition of group differences (Eurislam, 2012, pp.16). However, none of those two approaches has been successful in preventing the creation of parallel societies or the popularly called “ghettos”, in which specific cultures bearing their own ethnicity, language or religion have developed apart from the host culture. This is perfectly well illustrated in Belgium by some Brussel neighbourhoods that are almost exclusively Muslim. In addition, those Muslim communities tend to be disproportionately poor, unemployed or in prison compared with the local population (Archick et al., 2011, pp.6-7). Therefore, even after some generations, Muslims are still regarded as foreigners and many feel a sense of cultural alienation and discrimination (e.g. employment, education, etc.) because of their religion in the Catholic dominant Belgium (Archick et al., 2011, pp.7). Probably one of the most symbolic actions seen as an increasing alienation measure by Muslims (Birnbaum, 2015) undertaken by the country was the ban of the full-face veil in 2011 (BBC, 2014). For all those reasons, today, less than a third of young Muslims feel accepted in Belgium (Winsor, 2014). As explained by Gilles de Kerchove (2014), the EU counter-terrorism coordinator, some young Muslims are probably also joining the conflict because of a desire for adventure and adrenaline and the quest for thrill of wars due to this feeling of isolation or marginalization in their country.

The third qualitative aspect that is interesting to deal with in order to explain the radicalisation among Muslims in Belgium concerns the country’s fractionalization. Indeed, it is not a secret for anyone that Belgium lacks a strong cultural and national unity due to bitter rivalries between the Dutch speaking North and the French South. This has altered Belgian’s identity leading to a divided population exacerbating the difficulties Muslims immigrants have had fitting in. As a result, they tend to live in close-knit communities with separate social circles, entailing even more their integration (Winsor, 2014).

Along with the fractionalization of the country, nationalist political parties have emerged. As most of them prone the division of Belgium, they also hold anti-immigrants, racist and xenophobic discourses. The popularity of those nationalist political parties is mainly observed in the Flemish part, also the Belgian region with the most foreign fighters identified (van Ostaeyen, 2014). The main anti-immigrant Flemish political party, Vlaams Belang, advocates repression measures on immigrants and defends the idea that Muslims who do not renounce their faith should be deported (Winsor, 2014). In the regional elections of 2009, the party won more than 15% of the Flemish votes, ranking them second in the results

(SPF Intérieur, 2014). In the regional elections of 2014, the N-VA, another but more moderated nationalist Flemish party became the first political party of the Northern part of Belgium with more than 31% of the votes (SPF Intérieur, 2014). They are also part, today, of the governmental coalition ruling the country. Those nationalist pressure leave little room for people with different identities (Birnbaum, 2015), imposing Muslims to accommodate with Belgian life-style, values and principles.

The lack of Belgians' unity has also hurt the effectiveness of the government and the coherence of its responses (Birnbaum, 2015). Indeed, on the one hand, two Belgian-Arab experts have pointed out that the Belgian government has done very little in order to address unemployment, discrimination and economic deprivation among the Muslim community (Zaougui and van Ostaeyen, 2014). This may be explain by the hardness to find common grounds between the numerous and ideologically very different political parties active in the Belgian political life, impacting the ability of the country to take national and effective policies in many areas. On the other hand, with always more separation of power and delegation of governmental functions to the regions, Belgium's security and intelligence services experience always more degradation due to the starving of the Federal's budget and the fattening of the regions' one resulting in under-resourced police, obsolete prisons, poorly secured courthouses and rudimentary computerisation of the entire legal system (Camatsos, 2012). Hence, resources for counter-terrorist activities are also cut, limiting the prevention capacity of radicalisation and terrorism and leaving space for the emergence of jihadist movements like, for instance, Sharia4Belgium, a today banned extremist Salafist group that has been active underground for a long time and is accused to have recruited hundreds of young Belgian Muslims in order to join IS.

Finally, the inactivity of the European countries, including Belgium, in the Syrian war is probably also to blame for the emergence of jihadism in the country. Indeed, as explained by Gilles de Kerchove (2014), the Muslim Community in Europe has the feeling that the EU is not doing enough in order to help Syrian opposition in their civil revolution. Therefore, they may feel that they have the duty to go there and fight as propagandized by Islamist terrorist groups such as IS or Jabhat an-Nusra.

This section has shown that qualitative variables are very helpful to complement the findings of the quantitative part. Whereas the empirical study has only demonstrated the importance of the religious parameter, i.e. the size on the Muslim community in a country, this case-study of

Belgium permits to go a bit more in depth in the reasons why that religious variable may have become the most explanatory variable of the FF phenomenon in Europe. Indeed, based on the assumption that a priori the Muslim religion is not related to any kind of violence, the last section has brought forward aspects such as historical immigration trends, integration issues or even domestic cultural fractionalization, political extremism or foreign political choices to explain the possible turning to violence of many young Muslims in Belgium. Those factors are mostly political by nature. Therefore, the discussion about the possible impact politics may have on the FF phenomenon is reopened, contrasting with previous empirical conclusions. Interestingly, what we observe in Belgium is finally in line with what Martha Crenshaw already claimed in the beginning of the 1980s. She (1981) believed that the lack of government terrorist prevention and the absence of effective security measures are key preconditions for terrorism. Furthermore, she identified the existence of discriminative policies or concrete grievances among a subgroup of a larger population, and the lack of opportunity for political participation or political persecution and repression as key variables leading to the increase of terrorist activities in a country. This is finally a bit what we observe in the case of Belgium.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to shed more light into the causal mechanism that connects the jihadist foreign fighters' phenomenon with economic, social and political indicators. After a brief literature review on terrorism, findings from the empirical research seem to suggest that the size of the Muslim community in a country is the main determinant of the phenomenon. In contrast, the cross-national quantitative study has also shown the statistical insignificance of the other variables studied, i.e. wealth, unemployment, education, democracy level and the colour of the government.

The paper then moved on to the case study of Belgium, the European country with the most foreign fighters per capita. That section aimed at understanding how a minority such as the immigrated Muslim population started to radicalize and became a danger for its host country. The main outcome of the case study emphasized integration failure as one of the main reasons. Indeed, even after a couple of generations, the community still lives in poorer socioeconomic environments than the average Belgian. Furthermore, the power of nationalist and xenophobic political parties in the North, as well as discrimination and alienation intensified identity conflicts among the Muslim youth, sensitizing them to extremist messages. Secondly, Belgium's fractionalization leading to ineffective and incoherent governmental measures may also be to blame. With the erosion of security services and federal budget, the country lacks strong counter-terrorism policies to prevent the emergence and expansion of terrorist cells on its soil. Finally, the inactivity of the Belgian government as well as the EU as a whole concerning the Syrian civil war has probably also motivated many young to leave the country and fight with their fellow Muslims.

This mixed methods research contains some limitations. Indeed, first, the uncertainty level of the multivariate analysis is most of the time too high to take results seriously into account. The problem of robustness, reliability and certainty could be solved by adding more cases, which leads us to a second limitation concerning data availability on the number of foreign fighters by country. Thirdly, the phenomenon examined is a very complex one and cross-national study on its root causes is still almost inexistent. Therefore, this study had to base its assumption on what was already provided by the terrorism literature, which, of course, is a much more broader concept than the jihadism foreign fighters' one, leaving out important specific aspects.

The policy implications of the findings of this research inquiry are interesting. Having statistically determined that the size of the Muslim community in a country matters in the issue of jihadist foreign fighters, governments' efforts should be more oriented towards the integration of those minorities in the domestic culture to avoid further radicalisation or home-grown terrorism. Nevertheless, with such strong values and identity, neither alienation nor isolation is the solution for Muslim minorities' integration. Conversely, politics should understand and accept the specificities of that society and try to invite and include those minorities as much as possible in public and political life. Moreover, social-capital bridging should be stimulated by avoiding absolutely Muslim ghettos and enhance social diversity in the housing, employment or education sector. Finally, interreligious dialogues should be promoted in order to improve relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

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## 7. APPENDIX

### A. Brief historical background, root causes and drivers of European Jihadism.

Concerning the historical background of Jihadism, the phenomenon has seen its emergence in 1979 with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. At that time, in his fatwa, Abdullah Azzam called all Muslims around the world, regardless of their nationality, to fight defensive jihad against the enemy invading their Muslim land (Manzar Zaidi, 2009, p.30). As a result, many foreign fighters from across the world, mainly Arabs with a shared common ideology, decided to join Islamic resistance troops in the country (Saltman and Winter, 2014, p.15). The phenomenon gave rise to many other Islamist mobilizations in the 1990s in the region and it is from this pool of Islamist fighters that, in the late 1980s, Osama Bin Laden, key leader of the Islamist movement, created the first jihadist group: Al Qaeda. The ultimate goal of the terrorist organization was to re-establish the caliphate. Therefore, Bin Laden's strategy was to fight the "Far Enemy", i.e. Western Crusaders and Zionists, before taking any initiative in Muslim States. From the mid-1990s until 2001, the group expanded considerably and became a major threat to international security and western global economies (Saltman and Winter 2014, p.19). It is estimated that at his peak, the group reached between 3000 and 4000 jihadists, young Arab Muslims from all over the world.

While the global jihadist movement to join Al Qaeda existed, it is quite insignificant compared with the number of jihadi foreign fighters joining the more modern Islamic State (IS)<sup>7</sup> terrorist group during the last decade. Indeed, IS, a salafi jihadi extremist militant group, emerged in the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Jordan. While the terrorist group's motivation is the same as Al Qaeda, re-establishing a caliphate, its strategy is, on the contrary, based on an offensive global jihadist movement and aims, in first place, to internally purify Muslim countries (Manzar Zaidi, 2009, p.30). The group gained some notoriety during the Iraq insurgency but more significantly in 2011, when it took part in the Syrian civil war and in 2014 when it proclaimed itself to be a Worldwide Caliphate (Lawrence, 2014).

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<sup>7</sup> There exist many different terminologies for the terrorist group but in this paper, the "Islamic State" (IS) will be used. (Saltman & Winter 2014:12).

Moving on to European foreign fighters' motivations to risk their lives in Syria or Iraq, Gilles de Kerchove (2014), the EU counter-terrorism coordinator, provides four reasons. Firstly, the Muslim Community in Europe has the feeling that the EU is not doing enough in order to help Syrian opposition in their civil revolution. Therefore, they may feel that they have the duty to go there and fight. The second one is related to al Qaeda or IS powerful and effective message about the Jihad, resonating more in Syria than maybe in other places. Thirdly, inside the Muslim community, Sunni Muslims may feel threatened by Shias, necessitating an armed intervention. Finally, some young Muslims are probably also joining the conflict because they are looking for the thrill of wars and because of a desire of adventure and adrenaline. This may be a consequence of isolation or marginalization in their country. In an article published by the European People's Party (Stellini, 2015), the author also drives our attention to other causes such as the lack of employment opportunities leading to frustration among the Muslim community, the feeling that they do not belong to European or to any other society as well as external factors like domestic issues and debates (e.g. Headscarf debate), the failure of integration policies or other socioeconomic problems among Muslims.

Finally, in addition to those explanations about European foreign fighters' root motivations, Rob Bertholee (Washington Institute, 2014), Dutch General Intelligence and Security Services, interestingly provides five drivers that probably triggered the unique rapid growth in the European jihadist movement. The first is, obviously, the beginning of the Syrian war, which has set off the wave in Europe as it is an ideologically attractive conflict for potential Islamists and a country easy to access for volunteers from Europe. Secondly, jihadist movements have learned to become more discrete and professional in their relation with local security services, making their recruitment process more effective, as well as to use domestic democratic laws at their advantage in order to express their opinion legally. Fourthly, they improved effectiveness and speed in spreading their messages to a large audience thanks to internet and social media, leading to a faster radicalization and recruitment process. Finally, social media also helped the jihadist movement to become decentralised, autonomous, flexible, fast and fluid, strengthening the phenomenon and making it harder to hamper by security forces.

## B. Data Collection.

Country	FF	Wealth	Unemployment	Muslim	Education	Democracy	Government
Albania	46	4458,1	16	82,1	32	55,4	2,81
Belgium	40	46927,2	8,4	6	62	79,8	4,97
Sweden	32	60364,9	8,1	4,9	75	85,8	7,19
Denmark	27	59818,6	7	4,1	79	84,8	3,64
France	18	42631	10,4	7,5	53	77,7	3,32
Austria	17	50513,4	4,9	5,7	51	79,4	4,87
Netherlands	15	50792,5	6,7	5,5	60	82,6	5,48
Finland	13	49310,2	8,2	0,8	94	85,5	4,99
Norway	12	102832,3	3,5	3	75	87,8	3,11
United Kingdom	12	41776,8	7,5	4,6	59	78,4	6,7
Germany	8	46255	5,3	5	60	81	6,13
Ireland	7	50470,3	13,1	0,9	60	80,1	5,44
Republic of Macedonia	6	5109,9	29	34,9	35	52,4	7,32
Switzerland	5	84733	4,4	5,7	47	85,9	5,11
Russia	3	14487,3	5,6	11,7	74	44,4	9,5
Italy	2	35477,5	12,2	2,6	66	69,9	4,4
Spain	2	29880,7	26,6	2,3	69	74,3	7,59
Portugal	1,4	21507,7	16,5	0,6	58	73,9	6,96
Estonia	1	18877,3	8,8	0,1	69	72,6	8,17
Serbia	1	6353,8	22,2	3,7	48	60,2	5,46
Ukraine	1	4029,7	7,9	0,9	75	52,4	9,5
Bulgaria	0	7498,8	12,9	13,4	50	63,9	7,4

C. Governments' Political ideology calculations and score.

COUNTRY	YEAR	PARTY	SCALE L-R	number of ministers	score
<b>Belgium</b>	2010-2014	PS	2,93	4	4,97
		SPA	3,24	3	
		CD&V	5,76	4	
		CDH	5,49	2	
		VLD	7	2	
		MR	6,68	3	
<b>Albania</b>	2013-	PSS	2,5	15	2,81
		LSI	3,75	5	
<b>Austria</b>	2013-	SPO	3,72	7	4,87
		OVP	6,47	5	
<b>France</b>	2012-2014	PS	3,24	18	3,32
		EELV	3,15	1	
		PRG	4,08	2	
<b>Bulgaria</b>	2009-2013	GERB	7,4	16	7,40
<b>Germany</b>	2009-2013	CDU	6,25	8	6,13
		CSU	6,25	3	
		FDP	5,92	6	
<b>Denmark</b>	2011-2015	SD	3,8	11	3,64
		RV	4,87	6	
		SF	2,13	6	

<b>Estonia</b>	2011-2014	RE	7,89	7	8,17
		IRL	8,49	6	
<b>Spain</b>	2011-	PP	7,59	14	7,59
<b>Finland</b>	2011-2014	KOK	7,24	6	4,99
		SDP	3,55	7	
		VIHR	3,64	2	
		SFP	6,39	2	
		KD	7,18	1	
		VAS	2,18	2	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2010-2015	CON	7,42	18	6,70
		LD	4,09	5	
<b>Ireland</b>	2011-	FG	6,43	11	5,44
		LAB	3,62	6	
<b>Italy</b>	2013-2014	PD	2,62	10	4,40
		SC	6	1	
		UDC	6,1	1	
		NCD	7,4	5	
		R	3,97	1	
<b>The Netherlands</b>	2012-	VVD	7,34	10	5,48
		PvDA	3,61	10	
<b>Norway</b>	2009-2013	DNA	3,37	12	3,11
		SV	1,58	6	
		SP	4,65	4	
<b>Portugal</b>	2011-	PSD	6,29	8	6,96
		CDS-PP	8,02	5	
<b>Russia</b>	2012-	ER	9,5	23	9,5
<b>Serbia</b>	2012-2014	SNS + PS	7	10	5,46
		SPS	2,5	6	
		PUPS	2,5	1	
		SDPS	7	1	
		NS	7	1	
		SDA	9	1	
		URS	5	3	



<b>Sweden</b>	2010-2014	M	7,89	13	7,19
		C	5,8	4	
		FP	6,29	4	
		KD	7,19	3	
<b>Switzerland</b>	2011-	SP	1,83	2	5,11
		FDP	6,32	2	
		CVP	4,72	1	
		SVP	7,35	1	
		BDP	7,4	1	
<b>Macedonia</b>	2006-	VMRO-DPMNE	6,25	11	7,32
		BDI	9	7	
<b>Ukraine</b>	2012-2014	PR	9,5	13	9,5