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A second chance: from the process of radicalisation to a deradicalisation programme. The voluntary homecoming foreign fighters.
The importance of rehabilitation, reintegration and resocialisation.

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"We always arrive at the place where someone is waiting for us"

José Saramago*, The Elephant's Journey*

ABSTRACT

The first part of this research aims to analyse the process of radicalisation, namely the reasons and factors that have motivated thousands of European citizens to embrace the fundamentalist and extremist ideology of the Islamic State, followed by an explanation of what has failed in terms of social inclusion of those people. Furthermore, by briefly analysing the western counter-terrorism measures, the dissertation aims to ascertain if these aggressive measures have had a counter-productive effect and to what extent it was the lever that potentiated some of the hate speech against western countries.

In the second part, the focus will be the necessity of an effective deradicalisation program and how it should be addressed, focusing on a non-prosecution route to those who voluntarily returned, with the main emphasis on children.

To understand these programs from a practical perspective, a critical case study examination of the decentralised deradicalisation and reintegration program of Denmark, the Aarhus Model, and the centralised program of France will be demonstrated.

It concludes by addressing some challenges and ethical questions that may be posed when dealing with a sensitive topic as the process of radicalisation and the subsequent process of deradicalisation.

Keywords: Radicalisation, Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, Counter-Terrorism, Children

METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND OBSTACLES

This dissertation presents a summary of the reasons that might have influenced many youths to embrace an extreme ideology and to radicalise themselves through a theoretical analysis and a critical discourse investigation, where it is described, interpreted and scrutinised the pathways and the reasons behind those radicalisation processes. This research also focuses on how the programs of deradicalisation are being addressed in Europe, through a comparison between two case-study: France and Denmark.

It was decided to carry out this analysis as this method is, perhaps, the most relevant for a research question that seeks to explain the importance of an effective process of deradicalisation that addresses some contemporary social phenomenon, and the importance of addressing the 'how' and the 'why' behind the radicalisation process, as the way to prevent further cases of radicalism.

This investigation was planned to pursue interviews with youth social workers, deradicalisation experts, members of national parliaments, probation officers, families of radicalised people, NGOs that provide a variety of support to these vulnerable communities. Nevertheless, due to the time limitation and the fact it was drafted during the restrictive conditions of the Covid- 19 pandemic, it was not possible to lead the intended interviews. Hence, only a few contacts were made with Muslim communities in Austria and Denmark. The individuals that were interviewed are Muslim's members of some NGO's that are working with vulnerable communities in their countries. The initial plan was to pursue these interviews in person in their countries, but due to the Covid-19 restrictions, it had to be done by phone call.

All participants were informed about the methods, the purpose and the aim of this study and had to sign a consent form, where it was explicitly mentioned that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any moment.

As a result, the research was conducted mainly based on the already existing data and interviews, and most of the first-hand information was acquired through journals and newspaper articles, and state reports.

These data, both the existing and the collected, were used to demonstrate the feelings of Muslim people in Europe, mainly in terms of discrimination and sense of belonging and to display their struggle in everyday life in some European countries, validating the arguments exposed through this thesis.

Moreover, regarding deradicalisation programs, since it is a process that still ongoing, there is an evident lack of diversity in the literature. Equally, there are not many studies on the effectiveness of the deradicalisation programs, and consequently, the rate of success of those programs is hard to precise.

Thus, due to these main obstacles, this research may contain some gaps in terms of accurate data.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIVD: Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service

CCIF (Collectif Contre Le Islamophobie)

CENTCOM: United States Central Command

CT: Counter-Terrorism

ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights

EP: European Parliament

EU: European Union

EC: European Commission

EUMS: European Union Member States

FTF: Foreign Terrorist Fighter

ICSR: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

HRW: Human Rights Watch

IS: Islamic State

ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Sham

LGBTQ+: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer

NCTV: National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Council

UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UK: United Kingdom

RAN: Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)

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1. Introduction

During the advent of the Arab Spring in 2011, citizens worldwide joined many non-state actors[1] in various Middle Eastern countries to fight their authoritarian regimes. However, to Syria, many individuals fled not simply to fall the Bashar Al Assad regime but instead to accept Al Baghdadi's call[2] to join the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS)[3].

In order to define those who joined the rows of terrorist organisations, such as IS or Jabhat al-Nusra (now called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham), among other militant groups, Baker and Singleton defined them as Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs). In their definition, they characterise them as "individuals, driven mainly by ideology, religion and/or kinship, who leave their country of origin or their country of habitual residence to join a party engaged in an armed conflict."[4].

In a similar manner, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) defined "Foreign Terrorist Fighters" in the resolution 2178 as:

> "Individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict"[5].

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[1] The concept of non-state actors is generally understood as including any entity that is not actually a state, often used to refer to armed groups, terrorists, civil society, religious groups, or corporations;

[2] Aljazeera, "Iraq's Baghdadi calls for 'holy war'", 2 July,2014, available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/7/2/iraqs-baghdadi-calls-for-holy-war (Accessed 14-03-2021).

[3] This group has been referred to in various ways during the past few years ('Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant' (ISIL), 'Islamic State in Iraq and Syria' (ISIS), more recently as 'Islamic State' and in Arabic as 'ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-ʿIrāq wa-sh-Shām' shortened to Da'ish or Daesh). Before the proclamation of the Caliphate, the term ISIS was correct. After this establishment, the correct term to use is IS. Therefore, in this research, the abbreviation IS will be used. See F. Irshaid, BBC 2nd December 2015, "Isis, Isil, IS or Daesh? One group, many names", available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27994277, (Accessed 14-03-2021).

[4] Bakker, B. Singleton, M. 2018, Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond, pp 9-25. Asser Press.

[5] UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) [on* address the acute and growing threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)*],* 24 September 2014, S/RES/2178(2014), available at: https://undocs.org/S/RES/2178(2014) preamble para. 9. The term "foreign terrorist fighter" was first mentioned in the Security Council resolution 2170 (2014). With this resolution the Council condemned "gross, systematic and widespread abuse" of human rights by ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Nusra Front.

Amid constant Human Rights violations being perpetrated by such groups, as ethnic cleansings[6], mass killings, and destruction of any type of archaeology artefacts[7], among other terrorist attacks, this flow of FTFs to join some militant groups has become a dominant security concern worldwide, resulting in joint efforts in many countries to prevent and stop new fighters' migration[8].

Even though most of these fighters were coming from countries in the Middle East, there was also a significant number of European Jihadis, mainly coming from France, Germany, the United Kingdom (UK), Belgium or Denmark. Although it is not possible to have a precise number of FTFs who joined the insurrection in Iraq and Syria, according to numbers disclosed by the European Commission (EC)[9], more than 40.000 FTFs have travelled from nearly 120 countries to join the rows of these terrorist organisations. Among them, it is estimated that more than 5000 are originally from countries in the European Union (EU) and the UK– either citizens or persons having their permanent residence in an EU Member State or the UK -representing nearly 20% of the total FTFs[10]. Nevertheless, the limited reliable information on these individuals hampers any current attempts of characterising this target group by gender or age. Namely when it concerns minors, trusting the current numbers collected by different entities are even less accurate as it is not always clear if those who joined IS before the age of 18 years were already considered adults by law or merely by the merit of having been on "in the field". Nevertheless, according to the numbers of the International Center for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), more than a thousand Muslim women from Western countries might have joined IS, representing 17% of Western fighters' total. It is also believed that around 1500 out of nearly 6000 Western combats were minors, corresponding to approximately 25%.[11]

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[6] Amnesty International, Ethnic Cleansing: On a historic scale: Islamic state's systematic targeting of minorities in Northen Iraq, 2014, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/mde140112014en_0.pdf (accessed 14-03-2021)

[7] Curry, A. (2015, September 1) Here Are the Ancient Sites ISIS Has Damaged and Destroyed. National Geographic. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/150901-isis-destruction-looting-ancient-sites-iraq-syria-archaeology (Accessed on 27-02-2021)

[8] Council of the European Union (2015) *Outline of the counter-terrorism strategy for Syria and Iraq, with particular focus on foreign fighters*. Brussels. Available at: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5369-2015-INIT/en/pdf (accessed on 14-03-2021)

[9] RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices (2017). *Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families.* Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf. (Accessed on 27-02-2021.

[10] European Parliament Briefing 548980 (2017) – Foreign Fighters, *Member States response and EU action in an international context*
Available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-Briefing-548980-Foreign-fighters-FINAL.pdf (Accessed on 27-02-2021)

[11] Cook, J., & Vale. G (2018). "*From Daesh to 'Diaspora': tracing the women and minors of Islamic state;* ICSR Research Report. Available at https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-'Diaspora'-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf (Accessed on 27-02-2021)

Through a deep analysis of the process of radicalisation and the pathways that many of those youth followed, this study will show what might have motivated thousands of European youths to join IS. Although every case is different, and therefore every motivation and process of radicalisation also differs, the theory of three pillars of radicalisation of Professor Kruglanski and the five pillars of identity of the Psychologist Petzold will provide crucial support in understanding some of the common motivations behind the decisions of thousands of European youths.

This first part pretends to give the reader the background of those who left for Syria and Iraq, demonstrating some of the pathways into radicalisation and how sometimes lack of social inclusion policies and high rates of discrimination towards Muslim communities can have influenced the faith of many youths. Moreover, it has been seen in some EU countries and in the UK how several measures have been disproportionately displaced. Therefore, it is essential to deepen into an analysis of some Counter-Terrorism (CT) measures in some EU countries and ascertain if it directly connects with some cases of radicalisation in terms of an action-reaction effect. For example, it pretends to display if the aggressive European CT measures that developed pre-concepts towards Muslim communities, allowing the implementation of aggressive policies that did not respect the EU rule of law or human rights, had the expected and necessary good effects of tackling the threat of terrorism.

Regardless the existence of a European common strategy on CT, it will be only analysed specific measures implemented independently by some States and not the guidelines of the EU. It is also important to underline that although the UK is not anymore in the Union, when certain policies were implemented, the UK was part of the EU, and therefore, for the purpose of this research, in some instances, the UK will be mentioned as an EU Member State (EUMS).

Although some FTFs that left Europe continued to preach the IS ideology, many of them decided to return and highly regrated to have joined the group. To help to understand the returning phenomena, it is essential to use the division into three waves made by Colsaet[12]: the first returnee wave took place in 2012/14, prior to the establishment of the caliphate; the second wave of returnees started in parallel with the establishment of the caliphate in June 2014 and lasted until June 2015. It is marked by the deterioration of living conditions in the caliphate, notably following the beginning of the military strikes

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[12] Colsaet, R. & Renard, T. (2018) Returnees: who are they, why are they (not) coming back and how should we deal with them? Assessing Policies on Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. Available at: https://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2018/02/egmont.papers.101_online_v1-3.pdf?type=pdf (Accessed on 10-04-2021)

by the international coalition and the intensification of fighting in Syria, making a high number of victims among jihadis; the third wave covers the decline of the caliphate and the post-caliphate period essentially. In this wave, a few families with children returned to Europe between 2016-2017.

In this second part, the spotlight will be mainly on the second wave of returnees and those who voluntarily returned but did not commit any crime while abroad. This research intends to demonstrate the advantages and shortcomings of deradicalising those individuals from a non-prosecution route, through a program of rehabilitation and reintegration. Although deradicalising women and men are extremely important, the emphasis will be on the children of the returnees and the importance of submitting them to rehabilitation that does not impel imprisonment and how it can help prevent further waves of radicalisation.

The choice of the topic of returnees falls upon that although this return has been in the attention of the political agenda of the EU countries for the past years, it still not possible to affirm that there is an effective program within the EUMS, nor this problem has been addressed adequately. Therefore, and to help to fill this gap, it is important to scrutinise why there is not a common policy and how it could be an advantage for the internal security of the EU if it has a common strategy. Hence, this paper aims to demonstrate how the EUMS have been approaching this subject and highlight the differences between national strategies on deradicalisation. France and Denmark are the selected case studies to be analysed.

The reason behind choosing Denmark is linked to two main elements: i) it was one of the EUMS with the highest percentage of people joining IS; ii) Denmark developed and implemented a liberal, progressive and decentralised programme of deradicalisation and rehabilitation named the Aarhus model. This model main focus is to change violent extremist views and behaviours of the individuals while providing a comprehensive support structure to enable reintegration into society, through a tailored approach to policies of rehabilitation for those who voluntarily returned and did not commit any crime while abroad. It provides a case-by-case approach that excludes resorting to arbitrary imprisonment. On the other hand, France's case highlights the national programme of deradicalisation created by Prime Minister Manuel Vallas in 2017, which was a more conservative and centralised programme, with a more "radical" approach.

The present thesis aims thus to demonstrate the policy gaps found in the EUMS concerning national strategies namely on measures to approach voluntary returnees from a non-prosecution route and how

these gaps can be filled, showing how a more decentralised and less conservative approach can help to prevent further cases of radicalisation.

This paper also delves into the challenges of those programs, identifying which key players can make it succeed. Moreover, this research also focused on the threat that their return might pose to internal security, underlining that every case should be studied individually and address accordingly.

As a final examination, it dives into the public perception of this phenomenon and the ethical and moral interrogations that a deradicalisation process may arise. These concerns are mainly linked to how victims will perceive the reintegration of those who joined IS - even though they might not have committed any crime while abroad - and to what extent is it acceptable that a person who joined such a murderous organisation should have the right of being reintegrated.

2. The process of radicalisation

2.1 The homegrown jihadis

2.1.1 The process of radicalisation: Why European born youth joined IS?

Of all those who joined IS from western countries, there were a variety of backgrounds and reasons, networks and connections, that influenced them to join a militant jihadist group. Some of them already had a past linked to violent extremism[13] and saw this as an opportunity for some material enrichment. In contrast, others had been recorded with petty crimes or had no register of any actions related to crime or extremist ideologies[14] and have joined some of those groups without knowing much of the realities on the ground.

Unlike those who already had previous contact with other militant groups, many others did not have any engagement with these extremist groups. Those are called ″Homegrown Jihadis″,[15] i.e. those born and raised in EUMS and did not directly connect with any previous contact with jihadi groups or militants.

The broad phenomena of radicalisation of some homegrown jihadis is a topic of an intense psychosocial process, driven by a combination of individual traits and circumstances, social dynamics, and external enabling conditions. Therefore, it has been a subject of intense studies among scholars[16], and despite the fact little is known about the causes, motivations and triggers that can allow researchers to develop a patterned terrorist profile, but, instead, a myriad of ways and possibilities, it is possible to find some common factors that can have influenced many people to join the rows of IS. If it is undeniable that tremendous fanatism and a criminal background guided some[17], it is clear that many others were driven

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[13] Hofinger, V. and Schmidinger, T. *Muhajirun' from Austria. Why they left to join ISIS and why they don't return.* Pp 292-293. Available at: https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/329/217 (Accessed on 07-03-2021).

[14] Rekawek, K Matějka, S. Szucs, V. Beňuška, T. Kajzarová, K. and Rafay, J. GLOBSEC research, *"Who are the European Jihadis?".* Available at: https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GLOBSEC_WhoAreTheEuropeanJihadis.pdf (accessed on 20-02-2021)

[15] Ibid 10

[16] See Hofinger, V. and Schmidinger, T. *Muhajirun' from Austria. Why they left to join ISIS and why they don't return.* P.299 para 2.

[17] Basra, Neuman & Brunner.(2016). "*Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus".* ; ICSR Research Report. Available at https://capve.org/components/com_jshopping/files/demo_products/ICSR-Report-Criminal-Pasts-Terrorist-Futures-European-Jihadists-and-the-New-Crime-Terror-Nexus.pdf accessed on 23-03-2021 ; See also *Interview mit Thomas Schmidinger, Politikwissenschafter,* available at:

by a variety of reasons that nothing have in common with an extremist religious ideology or with past linked to the crime[18] - nonetheless, it is essential to underline that in certain cases of fanatism or an existent criminal background, socioeconomic factors might have influenced thousands of people to join those criminals and fanatic groups. In some instances, they precisely joined those groups due to their poor economic background, often in an extreme need for subsistence and influenced/manipulated by the wrong people at the wrong moment[19]. Likewise, feelings of alienation and discrimination as a result of years of inadequate implementation of social inclusion policies that take into account long-term socioeconomic factors and promotes long-term welfare based on the sense of belonging to the community and consequently intends to reduce the social inequality, feelings of injustice, could have been a critical push factor that influenced in the process of radicalisation[20]. Moreover, in some cases, an existential crisis or a traumatic experience in family life, difficulties at school or work, personal disappointments, or even new friendships[21] are often considered an acute setting to stimulate extremist groups interest.

As such, the constant failure to achieve what was expected or dreamed can bring up feelings of hunger, disillusionment and loss of significance[22]. For youths seeking a sense of belonging to a group, joining a jihadist subculture can be seen as the escape to find a narrative that allows them to shake off eventual previous failures. At the same time, it helps them enhance their sense of self-worth while repressing the existential core self-doubting and uncertainties[23]and be perceived as a form of personal salvation. Furthermore, another example that illustrates youngsters' alienation and the inaccurate perception and understanding of those militant groups violent extremism is what is defined as the "hybrid street culture".[24] According to this concept, to feel like a group member, those youths adopt several behaviours

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https://www.demokratiewebstatt.at/thema/thema-demokratie-gegen-terror/interview-mit-thomas-schmidinger (Accessed on 24-03-2021)

[18] Ibid 15. Ibid 18. See the case of the British medical students that joined ISIS to work at their hospitals (*https://www.huffpost.com/entry/british-medical-students-isis_n_6916820*)

[19] EUSECON POLICY BRIEFING. Berrebi, C; Klor, E, F. Do Poor Economic Conditions Affect Terrorism? Available at https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/119596/1/diw_eusecon_pb0015.pdf acessed on 23-03-2021 (Accessed on 24-03-2021) See also: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/can-economic-conditions-explain-flow-foreign-fighters-isis/

[20] ENAR (2019). Michel, D. *Radicalisation in a new light: from security to social inclusion and equality*. Available at: https://www.enar-eu.org/Radicalisation-in-a-new-light-from-security-to-social-inclusion-and-equality (Accessed on 01-04-2021)

[21] Weggemans, D., & Bakker E., & Grol, P. (2014). Who Are They and Why Do They Go? The Radicalisation and Preparatory Processes of Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters. *Perspectives on Terrorism).* Available at: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2014/issue-4/who-are-they-and-why-do-they-go...---weggermans-bakker-and-grol.pdf. (Accessed 26-02- 2021).

[22] Bjørgo, T. (2011) Dreams and disillusionment: engagement in and disengagement from militant extremist groups. Available at: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10611-011-9282-9 (Accessed 26-02-2021)

[23] Cotte, S. (2011) Jihadism as a Subcultural Response to Social Strain: Extending Marc Sageman's "Bunch of Guys" Thesis. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.611840 (Accessed on 26-02-2021)

[24] Ibid.

that are not allowed and are hardly criminalised under the IS rules[25]. These are connected with the western Street culture, such as dressing like rappers, smoking cigarettes and marijuana or drinking alcohol while watching jihadi videos and having pictures of Osama bin Laden and other jihadist militant groups on the display of their cell phones. It clearly shows that more than pursuing a radical extremist idea, those people seek a sense of belonging anywhere, seeking a meaning for their lives and being part of a global community that can help them overcome their fears, uncurtains, and feelings of alienation.

It is also a common trend that some youth are living with a sense of not belonging anywhere in certain cases. When this is the case, youngsters do not feel part of the culture of the country where they were born or where they are living in, nor, in the case of people from a second or third generation of immigrant families, to the country of origin, which results in a crisis of identity[26]. They do not feel integrated either in the country where they live nor in the country where they may have roots, and in some instances, they have not had any contact with their families in countries of origin, resulting in feelings of confusion and anger, given their nation's cultural and societal background. This is a common feeling among youths when questioned about their sense of belonging. They claim that they do not feel part of any culture or country because society does not recognise them as part of its culture. They are still labelled as migrants, even though they are from a second or third generation of immigrant's families and have been born within the EU.

It is the case of a young female with Turkish background living in Austria, who stated in an interview[27] that "sometimes we feel that we do not belong anywhere. We have Austrian nationality, but we hear people saying to 'come back to our country'; which one is our country? We have been living here all of our lives. I am Austrian. It is obvious that we start to think, where do we belong?". In the same way, it also the case of a young female with Lebanese and Palestinian roots, born and raised in Denmark, that emphasized in an interview,[28] "when I listen to Danish authorities saying that I am not Danish, despite the fact that I was born here, it is clear that I do not feel part of the culture" and also added "in Denmark, I am considered as a person from the Middle East, but there I am considered a European. I do not feel home anywhere".

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[25] Saul, H. (2015). The independent, Life under Isis in Raqqa: The city where smoking a cigarette could see you publicly flogged, imprisoned and even decapitated, *The Independent,* 13 February. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/life-under-isis-raqqa-city-where-smoking-cigarette-could-see-you-publicly-flogged-imprisoned-and-even-decapitated-10043969.html (accessed on: 02-04-2021)

[26] Fainberg, A. 2017. International Institute for counter-terrorism. Here We Come: The Evolution of Foreign Fighters' Flow to Syria and Iraq in 2013-2016. Available at: https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1954/the-evolution-of-foreign-fighters#gsc.tab=0 (Accessed on 19-03-2021)

[27] Interviews in Vienna with some Muslim women in March 2021

[28] Interviews with Danish Muslim community in March 2021

It is crucial to understand that in some cases, these vulnerable young people tend to keep these feelings to themselves and to apparently live an everyday life similar to most people within their communities. Yet, it can become a push and pull factors that are not visible, but they exist and significantly influence them, as it will be explained further.

Hence, it can be noted that radicalisation is not a characteristic of irrational madmen but a process that combines a specific set of emotions and circumstances that can develop in different individuals in a multiplicity of ways[29].

2.1.2. The three pillars of radicalisation and the five pillars of identity

According to Professor Aries Kruglanski, there are three main radicalisation pillars: the need, the narrative and the networking[30].

In the first pillar, he argues that all those who join these organisations have a necessity, an individual motivation behind that. Often, this need is motivated by a sense of alienation and discrimination, feelings of not belonging anywhere, an extreme necessity of finding something that can fulfil their condition —a place where they can "find" themselves.

The second pillar and a fundamental one is the narrative. It is when the need meets the ideology that can be perceived as the satisfaction of the necessity. In Kruglanski's perspective, it is the narrative that satisfies the motivation and the need. It is in this moment that an individual begins to find their meaning, where an ideology brings the sense of belonging to something. To justify the importance of the narrative, Kruglanski affirmed that people are not convinced by logic or scientific evidence but by an evidence that addresses the need and the motivation. This, indeed, pierces right through their most basic necessity of a narrative. This process brainwashes most vulnerable people with extremely well-tailored propaganda campaigns relying on persuasive strategies about their ideology[31]. These strategies included a constant narrative claiming the west as a hostile society, an outlet for the frustration they feel due to everyday

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[29]Slootman, M. Tillie, J. (2006) Processes of Radicalisation Why some Amsterdam Muslims become radicals. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305000725_Processes_of_Radicalisation_Why_some_Amsterdam_Muslims_become_radicals (Accessed on 27-02- 2021)

[30] Bélanger J, J. Gunaratna, R. Kruglanski, A. 2019, The three pillars of radicalisation: Needs, Narratives and Networking. Oxford

[31] Report by NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2016), Daesh information campaign and its influence. Available at: https://capve.org/components/com_jshopping/files/demo_products/daesh_2016_24nov.pdf (Accessed on 14-03-2021)

racism and where the Muslims were treated unjustly by the kuffãr[32], claiming that there was only one just cause, the creation of the "Caliphate". In their propaganda, this would be the only defence of the Muslims worldwide against the perceived assault of a vilified west, pointing to the decadence and corruption of European societies, making them perceive that their situation was not as a result of their failings but rather a result of the hostile western culture[33]

The third pillar is the network. It is an indispensable pillar: in this phase, a group member validates the need and the narrative. The quest for a meaningful purpose in life is accepted, and the individual is awarded with recognition. In that regard, IS was much more developed than other groups such as Al-Qaeda, for instance. The IS leaders knew precisely the importance of developing not only a certain type of radicalisation by people to people contacts and word of mouth in prisons or mosques but also reaching out to youths using online platforms as a tool. These new methods included attempts to radicalise and recruit through social media and dark web, and investment in the production of high-quality propaganda videos, showing the well-managed scenes of prosperity, services provided for the community, and images that glorify the members of the organisation and the battlefield successes, accompanied by slogans referring to the creation of the "Islamic State".[34]

The German psychologist Hilarion Petzold's theory about modern psychotherapy[35] can also help to understand radicalisation phenomena from a perspective of a crisis of identity. Petzold defines the sense of identity as the result of ego's synthesis performance in processing multiple recognitions in diverse socio-cultural contexts, emotional and cognitive evaluation, and connection with identifications[36]. He claims that individuals' personality develops through social relationships via social experiences, activities, stories, and dialogues with other people. Hence, life situations and conversational partners change throughout life, and thus identity is to be seen as a constantly evolving process. Petzold believes that identity formation is a process that never ends and is subjected to more or less considerable changes during a lifetime – such as alteration of the living environment, relationships, or work. Therefore, to better understand this theory, the identity can be illustrated as a roof that is hold and supported by five

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[32] Kuffar is an Arabic term which means "infidel", ¨rejector","denier "or "disbeliever", " The term refers to a person who rejects or disbelieves in God as per Islam or the tenets of Islam, denying the dominion and authority of God, and is thus often translated as "infidel"

[33] Nielsen, D, A. (2010) Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 33:9, p.800 Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.501423, ((Accessed on 27-02-2021)

[34] Ibid.32

[35] Petzold, G, H. (2012). Identität. Ein Kernthema moderner Psychotherapie. Springer VS (Wiesbaden).

[36] Mantovan, F. Riedl, M. & Them, C. (2012) Being a Nursing Home Resident: A Challenge to One's Identity. *Hindawi Publishing Corporatio.* Vol.13 pp. 2-3. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/932381 (Accessed on 16-04- 2021)

fundamental pillars[37] (fig1): the individual's biological system, which contains all thoughts, health, physical potential, weaknesses and strengths; the social environment, once that an individual personality develops through social relationships; the work achievement and leisure time, fundamental in the stability of any person; the material stability, such a house or other possesses; and the values.

According to this theory, when the stability of one of those pillars is threatened, it drives the individual to some insecurity that can influence in terms of how the person understands the identity. In many cases, when the other pillars are shaken or failed, the values pillar can be a consolidative component that sustains the personality and can compensate for other pillars loss. In other words, it means that when an individual loses their job, a relationship or any other thing represented in the other pillars, the values can help to equilibrate the feeling of frustration and balance the sense of identity. Nonetheless, even though values have a compensatory role, the effect may be regressive in particular cases. Every person gives different significance to each pillar in their lives, having their own individual meaning. Nevertheless, in some instances, moral norms suppress the needs and, in those cases, having several negative consequences; it can lead to events of psychosomatic disorders or losing their ego and their sense of belonging[38].

Furthermore, in this phase, the identity breaks down, deteriorating the individual's performance, driving to emotional exhaustion, self-worth crises, and losing their sense of identity. These crises can be seen as the cause that makes some individuals seek to join groups that can provide them with this sense of identity and belonging that they have lost.

Important to note that, altogether, using a manipulative and convicting speech, exploiting and "hijacking" religion[39] as an escape for their tribulations, a solution that can immunise, to some extent, against the uncertainty, can be an explosive mix and a prominent factor that had driven hundreds of people into these militant groups.

The case of Laura Passoni, a Belgian woman that joined IS after her boyfriend broke up with her[40], the story of Jamila, a young girl from a family of Moroccan immigrants living in the Netherlands that claimed

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.35
[39] Comments by Professor Kruglanski in an online Webinar "The three pillars of radicalisation" on 17th March 2021.
[40] Ciganeiro, J. (2016). A Belgian woman explains why she joined ISIS and why she came back. *The World,* 19 December. Avaialable at: https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-12-19/belgian-woman-explains-why-she-joined-isis-and-why-she-came-back Accessed on 17-03-2021)

that she only found a sense of belonging and a reason for her life in militant jihadism[41], or the example of an immigrant in France that joined Al-Qaeda because he felt ″ignored and despised″[42] by the French people despite the fact of having French nationality, seems to dovetail precisely what was said above. In cases like those, religiosity was not a primary motivation for their actions, but instead, it provided the dominant frame to interpret almost every aspect of their lives[43]. It is not the religion itself that makes them embark on the IS journey, but a loss of significance and the need to seek recognition. The jihadist propaganda exploited their feeling of alienation, exclusion, and identity crisis, providing them with a narrative that empowers and gives a sense of self-worth through an extreme religiosity ideology. These people use selected Islamist catchphrases as a narrative legitimation of a counter-identity that is not rooted in political or religious agendas, but rather in (social and psychological disordered) general distancing to everything else[44].

 Kruglanski adds that it becomes simpler to persuade and succeed in radicalising a person exposing them to this speech when they are in a vulnerable situation. In his words, it is not about how a person sees the certainty but how he or she sees and deal with uncertainty[45].

Similarly to those three cases, many other young individuals did not feel incorporated in their community and have lost a certain sense of belonging, and they only find these new ways on those groups[46]and joining radical organisations seems the only escape from a life ostensibly without prospects.

There are many other cases in which those who were radicalised also mentioned the desire to migrate and live in an Islamic State. According to them, the only place where they could fulfil the sense of belonging and the only place where they would be accepted as an equal human being, as a "real Muslim", where there is no discrimination nor stigmatisation, where nobody would even make a differentiation

[41] Bakker, E & Gro, P. (2015) Motives *and Considerations of Potential Foreign Fighters from the Netherlands.* ICCT Policy Brief pp. 8-9. Available at: http://icct.nl/app/uploads/2015/07/ICCT-Bakker-Grol-Motives-and-Considerations-of-Potential-Foreign-Fighters-from-the-Netherlands-July2015.pdf (Acessed on 19-03-2021).

[42] Pisou, D. (2013) Coming to Believe ''Truths'' About Islamist Radicalization in Europe pp 253-254, available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2012.659361 (Accessed on 24-03-2021)

[43] Dawson, L, L and . Amarassingam, A. Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivation for *Hijrah* to Syria and Iraq", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Volume 40, Issue 3, p. 192.

[44] Lindekilde, L., Bertelsen, P., & Stohl, M. (2016). Who Goes, Why, and With What Effects: The Problem of Foreign Fighters from Europe. *Small Wars and Insurgencies, 27*(5), 858-877. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1208285 (Accessed on 27-03-2021)

[45] Ibid. 38

[46] Crouch, D. (2016). Spotlight on Nordic recuiting grould for Isis Fighters' child brides. *The Guardian*, 25 February. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/25/marilyn-nevalainen-case-highlights-swedish-move-to-end-extremism; (Accessed on 23-03-2021) See also the case of two Austrian women in Al-Hol-Camp Hofinger, V. and Schmidinger, T. *Muhajirun' from Austria. Why they left to join ISIS and why they don't return.* pp 299. Available at: https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/329/217

because of their country of origin[47]. However, it is important to stress that it does not mean that only marginalised or vulnerable communities are receptive to extremist ideologies, but rather that marginalisation and alienation increase and accelerate the risk and the process of being convinced by fanatic views[48].

3. The western counter-terrorism approach

3.1 International Counter-terrorism and Human Rights legal framework

> "Security without Human Rights protections is only an illusion. Human rights violations do not make the world safer or more secure. They undermine the security of all. "[49]

With the terrorism threat level arising and constituting a severe danger to democracy and security, especially after the series of terrorist attacks on European soil between 2014 and 2016, together with the surprisingly flow of thousands of European citizens to Iraq and Syria, many European countries had a necessity to launch a rigid and robust counter-terrorism policy, pushing their agendas to concentrate their efforts and priorities in combating terrorism, creating new counter-terrorism measures and procedures.

This new "war on terror" had emphasised mainly in preventing potential jihadists not only to leave to the "Caliphate" but also to prevent them from persecuting terrorist attacks in their home countries, the so-called "lone wolves[50].

However, when countering terrorism, states do not have total discretion in creating new policies, and some limits must be respected. For that reason, a few international Human Rights laws must be respected and cannot be restricted or derogated in any case, not even in the case of a state of emergency. Among them, article 4(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),[51] which identifies as non-derogable the right to life, freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to be recognised as a person before the law, and freedom of thought, conscience

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[47] Hofinger, V. and Schmidinger, T. *Muhajirun' from Austria. Why they left to join ISIS and why they don't return.* pp 297. Available at: https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/329/217

[48] Ibid.12

[49] Center for Not-for-Profit Law. Counter-terrorism & Human rights- Soft law, hard consequences. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Terrorism/SR/UNSRCTbrieferSoftLaw.pdf (Accessed on 27-03-2021)

[50] A lone actor, lone-actor terrorist, or lone wolf is someone who prepares and commits violent acts alone, outside of any command structure and without material assistance from any group. They may be influenced or motivated by the ideology and beliefs of an external group and may act in support of such a group.

[51] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 49

and religion, among others. Equally, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)[52] in article 15 (2) states that the right to life, prohibition of torture or no punishment without law are also some rights that cannot be deniable.[53] Moreover, when developing Counter-Terrorism (CT) strategies, policymakers must remember that the purpose of CT measures lays on two main objectives: Firstly, it aims to reduce the prospect and number of terrorist attacks and, as a consequence, lower the number of deaths or wounded; secondly, it seeks to decrease the climate of fear and anxiety created by these attacks. Simultaneously, it must be considered how terrorism affects citizens' lives and wellbeing and how the proposed counter-terrorism measures will affect those lives[54], bearing in mind that states have some limits in creating new regulations. For instance, policies that provoke heavy-handed security responses that erode commitment to human rights and the rule of law should not be implemented, with the risk of having a counter-productive effect and feeding some organisations strategies that support violence[55].

Although the efficiency in assessing and balancing the right to security with the right to liberty in times of serious threat is considered by many writers[56] a very complex, risky and challenging task, and despite the urgency of fighting terrorism, some limits cannot be crossed. It is fundamental to have an effective policy that prevents any type of acts that are incompatible with the protection of Human Rights is not implemented and guarantees that not all means are justifiable.

Several times, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had called for the importance of respecting Human Rights while countering terrorism. In 2006, the UNGA unanimously reiterated that "effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals but complementary and mutually reinforcing[57]. Likewise, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism noted that a counter-terrorism response confined to security measures are insufficient, identifying "extremism" as the problem

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[52] Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14*, 4 November 1950, ETS 5

[53] Despite the fact that some rights of the ECHR are not possible to be derogated in any circumstance, the ECtHR defined three conditions that are necessary to be possible to derogate some rights of the ECHR. See *Lawless v. Ireland (No 3)*, 1961, para. 28

[54] Wolfendale, J., "Terrorism, Security, and the Threat of Counterterrorism ", Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 29(7), 753-770 . Available at: https://www-tandfonline-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/doi/full/10.1080/10576100600791231 (Accessed on 23-03-2021)

[55] ENAR Suspicion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The impact of counter-terrorism law and policy on racialized groups at risk of racism in Europe. (2021) p.26. Available at: https://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/suspicion_discrimination_surveillance_report_2021.pdf (Accessed on 23-03-2021)

[56] Van Um, E., "Dealing with uncertainty: the illusion of knowledge in the study of counterterrorism effectiveness", Critical Studies on Terrorism, 8(2), 2015; Waldron, J. Security and Liberty: The Image of Balance. 2003. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 11, pp. 191–210; Michaelsen, C. Balancing Liberty and Security? A Critique of Counterterrorism Rhetoric,"

[57] UN General Assembly, *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its 60th.*, 20 September 2006, A/RES/60/288, available at: https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/60/288 (accessed on 23-03-2021)

only provides more grounds to crush dissent"[58]. Similarly, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) warns that "measures to combat terrorism that violate international human rights standards are counter-productive. They undermine the rule of law and the credibility of public authorities, and their ability to counter the threat posed by terrorism[59].

At the same time that European countries must investigate and prosecute those who commit terrorist acts or are involved in any way with terrorist organisations, it is necessary to find a balance between respect for Human Rights and the CT measures, as seen above. The fight against the threat of terrorism cannot be misused, and the rule of law and the core of Human Rights that are enshrined notably in the European Convention on Human Rights[60] cannot be jeopardised in the name of internal security.

An essential point to remark is that to have success in long-term CT strategy, it is not only the law itself that will determine the effectiveness of this policy but rather the reaction of those targeted by the law[61]. Therefore, all measures must be seen as legitimate and proportional to the threat. Consequently, it is essential to have an independent and fair judiciary that follows and respects the Human Rights law. Only a system that does not discriminate against any citizen despite his/her religion or ethnicity, and detain terrorists, disrupt terrorist networks, catch and punish those who commit crimes, and at the same time ensure that any innocent suspects mistakenly caught up in the law enforcement process are rapidly released, can be seen as fair and efficient[62]. In this direction, Wolfendale refers[63] that if radical counter-terrorism measures are to be accepted, there must be some evidence that they are in fact effective in staying the threat of terrorism; otherwise, undermine Human Rights protection while fighting against terrorism can endanger the efficiency and success of the measure itself, becoming most likely counter-productive, and having harmful consequences not only to the operations but also to the community.

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[58] UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur* on the promotion and protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 22 February 2016, A/HRC/31/65, available at: https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/HRC/31/65 (acessed on 23-03-2021)

[59] OSCE, Countering Terrorism Available at: http://www.osce.org/odihr/countering-terrorism. (Accessed on 21-03-2021)

[60] Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14*, 4 November 1950, ETS 5,

[61] Van Um, E., "Dealing with uncertainty: the illusion of knowledge in the study of counterterrorism effectiveness", Critical Studies on Terrorism, 8(2), 2015, Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2014.981400 (Accessed on 27-03-2021)

[62] International commission of Jurists (2009), Assessing Damage, Urging Action Report of the Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights. Available at: https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=4a7836d62 (accessed on 23-03-2021)

[63] Ibid. 41

Besides, it can be a significant mistake that can lead to an ineffective general policy, and it may have the opposite effect and may facilitate the cause of terrorism[64].

3.2 – Violations of Human Rights in EU countries while countering-terrorism

Notwithstanding all that was above said, and despite the resolutions of the UNSC calling for the states to comply with international human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law[65], many measures that entail human rights infringements are not being implemented or respected. Several scholars have been arguing that, as a clear violation of Human Rights, some countries justified the use of aggressive tactics, arbitrary detentions, as well as the use of force or torture[66], and in some cases, enforced disappearances[67] as security procedures.

The threat of terrorism and the migration crisis has been accompanied by a speech of legitimisation for the increasingly broad range of administrative measures that do not necessarily require a judge's decision but considerably impact citizens lives in Europe. These include mass surveillance measures for port and border control and counter-terrorism actions such as administrative detentions[68] or arbitrarily house searches, deportation orders, fundraising offences, asset freezing or indirect measures[69] or prohibition of mass gatherings. These restrictions endanger the rights to privacy, movement, expression, association and liberty, in the name of security.

Although the specificity of counter-terrorism measures is justified on the specificity of the terrorist threat, in various cases all over the EU, they have used the delicate measures to address independent matters, therefore losing any valid legal ground to justify their actions. This type of abuses deserved already the concerns of the UN Committee against Torture observations in May 2016, that related that the "reports of excessive use of force by the police during some search operations, which has in some cases led to psychological sequelae for the persons in question" could constitute an infringement of rights ensured

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[64] Council of Europe Portal. Commissioner for Human Rights: Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights Protection, available at https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/thematic-work/counter-terrorism/-/asset_publisher/eLuVvXpKOf9y/content/respecting-fundamental-rights-and-freedoms-in-the-context-of-strengthening-the-fight-against-terrorism?inheritRedirect=true (accessed on 23-03-2021)

[65] See Security Council resolutions 1456 (2003), annex, para. 6, and 1624 (2005), para. 4

[66] Van Um, E., "Dealing with uncertainty: the illusion of knowledge in the study of counterterrorism effectiveness", Critical Studies on Terrorism, 8(2), 2015

[67] Ibid. 58

[68] Lamer, W. 'From sleepwalking into surveillance societies to drifting into permanent securitisation: Mass surveillance, security and human rights in Europe' (2017) 1 *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* 393. Available at: https://repository.gchumanrights.org/handle/20.500.11825/422 (Accessed on 27-03-2021)

[69] Bigo, D. Bonelli, L. Guittet, E, P. Ragazzi, F. "*Preventing and countering youth radicalisation in the EU*", European Parliament, 2014, p. 27. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/509977/IPOL-LIBE_ET(2014)509977_EN.pdf (Accessed on 27-03-2021)

under the United Nations Convention Against Torture[70]. Moreover, many of these house searches were done during the night, often violent and humiliating, and have a nefarious consequence, traumatising hundreds of people, including children[71], and therefore does not seem an approach that complies with the respect of Human Rights.

Contrary to what could be expected, aggressive measures were not only implemented in countries directly affected by terrorism, such as France or Belgium but were being adopted in many other EU countries. According to the Amnesty International report[72], European countries that have not directly experienced any recent terrorist attacks also implement "draconian" counter-terrorism laws. In addition to the measures above mentioned, it has been reported that there were implemented programmes of counsel, support and mentorship to individuals that can be considered at risk of or "vulnerable" to violent extremism. Those programs raised the amnesty international concern once they were created without any independent evaluation programme, risking the effectiveness and clarity due to their lack of transparency in the implementation and putting at risk of exclusion and discrimination those targeted by those measures.

In the UK, a bizarre law that predicts that individuals working within statutory organisations must report any suspected case of being a potential terrorist to external bodies for a deradicalisation program[73] was created. This new rule is based on control what someone might do in the future rather than on any criminal act committed. It means that there is an arbitrary "pre-crime" initiative that might depend on every person evaluation and discernment and can have a dramatic impact on the lives of those affected by this new regulation, together with their families[74], putting obviously their personal and social life in danger, as well as their jobs. Moreover, the definition of "potential terrorist" might be too broad. Anyone with a

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[70] UN Committee against Torture, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of France, CAT/C/FRA/CO/7, 10 June 2016, paras 12-13. Available at: http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsuGd5%2BKvluDUd5l6A8IG Lwe7yYFE5XN4yWN%2FVIBV2%2Fx5xo5wdbP%2FfJ9lnN%2BHl72zfmMftvkB4lyBGPhyXl1IYNK3kkf4ZRLRPHOy l7%2BoEeNG (Accessed on 23-03-2021)

[71] Amnesty International France, "Des vies bouleversées: l'impact disproportionné de l'Etat d'urgence en France", AI Publications, 2018

[72] International Amnesty, (2017) Beware the march of draconian counter-terrorism laws in Europe. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/01/beware-the-march-of-draconian-counter-terrorism-laws-in-europe/ (Accessed on 19-03-2021)

[73] (2015) PREVENT will have a chilling effect on open debate, free speech and political dissent, *The Indepentent,* 10 July. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letters/prevent-will-have-chilling-effect-open-debate-free-speech-and-political-dissent-10381491.html (Accessed on 23-03-2021)

[74] See the case of a 4 years old child referred to terrorism prevent after talking about Fortnite. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/31/muslim-boy-4-was-referred-to-prevent-over-game-of-fortnite

growing beard who wears a hijab or goes to a mosque can be marked as a "potential terrorist", making him/her a constant suspicion of jihadist radicalisation.

Furthermore, countries often use vague concepts of Human Rights, relying on these misconceptions to create unlimited powers to search anyone who seems suspect because of their beliefs, without any evidence. It can be seen in several cases around the EU countries, where the narrative and legislation to combat extremism were wrongfully used to halt non-violent groups activities[75] or to confiscate religious texts[76] and detain journalists and political activists critical of State policy[77].

It was indeed what happened in France after the deadliest attacks in 2015. The country embarked on a tremendous strict policy against terrorism. This new policy was marked by a declaration of a state of emergency that was normalised and successively renewed during two years[78]. The state of emergency has given unlimited powers to the security authorities. Among them, the limits to people's movement and forbid mass gatherings or the right to conduct house searches at any time without judicial oversight, enforce house arrest and confiscate certain classes of weapons, even if people hold them legally[79].

In 2017, when Emmanuel Macron won the elections, the state of emergency was finally lifted. However, two days before the end, a new decree entered into force, replacing the previous state of emergency with new measures that kept the anti-terror powers in the name of "internal security"[80]. Nonetheless, this new decree deserved many civil society critics, among them judges, Human Rights associations and both the far-left and far-right parties, claiming that those measures "risk making emergency powers part of ordinary law"[81].

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[75] Cross, T. (2016) "France's state of emergency used to ban activists from labor law protests," *RFI*, 16 May. Available at: http://en.rfi.fr/france/20160516-frances-state-emergency-used-ban-activists-labour-law-protests (Accessed on 25-03-2021)

[76] Global Freedom of Expression (2015), The case of "Prayers to God: its purpose and place in Islam" book being extremist. Available at: https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/the-case-of-prayers-to-god-its-purpose-and-place-in-islam-book-being-extremist/ (Accessed on 25-03-2021)

[77] Monitor Tracking civic space, June 2019. Available at https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2019/06/30/growing-restriction-and-state-violations-against-journalists-covering-continuous-protests-france/ (Accessed on 24-03-2021)

[78] Vauchez, H, S. The State of Emergency in France: Days Without End? Cambridge University Press. Available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-constitutional-law-review/article/abs/state-of-emergency-in-france-days-without-end/4187319346967B43779DE75B1E59AF87 (Accessed on 25-03-2021)

[79] France 24 (2015). *What does a 'state of emergency' mean in France*? 15 November. Available at: https://www.france24.com/en/20151115-what-does-france-state-emergency-mean. (Accessed on 27-03-021)

[80] Loi n° 2017-1510 du 30 octobre 2017 renforçant la sécurité intérieure et la lutte contre le terrorisme. Available at: https://www.vie-publique.fr/loi/20775-loi-securite-interieure-et-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme (Accessed on 26-03-2021)

[81] (2017) Macron anti-terror law replaces French State of Emergency, *DW*. 01 November. Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/macron-anti-terror-law-replaces-french-state-of-emergency/a-41191947 (Accessed on 26-03-2021)

It also deserves much criticism from the UN experts, mainly from a special rapporteur on the protection of Human Rights, that claimed that "the normalisation of emergency powers has grave consequences for the integrity of rights protection in France, both within and beyond the context of counter-terrorism".[82] As seen, France became a clear example of the misuse of the counter-terrorism laws to undermine human rights protection and multiply abuses on behalf of security. Thousands of illegal administrative searches and hundreds of administrative detentions took place, bringing a sense of an "anecdotic arbitrariness"[83].

3.3 Towards Muslim Communities

Although the religious element has to be taken into account and it is undeniable that several of the terrorist attacks were pursued by terrorists claiming to act in the name of *Allah*, it should not be used blindly and excessively broadly, under the risk of legitimising the revenge from any person from that group[84]. Furthermore, according to Europol numbers, the vast majority (70%) of terrorist incidents in Europe between 2006 and 2019 are related to ethno-nationalist and separatist groups and not religious extremism.[85] If it is true that these strategies are generic in theory and do not target any specific group, it is not what happened. Many of these practices have affected a large section of the Muslim population, particularly in Europe, and heavily contribute to the escalation of resentment and possible violence between communities and the state.

The specific and frequent target of Muslim communities deserves the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief that expressed doubts on "the frequent, widespread nature of violence targeting Muslims worldwide, including incidents where authorities allegedly have incited, engaged in or failed to respond to violence" [86]. In this report were found evidences that suspicions of Muslims have escalated to "epidemic proportions". It can be justified by using extreme measures targeting Muslims and defining them as both high-risk and at risk of radicalisation.

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[82] UN News (2017). France must bring counter-terrorism law in line with international rights obligations. Available at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/567292-france-must-bring-counter-terrorism-law-line-international-rights-obligations (Accessed on 26-032021)

[83] Amnesty International, "Disproportionate restrictions on demonstrations under the state of emergency in France", 2017, AI Publications. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/6104/2017/en/

[84] Resnick, B. (2017) All Muslims are often blamed for single acts of terror. Psychology explains how to stop it. *VOX, 30* November 2017.

[85] ENAR Suspicion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The impact of counter-terrorism law and policy on racialized groups at risk of racism in Europe. p.12

[86] UN Human Rights Council, UN Human Rights Council: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Countering Islamophobia/AntiMuslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief February 2021 , A/HRC/46/39, available at:
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/HatredAndDiscrimination.aspx (Accessed 6-04-2021)

There are plenty of examples that illustrate this "trend" of new restrictive laws in some EU countries towards specifically the Islamic traditions and culture, which can perpetuate, validate and normalise discrimination, hostility and violence towards Muslim individuals and communities. Some of these measures are highly questionable and debatable. For instance, in Denmark, the government introduced new laws stating that children living in low-income families in the so-called "ghetto" neighbourhoods must spend 25 hours apart from their parents every week to be taught "Danish values;"[87] similarly, in many countries in Europe, there were a mass closing of mosques[88] and a common ban on the Islamic veil[89]. Likewise, house search and seizures have increased and became a routine to Muslims, making their communities particularly targeted and deprived more than ever, suffering from many cases of abuse and being categorised as a dangerous group.

According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report[90], those measures have created economic hardship, stigmatised those targeted, and have traumatised children. It also denounces the abusive and discriminatory raids against Muslim communities exposing the cases of individuals that were not related to non-terrorism and were subjected to abusive searches or placed under house arrest, where many people claimed that they had been targeted because of their religion.

Moreover, not only members of these communities were affected. It is mentioned that Human Rights activists and lawyers working in affected areas were also tackled, raising a feeling of a clear intention to isolate those communities. [91]

Not surprisingly, due to such climates of exclusion, fear and distrust, the Muslim communities have been suffering an increasing feeling of ostracisation and collective blame for terrorism. It is accompanied by a sense that they are "suspect communities" that are being forced to bear collective responsibility for the actions of a small minority given to the communal call to engage with counter-terrorism, combined with constant suspicion of Muslims as radicalisation risks, which have influenced feelings of Islamophobia, alienation and segregation. For instance, a Danish citizen with Iraqi roots mentioned that he became afraid of leaving his house to school during the IS raising due to the constant suspicion and distrust

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[87] Ngo, M.(2018) "No ghettos in 2030": Denmark's controversial plan to get rid of immigrant neighborhoods. *VOX,* 3 July 2018.

[88] Safdar, A. (2015) France likely to shutdown more than 100 mosques. *Al Jazeera.* 3 December. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/3/france-likely-to-close-more-than-100-mosques. (Accessed on 26-03-2021)

[89] The Economic Times, (2021) Switzerland latest European country to ban Islamic full-face veils. Available at: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/european-bans-on-islamic-full-face-veils/articleshow/81393603.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst (Accessed on 26-03-2021)

[90] Human Rights Watch, (2016) "France: Abuses Under State of Emergency". Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/03/france-abuses-under-state-emergency (Accessed on 26-03-2021)

[91] Ibid.78

anywhere he was going. He noted that "Muslims in Europe have to plan every step of their daily routine and carefully pay attention to every detail not to do something that can provoke cases of Islamophobia. For example, I have to shave my beard every day to avoid unwanted glances. If I had blonde hair and blue eyes, nobody would ever look at my beard"[92]. Moreover, he also stated that "due to my ethnicity, I feel that I have to work hard twice than my colleagues to achieve the same objectives or to get the same job. Even worse, I have to show them every day that I am not a terrorist, and I do not support fanatism. Otherwise, they will assume that I do".

This type of arbitrariness made many scholars argue that most liberal democratic governments have sacrificed some of their democratic substance on behalf of the fight against terrorism[93]. Tsoukala goes even beyond and argues that:

> "if liberal governments cannot legitimate exceptional measures, they cannot be morally distinguished from the terrorists, who believe that the end justifies the means, and might be denounced for their undemocratic, authoritarian-driven stance"[94].

Some of these policies were discriminatory and highly questionable, jeopardising the right to all citizens equality before the law since the potential targets were most likely Muslims. According to the UN special rapporteur on the protection of Human Rights, the wave of new policies in counter-terrorism could have a discriminatory repercussion among the Muslim community, especially the community residing in France[95]. The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and racial intolerance also released a similar statement, stressing how "counter-terrorism laws and policies have vastly exacerbated Islamophobic sentiment" in the UK[96].

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[92] Ibid. 30

[93] Bogain. A (2017) Security in the name of human rights: the discursive legitimation strategies of the war on terror in France, Critical Studies on Terrorism, 10:3 p 447.

[94] Tsoukala, A. (2006) Democracy in the Light of Security: British and French Political Discourses on Domestic Counter-Terrorism Policies. VOL 54, pp 607–627.

[95] Ibid.74

[96] OHCHR, *End of Mission Statement of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance at the Conclusion of Her Mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (2017) para.40. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23073&LangID=E (Accessed on 30.03.2021)

3.4 The counter producent effect:

As demonstrated above, there was a tendency that those who were firstly investigated, arrested and detained on suspicion of terrorism were always Muslims. Those acts perpetuate a harmful stereotype that personifies and portrays Muslims and their beliefs and culture as a threat, raising an anti-Muslim sentiment resulting in hate attacks against Muslim citizens, increasing the number of counter-attacks.

As shown, there is clear evidence that the counter-terrorism procedures toughened in 2015 by some European Countries contributed to increasing the Muslim community's alienation. One of the consequences of this alienation is the significant increase of cases of Islamophobia throughout Europe. For instance, 278 cases of Islamophobia were reported in Belgium throughout 2018[97]. In Austria, an NGO from the local Muslim community reported more than a thousand hate crimes against Muslims in 2019[98] - nearly twice of the cases in 2018. In France, the Collectif Contre Le Islamophobie (CCIF) reported 789 Islamophobic incidents in 2019, a rise of 77% if compared with 2017[99] - regardless, it is important to mention that the numbers disclosed by CCIF have been subject of many discussions and criticism due to the connection of the organisation to authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and/or with the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, the CCIF was dissolved by the French Government in 2020 after the killing of Professor Samuel Paty, being then reestablished in November 2020 in Belgium[100]-. Furthermore, the results of a survey conducted in Denmark concluded that 28% of the Danish population agrees that Muslims should be deported[101].

Years of counter-terrorism measures targeting Muslims did not minimise the likelihood of terrorism from the community members. Instead, it raised their feelings of discrimination and dehumanisation, clearly damaging their integration processes. In some instances, wrongfully perceived or not, individuals or

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[97] UNIA, Annual Figures Report, Year 2018 (Rapport Annuel Chiffres, Année 2018/Cijferverslag 2018) Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/criminal-detention/node/6424 (Accessed on 30-03-2021)

[98] Antimuslimischer Rassismus Report (2019), Available at https://dokustelle.at/reports/antimuslimischer-rassismus-report-2019 (accessed on 27-3-2021)

[99] Azzouz, F. (2020) 789 signalements islamophobes en 2019. Anadolu Agence. 25 February 2020. Available at: https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/monde/france-789-signalements-islamophobes-en-2019-/1744822 (Accessed on 26-03-2021)

[100] Le Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France officiellement dessous (2020) *Le Point* 02 December. Available at: https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/le-collectif-contre-l-islamophobie-en-france-officiellement-dissous-02-12-2020-2403864_23.php (Accessed on 30-03-2021) and Dissous en France, le Collectif contre l'islamophobie (CCIF) se reconstitue en Belgique (2021) *Le Figaro,* 18 February. Available at:https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/dissous-en-france-le-collectif-contre-l-islamophobie-ccif-se-reconstitue-en-belgique-20210218 (Accessed on 30-03-2021). For more information about the disputes and the criticism of CCIF, see also the article of Migration Research Institute "The Soft Hand of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe", pp.4-5. Available at: https://www.migraciokutato.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-Soft-Hand-of-the-Muslim-Brotherhood-in-Europe-1-2.pdf (Accessed on 30-03-2021)

[101] Islam Times (2019). One in Four Danes Believes Muslims Must Leave Denmark. Islamtimes.org, 23 October. Available at https://www.islamtimes.org/en/news/823563/one-in-four-danes-believes-muslims-must-leave-denmark-survey (Accessed in 29-03-2021)

communities targeted by measures to counter violent extremism, felt that some of the procedures, such as customise counselling or mentoring and community outreach (particularly where it involves the police), are instead intended to gather information and exercise a specific control in their groups and communities[102]than to assist in building resilience against the threat of violent extremism.

It is also possible to argue that these policies undermined cooperation between Muslim communities and law enforcement efforts to help identify local terrorism threats based on militant Islam and risking some confrontation between the state and those communities.

Although it is impossible to blame counter-terrorism measures for the high number of youths who fled to join terrorist movements, it is undeniable that the fight against extremism in Europe was discriminative and negatively influenced these communities' lives. Moreover, it had highly damaged the combat to the threat of religious extremism itself, and it also influenced the rise of hate speech against Islam and Muslims, clearly raising the Islamophobia cases and negatively influencing their lives, increasingly isolated them.

In fact, policies that ban the use of Islamic symbols as the Hijab or the Niqab, the closing of mosques, arbitrarily and indefinite detentions without a need of warrant released by a judge, restrictions to movement, torturing terrorism suspects, reducing the standard of proof required for arresting suspects, searches and other intelligence-gathering procedures might prevent some individuals from committing terrorist acts. Nevertheless, it does not affect the overall threat from terrorism. Instead, as proved by a UN research[103], when policies are not proportional and tackle certain groups because of their religion or ethnicity, state security actors are a prominent accelerator of recruitment into terrorism. In the European case, there is a possibility that the hate speech against the western countries might have ensued from the counter-terrorism measures issued by European authorities[104]. Thus, it is clear that the counter-terrorism approach has had a counter-productive effect. Consequently, it is possible to argue that it does not seem the most appropriate way to tackle the issue of terrorism.

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[102] See ACLU et al, letter to Lisa Monaco, op.cit, and ACLU, "Eye on the FBI: San Francisco", 2012
[103] UNDP, 2017 – Journey to extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and The Tipping Poinf for Recruitment. Available at: http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf (Accessed on 20-03-2021)
[104] Ibid. 44

3.5 The media influence – the role of the media in the growing bias against Islam and Muslims

> "The media is the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that is power. Because they control the minds of the masses."[105]

When those words were uttered, the message was clear: the media is power. Indeed, throughout the year's media has played a crucial role in bringing information to everyone, helping the masses form ideas about places, persons, or feelings they never faced[106] . The media's information is intended to be independent, without taking part on any political, sport or religious side, creating a particular type of social cohesion and only broadcasting the reality. It is undeniable that news agencies bring many benefits, producing some good examples of equality, but it is also true that it also has negative consequences, sometimes endorsing discriminative beliefs and misguided stereotypes. It may confirm or deny our convictions and suspicions about a specific topic, but it also can create some perspectives that might be contrasting with reality.

The importance of the news agencies, namely the TV News, is explained by Patrice de Beer, who argues that people, in general, do not read papers but instead only watch television[107]. According to him, nowadays, television became focused on a "pop culture society" mixing the pop culture with current affairs, and setting their own particular agenda, seeking for populistic scandalous rather than show the reality, highlighting criminality, immigration and depicting a society that has a high rate of crime due to the presence of immigrants[108]. This new type of media reality is particularly dangerous in an era where most people believe that media only provide facts, seeing the broadcastings as the unbreakable truth, consequently leaving space for manipulating public opinion.

In the case of Islam, it has been persistently on the headlines of the Western media, which in this particular case, sometimes has been more concerned with being an active and constant object on crafting public opinion rather than mirroring the reality. In this case, much of what is known in European countries comes from the mass media, since that "over three-quarters of people in Western societies rely on media as a primary source of information about Islam and Muslims"[109]. At the same time that this makes the media extremely important in transmitting the information, it makes the population tremendously

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[105] Although this quote is often attributed to Malcolm X, there is no clear evidence that he has said that.
[106] Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation analysis: An overview. *Mass Communication and Society*, *1*(3- 4): 175-194.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ewart, J. Martinkus, J. Rane, H. (2014) Media Framing of the Muslim World: Conflicts, Crises and Contexts, pp 29-46

vulnerable to the influence that media can have in persuading their opinion. Even though it is through the Western media that most of the Europeans get some information about Islam, Muslims are underrepresented and often mispresented in scenes. Constantly, news about their religion reinforces harmful stereotypes and tropes about Muslims, normalising anti-Muslim feelings, often focusing disproportionately on negative angles of stories evolving them and not covering in the same way acts committed by Muslims than acts committed against them[110]. The majority of the information about Islam has been a common bias and passive adoption of an Islamist narrative, which only serves populistic agendas and contributes to polarising political antagonism and enriching a clime of hate and Islamophobia[111].

This kind of misrepresentation of the immigrant communities or ethnic-religious minorities endangers their security and increases discrimination cases. Nevertheless, this envisaged portrait of reality has been subjected to several studies within European countries.

For instance, in the Netherlands, a study by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reported that in the Dutch news items, between 2016 and 2017, the adjectives most used to describe Muslims were "radical", "extremist" and "terrorist"; in contrast, Dutch people were often described as "known", "average" and "beautiful"[112]. Moreover, according to the European Islamophobia Report[113], 99% of the articles on terrorism in the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* were related to "Muslim terror;" in comparison, articles on Islamophobia made up only 0.7% of all articles related to Muslims. Nonetheless, similarly to the case of CCIF, the authors of the European Islamophobia Report have been criticised for their connection to Turkish party *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) also known as Justice and Development Party, and for their financial support from SETA, a think tank with links to the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan[114] and for that reason, the numbers might not be totally neutral.

[110] Stone, M. (2017). Snake and Stranger: Media Coverage of Muslims and Refugee Policy, Shorenstein ctr. On media, pol. & pub. Pol'y, Available at: https://shorensteincenter.org/media-coverage-muslims-refugee-policy/ (Accessed on 30-05-2021)

[111] How do the media fuel Islamophobia? WAAC Comunication for all, available at: https://waccglobal.org/how-do-the-media-fuel-islamophobia/ accessed on 1-04-2021

[112] Council of Europe (2019) *ECRI report on Switzerland* (Sixth monitoring cycle) para 32. Available at: https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-switzerland-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4bd, (Accessed on 05-04-2021)

[113] Bayrakli, E. Hafez, F. European Islamophobia Report 2019 p.36 available at: https://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EIR_2019.pdf (Accessed on 03-04-2021)

[114] Scholz, N. (2019) Die Denunziation der Islamkritiker. *Falter,* 13 December. Available at: https://www.falter.at/zeitung/20191213/die-denunziation-der-islamkritiker (Accessed on 17-06-2021); See also Bauer, G. (2016) Ein Thinktank in Erdoğans Umfeld prangert "Islamophobie" in Österreich an. *Profil.* 21 September. Available at: https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/thinktank-erdogan-umfeld-islamophobie-oesterreich-7578190 (Accessed on 17-03-2021)

Analogous cases can be found in France and the UK, where most magazines and newspapers were publishing articles against Islam, portraying the Islamic culture in a depreciative way and mocking their costumes[115]. Moreover, some reports described that 75% of the media coverage about Muslims concerned terrorist activities and conflict [116]. Equally, the topic "IS" was represented in three-fifths of all Muslim-centered stories[117]. Contrarywise this, positive sections such as human-interest stories or reports depicting Muslims as fruitful members of society were, however, overlooked[118]. This report also stated that in news and stories where Muslims were the main focus, only 3% of the voices heard were, in fact, Muslims[119]. Also, in the US, during the TV debates about the Trump administration's new executive order that would ban immigration from seven Muslim-Majority countries, only 8% of the 176 guests invited to discuss the issue were Muslims.[120]

Likewise, the UNHRC found evidence that in several countries, media disproportionately focuses only on negative angles of stories involving Muslims, such as reporting on their perceived failure to integrate[121]. Similarly, an investigation led by the Federal Commission Against Racism on the quality of media coverage in Switzerland[122] discovered that between 2014 and 2017, eighteen print media outlets were reporting predominantly condemning the lack of will of Muslim community to integrate, highly criticising their values and costumes, but only 2% of the respective reports covered the daily life and the everyday struggle of Muslims or their successful process of integration.[123]

Moreover, there is a high disparity between white supremacists' extremism and Islamic extremism. For example, in the UK, the terms "Islam" or "Muslim" were used almost nine times more than when

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[115] Mathis, C. (2017) How The British Media Helps Radicalise People Against Islam. *HuffPost.* 21st June. Avaialble at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/darren-osborne-islamophobia-in-uk-media_n_594982bee4b00cdb99cb01b9?ncid=inblnkushpmg00000009&fbclid=IwAR0B_LFK3rpVbWOz5OXJwyAqzHL5EgGbO0RAUXvqLFOsofVmNgBxln6ztW8 (Accessed on 01-06-2021)

[116] Ibid Stone, M. (2017). Snake and Stranger: Media Coverage of Muslims and Refugee Policy, SHORENSTEIN CTR. ON MEDIA, POL. & PUB. POL'Y, Available at: https://shorensteincenter.org/media-coverage-muslims-refugee-policy/ (Accessed on 30-05-2021)

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Alderman, J. & Mast, N (2017). When Discussing Trump's Muslim Ban, Cable News Excluded Muslims. *Media Matters for America.* 2 February. Available at: https://www.mediamatters.org/donald-trump/when-discussing-trumps-muslim-ban-cable-news-excluded-muslims. (Accessed on 29 May 2021)

[121] UN Human Rights Council, *UN Human Rights Council: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief,* Countering Islamophobia/Anti-Muslim Hatred to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief February 2021 A/HRC/46/39, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/HatredAndDiscrimination.aspx (Accessed on O6-042021)

[122] Although Switzerland is not in the European Union, it was decided to mention because it is an European Country with a high rate of Islamophobia cases.

[123] Ibid. 116

the perpetrator was identified with the terms "far-right", "neo-Nazi", or "white supremacist"[124]. Similarly, it was reported that unequal media attention is often a reality for a terrorist's attack committed by Muslims. In fact, in comparison to terrorist attacks committed by far-right extremists, the attention given to extremist Islamism is much higher[125], receiving on average 449 per cent more media coverage than if a non-Muslim agent has done the same action.[126]

This is frequently motivated by the duality that Western societies perceive terrorism; on the one hand, when the perpetrators are Muslims, and the victims are from a different religion or ethnicity, the innocence and goodness of the victims and their devoutness will often be presented in contrast with the values of Islam[127]; on the other hand, if the same act is committed against a Muslim, the perpetrator may be considered as a lonely wolf, and will not be labelled by his/her ethnicity or religion, but will be considered as an "exception"[128].

Furthermore, in addition to the influence that news agencies might have, this kind of public manipulation is also present in the Western cinematographic industry. In the UK, for instance, there is a mass campaign to remove old films and TV shows that explicitly exposes racist portrayals of Africans, Asians and other ethnic minority. However, this is not extended to films that included depreciative images of Muslim communities[129]. Also, research on the Hollywood industry found that in over 900 Hollywood films, Arabs or Muslim men were usually defined as terrorists or any other villain[130].

As seen, Islamophobic stereotypes are common both in TV news, newspapers, magazines and in other entertainment spaces in general. Being (un)consciously reinforced through the media, such portrayals will validate any Muslim's general sense of suspicion. Asides from that, in some cases, consolidate the fear of Muslims and negatively labelling them may also be used as fuel by anti-Muslim individuals and

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[124] Hanif, F. (2020). How the British Media reports terrorism. Available at: https://cfmm.org.uk/resources/publication/cfmm-special-report-how-british-media-reports-terrorism/ (Accessed on 04-05-2021)

[125] Kanji, A. (2018) Framing Muslims in the "War on Terror": Representations of Ideological Violence by Muslim versus Non-Muslim Perpetrators in Canadian National News Media. *MDPI Centre* Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9090274 (Accessed on 05-04-2021)

[126] Kearnsetal, E. (2017) Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention Than Others?. Available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2928138 (Accessed on 29-05-2021)

[127] Powell, K. A. (2011). Framing Islam: An analysis of US media coverage of terrorism since 9/11. *Communication Studies*, *62*(1), 90-112.

[128] Corbin, C. (2017). Terrorists Are Always Muslim but Never White: At the Intersection of Critical Race Theory and Propaganda. *Fordham Law Review*, University of Miami School of Law. Available at: https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5437&context=flr (Accessed on 29 May 2021)

[129] Hunter, M. (2020) Islamophobia in the Media. *The News*. September 9. Available at: https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/711967-islamophobia-in-the-media (Accessed on 05-04-2021)

[130] Akram, s. & Johnson, K (2002) *Race, Civil Rights, and Immigration Law After September 11,2001: The Targeting of Arab sand Muslims*, pp. .295, 309. Available at: https://privacysos.org/sites/all/files/akram.pdf (Accessed on 29-05-2021).

groups to further their agendas. Therefore, it is impossible to deny that media, whether in the news or film industry, play a crucial role in shaping the public perceptions of Islam and Muslims negatively.

To conclude, as long as the mass media "consciously or unconsciously continue to support Islamophobic stereotypes, they are complacent with the abuses that Muslims suffer as a result"[131]. Therefore, they may also be responsible for some responses that might derive from Islamophobic acts.

3.6. Final Remark:

Throughout the years, many studies in Europe[132] have been addressing such an aggressive measure's effectiveness while countering terrorism and preventing extremism. It has demonstrated that a small probability of such legislation played a significant role in the decline of terrorism in Europe[133]. Still, instead, it raised a hatred behaviour against western authorities.

It should be noted that any counter-terrorism and prevention programmes effectiveness requires excellent coordination and cooperation between authorities, social workers, and families. Also, it relies on an important relationship of trust, believing that authorities will respect the individuals' rights and assist the family members and friends of those who are, eventually, detained or indicted for terrorism. Additionally, it is urgently needed a more effective solution that does not alienate a specific group based on their religion, ethnicity or country of origin. It has been proven that preventing extremism with discriminatory measures against vulnerable communities does not have the expected result.

Instead, policymakers should invest in more human resources - such as qualified social workers- and more social programs. It is fundamental to create a community-building system capable of bringing different cultures together and social integration projects that play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion while promoting common democratic values and managing controversial issues.

An excellent educational system aiming for social inclusion is a cornerstone for an effective prevention of radicalisation by strengthening resilience against extremism.

An inadequate measure of effectiveness can contribute to complacency, the wrong allocation of scarce resources and unexpected surprises.[134]

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[131] Michaelsen, C "Balancing Civil Liberties Against National Security? A Critique of Counterterrorism Rhetoric" p.20
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.41
[134] Byman, Daniel: "Measuring the War on Terrorism: A First Appraisal", *Current History*, Vol. 102, No. 668, (2003), pp. 411-416.

Only when people feel part of a society and society respects them and feel that they have the same opportunities and their future can grow no matter the background, we can successfully prevent extremism.

4. The need for an effective deradicalisation to the voluntarily homecoming FTFs, focus on children

4.1 – Conceptual problem between deradicalisation and disengagement

Before moving to the necessity of an effective deradicalisation program, it is essential to underline that, although the terms *disengagement* and *deradicalisation* are often used interchangeably to refer to cognitive and physical disassociation from violent group identity and ideology, they are two different concepts. This difference has been an object of various debates in the literature, and there is no consensus defining both terms[135].

Broadly speaking, the term disengagement refers to a behavioural change, whereas deradicalisation implies a cognitive shift, a fundamental modification in the understanding.

On the one hand, disengagement can be described as critical cognitive and social change, a process when an individual modifies the behaviour by renouncing from violence and withdrawing from a radical or terrorist network. It does not necessarily imply a change in values or ideas. Instead, it means leaving behind the shared social norms, attitudes and aspirations, renouncing the objective of achieving their goals through violence[136]. Although during this process a person often abandons the group where was engaged, it does not mean that it always has to happen. In some instances, the individual remains affiliated with the radical organisation but are not willing anymore to execute violent attacks[137]. Therefore, even though the person is no longer engaging in terrorist operations, it still can result in some

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[135] The definition of both concepts will be addressed very briefly. For more discussion on differences between both see Stacie L. Pettyjohn, . Ghez J. & Boucek, (2010) Deradicalising Islamist Extremists; Marsden, Reintegrating Extremists; Koehler, D. (2016) Koehler, Understanding Deradicalization Methods, Tools, and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism; Islam, D. (2019). De-radicalisation of Terrorists: Theoretical Analysis and Case Studies. Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 11, No. 5

[136] Horgan, J. (2009) Deradicalization or disengagement? A process in need of clarity and a counterterrorism initiative in need of evaluation. Revista de Psicología Social, 24:2, 291-298

[137] Islam, D. (2019). De-radicalisation of Terrorists: Theoretical Analysis and Case Studies. Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses , Vol. 11, No. 5, pp. 6-12.

continued adherence to some other socially relevant support behaviour. In Horgan's words, this process can be described as "a social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to, and involvement in, violent extremism is reduced to the extent that he or she is no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity. This process involves a change in behaviour (no longer using or justifying the use of violence), but it does not necessarily involve a change in an individual's commitment to a radical or extremist cause – the individual might leave the organisation but not necessarily modify extremist beliefs"[138].

On the other hand, deradicalisation can be explained as the process of changing internal beliefs and denouncing radical ideologies. In this process, a person changes their beliefs, rejects a violent extremist ideology and embraces non-violent values. It implies a fundamental change in understanding and renouncing radical or extreme ideas, beliefs, and groups linked to violence[139].

Another difference that distinguishes both concepts is the intervention process. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the process of disengagement requires interventions that often consists of different activities. These activities usually concern psychological counselling and support, social work interventions, faith-based debate and dialogue, vocational training, creative and physical therapies (e.g. yoga), family accomplishments, and social and cultural recreation[140]. In contrast, deradicalisation interventions tend to extensively rely on personally well-trained religious scholars, mentors, psychologists, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals, together with the support and presence of individuals who have already pass successfully through this process, the so-called "formers"[141].

A clear example to illustrate the difference between both notions is the case of militant jihadism. When an individual initiates disengagement, they no longer participate in support IS cause – it means no longer planning, recruiting, participating in, funding, or soliciting support for jihadist terrorist activities. On the contrary, in the deradicalisation process, the individual will change the beliefs and values to no longer support the IS ideology and, consequently, do not participate in any action[142].

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[138] Horgan, J. & Braddock, K. "Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalisation Programmes," Terrorism and Political Violence 22, no.2, (2010): 267-291.
[139] Ibid.138
[140] UNODC (2016), *Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons,* p.78, Available at: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/Handbook_on_VEPs.pdf (Accessed on 12-04-2021)
[141] Ibid.
[142] Boutland, D. & Govier, T. (2020) Dilemmas regarding returning ISIS fighters. Ethics & Global Politics, 13:2, pp 93-107. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/16544951.2020.1756562 (Accessed on 10-04-2021)

Given these points, it is possible to argue that these two definitions can be seen as part of the same process. Although disengagement plays a role in deradicalisation and it can be seen as a result of disengagement[143], it is not clear whether all the disengagement processes will culminate in deradicalisation[144]. Due to the commitments based on what those individuals have been taught during their radicalisation path by their leaders, many scholars argue that it is still harder to disassociate them from their group's ideology than to convince them not to engage in violence which can jeopardise the success of both processes[145]. Therefore, there is always a significant possibility of backsliding, and the individual rejoins terrorist groups or engaging in any other violent crimes.

Nevertheless, these definitions have been causing some controversy. For instance, the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) has argued that deradicalisation aims to change individual opinions or beliefs, interfering with the rights to adopt beliefs and ideologies and hold opinions without interference[146] . As a consequence, it can consubstantiate in a violation of those rights[147]. Subsequently, OSCE claims the term and process of deradicalisation should not be used, but instead, states should uniquely focus on the process of disengagement[148]. Though this may be true, it is essential to mention that to have a successful disengagement or deradicalisation process, it must involve both the exit from the extremist milieu and the re-engagement in a non-extremist environment[149]. In fact, the European Commission Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) suggests that if an approach only focuses on disengagement, it might leave the individual with the ideology. Therefore, it does not guarantee that the person will not rejoin the terrorist networks process.

Conversely, if a policymaker decides only to focus on deradicalisation, it might miss the crucial fact that the dropout from extremist and terrorist groups could be predicated on a host of reasons that go beyond ideology, such as disillusionment with the efficacy of violence, falling out with compatriots, and the attractions of regular life. Moreover, factors such as peer pressure and fear of retaliation from former

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[143] Kohler, D. (2017) Understanding Deradicalisation. Methods, tools and programs for countering violent extremism.

[144] Bertram, "How Could a Terrorist be De- Radicalised?", 123.

[145] Boucek, C. Ghez, J. Pettyjohn, S. & Rabasa, A. (2010). De-radicalising Islamist Extremist.Rand Collections. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1053srf (Accessed on 27-02-2021)

[146] See Articles 18 (1) and 19 (1) of ICCPR

[147] OSCE (2020). Non-custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism p. 32 Available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/7/444838.pdf. (Accessed on 27-02-2021)

[148] OSCE (2018), Guidelines for Addressing the Threats ad Challenges of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters" whitin Human Rights Framework p. 61. Available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/7/393503_2.pdf (Accessed on 27-02- 2021)

[149] RAN ISSUE PAPER (2016) Foreign fighter returnees & the reintegration challenge. Available at: *https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_foreign_fighter_returnees_reintegration_challenge_112016_en.pdf* (Accessed on 23-02-2021)

fellows may also form obstacles to ceasing extremist or terrorist groups' involvement[150]. Therefore, as noted, both processes should be used simultaneously to address the issue of reintegrating former extremists successfully.

4.2- Deradicalisation programme from a non-prosecution route to the voluntary homecoming FTFs

After the defeat of IS in the field, many countries faced the complex and pressing challenge of effectively respond to the return of those who travelled to participate in the hostilities in Iraq and Syria. Although there is not enough data to have a precise and reliable number of how many people came back from the field, numbers disclosed by the EP[151] estimates that nearly 30% of those who left for Iraq and Syria have already returned. Countries like Belgium (30%), Denmark (46%), the UK (50%), Germany (31%) or France (12%) are the countries with the highest percentage of returnees[152].

Among those who returned or have been trying to return, there is a diversity of motivations and reasons that influenced them to leave the "Caliphate". These motives can be divided broadly into five categories: (i) those who left early or after only a short stay and were never particularly integrated with IS; (ii) those who stayed longer but did not agree with everything that IS was doing; (iii) those who had no qualms about their role or IS tactics and strategy, but decided to move on; (iv) those who were fully committed to IS but forced out by circumstances, such as the loss of territory, or were captured and sent to their home countries; and (v) those who were sent abroad by IS to fight for the caliphate elsewhere[153].
 If we focus on the youths that left to IS, the willingness to return is often triggered by a traumatic event, motivated by their unpreparedness for war and its adversities. In many cases, they have returned with both physical and psychological wounds[154] - it is essential to remind that in some instances, many of those who left as FFTs were driven by a variety of reasons that not extremism or crime-linked, and

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[150] Ibid

[151] Due to difficulty in have reliable information about the numbers of returnees, in this research the numbers disclosed in 2018 by the EP will be used. However, it seems that the disparity of the numbers does not consist any problem once it does not interfere with the focus of this study

[152] Walmsley, J. Scherrer, A. Ragazzi, F. European Parliamentary Research Service (2018). *The return of foreign fighters to EU soil.* Ex-post evaluation. Available at:https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf

[153] Barrett, R. (2017) Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the threat of returnees. Soufan Center. op.cit., p. 18-19. Available at: https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf (Accessed on 18-04-2021)

[154] Ibid.

therefore had a completely different idea of living under the rules of the "caliphate"[155]. In reality, to some returnees, the idealist and dreamy life in the rows of IS became their worst nightmare, witnessing in everyday life evilness, cruelty, corruption and perverted misuse of Islam[156], making them genuinely regret their decision to join the group[157].

Although programs of disengagement and deradicalisation can be reasonably seen as a hot topic and sometimes viewed with high controversy from a societal and ethical perspective[158], with claims of posing, in some instances, a threat to the society, with a high risk of recidivism[159], the benefits that those programs offer in the long term are higher than any shortcoming. In the first place, it is worth mentioning that a successful re-entry process into society is both a security and a humanitarian imperative, with benefits in stopping violence, preventing further radicalisation cases, and being a community asset[160]. Also, as mentioned above, among those who voluntarily returned or want to return, the vast majority do not want to continue allegiance to any terrorist group and regret having integrated these groups. Consequently, it is possible to make an optimistic assumption that many returnees will have become profoundly disappointed and shocked by the realities of the "Caliphate". Indeed, for many of them, the hardship and brutality to which they had been exposed in the field, the severity of what they had found in a sought society conducted on religious extremism life under the auspices of IS, was not what they thought and wanted. Several already claimed their profoundly remorseful[161], and in those cases, these feelings may result in successful processes of disengagement and deradicalisation to the point where there is no risk of public damage from their behaviour[162].

In terms of benefits, it is possible to divide them into two main groups: first of all, it is arguable that it prevents acts of violence and diminishes cases of further radicalisation among the youth population,

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[155] See chapter I

[156] Lindekilde, L., Bertelsen, P., & Stohl, M. (2016). Who Goes, Why, and With What Effects: The Problem of Foreign Fighters from Europe. *Small Wars and Insurgencies, 27*(5), 858-877. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1208285

[157] Alleruzzo, M. Issa, P. & Rosa. A. (2019). APnews. In camp of diehard IS supporters, some women express regrets. 2nd April. Available at: https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-syria-ap-top-news-international-news-islam-7b16f97433cf40b3a2e46b1fc127fced (Accessed on 21-04-2021)

[158] See chapter 5.

[159] Jenkins, M, B. (2014) When jihadis come marching home. Rand collection. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep02430?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (Accessed on 19-04-2021)

[160] OSCE (2020). Non-custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism. Available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/7/444838.pdf. (Accessed on 19-04-l2021)

[161] See the case of Laura Passoni https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-12-19/belgian-woman-explains-why-she-joined-isis-and-why-she-came-back or the case of Hoda Muthana https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/17/us-woman-hoda-muthana-deeply-regrets-joining-isis-and-wants-return-home

[162] Govier, T. & David Boutland Ethics & Global Politics (2019). *Dilemmas regarding returning ISIS Fighters*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/16544951.2020.1756562 (Accessed on 26-02-2021).

besides building overall community-level resilience to violent extremism[163]; secondly, and equally important, is the matter of relations with the community. It includes not only the relationship with relatives, friends, and other returnees but also with the community as a whole, seeming reasonable and reliable to presume and believe that a proper and constructive treatment of the returnees will further relationships with his/her community[164]. It may help to fill the gaps of some youths' feelings - that influenced many to radicalise -, being a good illustration that a successful deradicalisation and disengagement program of former IS fighters and supporters will benefit the security and wellbeing of the community itself. Likewise, reintegrated persons who have experience with jihadist groups such as IS may be willing and able to supply valuable information to authorities and those working with programs of preventing extremism[165].

Though, it is not a simple and easy task. It has to be carefully addressed, and any situation should be tailored according to the push and pull factors behind it[166]. Any programmes that aim to redirect their futures away from extremism would involve different strategies and flexible plans depending on these varying recipients. Therefore, policymakers must ensure that any strategy is adapted to the variety of backgrounds, experiences, roles and motivations, carefully planning to deal with people considered to have a high level of trauma and emotional/psychological issues, especially women and children of various ages and with a high impact of trauma[167]. Moreover, it is essential to carefully understand that they may be victims, perpetrators, witnesses, or a combination of both. A more prolonged investment in psychosocial treatment, monitoring, and individualised mentoring programs is needed in certain cases. All of these people have different trauma experiences, and some of them are highly vulnerable and have unaddressed psychosocial issues, with the risk of often bring back the emotional damage of exposure to and participation in the war[168].

Equally, in order to reduce the possibility of recidivism, a long-term and sustained investment and specialised expertise should be implemented. It should predict to halt the cycle of discrimination-radicalisation, providing mechanisms to integrate these people and address issues as the identity crisis, analysing their needs, narrative and network, and redirecting the individuals' aspirations toward more

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[163] Ibid. 103
[164] See the case of Mubin Shaikh. Bonino, S. & Shaikh, M. (2016). In Conversation with Mubin Shaikh: From Salafi Jihadist to Undercover Agent inside the "Toronto 18" Terrorist Group. *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 61-72
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid. 23
[167] Ibid. 72
[168] Ibid.161

positive ambitions such as significant jobs or community roles through therapy[169], carefully not to reinforce stigmatisation attentive to direct or indirect discrimination. Also, it is absolutely essential that those programs are flexible, interactive and sustained, and ensure it addresses the gender-specific needs and challenges of reintegrating women and children back into a highly contested societal context, which can be the first step to avoiding new radicalisation cases. In some cases, it might be necessary to focus more on socioeconomic interventions, others on psychosocial factors, and some on ideological and political issues or, in some instances, address a junction of both.

In addition, rehabilitation programs sometimes have to focus on recreational and cultural support without neglecting the importance of providing job training, housing, and social welfare support. Moreover, it also needs to be based on a solid and carefully understanding of the specific cultural and social dynamics that led to radicalisation and mobilisation and the factors that brought the fighters home again. In this way, designing an effective reintegration program requires multiple levels of analysis and a merging of technical expertise with local wisdom and capacity[170].

Hence, no single model should be applied across different cultural contexts. Instead, it must tailor to each specific case and background. Ideas of social and familial obligations, honour, shame, forgiveness, and reconciliation are all culturally defined and must be considered. The ways in which communities interact and are structured vary tremendously, as do the roles and influence of families, community leaders, and institutions[171]. Successful programs have a more significant impact and greater legitimacy when personalised to each specific case and developed together by communities and authorities, supported by a local understanding of social norms, community relationships, and cultural traditions[172]. The importance of the community and the milieu in the deradicalisation process is also underlined by Daniel Koehler, who argues that a successful deradicalisation program can only happen when an individual feels in a safe and open environment that provides space and supports a "cognitive opening" for personal reflection[173].

A Danish psychologist claims that "if we cannot or for political reasons do not want to find ways to genuinely re-include them into societies, we will end up with an alarmingly large army of radicalised

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[169] Singh, S. & Souris, E. *Want to Deradicalize Terrorists? Treat Them Like Everyone Else*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 November. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/23/want-to-deradicalize-terrorists-treat-them-like-everyone-else-counterterrorism-deradicalization-france-sri-lanka-pontourny-cve/ (accessed on 03-05-2021)
[170] Ibid.165
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.133

young nomads drifting around searching for the next and possible even worse terror organisation to crystalise"[174]. In different words, if a country decides not to face the returnees' challenges and simply prosecute them without any deradicalisation and rehabilitation program or simply keep them out by revoking their citizenship[175], not prioritising none of the mentioned programs, in a long-term period, it will contribute to spread extremist ideologies. From a security perspective, doing nothing is the worst of all options[176], and it will allow those individuals to keep recruiting to extremism and regroup elsewhere and continue practising barbaric acts of violence and terrorism, as has been happening in Mozambique and Iraq[177].

Therefore, states authorities should not avoid dealing with the issue of the returnees by leaving these tribulations to other states and the international community as a whole or simple punishing them. If a country purely punishes the individual and imprison them without providing any deradicalisation program, these actions may pose notorious concerns involving the high risk of raising the likelihood of new cases of radicalisation in prison, once those penitentiaries are often seen as an incubator of radicalisation[178]. Therefore, due to the threat that imprisonment of some of the voluntary returnees may pose, in specific cases, it is worth following a non-custodial route or probation that could consider a reintegrative program in order to avoid prison stigma, discrimination, violence or radicalisation of inmates[179]. These cases should be, though, carefully analysed.

To sum up, in the absence of non-custodial programs to the voluntarily homecoming FTFs, the possibility of cases of recidivism and new cases of radicalisation is significantly high, which may pose a more significant potential threat to internal security. Moreover, even if they do not return to violence or not led new radicalisation while in custody, their identity as combatants might be a wrongful inspiration among

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[174] Ibid. 154

[175] BBC, Islamic State: Who is taking back foreigners who joined? 10 October. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49959338 (Accessed on 23-04-2021)

[176] Hassan, Lila. (2021) *FRONTLINE* report. 6th April. Available at: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/repatriating-isis-foreign-fighters-key-to-stemming-radicalization-experts-say-but-many-countries-dont-want-citizens-back/?utm_campaign=frontline&utm_content=1617727086&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter (accessed on 20-04-2021)

[177] See Thompson, W. (2020) How ISIS is regrouping in Mozambique. 18 June. Available at: https://www.businesslive.co.za/fm/features/africa/2020-06-18-how-isis-is-regrouping-in-mozambique/ (Accessed on 21-04-2021); Courtney, K.(2019) ISIS regrouping in Iraq. 4 February. Available at: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/isis-regrouping-iraq-pentagon-report-says-n966771 (Accessed on 21-04- 2021)

[178] See the comments of EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/security/20150316STO34842/eu-counter-terrorism-coordinator-jail-is-a-major-incubator-of-radicalisation (Accessed on 19-04-2021)

[179] Ibid.140

youths and thus maximise the possibility of further radicalisation cases. On the contrary, a successful programme that establishes a new positive identity and relations with new social groups may play a decisive role in helping build and increase resilience to violent extremism worldwide[180].

4.2.1 The importance of the focus on children

Unlike in other non-State armed groups or terrorist organisations where many children are recruited by abducting them from their own families to make them child soldiers[181], many of the Da'esh child fighters were brought to the IS-territory by their parents who moved to Iraq and Syria or were born into FTFs families already in the field[182].

In this context, their parents were often encouraged to train their children to become the next generation of jihadists, also known as the 'lion cubs' or the 'cubs of Caliphate' (or *ashbal*), indoctrinating them to hate and fight those opposing their rules, allowing IS to forge and groom its more loyal members[183].

Part of the IS training was the political indoctrination and military preparation. At the age of six, young children were exposed to jihadi politically indoctrination and started to receive military training at the age of nine[184]. Daesh child recruits were inculcated to show absolute loyalty to Daesh and taught through a carefully religious instruction to show commitment to martyrdom as the highest cause[185]. Equally, the indoctrinating process of minors included the systematic and deliberate shaping of their viewpoints and ideas about the role of women, the LGBTQ+ community and people of other faiths or beliefs, being propagandised to fight against the west and the "infidels"[186].

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[180] Ibid.60

[181] Dudenhoefer, A. (2016) 'Understanding the Recruitment of Child Soldiers', Conflict Trends 2: 45 - 53. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317415254_Dudenhoefer_A_2016_%27Understanding_the_Recruitment_of_Child_Soldiers%27_Conflict_Trends_2_45_-_53 (Accessed on 28-04-2021)

[182] F Capone, '"Worse" than Child Soldiers? A Critical Analysis of Foreign Children in the Ranks of ISIL' (2017) 17 Intl Criminal L Rev 161, 175-176.

[183] Capone, F. (2019) "Children in conflicts as victims and perpetrators? Reassessing the debate on child soldiers in light of the involvement of children with terrorist groups: the children (and wives) of foreign ISIS fighters". Questions of International Law Journal. Available at http://www.qil-qdi.org/the-children-and-wives-of-foreign-isis-fighters-which-obligations-upon-the-states-of-nationality/. (Accessed 29-04-2021)

[184] Van der Heide, L. & Geenen, J. (2017) Children of the Caliphate: Young Returnees and the Reintegration Challenge pp 42-59. Available at: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/governance-and-global-affairs/isga/isga-journal_special_issue-4.pdf (Accessed on 27-04-2021)

[185] Ibid.

[186] The children of ISIS: The indoctrination of minors in ISIS-held territory. Joint publication by the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism and the Dutch Intelligence and Security Service. Available at: https://radical.hypotheses.org/files/2018/01/Minderjarigen_bij_ISIS_ENG.pdf (Accessed on 26-04-2021)

After receiving political and religious indoctrination and got into the IS ranks, they perform multiple roles such as spies, preachers, recruiters, soldiers, executioners, or suicide-bombers[187]. Da'esh instructors and officials recurrently train children to act as informants and report any suspicious behaviour by their parents or any other person living in their controlled area that violate religious laws or suggest opposition to IS rules[188].

The cruelty and craziness that these children were subjected were recorded in some official propaganda videos, as the video of a 4-year-old British boy pressing the button to blow up a vehicle holding three prisoners[189]. Although they were exposed and have witnessed such cruelty, it does not necessarily mean that they agreed or support this ideology and atrocities. In some interviews conducted by the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) and the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), a 15-year-old boy described how was the feeling when facing such barbarism. As an example, he mentioned the case when one of his peers in the rows of IS had to behead someone: "Some of the boys felt uncomfortable about it, but no one dared to say anything. Whenever there was an execution, everyone pretended to be happy, and we shouted Allahu Akbar! We could not say that it upset us. I was upset". Yet, another boy explained that "guys in the camp participated in competitions. The prize? The opportunity to become a suicide terrorist"[190].

In light of the above, despite the hot discussion around this topic and the considerable debate about whether the returned children should be considered victims or perpetrators, I believe that they must be seen as victims rather than perpetrators.

From a legal perspective, the extensive international legal framework follows a path of protection rather than condemnation. According to the UNODC, there is an obligation to protect and reintegrate these children once all children associated or recruited into armed or terrorist groups are to be considered first and foremost victims[191]. In the same way, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols recognises the vulnerability of children and the obligation to treat all children affected by armed

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[187] Ibid.179
[188] Ibid.
[189] Dearden, L. "Isis propaganda video shows British four-year-old Isa Dare 'blowing up car' with prisoners inside in Syria". *The independent,* 11 February, 2016, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-execution-video-shows-british-four-year-old-isa-dare-blowing-car-prisoners-inside-a6866626.html (Accessed 28-04-2021)
[190] Ibid.184
[191] UNODC (2017). Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremists Groups: The Role of the Justice System. P. 40

conflict with particular respect and protection[192]. According to this convention, in an armed conflict, children are protected both whether in a civilian or in a combatant role, regardless of taking part or not in the hostilities. In other words, it means that children should be protected for being a victim of the conflict when they do not take part in the aggressions and also as a victim when they are recruited to play a role as a child soldier. Likewise, the 2007 Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups consider that child soldiers must be treated as victims first, rather than perpetrators[193]. Parallelly to the Geneva Conventions, this can mean that the children of FTFs are doubly protected. First as victims of armed conflict for their status as children, and then for their condition as child soldiers.

In the jihadist children's specific case, many found themselves in an armed conflict but not necessarily played a direct role in the conflict. The vast majority are victims of the choices and exploitation of their parents, with no intention to join armed forces or participate in combat, and victims of war where they were brought to by their progenitors. Therefore, unlike their parents, children cannot be held responsible for their actions but rather considered victims of their own parents[194]. This is corroborated by article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that claims that the rights of the children should be considered separately from their parents' rights and thus, protected from being discriminated or punished as a result of the actions or beliefs of their parents.[195] Therefore, in any decision or action of a State that directly or indirectly affects the children, the principle of the child's best interests must be taken as the first concern. Furthermore, the UNCRC also obliges countries to take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures to fulfil this obligation[196].

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[192] ICRC, Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36d2.html ; ICRC, *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, 8 June 1977, 1125 UNTS 3, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36b4.html.

[193]UNICEF, *The Paris Principles. Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated With Armed Forces or Armed Groups*, February 2007, para 2.1, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/465198442.html.

[194] Colsaet, R. & Renard, T. (2018) Children in the Levant: Insights from Belgium on the Dilemmas of repatriation and the challenges of reintegration. Egmont Royal Institute. Available at: https://www.egmontinstitute.be/children-in-the-levant-insights-from-belgium-on-the-dilemmas-of-repatriation-and-the-challenges-of-reintegration/ (Accessed on 27-03-2021)

[195] UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, Article 2, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html.

[196] UNCRC, Article 3.

Besides, in cases of connections to any crime, this convention also predicts the protection of children, promoting their resocialisation and allowing them to receive exceptional support through physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration[197].

From a security perspective, a lot was already said on pages 28-30. However, it is important to remark the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) arguments, the commander General Kenneth McKenzie, concerning children. McKenzie argues that children that have been radicalised since a very young age or since they were born, unless states find a way to reintegrate and deradicalise them, they might be "giving themselves the gift of fighters five to seven years down the road, and that is a profound problem" [198]. Moreover, he also claims that "it will be a military problem in a few years if we do not fix the non-military aspects of it now".

In the same direction, HRW points that there is an extreme necessity of seeing children as victims and create programs to deradicalise and reintegrate instead of seeing them as perpetrators and prosecute them[199]. The organisation claims that children that lived under IS rules should be treated first and foremost as victims and should only face prosecution and detention "in exceptional circumstances"[200]. HRW goes even beyond and remarks that "Expanding prisons and locked rehabilitation centres to warehouse hundreds of children who never even chose to live under IS is unconscionable"[201].

This is also the position of some child rights experts that have been arguing that if there is not an effective program that helps these children, they are on the edge of the risk of double victimisation[202]. Firstly, for being abducted, recruited, used, and exposed to violence at an early age and secondly for being considered a threat and prosecuted instead of having a proper rehabilitation; in some instances, considered "abandoned" by their own countries[203].

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[197] UNCRC, Article 11.; Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, *as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14*, 4 November 1950, ETS 5, Article 10, available at:

[198] Jangiz, K. "Radicalisation of children at al-Hol a 'profound problem': top US commander". *Rudaw,* 28 April, 2021. Available at: https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/280420211 (Accessed on 28-04-2021)

[199] Human Rights Watch, (2021) "Thousands of Foreigners Unlwafully Held in NE Syria". Available at https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/23/thousands-foreigners-unlawfully-held-ne-syria (Accessed on 30-04-2021)

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Athie, A. (2017) The Children of ISIS Foreign Fighters: Are Protection and National Security in Opposition? International Peace Institute. Available at: https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/12/children-isis-foreign-fighters-protection-national-security-opposition/ (Accessed on 27-04-2021)

[203] Hubbard, B. & Méheut, C. "Western Countries Leave Children of ISIS in Syrian Camps". *The New York Times*, 31 May 2020. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/world/middleeast/isis-children-syria-camps.html (Accessed on 28-04-2021)

However, this approach does not necessarily mean that there should not be any consequences for their actions, but rather that due to their status as victims, all the responses should address their best interest, granting them the right to be socially, psychologically and physically rehabilitated[204].

When discussing child rehabilitation and reintegration processes, it is fundamental to consider two main issues: the confront of what they have seen during their period in the "Caliphate" and the challenging task of their returning. Regarding the first one, many children came highly traumatised due to the environment where they were born/grew up and the horrors and cruelty they have witnessed. Several may have been injured or acquired disabilities, whereas others experienced sexual exploitation and abuse – some girls may have been even raped[205]- while several may suffer chronic health consequences from having lived in conditions deprived of adequate basic services. Moreover, facing bombs and other cruel scenes like executions, public amputations, public displaying of beheaded persons was also a reality when in the IS territory. Furthermore, during their times in the field, they were subjected to daily airstrikes – which is a proven stressful experience for children [206]. In addition, minors were confronted with death and destruction more than any other children in many Western countries, and several have lost family members or friends on the battlefield[207].

In terms of their returning, stigma and discrimination upon arrival to their countries of nationality or relocation to a third country may also increase the difficulties that such children face when reintegrated. Consequently, according to UNCRC, countries should take all their appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim, providing it in a safe environment that can foster the child's health, self-respect, and dignity [208]. Equally, this convention also aims to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights and access to cognitive development, food, housing, education, and health are protected[209].

Under those circumstances, every program should aspire to support children to be able to enjoy their rights properly and without discrimination or stigmatisation. Therefore, if no proper program addresses and ensures that all the rights mentioned above are protected, it can jeopardise these children's reintegrating process.

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[204] Sampaio, A, A. McEvoy M. Little weapons of war: Reasons for and consequences of treating child soldiers as victims. *Netherlands International Law Review*. 2016;63(1):51-73.
[205] Ibid. 192
[206] Ibid.181
[207] Ibid.183
[208] UNCRC, Article 39.
[209] UNCRC, Articles 6 and 4.

Alongside the conventions, principles and guidelines mentioned *supra*, many resolutions of the UNSC have also been stressing the government's responsibility to provide long-term and sustainable protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts[210]. This protection emphasis namely in encouraging policymakers to focus on reintegration and rehabilitation[211], and in recognising and underlining the particular importance of providing a well-timed program that offers assistance to "children associated with foreign terrorist fighters returning or relocating from conflict zones, including through access to health care, psychosocial support and education programmes that contribute to the wellbeing of children"[212]. Furthermore, some of these resolutions also advise states to develop appropriate "legal safeguards to ensure that prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies concerning children comply with international law obligations and are tailored to their needs"[213].

Notwithstanding what was aforesaid, some concerns should also be considered. Children returning after being recruited as a child soldier to the IS rows constitute undoubtedly a long-term challenge that requires longstanding commitment and may pose a dilemma: on the one hand, the moral and legal obligation to deradicalise and support their rehabilitation; on the other hand, the security concerns. In some of the EU countries, authorities have claimed that these children can threaten the internal security of the Union due to what they have been exposed to during their times in the field. For instance, the German domestic intelligence chief, Hans-Georg Maassen, claimed that these children, due to their past and what they were indoctrinated to, "could later carry out violent attacks" [214]. In his words, they could be living time bombs due to the possibility of coming back brainwashed to carry out attacks; the same fear is shared by the former chief of French domestic intelligence service, Patrick Calvar, that defends those children pose an undeniable threat, considering them as "ticking time bombs who hated democracy and the West"[215].

Although all the controversy around this topic, in order to not undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, it should never be forgotten

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[210]UN Security Council resolution 2225 (18 June 2015), para. 7. UN Doc S/RES/2225(2015), available at: https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11932.doc.htm (Accessed on 28-04- 2021)

[211] UN Security Council resolution 2427 (9 July 2018), para. 26. UN doc S/RES/2427(2018), available at: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/216/81/PDF/N1821681.pdf?OpenElement (Accessed on 28-04-2021)

[212]UN Security Council resolution 2396 (21 December 2017), para. 36. UN doc S/RES2396(2017), available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1327675 (accessed on 28-04-2021)

[213] Ibid., para. 37.

[214] Siebold, S & Shala, A. (2018) 'Brainwashed' children of Islamist fighters worry Germany: spy chief. *Reuters*. 31 January. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-security-children/brainwashed-children-of-islamist-fighters-worry-germany-spy-chief-idUSKBN1FK1FJ (Accessed on 30-052021)

[215] McGuinness. (2016). Children of hate-filled ISIS returnees are ticking time bombs' – French experts warn. *Express*. 13 December. Available at: https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/742994/isis-islamic-state-terrorist-france-children-bombs (Accessed on 30-05-2021)

that the majority of these children have no fault of their own, and they were taken to the IS ranks by their parent's decisions. Thus, it is crucial not to let the increasing public fears of the security threat that minors may pose upon return be prejudicial to the children. Therefore, approaches that generalise, securitise, and keep the ostracisation against children and minors, stimulating personal grudges that can culminate in inter-generational radicalisation[216], should not be considered. Instead, all these children should be cared with particular attention to the psychological impact of these individual traumas and should be closely and carefully accompanied in their (re)integration into a safe milieu.

In this regard, the approach must be tailored to each specific case and consider children's specific experiences and conducts under the "Caliphate". The reintegration and rehabilitation of children are widely regarded as the only viable option to ensure their wellbeing and, at the same time, neutralise further security threats.

Finally, when addressing this issue accurately, countries are mitigating risks and minimising the chance of recidivism and concomitantly avoiding making these children as victims not only of their parents' decisions but also victims of the inaction and passivity of the European governments.

5. The lack of a common deradicalisation program in the EU. The Aarhus Model and the case of France.

5.1 The inexistent joint policy on Deradicalisation programmes

Unlike the common strategy for combating terrorism[217], in terms of deradicalisation, disengagement and reintegration, the approaches to the variety of challenges presented in the EU countries vastly differ from one to another country. This lack of common strategy can be justified on account of each state's different security and socio-cultural environments, and due to the conceptual context, that implies a difficulty to

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[216] Matias, B. (2021). Radicalization in Western Europe: Mental State or Social Challenge? Tactics Institute For Security & Counter-Terrorism. Available at: https://tacticsinstitute.com/news/details/233/radicalization-in-western-europe-mental-state-or-social-challenge (accessed on 04-03-2021)
[217] Council of The European Union (2005) *The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy*. Brussels. Available at: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204/EN/pdf (Accessed on 21-05-2021)

find a consensus on an effective programme. Hence, every country has been creating discretionarily their own plan, which varies depending on the political agenda and interests of those in power.

As a consequence, Member-States deal with this issue differently; some countries have a more liberal and decentralised approach, whereas others have a stricter and more centralised model[218]. This discrepancy among European approaches to returnees may negatively impact the security concerns, creating a gap between the understanding of Human Rights in different EU countries and confirming the idea of non-common policy on Human Rights issues inside the EU area, leading to different responses among the Member-States. For example, in 2012, a Danish citizen that was allegedly sent to Syria by Danish intelligence services to gather information about IS and the forces fighting the regime of Bashar Al-Assad was not sentenced upon his arrival to Copenhagen and lived a quiet life in Denmark after his return. However, in 2017 he was arrested in Spain and sentenced to eight years in jail, accused of joining a terrorist organisation because of his trip to Syria in 2012[219].

Despite the increase of awareness and efforts to have a common strategy, one of the main consequences of this gap to deal with the returnees is precisely that this process let the entire decision to national initiatives, many times manipulated by populist political parties aiming to satisfy the public opinion rather than respect Human Rights. Consequently, it makes countries decide how to deal with FTFs completely *ad-hoc*. This arbitrariness in the approach could risk an eventual common protection of internal security once there is not any coordinated and continued strategy to follow.

5.1.2 The Aarhus Model

With the wave of returning FTFs to Europe, and in order to address the threat of extremism that these individuals pose, contrarily to many Western countries that have chosen detention and incarceration to prevent and counter violent extremism, Danish authorities decided to develop a pioneer and progressive-comprehensive psychology-based program. This plan is intended to stop and prevent any kind of radicalisation[220] and to help those that were already radicalised to leave these ideals through a non-prosecution route, the so-called Aarhus Model. It was adopted in 2013 to upgrade the already existing

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[218] Ibid. 150
[219] *The other face of Europe.* Directed by David Gelb. *Al Jazeera World*, 2020. Documentary. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/program/al-jazeera-world/2020/12/16/the-other-face-of-europe (Watched 29-05-2021)
[220] This program was created in 2007 in the Aarhus Municipality and aimed to prevent any type of radicalisation, political or religious, from with supremacists far right members to Islamic extremists and any other type of extremism.

program for the prevention of radicalisation[221] and is based on the Life Psychology theory of Psychology Professor Preben Bertelsen. In his concept, it is presumed that every individual aspires to lead a 'good life', and therefore to an individual embrace the extremism, it is because something had happened that motivated the diversion on individuals' values, and consequently made them join terrorist organisations[222].

The model focuses on a deradicalisation program that provides former FTFs with the opportunity to reintegrate into conventional society, with premises of inclusion rather than stigmatisation or exclusion and incarceration policies. Bertelsen developed this program based on the belief that its participants would be mainly confused and vulnerable young people struggling with issues as identity crisis and caught between two cultures, looking for existential answers, easily influenced by a simplistic narrative urging them to join IS rows[223]. Therefore, this model understands that the only way to succeed in rehabilitating returning FTFs is to create a trust relationship between authorities and the social circles in which radicals operate. For that reason, the project has been developed "through a learning-by-doing and trial-and-error, rather than sitting behind a desk"[224] and consists of two target dimensions: the prevention of radicalisation and the deradicalisation targeted intervention. These two dimensions are consequently centred on three main characteristics that connect Danish authorities, trained mentors, families, friends, and local religious actors: *i)* it is a multi-agency and extensive collaboration between various existing social services providers and institutions, such as the educational and health-care system, civil society, religious authorities, police, and the intelligence and security services, including state, regional and local actors; *ii)* social inclusion, and *iii)* scientific formation[225]. As seen, it is a joint effort between many actors that combines a variety of entities and demands strict and vigorous cooperation between all of them. Equally, it also includes the cooperation of research projects at the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences and with experts in the field of politics, sociology, psychology, acculturation and religion at Aarhus University, and counting close collaboration with RAN[226].

[221] Hemmingsen, AS. (2015). An introduction to the Danish Approach to Countering and Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation. Danish Institute for International Studies. Available at: https://www.ft.dk/samling/20151/almdel/reu/bilag/248/1617692.pdf (Accessed on 30-04-2021)

[222] Bertelsen, P. (2015). Danish Preventive Measures and De-radicalisation Strategies. *From the desert to world cities: The new terrorism*, p. 241-252. Available at: https://psy.au.dk/fileadmin/Psykologi/Forskning/Preben_Bertelsen/Avisartikler_radikalisering/Panorama.pdf. (Consulted on 18-02-2021).

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid. 219

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid.

The structure of the deradicalisation mechanism, also known as 'exit programme', goes around efforts that target respectively the wider Danish society, extremist individuals and groups that are already involved in violent extremism. Nevertheless, these issues are changeable and might differ any other time. Thus, to address the challenges that may arise, the focus is being constantly reshaped to the new needs through various new mechanisms and activities, both "top-down and bottom-up" and always tailored to the specific case[227]. Although some of these emphases may slightly differ, the overall approach rests on a set of fundamental premises fluctuating from considerations of the welfare state to understandings of delinquency and how their behaviour can be changed, and they can become reintegrated[228].

What makes the deradicalisation dimension of the Danish Aarhus approach so unique is precisely the purpose of the exit programme, that is to help men and women who wish to abandon extreme and violent trajectories and find their ways back into society, being included in daily social life; the intention of inclusion without prosecution.

This inclusive model proposes to represent meaningful participation in everyday cultural and social life, spreading a message that IS supporters who are Danish and left Denmark should and can come back to their country and that they will be wanted there, as well as they will be able to form for themselves a decent life[229]. Moreover, this program was designed to counter the narrative that there is no other option but to continue fighting, that criminality and violence is the only choice to them because there is nothing else to do and society does not want them[230]. It recognises that these individuals are no different from any other citizen, and if they renounce extremism and violence, they should be able to get an education program or/and a job[231].

However, this process is restricted and based on the precondition that the homecoming FTFs have not committed acts of violence while supporting IS abroad (if so, then this person will be prosecuted according to the Danish law), and therefore, whilst that has not committed any crime while abroad is one of the crucial requirements of this model, it is also one of the shortcomings and can be the subject of many ethical discussions[232]. Determining whether returnees have committed or not acts of violence abroad is hugely complicated and rough. Finding evidence to prove if the returnee participated or did not

[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Govier, T. & David Boutland Ethics & Global Politics (2019). *Dilemmas regarding returning ISIS Fighters*. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16544951.2020.1756562. (Accessed on 26-02-2021).
[230] Ibid
[231] Hassan, A. De-radicalisation Programme for Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters. Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 11, No. 3 (March 2019), pp. 13-16
[232] See the chapter V.

participate in any crime while in IS is challenging and roughly impossible to confirm. Moreover, it is difficult to distinguish between those who left to fight and have actually participated in perpetuating the barbarism of IS and those who only wanted to live in the "Caliphate". Thus, there is a double risk: a risk of finding false evidence that can be used against the individual and sentence him/her wrongfully and the possibility that the person has committed crimes and is not being prosecuted appropriately due to the lack of evidence.

Consequently, not every returnee meets the requirements to enjoy this model. Still, those who fit in these integration programmes are offered counselling, social services, medical care, housing, vocational training, and employment.

Accordingly, individuals in the program are mentoring by a professional that is responsible for playing three prominent roles: firstly, he/she has a crucial responsibility in the particular deradicalisation process by marking the pitfalls, the personal and societal dangers and the illegality and the mis-directedness of their particular behaviours; secondly, the mentor provides assistance to find ways of inclusion and reintegration regarding the activities and tasks in the daily life of the mentee (family, work, education, leisure time); and thirdly, they are at the disposal of the participants to have a day-to-day advice and assistance, with whom they can engage in extensive conversations about life problems - as an existential crisis for instance -, religion, citizenship, sense of belonging, and any other issues like violence or their extremist past[233].

Still, only sixteen out of thirty-six danish citizens that left for Syria had voluntarily returned. However, thirteen of them were submitted to this program and were successfully reintegrated, claiming a profound regret for have joined the group[234].

To explain the success of this program, it is worth underlining the conjugation of some factors: all these mentors that participate in the program are well trained and have high skills to deal with extremism; they were recruited and distributed to the specific case concerning age, gender, ethnic background, formal education and experience. Moreover, all of these professionals have received intensive preparation, comprising courses on radicalisation and deradicalisation processes, risk factors and conflict management. Besides, all their programs are tailored to each specific case and individual profile and specific needs of the targeted person.

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[233] Ibid. 219
[234] Cobiella, K. (2015) Denmark De-Radicalization Program Aims to Reintegrate, Not Condemn. Available at: https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/denmark-de-radicalization-n355346 (Accessed on 21-05-2021)

Additionally, there is strict, reliable and trusty cooperation between all the Danish authorities involved in the program and the families of the returnees as well as their community and religious leaders. Last but not least, the Danish Government invests over than €1M a year in "jihadi rehab programs"[235], demonstrating how the Government is committed to stopping new radicalisation cases through rehabilitation and reintegration of former extremists rather than simply put them "behind bars".

5.1.3 The case of France

In France, due to the growing number of Islamic radicalisation cases and the consequent rise of terrorist attacks, in 2016, the French Prime Minister, Manuel Vallas, approved a new package to tackle extremism. Among many other policies, this compendium included establishing a deradicalisation centre[236]based on an experimental program with a therapy called "shock therapy"[237]. The then called Centre for Prevention, Integration and Citizenship was aimed to receive in two years around 3,600 radicalised youths between 18 and 30 years old that were willing to voluntarily being subjected to a deradicalisation process[238].

This "shock therapy" consisted of a ten-month regime that could provide a transitional space between an open atmosphere and a prison that would help them to "reshape their intellectual system and divorce them from jihadi mindset"[239].

During their time in the Centre, the participants would receive lectures in philosophy, media, religion, French history and literature, music and art. Moreover, it included conversations on democracy and secularism as well as other activities such as therapy and sports[240]. The participants would be subjected to an experimental method via a collective approach, where they would "develop critical minds and appropriate citizenship and republican values"[241]and would redress their thinking and behaviour in order to return to mainstream society. To fulfil this aim, they would wear uniforms during their daily routine, participate in structured and mandatory military drills, and sing the "*Marseillaise*", the French National

[235] Preventing and Countering Extremism and Radicalisation. National Action Plan. (2016). Available at: https://stopekstremisme.dk/filer/fakta-om-udmoentning-af-satspuljeaftale-3-nov-2016.pdf Accessed on 21-05-2021)

[236] The Local (2016). France's first centre for deradicalisation set to open. September. Available at: https://www.thelocal.fr/20160914/frances-first-centre-for-deradicalization-set-to-open/ (Accessed on 29-04-2021)

[237] Fillion, S (2017). What can we learn from France's failed deradicalisation centre. *La Stampa*. Setember. Available at: https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/la-stampa-in-english/2017/09/02/news/what-we-can-learn-from-france-s-failed-deradicalization-center-1.34412986 (Accessed on 29-04-2021)

[238] Ibid. 204

[239] Nateghpour, A. (2018). Deradicalisation Programme. The Case of France. Available at: https://www.grin.com/document/465431 (Accessed on 29-04-2021)

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid.

Anthem. Additionally, all participants had an everyday meeting with special educators, psychologists, lmams, and psychiatrists to evaluate the undergoing cognitive shift[242].

However, the program curriculum did not include the approach and dialogue about extremist's ideologies and the reasons and issues that made them join an extremist ideology, such as the crisis of identity or lack of sense of belonging and feelings of discrimination, and therefore the entire life cycle of radicalisation would not be addressed and scrutinised in their daily basis. Thus, their prior radicalisation process was rather seen as a psychiatric problem than a structured ideology manipulated by a solid and convincing rhetoric[243]. Consequently, this program was accused of being projected to influence them to give up on their traditional Muslim values (for instance, stop eating halal food[244]) and embrace French values.

4.1.3.1 The failure of the French Centre for Prevention, Integration and Citizenship model

Not surprisingly, the program failed, and the Centre closed in 2017, less than twelve months after the official inauguration and with none of the volunteers that began the program lasting the ten months and finished the process of deradicalisation[245].

Many reasons can be seen as the motive why this program failed. Firstly, the beginning of the program was poorly managed and created with no structured plan behind it. Different from the Aarhus Model, where the municipality and all the stakeholders are in perfect syntony and collaborate close to each other, the French project was created in the small town of Pontourny without consulting the local authorities in advance, including the city mayor[246]. It means that since the commencement of the process, there was no coordination between all the participants. It lacked to understand the region's needs, how the municipality would see this project, which tools would be necessary to make it succeed, the resources used in the project, or how the civil society would or would not engage with the participants in the program. In fact, the inhabitants of Pontourny did not accept the creation of the centre in their community, and since the

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[242] Crowell, M. (2017). *What Went Wrong with France's Deradicalization Program? - The Atlantic.* Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/france-jihad-deradicalization-macron/540699/ (Accessed 29-04-2021)

[243] Sputnik. (2017). *France's Deradicalization Program 'Was a Total Failure' After Four Years of Work - Sputnik International.* Available at: https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201711131059065903-french-deracalization-system-failure/. (Accessed 23-05-2021)

[244] Ibid. 240

[245] France 24 English. (2017, August, 02). France: First deradicalisation centre closes less than one year after opening (Vídeo). YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rbVxA_bTQ4

[246] Ibid. 241

beginning started to object to this project, claiming that it was bringing "potentially dangerous individuals at risk of turning violent in their midst" to their local environment or even protesting in front of the centre, carrying signs claiming that "Pontourny is in danger" and "Jihadist Danger.[247]"

Secondly, contrasting the Danish model where each program is tailored to each specific case and carefully addresses the needs, the past and the future of any individual, Valla's project failed to fully comprehend the subjectivity and complexity of each radicalisation process and path, and consequently failed to direct an effective deradicalisation program. This was a collective program with only one path, a program that would treat all the volunteers in the same way without paying attention and addressing every individual's specific necessity and background. To Wassim Nasser, a French expert on Jihadists groups, the program was not well prepared and did not work on a case by case, did not care about the vicissitudes of the different people, and therefore it could not be expected success through this methodology[248]. In his perspective, these people have lost faith in the State, and therefore focus on "responsible citizenship and relearning the values of the Republique" does not seem the right approach, but rather a methodology that convicts them not to embrace violence and refrain from their ideology.

Additionally, he endorses that a deradicalisation process is incredibly complex and should be carefully addressed, claiming that "it is not like you can just give them a red pill and they will start singing the *Marseillaise*"[249].

Moreover, the full-frontal approach also deserved the criticism of Amelie Boukhobza, a well-known French psychologist. In her perspective, learning French nationalistic symbols and costumes aggressively, opposing to their traditional Muslim ones, could not be considered as the proper way to deal with radicalised people; the "full-frontal approach of flag raising in the morning, courses in secularism, singing the French national anthem, was too aggressively nationalistic." Boukhobza accuses France of erecting "a program in total opposition to the particular mental universe of the individuals", and in her perspective, it should have been created a program that would propose not a counter-truth but something that would make them understand that both cultures can coexist[250]. This approach marks one of the most significant differences between the French and Danish methodologies: the French model was concentrated on eliminating any other values that were not the French nationalistic ones, whereas the

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[247] Ibid.240
[248] Jacinto, L. France 24. (2017) France's 'deradicalisation gravy train' runs out of steam. Available at https://www.france24.com/en/20170801-france-jihad-deradicalisation-centre-closes-policy (Accessed on 21-05-2021)
[249] Ibid
[250] Ibid.239

Danish model was more focused on coexistence between different cultures and values, always respecting any cultural difference.

To Boukhobza, a program that intends to deradicalise and counter an individual's ideology is challenging and implies years of studies and research, an enormous level of fund, commitment, and knowledge to get the result. Hence, to her, it is unthinkable to have success in deradicalising extremists through an aggressive nationalist method[251].

Additionally, another enormous mistake in this model was that it was created under the idea that taking these youths away from their home environments and put them in this Centre, far away from their milieus for ten months, would be the right way to re-shaped them to French values. Nonetheless, from an integration point of view, this is a wrong approach. It would instead make them feel that they were being treated as sick people, people who need a mental cure, that their families and all their environment were wrong, and therefore they should be taken away to "receive treatment" rather than feel that they were being reintegrated into society. Besides, being incarcerated in this Centre would quickly arise feelings of being under surveillance while in the program, like if they were in prison, which would crease their beliefs of not trusting the Government or any other authority.

In that regard, the French Senator Esther Benbassa highly criticised the *modus operandi* and classified the program as a "total fiasco", claiming that taking young people from their homes was a non-sense policy and that those people needed to be re-socialised, not isolated[252].

It is possible to argue that this aspect can be seen as the most significant difference between those two models. One of the most essential premises in the Danish example is the family and community's important role in their resocialisation. In this understanding, to succeed in reintegrating an individual, it is necessary to work alongside with the families and the community of the participants to make them feel included in the civil society, engage with their fellow citizens, and build a trust relationship with the authorities, rather than enclosure them in a closed environment like a penitentiary.

Similarly, the fact that this program did not provide directed training to any job or did not offer vocational education to a future profession - which should be a cornerstone in a program like this - might have been one of the reasons why this program failed. It is important to recall that a process like this should also redirect the individual to a future job, where they can understand that once finished the deradicalisation process, they are ready to engage in mainstream society, get a job and have an undisturbed life.

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[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.

Lastly, due to a lack of understanding of the complex difference between disengagement and deradicalisation, this project mainly pursued disengagement programs and not of deradicalisation. It was mainly focused on making the individuals abandon the groups where they were engaged in order to reduce the number of active terrorism, rather than focus on making those participants understand why the extreme ideology and a terrorist behaviour would be an erroneous path and how they could be reintegrated into the society leaving the extremism ideologies behind.

The foremost critics sustained that the French Government created this Centre as a populist move, claiming that they "were looking for something to give to the citizens as a response to ease up all the pressures"[253], and thus they were not really interested in making it work. Likewise, some voices also noted that in this program there was nothing voluntarily, experimental or progressive but rather a contradiction of values, once it forced people to wear uniforms, follow military drills, sing the "*Marseillaise*", and pursue other French nationalistic symbols, which would be unerringly the same radicalism but in the other way around[254].

To conclude, it is also worth to be mentioned that, opposing to the Aarhus Model, this program did not predict that homecoming FFTs could integrate the Centre – even though the requirements would be restricted to those who did not commit any crime while abroad. Instead, it would be only for those who were never engaged in any extremist organisation in France or abroad or did not leave the country to join any terrorist group.

In fact, the French policy towards those who left to Syria and Iraq and wanted to come back has been a strict and an extreme policy[255]. It has been an *ad hoc* policy, and in the medium-long term, it can be much more prejudicial than having a proper and well-structured deradicalisation program[256].

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[253] Ibid.

[254] Kern, S. (2017). *France: Deradicalization of Jihadists a "Total Fiasco"*. Available at: https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9982/france-deradicalization (Accessed 23-05-2021).

[255] The Independent, (2017). *France is 'hunting down its citizens who joined ISIS' without trial in Iraq*. 30 May. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/france-hunting-isis-fighters-citizens-without-trial-iraq-special-forces-sas-syria-terrorists-surveillance-killed-a7763111.html (Accessed on 20-05-2021)

[256] Pugliese, M. (2020). France and Foreign fighters: the *Controversial Outsourcing of Prosecution*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies. Available at: https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/france-and-foreign-fighters-controversial-outsourcing-prosecution-24666 (Accessed on 20-05-2021)

5.2 The important role of the family and their communities

"A broad holistic discussion by all stakeholders is crucial, society as a whole need to rehabilitate deradicalised individuals or returning terrorist fighters with an understanding and inclusive outlook to avoid recurrent ostracism. It is key to educate society towards this new type of social integration crippling Europe. Otherwise, it can add fuel to the fire"[257].

Although for a returnee being accepted by their families and close friends is perhaps the most important step to succeed in the long and challenging process of rehabilitation– in most of the cases, families are fundamental to their way back since it can perform the strength to individual's resilience and are crucial in their mental stability-, the possibility of failing and easily dive again into extremism is very much related to the way that society as a whole understands and deal with the issue of FTFs.

Hence, the resocialisation process should be very carefully addressed. Once back into society, their milieu can have both a positive or a negative impact. Their influence can be destructive or constructive; it can isolate the individuals and gives them the sense of loss that they had before and consequently led them to seek other alternatives for their needs; or it can be the lever that these individuals need to heal their wounds and preventing them from seeking significance in radical movements networks[258]. In other words, it is the community itself that more than their families, can offer or not the sense of belonging and inclusion that formerly this person did not feel and which can provide an alternative to the sense of belonging that extremist groups may have used to persuade them. In contrast, if the community does not participate and does not accept that person's reintegration, continuing to deny their inclusion due to their past, then it will bring tensions between the individual and the community, which might raise the possibility of backsliding[259]. When a FTF decide to come back and embrace a deradicalisation process, it does not necessarily mean that he/she will not relapse, and chances of recidivism are eliminated. Conversely, these are super vulnerable people that are highly traumatised, and therefore still a target of terrorist organisations that continue operating and might try to re-radicalise them. For that reason, policymakers need to acknowledge that society itself might not be ready for this new type of

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[257] Ibid. 213
[258] Ibid 213.
[259] RAN EX POST PAPER (2018). *Engaging with communities. Collaboration between local authorities and communities in PVE.* Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-local/docs/ran_local_yf-c_collaboration_local_authorities_communities_preventing_violent_extremism_22-23022018_en.pdf (Accessed on 26-02-2021)

reintegration, and it is absolutely essential to "educate society towards this new type of social integration crippling Europe".

Consequently, although governments and local authorities may provide their utmost to reintegrate and rehabilitate these people and to prevent cases of ostracism against them, the key for the success of a program like this and to prevent new cases of discrimination and consequent radicalisation is not only lying on the investment and efforts by the government or local authorities but rather in a strong and committed community effort[260]. These programs cannot be successfully implemented without community engagement. Indeed, rebuild the social network of a FTF and getaway of the draw of being a terrorist, even though he/she might have not committed any crime and voluntarily returned home, is one of the most complex challenges during the rehabilitation process[261].

Thus, it is crucial to build a strong cooperation relationship based on trust and dialogue between the individual, the community, and the authorities; the person takes responsibility for their actions, and the community assumes the responsibility of respecting and integrating the individual. Nevertheless, constructing this trust affiliation is a long-term process that needs a durable timeframe to be effective and requires a strict commitment. Thus, protection, representation and support to all stakeholders should be provided[262].

It is also worth underlining that there are cases where it is not only the returnee that might be highly traumatised but also the family. In this instance, households might be traumatised by the acts of their sons and daughters. On some occasions, their actions brought consequences as police raids in their homes, public humiliation or stigmatisation through media coverage[263]. Many families were shocked and defragmented by the fact that their relatives joined a terrorist group. Thereby, it is indispensable to provide family support in conjunction with other support services, such as welfare assistance, employment services and psychological aid.

A deradicalisation program is such a complex process that it is not only the society that needs time to adapt but also the families themselves need time to deal with these vulnerabilities and restore their family bonds[264], which might be impossible in a hostile environment.

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[260] Ibid. 213
[261] Ibid. 257
[262] Ibid.
[263] RAN EX POST PAPER (2018) *The role of family and social networks in the rehabilitation of (violent) extremist and terrorist offenders.* Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/aboutran/ranpandp/docs/ran_pp_role_family_social_networks_rehabilitation_extremist_terrorist_offenders_06-07_03_2018_en.pdf (Accessed on 26-02-2021)
[264] Ibid.

An example of how civil society should deal and engage with this phenomenon is when it comes to the reintegration of children and/or youths. Although their presence may scare and create tension in the educational environment because of their background, in order to minimise their perception of being "different" and to prevent any type of trauma reaction, schools should be ready and equipped to provide a regulated space. Therefore, to make them feel that it is a safe environment that provides space to distress and to alleviate from the atrocities and barbarism that were subjected, provide support, normalisation and the idea of a safe environment should be favoured rather than a buzzing climate[265].

If the communities and the educational system provide this type of environment, this will make the individual feel integrated and leave the perceptions of injustice and anger against the society that once led them to join an extremist group, and the probability of succeeding in deradicalise and reintegrate them will be much higher.

6. Public controversy

6.1 – Public opinion and some ethical questions of reintegrating FTFs into society

In scientific terms and from a theoretical perspective, a deradicalisation program seems to be relatively easy to implement. It would be mainly following some pre-determined guidelines and adapt them to the national needs. However, there are many difficulties, and it is not a "black or white" process. It requires multiple conjugations, depends on many factors to be effective and succeed, and faces many challenges.

One of these challenges is the disapproval by civil society. For many, the possibility of former FTFs being subjected to deradicalisation programs from a non-prosecution route, allowing them to circulate freely in the community -even though they might not have committed any crime-, will be not only frightening but profoundly offensive from an ethical and moral point of view, and the mere act of joining this barbaric organisation is, *per si,* seen by some citizens as a reason for being punished.

Notwithstanding everything written in the previous chapters, these programs have been filled with ethical questions and have been heavily criticised and scrutinised by the population in general[266]. One of the

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[265] RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices (2017). *Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families.* Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf. (Accessed on 27-02-2021).
[266] Stone, D. (2015). *The outcome of long process: Tracking terrorist rehabilitation and the beginning of a longer one.* New Jersey: Imperial College Press. p.222-224

main dares is making the population cooperate and understand the importance of these programs and subsequently accept the right of those people being reintegrated. Often, returnees are considered as a threat for three reasons: first, resulting of have been on the battlefield, and since they were members of a terrorist organisation, they are endowed with capabilities of carrying out terrorist attacks; secondly, they joined these ideologies by their own conviction and therefore civil society still sceptical to their right to return and being reintegrated, doubting of the real intentions; third, the feelings are sometimes also based on doubts of how successful this deradicalisation and reintegration processes are[267]. Comprehensibly, some of these concerns are also linked to the fear of a future possible and dangerous regroup of the jihadis, especially the indoctrinated children[268]. Indeed, all these concerns are justified, and some facts may seem legitimate. It is undeniable that there are already cases in which returnees have been involved in terrorist acts in their home countries - for example, a Belgian returnee perpetrated the 24 May 2014 attack in a Jewish Museum in Brussels[269]. However, some studies have found that the possibility of carrying an attack after the return is scant, and most returnees do not present an acute danger (only 1 in 360 FTFs perpetrated an attack after returning)[270]. Thereby, as mentioned in the previous chapters, having an effective deradicalisation and reintegration program can be a useful measure to reduce the possibility of regrouping and carrying new attacks. In contrast, the policy of simple detains and punishment might have the opposite effect.

Moreover, understandably, there is frequently a great concern of public animosity towards investments in programs to rehabilitate those who have left to support IS. This resentment would likely difficult any reintegration program viewed as supportive of them. This distrust by civil society is also very much motivated by the context that many European countries live, a situation where frequently the public resources assigned to deal with poverty and inequalities are scarce. Furthermore, many countries are struggling with high rates of unemployment and providing jobs, social security, among other support to FTFs, can seem a controversial feature of a reintegration program if implemented in a struggling

[267] Pohl, J & Reed A. (2017) Tackling the surge of returning foreign fighters. NATO Review. Available at: https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2017/07/14/tackling-the-surge-of-returning-foreign-fighters/index.html (Accessed on 30-05-2021)
[268] Ibid.139
[269] Penketh, A. (2014) Brussels Jewish Museum shooting: suspect with Islamist links arrested. *The Guardian.* 1 June. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/01/suspect-arrest-brussels-jewish-museum-shooting (Accessed on 02 June 2021)
[270] Hegghammer, T & Nesser, P. Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West. University of Leiden, Terrorism Research Iniative. Available at: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/440/html (Accessed on 30-05-2021)

economy and stagnant job environment[271]. Likewise, in times of such scarcity of financial resources, where governments struggle to provide public support, worsened last year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, raise the budget to face the costs associated with this reintegration programs will almost certainly be causes of considerable discordance by citizens, and consequently, the programs to rehabilitate returning fighters are likely to be met with considerable disbelief, if not with expressed indignation[272]. Undoubtedly, in some social strata, it may create perceptions that FTFs are being rewarded for their criminal decisions or obtaining an unfair advantage over others who have never committed any type of crime, which will most likely make it even more challenging to implement those programs[273].

Although all these scepticism and ethical questions may be acceptable, the main interrogations will remain unanswered, at least in this dissertation. Is it morally acceptable to reintegrate from a non-prosecution route a person who has joined a group that perpetuated such horrendous crimes as genocide, mass rapes, torture or destroying cultural sites? Should a voluntary returnee that joined the IS be reintegrated after the atrocities they committed and the suffering that this group caused? Could that be compatible with respect for human dignity, namely with the dignity of the victims? How will be resentment and feelings of injustice among victims of terrorism? Furthermore, from a moral point of view, another big question is whether the reintegration of persons who have joined this group could ever be morally acceptable. Would such persons be forgiven, even if they appear to have not directly participated in committing any atrocity when in the field and seem to be rehabilitated and show remorse?

Regardless, the purpose of this research was not to find answers to these moral questions. Still, rather it was intended to show that despite some will be tempted to argue that those who did not show any respect for human dignity should not themselves be treated with dignity, human rights and civil liberties should always prevail. They must be above any stance or temptation to deny them.

The rest is, perhaps, a question to be responded to in a further research.

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[271] Ibid.139
[272] Ibid.
[273] US Institute for Peace (2017). Holmer, J. & Shtuni, A. *Returning Foreing Fighters and Reintrgrating Imperative.* Available at: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/sr402-returning-foreign-fighters-and-the-reintegration-imperative.pdf. (Accessed on 28-02-2021)

7. Conclusion

The first part of this thesis focused on analysing the complex process of radicalisation and what can have motivated European youths to join such a brutal terrorist organisation as the IS, and whether the counterterrorism approach of the EU countries was a trigger to a mass radicalisation within EUMS. Indeed, the analysis of this radicalisation path has demonstrated the high complexity and the multi-factors that might have influenced thousands of youths to join IS. This research has shown the multiply pathways and drivers of radicalisation and its dichotomous facets, clearly exposing that there is not only one route to radicalisation but a variety and conjugation of factors.

Although the investigation has demonstrated that despite all these factors that have contributed to radicalising some Europeans - as the theories of Kruglanski and Petzold helped to explain – there is a clear connection between the aggressivity of some counterterrorism policies and consequent discrimination of the Muslim communities all over the Europe and cases of radicalisation.

Throughout this study, it was possible to see how in some countries, Muslims have been generally perceived as a threat and being always suspicious just for the reason of being Muslim. In many cases, they are suspects even though no evidence links them to terrorist organisations. The analysis found that though some of those people were born in Europe and are from a second or third generation of immigrants, the social stigma and some stereotypes still part of their daily basis. The case of the Danish man with Iraqi roots, the Danish young with a Lebanese/Palestinian background or the Austrian woman with Turkish roots precisely proved it. Moreover, it was possible to see how the lack of social inclusion policies might have influenced some youths to adopt a radical speech against the *status quo* of their lives in an Islamophobic environment.

Besides, the media had a substantial influence in shaping the public opinion about Muslims and Islam, constantly blaming their religion for terrorist attacks and often classifying them as a threat to western values.

Hence, a different counterterrorism approach and a new narrative that is not constantly blaming Muslims for terrorism are needed. It is indispensable to create proper policies that do not have a counter-effect and develop adequate mechanisms and strategies to stop engagement with violent jihad. An effective CT

policy has to be done with strict cooperation between first-line responders (teachers, social workers, community police officers) and parents, friends or acquaintances of potential jihadists, but always with a non-bias approach against Islam.

The second part of the dissertation displayed the complexity of implementing a deradicalisation process and its challenges. It showed why there is a need of having a proper common strategy within the EU countries that deal with the challenge of deradicalisation and could prevent further cases of radicalisation. Firstly, it was clear that those programmes need an excellent coordination and cooperation between workers, psychologists, specialists, national and local authorities, among others, which can be much easier to coordinate and to make it succeed if there is a common strategy at the EU level, opening space for sharing of expertise and other resources. In fact, there many countries that do not have the expertise, resources, and other capacities in terms of deradicalisation and rehabilitation programs - at both the institutional level, professional and practitioner level – and urgently need to develop and implement new programmes that can help them to address this issue, which might be easier to provide if there is a coordinated strategy among EUMS.

Secondly, it was demonstrated that without a common strategy at the EU level that establishes some guidelines concerning the respect of Human Rights while dealing with returnees and creates some pillars in this process, the problems with radicalism would not be solved any time soon. Countries are acting *ad hoc* and without any cooperation, which might lead to some inconsistency in fighting further radicalism cases. The insight into the difference between France and Denmark and the consequences of a different approach might have shown an apparent urgency in establishing a common strategy among the States.

It exposed that the French approach, a centralised and aggressive program with nationalistic methods, was an apparent failure, with none of the youths that were submitted to the program finishing it, showing that an aggressive scheme that does not takes into consideration the specific needs and the vulnerability of each particular case, is doomed to fail. On the contrary, the case of Denmark is a clear example that it is possible to have a deradicalisation program from a non-prosecution route and a tailored approach to each specific case, focusing on their needs and projecting a future for those who have been involved in extremist groups, and it can reduce the numbers of a future process of radicalisation.

Nevertheless, although the majority of those who participated in the program were indeed reintegrated and the number of people that decided to join IS from Denmark considerable decreased after the

implementation of the Aarhus Model, it still not possible to be clearly sure if it was due to this mechanism, or was it also influenced by other factors such as the IS weakness and the reduction of their propaganda. Moreover, despite the apparent success, it is also not accurate to affirm that it is an infallible process.

Hence, much still needs to be done to evaluate these programmes efficiency and the actual effectiveness of focusing on a non-prosecution route. Nevertheless, it might be acknowledged that providing radicalised individuals with practical help to rebuild their lives and reintegrating them, seems to be more effective in countering their possibility of recidivism than only focusing on turning them away from radical ideology through an aggressive punishment.

Furthermore, when it comes to children who have grown in a conflict area, despite the scepticism and the hot debate about their threat to internal security, it was proved that simply incarcerate them and do not address all their psychological needs and invest in their rehabilitation will not have the positive expected effect. In the medium-long term, it might have more negative effects than positive. Therefore, it is undeniable that they must be carefully submitted to a reintegration program, addressing the vulnerabilities and needs of these children to avoid the next wave of radicalisation.

Moreover, keeping those children in limbo between what they have seen and, in some instances, done and their imprisonment may also point to a possible long-term security challenge, creating security vacuums in a short future. If governments are not capable of understanding that those minors are rather victims than perpetrators, letting them grow up in detention for actions of no fault of their own and without any hope in a dignified future because of the decisions of their parents, then they might be risking the creation of a new generation of frustrated and resentful teenagers that perhaps will be the new wave of jihadists.

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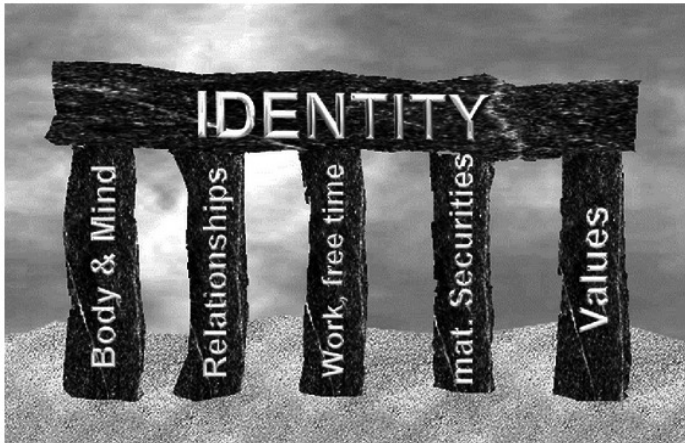
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9. Annexes

(Fig.1)