**Utrecht University**

# IDENTITY FORMATION AND ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION IN THE 21st CENTURY

## THE JIHADIST PROPAGANDA IN FRENCH PRISONS

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**Abstract**

The sudden expansion of ISIS over the past ten years has been a challenging topic for numerous experts on the field of international relations, who have sought to explain this rise of the jihadist ideology. And while there has been enough focus into analyzing the attacks and goals of the Islamic State in order for governments to implement counter strategies, the past four years have shifted the discussion into other aspects of the ISIS case. One topic of debate revolves around the explanation of how Islamic radicalization takes place within the Muslim youth of Europe. This thesis will make the case for linking Islamic radicalization with the effects of existential anxiety and identity insecurity within French prisons. Through constant interactions in society due to cultural globalization and which are enhanced by sentiments of isolation that the prison environment brings in, the thesis will analyze these connections with how the jihadist identity is promoted. By presenting Jihadism as the solution from this 'identity crisis', ISIS can radicalize and attain more followers. Lately this has been taking place within the isolated environment of French prisons. But why are French prisons so crucial for Islamic radicalization and why do they differ from the radicalization cases of young Muslims within the French society? These questions will be answered throughout the course of the thesis, finally linking the prisons to the historical perspective attributed to the creation of ISIS in order explain how identity formation can be linked so closely with the rise of extremist ideals. Finally the thesis will try to outline how this Islamic radicalization case on a domestic level of a prison can actually have consequences on an international scale.

**<u>Acknowledgements</u>**

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# Identity Formation and Islamic Radicalization in the 21st Century

## Introduction

Islamic radicalization can without a doubt be considered as one of the most crucial issues that the international community has been facing for the past ten years, requiring a definitive solution. More specifically, the ongoing conflicts in the Middle Eastern states, with the 2011 Syrian civil war being regarded as one of the worst tragedies of the 21$^{st}$ century, in combination with the West's constant involvement to the region due to political or economic interests, created a cycle of hatred between the two regions that slowly transformed into a cultural division between Western and Islamic ideals. And while this cycle has existed for more than thirty years, one could argue that the changes our global environment experienced almost twenty years ago certainly created a more fruitful ground for these extreme ideals to become as efficient as they are nowadays in regards to how they influence upon an individual's identity. In other words, the effects of globalization while providing the world with the conveyance of different cultural aspects which were impossible before and achieved a somewhat more stable environment for interaction between people from fundamentally different countries, also led extremist ideals to become more 'globalized' in terms of their impact upon the international environment. Recent terrorist organisations such as ISIS have taken into great consideration these effects of cultural globalization in order to further advance their tactics and become more successful in their goals, almost completely surpassing their predecessors such as Al-Qaeda. One of their most prominent strategies is their jihadist propaganda campaign which is being deployed against the Western countries in order to gain more followers to their cause. What this thesis will focus on in the course of the analysis, is how ISIS manipulates these so-called 'anxieties' of cultural globalization that Western societies are enduring and specifically the importance of the isolation factor within prisons such as the case of France, in order to recruit more members that will serve as a new 'race' of soldiers for the organization's goals. Because researching the whole spectrum of what is framed as Western society would not be possible, the thesis chooses to focus on one of the most recent and important issues in regard to Islamic radicalization. This is the sudden growth of jihadist ideals within French prisons. While the choice of France will be discussed thoroughly during the methodology section, a short introduction to the rationality behind this choice and why

it will prove to be relevant and provide the reader with a unique understanding of the radicalization process is needed.

The recruiting tactics that ISIS has been using over the course of its active years indeed vary; however they all serve a common purpose. This has been to gain as many followers as possible and transform their version of Islam into a universal doctrine that everyone follows and adheres to. Manipulating the isolation factor in combination with the effects that cultural globalization has brought upon Western societies and in our case the French prisons setting, has been a pivotal task of ISIS and serves as crucial evidence for the cause of the thesis in trying to explain how Islamic radicalization becomes an identity amongst individuals. One pivotal effect of why Islamic fundamentalism is so appealing comes without doubt from the personal disengagement in regards to the Western society that is visible amongst the Muslim minority and especially within the younger ages[1] (18-25 years old). The sudden and enormous influx of a different culture, traditions and beliefs within a society such as the French one for example, while indeed provided a sense of 'multiculturalism' and interaction, also produced negative results such as the distancing between the French ideals and the Muslim traditions that will be discussed in Chapter 1 and 3. Many of these Muslims, being recent refugees or those have been living in the country for years, tend to experience sentiments of social disengagement as they witness their environment to change so rapidly something that evidently affects them as well. In other words, what these people experience is a loss of their social identity. This loss of identity can be found within individuals as the need to reinvent themselves and 'propels' them into a quest of finding a new purpose in life. More importantly though, because of this identity search, these individuals tend to fall prey to radical ideals which then take their place as their new found identity. In the case of the young Muslims, this happens by adopting a radical view of Islam and becoming Jihadists. And while this also takes place within societies, its effects are gradually expanded when individuals with these sentiments enter the isolated environment of a prison, as it happens in France where prisons such as 'Fresnes'[2] serve as a preliminary

[1] More about the rising numbers of Jihadism in young Muslims in : Ahmed, Kamran. "Why Do some Young People become Jihadis? Psychiatry Offers Answers", The Guardian, 2017,

available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/26/jihadis-muslims-radicalisation-manchester

[2] More about the role of Fresnes at: Beardsley, Eleanor "Inside French Prisons, A Struggle to Combat Radicalization", NPR, 2017, available at:

prison and contain high numbers of young Muslims. There, isolation and the need to join a community is what enhance their decent into falling victims of this jihadist identity.

The loss of identity and the grave need for a new purpose in life due to that social disengagement and the confined scenery of a prison are precisely what provided ISIS with the potent conditions in order to formulate a successful recruitment strategy against the Western countries. By convincing these individuals that there is a higher purpose in their life and that they have been chosen by Allah (God) to bring forth his plan, what happens is that they transfer their radical Islamic ideals which in turn take root within these individuals. In other words, Jihadism becomes their new identity and subsequently ISIS becomes their new family and friends. This is what is more commonly known as Islamic radicalization. The most important consequence of this radical identity formation, especially when it comes down to ISIS and the newly turned followers, is that it poses a direct threat both domestically and globally. Many of these individuals that get released from prisons tend to complete their radicalization by travelling to Syria and becoming fully-fledged jihadists. In turn, they take up arms against their own people which have now been transformed into plain infidels and non-believers. This ultimately creates a grave need for policy change in order for governments to be able to identify the possibility of radicalization within these prisons and put an end before it escalates beyond control. For the French state, this issue has been taking place for almost ten years and only recently did the government propose a series of attempts in order to deal with it. Conclusively, by combining the aforementioned, the purpose of the thesis will be to assess the connection between identity formation and Islamic radicalization. After this connection has been explained, it will be applied to one of the most recent cases which is the radicalization issue amongst inmates and Islamists within the French prisons. This introductory chapter will conclude by providing the reader with the theoretical and methodological components that have been used during the writing of this thesis, before continuing to present the main argument and findings on how this radicalization occurs within prisons and why they pose such a point of importance for understanding the term. However, as the

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www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/06/25/534122917/inside-french-prisons-a-struggle-to-combat-radicalization

historiographical section that follows will point out, it is equally important to further understand the discussion concerning the radicalization process as well as how identity connects with these individuals and its point of origin in the international spectrum.

Historiographical Discussion

The discussion on how identity influences society is indeed long with its origins being traced to almost three decades ago[3], but with important contributions from numerous scholars. Besides globalization which is considered as the 'primary suspect' for most of the changes modern societies have had to endure, there are different approaches on how this interest to identity formation came into being. More specifically, the sudden rise of Islamic terrorism that has been brought forward by organisations such as Bin-Laden's Al-Qaeda and more recently ISIS, combined with the continuous rise of migration influx from Middle Eastern countries like the Syrian state due to humanitarian crises, has taken a toll on European states. For example, the Syrian conflict that sparked almost seven years ago, has led more than 10 million individuals to suffer from the hostilities[4], many of them having to migrate across EU countries such as Germany, France or Greece. Most of the refugees or migrants, if not all, carry with them their own customs, traditions and beliefs, which are different from what is known as Western culture (Religious freedom, economic and political liberalism etc.). Unfortunately, while numerous economic migrants or refugees inhabiting Western European countries such as Britain, France or Germany have managed to integrate into society bring up families and generally live a peaceful life, there are still those that are being constantly rejected due to these cultural differences. Ultimately, what this creates is a feeling of regret and loss of social belongingness. Desperate to uncover the reasons behind their non-recognition, these individuals tend to get lost in what is named as an identity nexus, something that can lead them into falling victims of extremist ideas ultimately adopting these ideals as their new identity.

Scholars such as Catarina Kinnvall trace the social shift that until today has led to the expansion of extremist ideologies that concern religion or the nation, to the 9/11 attacks and the general tensions in Afghanistan over the start of the 21$^{st}$ century. She

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[3] Malic, Kenan. "A Search for Identity Draws Jihadists to the Horrors of ISIS", The Guardian, 2015, available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/01/what-draws-jihadis-to-isis-identity-alienation

[4] For a detailed list of the numbers regarding the Syrian crisis see: "The Syria Crisis in Numbers", United Nations OCHA, Exposure, 2018, available at: unocha.exposure.co/the-syria-crisis-in-numbers

notes that this first large-scale globalized attack brought changes to both the residents of Middle Eastern countries and to those of the Western countries, which can mainly be combined into general feelings of insecurity and contempt[5]. One important case made in Kinnvall's work is that while globalization effects do not begin with 9/11, it is crucial to use this incident as the main factor producing this existential anxiety among Muslim minorities and Western citizens.[6] While Muslim minorities and Muslim migrants are two different groups and the focus relies more on the first one, it's important to underline the impact that this sudden influx of migrants has had in a European country such as France in regards to its minority. More specifically, the sudden rise in Muslim population within France further enhanced feelings of insecurity amongst the latter and the French people. This insecurity between the two groups consequently produces a competition for ideological significance where one challenges the other for the recognition of their identity. This model of conflict was first introduced by James Morrow as the 'classical crisis model'[7]. He defines conflicts as a three-player field which contains the nature of the conflict, the challenger and the challenged.[8] What is remarkable in the case of the Muslim minority in France and the people that already inhabit the latter is that both groups seem to have both roles. For example, in the case of France, the French people seem to consider the Muslim minority and its religious beliefs as a challenge to their French ideals, with many of them going as far as to consider them a threat to their own security. On the other hand, Muslim groups and especially those that come from a lower socio-economic class and are of a younger age as noted before, seem to see the French state as challengers against their struggle for a better future. As such, in these identity conflicts both actors define themselves and their aims of a conflict through their ethnic and religious terms.

This conflict leads to the production of radical sentiments as these nationalistic or religious fundamentalist ideals seem to be the only viable solution to achieving the recognition that is sought. Kinnvall also notes that identity formation plays a crucial

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[5] Kinnvall, Catarina. "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security", Political Psychology, Vol. 25, No. 5, 2004, 741-742, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/3792342

[6] Ibidem, 742

[7] Morrow, D. James. "Game Theory for Political Scientists", Princeton, NY, USA, Princeton University Press, 1994, 28

[8] Ibidem, 29-30

role in these conflicts for specific reasons.[9] Among them is the idea of self-categorization within individuals which serves as a factor for distinguishing the members of each group. This notion is similar to the previous case of Morrow regarding challenger and challenged. By creating the image of an 'enemy' it becomes easier to mobilize the members of the group and spread the ideals of their organization in order to get more people to join their cause[10]. The notion of the 'enemy' plays an important role in the identity formation process.

As noted in the introduction, the purpose of the thesis is to analyze how the theory of identity formation is linked to the Islamic radicalization of the French inmates. A pivotal task of the analysis is to first create a basis for how the term identity will be used during the process. Kwame Anthony Appiah defines identity as a source of value[11]. More specifically this value serves as a factor of structure. For Appiah this structure is used by people to aid them in governing their way of life, set goals and pursue a cause.[12] Furthermore, Appiah influenced by John Stewart Mill's writings, outlines that this need for a purpose in life and structure will eventually lead to the creation of groups that contain people that share the same identity. This is where the term identity gains its 'power'. The sentiment of solidarity can be created from people who are organized into groups sharing common beliefs, values and goals. In other words, sharing a common identity prompts people to think that they are in the same position in some cases[13]. Kinnvall similarly takes ideology as the main signifier of identity[14]. She notes that individuals use their personal beliefs and interpretations of society in order to understand and provide significance to their existence. This is something that is also validated by academics like Berzonsky[15] who focus on psychology. By joining organizations that share their views, these people strengthen their beliefs and gain a more efficient grasp of their identity.[16] The shaping of identity through social interactions was also introduced by Erik Erikson and Alvin Gouldner

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[9] Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism", 2004, 750

[10] Ibidem, 755

[11] Appiah, A. Kwame. "The Ethics of Identity", Princeton University Press, 2005, 24

[12] Ibidem, 25

[13] Ibidem, 26

[14] Kinnvall, 2004, 748

[15] Berzonsky, D. Michael & Dennis R. Papini, "Identity Processing Styles and Value Orientations: The Mediational Role of Self-Regulation and Identity Commitment" Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, Vol. 14, Taylor & Francis, 2014, 98-99 (doi: 10.1080/15283488.2013.858228)

[16] Kinnvall, 2004, 750

who provided the first definition for identity as early as the 1950s[17]. Ian Hacking also used identity to ratify his claim in what he calls 'the kinds of persons"[18]. More specifically he claimed that identity comes from the labels it bears. Labeling is what Appiah also discusses in his work as 'identification process'[19], something that will be analyzed further on the theoretical framework discussion.

Ultimately, identity can adhere to interpretations that vary between ethnic identities to political or even to religious ones as this thesis will explain with the Islamic case. What is important to keep from this ongoing academic debate regarding identity is how it forces people to even adopt beliefs that promote violence. In the case of Islamic radicalization within the prisons of France, as the chapters that follow will analyze, even individuals that had no prior connection to Islam or terrorism and were prosecuted for petty crimes, found themselves falling into that vicious cycle. The theoretical and methodological section that follows will try to explain the approach that the thesis will take toward identity formation and how this identity formation theory could be applied on the French prisons and the case of radicalized individuals so that a sufficient connection between the two terms (identity and radicalization) can be created.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

As noted in the historiographical section, the notion of religious identity formation has been generally discussed and analyzed for almost thirty years[20]. Because the term has had so many different interpretations varying from ethnical to racial identity, it is important to specify how the theory of identity formation is going to be used for the purposes of this thesis. Specifically, the thesis will only analyze what is known as the jihadist identity. In other words, the ways people shape their identity through this radical viewing of Islam. For that to work efficiently, this religious identity and the way in which it is created within an individual is going to be viewed as a process first and then as an effect, for example how someone ends up becoming a jihadist. This 'identity formation theory' or 'identification process', will provide the required base for

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[17]Appiah,2005, 65

[18]Hacking, Ian "Kinds of People", In Proceedings of the British Academy, Volume 151, British Academy Lectures 2006, Published to British Academy Scholarship Online, 2012, 5-6, available at: (doi:10.5871/bacad/9780197264249.001.0001)

[19]Appiah, 2005, 63-66

[20]Malic, "A Search for Identity draws Jihadists to the Horrors of ISIS", 2015.

analyzing this different approach on radicalization. More specifically, what Appiah[21] discusses in his work about identities is that societies produce labels[22]. These labels which are most times known within a social community are used in order to identify who will end up adopting each label[23]. While Appiah uses this model to explain racial identities and how people shape their identities through the available labels in society, this method can also be used to explain how individuals that have common characteristics such as tradition and ideology or share the same conditions, for example as in our case young Muslims that get sent to French prisons, can adopt the jihadist identity. In other words, those prone to violence tend to partake into a more violent identity formation.

Furthermore, Islamic identity formation is also going to be looked in direct connection with how members of ISIS radicalize these young Muslim inmates within French prisons, convincing them that through this they can resolve their identity crisis. As noted before, many of these young Muslims that are in prison seek a way to reshape their life and find a structure[24] for it. In order to connect to how this need for reshaping can lead to these individuals getting radicalized, the thesis will also assess the adoption of the radical ideals as a tool for salvation. The term salvation has religious connotations, which implies the idea of being saved from one's sins. In our case, these individuals find salvation in the religious sense of 'saving one's soul' as well as transcending their criminal past by becoming a faithful soldier of Allah.

This can become possible using what Kinnvall analyzed as 'existential anxiety' [25]. By adopting the extremist view of Islam which is being passed on by those that are already radicalized within French prisons and taking the role of a 'chosen', these people end up adopting an identity that promotes violence and mayhem. Joining a terrorist organization such as ISIS in our particular case, is what provides these Muslim youngsters with what was characterized as the means to signify their collective identity against those within France that do not recognize it. It is through these groups that these young people find relevance in their lives once more, ultimately becoming so entrapped

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[21] Kwame Appiahs's work focusing mainly on the psycho-social and political interpretations of identity formation provides an interesting take on how the jihadi identity is created amongst our French Muslim case.
[22] Appiah, 2005, 78
[23] Ibidem, 78
[24] Ibidem, 24 - 26
[25] Kinnvall, 2004, 758-760

in their new-found identity that they cannot go back. This so called 'holy' interpretation of the jihadist ideology will be viewed through the historical analysis of how ISIS came to become a global Islamic terrorist organization and how it managed to manipulate this ideology to create a jihadist identity that is successfully appealing to anyone. Through analyzing the prison environment in France and the rise of Islamic radicalization within its Muslim inmates, the thesis will try to provide an explanation on how this Islamic identity formation takes place and how this radicalization cycle can ultimately have not only domestic effects on the country but effects on an international level alike. By linking the isolation factor that was mentioned before with the 'inhumane' living conditions in French prisons and the general disproportionality of capable stuff to the number of inmates, as well as the French approach towards the Islamic traditions, it will become possible to understand how an individual without any prior connection to Islam can suddenly adopt this identity of jihadism and ultimately become a fully-fledged soldier of ISIS upon release.

To summarize, the thesis will focus on applying a historical approach to Islamic radicalization and its connection to identity in order to understand what makes these people adopt a jihadist identity. This will connect to the theoretical explanation of identity formation which will finally be applied to the case of the French inmates in order to understand both the micro and macro consequences of radicalization and religious extremism in a society such as the French one but also in our global system.

## Chapter 1: Identity Formation and Religious Fundamentalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Radicalization and its connection to identity theory while being a recent subject of analysis can most certainly provide us with some important evidence as to how this sudden rise of religious fundamentalist ideals came to be. Much scholarly work has traced the origins of this 'new-wave' of extremism to the consequences that globalization brought in the international system[26]. By completely reshaping – during the late 1970s and early 1980s – the social, political and economic environment as people had known[27], it created a spiral of different ideas and approaches amongst societies. The purpose of this chapter is to further analyze how the idea of cultural globalization is linked to the search for a new identity amongst individuals. By explaining the causes of religious identity formation, it can be understood as to why the current expansion of Islamic ideology has prompted so many terrorist organisations to launch their campaigns against their 'enemies' and challenge fundamental ideas such as democracy and freedom. Furthermore, as the terrorists continue to attack the Western states, more people seem to suddenly discard their beliefs and adopt this jihadist identity thus joining these groups. Evidently, it is becoming visible that this 'existential anxiety' that this globalization of cultures has created amongst people, seems to make them vulnerable into believing that adopting a radical Islamist identity is the only solution for them to find a place to belong. This sentiment increases dramatically when being combined with the isolation factor within prisons. As Chapter 3 will discuss later on, the 'existential anxiety' amongst Muslim youngsters in French prisons makes them far more prone to adopt a jihadist identity.

Globalizing Cultures: An Existential Anxiety for the Muslim Youth of France

There are many approaches to how globalization has affected the international system. Crucial for our case are the effects that globalization produced within societies in regards to the rapid cultural exchanges. This created both 'cultural homogeneity' but also 'cultural disorder'[28]. As traditions interact with each-other in closer ways as in the example of France, these continuous cultural interactions between for example the Muslim minority, specifically young Muslim men, and the country's citizens can suddenly affect them on a more vivid and quicker pace than it would have done almost thirty years ago. What the French case points out, is that this cultural disorder shaped by

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[26]Featherstone, Mike. "Global Culture: An Introduction" in *"Global Culture: Globalization, Culture and Modernity"*, (ed.) Mike Featherstone, Sage Publications, London, 1990, 6

[27]Ibidem, 7

[28]Ibidem, 6-7

this new globalized world, managed to compress the perceptions that these individuals have in regards to their security and identity[29]. Due to events and consequences being able to reach them more vividly, they became far more nervous in regards to the future, falling victims to what is described as an 'existential anxiety'[30].

One important consequence that globalization has had on an international level and the one that this chapter seeks to deal with, revolves around the notion of cultural globalization[31]. The latest conflicts and economic changes – between the Western and Middle Eastern countries – have created constant interactions between two different cultures that were not possible in past years especially with the rise of migration to tremendous levels. Moreover, this continuous involvement of Western powers in the Middle Eastern region in regard the conflicts within countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria for example, has managed to radically affect the latter[32] as large numbers of Muslim citizens migrated or sought shelter as refugees in the Western world. However, this involvement at the same time strengthened the rise of extremist ideas such as nationalism or religious fundamentalism as a reaction to that cultural pluralism and created a need for a return to the previous and more traditional state, in many cases even through the use of violence[33]. An example of that are the large scale terrorist attacks that have been taking place on a global spectrum as it was demonstrated from organisations such as Al-Qaeda. Before 9/11, strikes were only taking place on a more tactical level, usually having lesser casualties or specific political or military targets and goals[34] (e.g. Palestine terror attacks 1968). This prevented them from being considered a critical threat to the 'safety' of the Western world. However, religious terrorism after the 1990s began targeting civilians within Western countries. This change in combination with the constant migration influx from countries like Syria, due to safety reasons, towards European countries or the United States placed the citizens of these countries and this more traditional Muslim culture, into a tangled interaction.

Crucial for this case are the negative effects that these constant cultural changes can have for individuals and ethnic groups. This sudden cultural interaction due to the

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[29] Kinnvall, 2004, 742

[30] Ibidem, 742

[31] Featherstone. "Global Culture: An Introduction",1990, 8

[32] Kinnvall, 2004, 741

[33] Featherstone, 1990, 6

[34] Rasler, Karen & William R. Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism" , Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol.21, Ed. 1, 2009, 30-31, available at: (doi: 10.1080/09546550802544425)

migration influx, along with the economic and political difficulties that the Western countries have been trying to overcome and the ever-growing fears due to the threat of terrorism, have affected both the citizens of the West and the minorities already inhabiting these states. People began experiencing a sense of 'existential anxiety' for how their future will be shaped.[35] This essentially derives from the fact that before the 1970's, individuals mainly adhered to a more 'closed system' that consisted amongst others of less interactions with other cultures[36], and a more traditional way of living which mainly attributed security to the ideas of the nation or even those of religion. Through this sudden interaction of cultural identities and the constant reshaping of society, what takes place within people is a so called 'identity crisis'.[37] These insecurities that individuals experience are exactly what made them vulnerable in regards to their identity choices. As will be discussed later on, many of these individuals seek to return to a more traditional condition of their society as it has been happening in Europe for the past ten years. This also created a rise in nationalistic ideals, spurring from the economic crises within European countries and the general sociopolitical dissatisfaction. Its final point however has been the migration crisis. Ultimately, individuals being part of this dissatisfaction seem to be finding their identity calling within ideologies that draw from nationalism or religious extremism.

The significance of this 'existential anxiety' lies in the deconstruction of the term. Feeling anxious about one's existence in our case has to do with the perception of one's future in a society. Most groups or individuals live their lives with a belief that their country guarantees their safety and provides them with a sense of security. The 'existential anxiety' takes place when that sentiment of security gets torn down[38]. As noted before, one major event that firstly created this radical change in the West was the Al-Qaeda attacks on September 11th. Since it was the first large scale global attack on Western soil from an 'enemy' that a few years before would not have been regarded as a possible threat, the consequences of that hit would completely diminish the sense of

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[35] Kinnvall, 2004, 742

[36] Ibidem, 743-744

[37] Essentially people start re-thinking identity not knowing what suits them best anymore as the world constantly changes. Important research on identity has been done by Psychology scholars such as Berzonsky. See more : Berzonsky and Papini, "Identity Processing Styles and Value Orientations", 2014, 96

[38] Kinnvall, 2004, 746

security within Western societies[39]. This insecurity due to Islamic terrorism has been further expanded nowadays with the aforementioned Syrian refugee crisis which began back in 2011[40]. Because governments came across the dilemma of whether or not to regard the Islamic identity as a threat to their people's security, they developed policies that came as harsh to the Muslim minority or the migrant groups. For example, the closing of borders by many European states to the refugees of Syria or the migrants of Afghanistan received mixed thoughts from the international community. On the other hand, the sudden rise of the Islamic faith within the countries of the West (UK, Belgium, France e.g.) combined with the Muslim influx in Europe has had consequences on an individual level as well. The connection between the two has to do with how individuals, in our case European citizens and the Muslim youth, perceive the world around them. This insecurity interestingly tends to affect both groups in the same manner. Specifically, the Muslim in France, experience what is named as a sense of power deprivation[41] due to attempting to get accustomed the new conditions[42] (getting education and finding a job) along with dreading the country's acceptance of them. This, combined with the aforementioned harsh policies from the European countries may lead to the creation of hatred against the European state. On the other hand, a number of citizens within European states such as France or Belgium for example, who have one of the highest numbers of Muslim communities in Europe, may come to adopt hard policies in order to protect their Western ideals, frequently resembling a more nationalistic stance. An example of this can be found within the increasing support towards Marie Le Pen and her anti-Islamic strategy in France by a portion of French citizens, something that led to the rise of the rightwing political party 'Front Nationale'[43].

As noted before, the rising numbers of terrorist hits have led to the creation of sentiments of division in what is called the 'We vs. Others'[44] concept. This division in the case of Europe created a fruitful ground for those that sought to preach an extremist

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[39] Ibidem, 741

[40] Lister, R. Charles. "The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency", Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, 1-2

[41] Kinnvall, 2004, 747

[42] Frckoski, D. Ljubomir. "Negotiation in Identity Conflicts", 3rd Ed, Magor, Skopje, 2012, 8

[43] The elections of 2017 while having given Emanuel Macron victory in the French government, provided with a confronting rise in Le Pen's political party, managing to reach a percentage of 33.9%.

[44] Kinnvall, 2004, 753

ideology like Jihadism. In other words, Western citizens may be hesitant to approach the Muslim minority in fear of the latter being radicalized or even terrorists. Another example can be seen in how minorities from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds are being treated by society. The chances of finding a job or get a good educational base have been proven to be rather difficult. In other words, feelings of xenophobia or racism especially against the Muslim youth have taken rise in many of these states as a reaction to the insecurity that its citizens feel from the global events. This fear is wholeheartedly embraced by some extreme politicians (Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands etc.) that seek a return to a more 'closed'[45] state where cultural transference was not possible, evidently trying to keep the minorities away from the country or even completely deport them. There also numerous cases where young Muslims in European countries were being constantly harassed by authorities (mainly the police) due to their ethnic background, even though not all Muslim are firm believers of Islam[46]. And while the cases in countries like France are rising in numbers[47], there are also those that seek to aid refugees and migrants and stop any racist behaviors, thus trying to combat the rise of extremist ideals among the Muslims. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all Muslims will fall prey to the jihadist ideology and go as far as to become terrorists. Here the prison environment which will explain the French country's problem with radicalization, combining the above points with the 'isolation' factor the main key point for how someone can become a jihadist and also shows the difference between radicalization in society and in prison.

What is important to take from how this cultural globalization has affected states and their citizens, is that the negative effects can be traced on multiple aspects. This 'identity crisis' has managed to produce a strong division between what was characterized as 'We vs Others'[48]. A consequence of that is what will be discussed

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[45] Closed here refers to a country not being open to the aforementioned points of globalization, thus excluding

[46] Recent research has shown that within the French country Muslim individuals suffer gravely from incidents of racism. See: Sides, Johnny. "New Research Shows that French Muslims Experience Extraordinary Discrimination in the Job Market", The Washington Post, 2015, available at: www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/23/new-research-shows-that-french-muslims-experience-extraordinary-discrimination-in-the-job-market/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7ad4edb59eac

[47] Longeray, Pierre. "France Is Getting More Intolerant and Racist, According to Human Rights Report", Vice News, 2015, available at: news.vice.com/article/france-is-getting-more-intolerant-and-racist-according-to-human-rights-report

[48] Kinnvall, 2004, 755-756

further as the 'need to belong' and the 'sense of purpose'. In other words, due to this social disengagement and insecurity towards the values of society and how someone is treated, people try to find answers in reinventing their view of the world, ultimately changing their ideological beliefs and becoming involved with a group that shares a common goal. This eventually will lead them to adopt a new identity, thinking that they are saving themselves from their existential insecurity as well as gaining the strength to 'combat' those that have kept them oppressed, as in the case of Muslim vs. French. In this particular case these changes to one's identity were influenced by extremist ideologies. These ideologies can be transferred by individuals interacting with others that share the same feelings. Here is where the ideologies of religion and the nation take root in explaining some of the negative effects that this cultural globalization has created. Religion in particularly may present itself as a helping hand to those that are experiencing these forms of existential anxiety. However, while religion is being practiced by numerous people and groups around the world, its use that will be outlined in following passages refers only to Islamic extremism.

<u>The Creation of an Identity: Religion as the Tool for Salvation in a Globalized World</u>
Being at loss with one's self is certainly not an easy position neither in one's

interactions with society nor in one's life. As explained before, the feelings of existential anxiety in an ever-changing society such as the French, have affected its citizens whether these refer to the Muslim youth or to French citizens in regards to their identity. Those that feel at loss embark on a quest to remake their identity in order to cope with the changes and reshape their position in the global environment[49]. In other words, in order for them to regain a purpose in life, these people go as far as to completely change their own identity and create a new self. This is where ideologies such as Islamic fundamentalism can turn into identities. Adopting a religious identity like Islam can thus seem to offer a better solution for these people that feel disengaged from society or have had their life take a bad turn[50] as the French prison case points out. However, before explaining how this religious identity works, it is important to understand how the identity is being formed.

    As the identity formation theory explains, the term refers to the way one explains the world around them, the interactions with others that share their own views

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[49] Frckoski, "Negotiation in Identity Conflicts", 2012, 9-10
[50] Kinnvall, 2004, 742

and those that differ from them and also provides them with a sense of purpose[51]. When that sense of purpose is lost, as in the case of existential anxiety, that individual will seek to find a new purpose and a way to reshape what they have lost. One primary way for the shaping of identity is through interactions. In every social environment where people interact with each other, ideas or more specifically ideologies are being transferred[52]constantly. These ideologies provide functions that serve as a form of mental framework which entails languages, beliefs or traditions. This framework serves as representation forum for the different groups that exist in a social environment[53]. It also functions in the same way as identity labels. Through labels, a person is in sense making a choice between which labels better suit their current situation[54]. Similar to what scholars such as Appiah name as labels, is the formation of the Islamic religious identity which has been adopted over the past five years mainly by young Muslim inmates as a salvation from their social isolation which was discussed in the previous passage.

Religion has always been a part of our global environment and without a doubt is considered as one of the most influential and important ideological beliefs. And while it provided the world with its own form of answers about the how the world works or how humanity came to be, the most important case can be made about the structure it provides to one's life. While most scholarly work sees religion with a negative attitude due to its one-sided view of the world, no one can underestimate the importance it has had on influencing people or in our case forming identities. In other words, having a religious identity provides a very robust explanation of how the social environment functions. And because religion is by nature a totalitarian belief system there a no side linings allowed. Specifically, following a religious ideology clearly distinguishes a person from those that don't or have different religious beliefs, thus what is known as the "we vs. others" which was discussed above. Through this division, religious groups provide what is known as a collective identity sentiment. Through that collective nature,

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[51] Appiah, 2005, 24-26

[52] Stryker, Sheldon & Peter J. Burke. "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory", Social Psychology Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 4, Special Millennium Issue on the State of Sociological Social Psychology, 2000, 285-286, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/2695840

[53] Mathew, Francis. *"Does Ideology really Contribute to radicalization?"*, RCUK Partnership for Conflict, Crime & Security Research (PACCS) fellowship, Radicalization Research, 2015. www.radicalisationresearch.org/debate/francis-ideology-radicalisation/

[54] Appiah, 2005, 26

beliefs and ideas are being strengthened as a person interacts mainly with those that share his own view.

Moreover, another point that this Islamic identity seems to provide to those that feel disengaged from society, is the sense of a purpose. As the cases that will be analyzed in Chapter 3, most of the Muslim youngsters have little to no connection to the Islamic faith prior their radicalization. This 'holy' purpose is being presented upon them and then used to fortify them with answers that may spur precisely from these feelings of existential anxiety. This is generally taking place by adopting the idea that a higher power such as God has created the rules and that everyone must live his life by following this rule set. Furthermore that person or group should help others to find their way towards the road of Islam. Evidently on an individual level a person is relieved from the constant search of having to choose himself what specific action he must take in his life[55]. On a group level the collective nature of the word 'helping others' further strengthens the group's beliefs. This creates a sentiment of a purpose, which in the case of Islam comes from the highest power (Allah), incomprehensible by a regular person, thus providing individuals with the illusion of being 'chosen'. As 'chosen' these young Muslims can now completely reshape their life and find their salvation[56].

The jihadist identity though differs from other forms of identity in the case of how it influences a person. While there are numerous identities that contain lineages of race, ethnicity and political ideology, it provides a form of self-reflection to the individual that adopts it. An ethnic identity or a racial identity cannot be adopted by everyone as it is closely linked to matters of birth and territoriality. This is where a religious identity differs. It provides people with an open forum that almost anyone, who is ready to adopt its beliefs and ideological rules, can join without many exemptions. At any point of their life, people can take up a religion and follow its ideals for structuring their life. On the contrary, one may sympathize with the struggle of an ethnic group as the African – Americans and their struggle for achieving recognition but can never completely understand or experience the exact same feelings unless he was born with the same ethnic identity carrying what comes with it. By adopting a religious identity as the jihadist identity, the individual fully embraces the history of that religion

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[55] Kinnvall, 2004, 758-759

[56] Kruglanski, W. Arie, Xiaoyan Chen, Mark Dechesne, Shira Fishman & Edward Orehek, "Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance", Political Psychology,Vol.30, 2007, 335-336, available at: (doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00698.x)

with all the positive and negative aspects of it. That is precisely what makes this specific identity both extremely influential and if used in an ill way, dangerous on how it affects individuals.

What makes Islam important as an ideology is that as discussed, it provides individuals with a 'supernatural' cause that is combined with a structure indicating how they shape their life. Furthermore, because Islam is encompassed by beliefs, it allows for practically any person regardless of his ethnicity, race or issues of economic stability or political thought, to follow and practice its faith and values. However, in order for individuals to adopt a specific religion and formulate it as their own identity, further analysis needs to be provided on how some may choose to accept that identity or more specifically, be convinced to pledge themselves into that religion.

As with most doctrines, in the case of Islam recognition from a constituency requires some sort of connection to be formed between them. The existence of a Godly authority, Allah, as it was discussed above shapes Islam as an ancient monolithic entity[57] that serves as a stabilizing factor in order to counter any insecurities that have been created by xenophobic or racist experiences. Moreover, historical events that are pivotal to the evolution of Islam serve as a convincing factor especially if they can alienate the individual from what is considered as the enemy. A common historical example that Islamic extremists use, is that of the Christian Crusades. There is historical significance of specific events that serve as 'chosen traumas'[58], which relates to catastrophes that have befallen the followers of that faith or 'chosen glories'[59], that entails events where the religious faith triumphed and achieved its goals.

Ultimately, what is understood from this explanation of how Islamic religious identity is created is that it first requires a specific argument and significant claims in order to convince that individual to adopt it. In the section that follows, the analysis will focus on connecting the aforementioned traits of the jihadist identity. An example is that it creates a place that offers individuals a safe exit from the ontological insecurity due to the fallouts of globalization. This is one of the numerous reasons of why radical Islamism has become such a popular tendency in the past years and why its followers around the globe keep rising with every moment passing.

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[57] Kinnvall, 2004, 758
[58] Ibidem, 755-756
[59] Ibidem, 755-756

<u>Islamic Fundamentalism: A Convincing Argument</u>

Islamic fundamentalism primarily holds its legitimacy from the religion of Islam. In that sense, Islam as a religion presents its followers with the reassurance of a more traditional global state where Islamic traditions have the upper hand. Nonetheless, as a religion alone and as it happens with other Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism), Islam does not seek to overthrow and reshape the whole political environment. On the other hand, Islamic fundamentalism is precisely this practice of the Islamic faith seeking to 'cleanse' the world from those that are considered as 'non-believers' and make Islam into a universal religion that eventually will dominate the global system.

In that perspective, Islamic fundamentalism gazes the religion of Islam through a political lens, shaping it into what is known as political Islam. During a panel session on February 2017 from the European Institute for Democracy regarding how ideologies can be the main source of radicalization, Richard Burchill[60] noted that the main source of power that this perception of Islam has, derives from the hopes of building an Islamic utopia[61]. This view of recreating the world in the image of a Godly power like Allah is a convincing point especially for the young Muslim inmates because they feel that as it is now it is harmful towards them. This is the first argument for solving their existential anxiety. Furthermore, while there are many, whether of Muslim ethnicity or in some rare case even individuals that have no connection to the latter, that at first seem skeptical to suddenly embrace this side of a religious faith, Islamic fundamentalism provides an ideal system based on God's will. On the one hand it's not for them to decide the 'what' and 'how' but rather enforce His law and get their reward both for this life and the 'afterlife'[62]. This eschatological view of the world, to individuals that already feel disengaged and lost from, seems as reward of a second chance from something far higher than themselves. As Burchill observes: "The combination of perceived as real world grievances with the promise of a religious utopia creates an explosive mix, which is the main source of radicalization"[63].

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[60]Richard Burchill is the Director of Research at TRENDS Research & Advisory

[61] See more in: "Ideology: The Driving Force behind Radicalization?", Policy Briefing - European Foundation for Democracy, February 2017, Brussels, available at: europeandemocracy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Policy-Briefing-IN-Design..pdf

[62]As with many religions Islamic faith entails an eschatological perspective that the world will soon end. By staying a true Muslim one can guarantee his place into a peaceful afterlife.

[63]Quoted during the panel discussion: "Ideology: The Driving Force behind Radicalization?", 2017.

Another key message that emerges from the discussion regarding why Islamic fundamentalism is so appealing to the Muslim youth[64], is that as other extremist ideologies it manages to divide the people and strengthen its own followers through this division. By stressing out the importance of Islam as a faith, along with how pivotal its cause is, evidently legitimizing the actions and purpose of their followers, jihadist organisations denounce those that share different religious ideals or generally disregard religion as 'infidels', thus transforming them into 'enemies' of Islam. By doing so, organisations that seek to recruit followers to their religious sects, hijack the writings of a religion in order to further their interests. Specifically, the goal of most Islamic organisations such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS as noted beforehand, is to create a world where the Islamic faith is the total dominant factor.

Manipulating a religion in order to convince individuals about a specific cause and create soldiers that are bound to their faith and are willing to go as far as to give up their lives for these beliefs, is not a recent phenomenon. However, in the case of Islam ISIS managed to achieve some defining changes on the numbers of how many people rallied to their cause. While many have tried to blame Islam as being a violent religion, thus presenting itself as an easy asset for these organisations to use, it is unlikely that this is the case. The simplest answer against that approach would be that had Islam been a religion that encouraged mayhem and violence, then all of its followers and 'preachers' should also partake in these acts. However, as studies show this has not been the case[65]. There are many Muslims that live peacefully across the globe. What this points out along with the aforementioned about the creation of the jihadist identity is that what prompts an individual to adopt a radical identity such as Islamic fundamentalism doesn't have to do with the religion itself[66] entirely. In other words, there are other social, economic and political factors that are the driving force for that creation of a radical ideology. In the case of ISIS, managing to successfully manipulate these factors and present the jihadist identity view as the only solution to the existential crisis, is precisely how they manage to gain the attention and ultimately recruit individuals that have fallen into despair. The case of young Muslim inmates in France and the important factor of isolation within prison is another recruitment success that continues from the previous case of society.

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[64] Ahmed, "Why Do some Young People Become Jihadis?", 2016

[65] Rashid, Quasim. "A Strong Muslim Identity is the Best Defense Against Extremism", TIME, 2018, available at: time.com/4507774/muslim-identity-defense-against-extremism/

[66] Malic, "A Search for Identity Draws Jihadists to the Horrors of ISIS", 2015

Moreover, many individuals – due to this ontological insecurity from the turnout of society – desperately seek some form of action against what they consider as their main enemy. For example, in the European states there has been a substantial amount of individuals from the Muslim minority, especially within the younger generations that seek to secure a good education and a stable job and regard the government's policies as the main factor behind these difficulties that they encounter[67]. Terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks or more importantly the recent hits by members of ISIS against European states seem to have successfully drawn the attention of these individuals that have been affected by these policies of xenophobia and racism. By monitoring those that even at the slightest feel some short of connection to their cause, terrorists can then use this feeling of hatred against the state in combination with the aspects of their religious ideas, in order to provide them with that sense of purpose and revenge. Ultimately, these individuals come to mistakenly think their existential anxiety and identity crisis can been solved by finding their place in these organisations. Believing that they are serving a higher cause for the greater good is what makes them adopt these fundamentalist ideas[68].

Furthermore, the concept of legitimizing violence to those who are prone to be radicalized needs to be analyzed. The concept of violence is a pivotal case in extremist organisations. For the jihadists, one important aspect of its approach to violence comes from convincing themselves and others that it is for the greater good. In other words, by adopting the rule of Allah as the law they believe that it is their 'holy' duty to set the Islamic religion at the front of the global environment, in its rightful place. Through this, they manage to enlist a sense of urgency to their movement[69]. This sense of urgency combined with the narrow view of their faith essentially leaves no room for obstacles. The general norm of the jihadist identity is that individuals that do not share their view of accepting Islam as their faith and the dominant ideology are considered as 'infidels'. Thus it becomes the duty of the true-believers to either assist them in converting and accepting a jihadist view of Islam or essentially eradicate all who stand against their cause. In the case of the West, the typical norm that the Islamic extremists have been using for the past twenty years is closely linked to what was analyzed in

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[67] Malic, 2015
[68] Ibidem
[69] Kinnvall, 2004, 755

previous paragraphs as 'chosen trauma' and 'chosen glory'[70]. More specifically, by continuously putting the blame onto the Western countries for their mistreatment of the Islamic believers and their constant interference in the countries of the Middle East in order to satisfy their political and economic interests, the traumas mentioned below serve as a legitimizing factor to their cause. Furthermore, the groups tend to remind their members about the lives that were lost due to that 'Western war' and the constant tries of the Western powers to make their view of the liberal democratic globe to be applied in these Middle Eastern states even by force. While as noted beforehand matters of ethnicity and ethnic struggle cannot apply to those that don't share the same identity, through religious ideology it is possible to also achieve that connection. By linking those historical events with their current struggles, groups like ISIS legitimize their tendency for violence[71]. Achieving revenge and making a stand against the 'imperialistic' Western powers that continue keeping down their Muslim 'brothers' and essentially to Allah, is how they convince them to follow their cause.

Ultimately, what can be understood from the previous points is that Islamic fundamentalism touches upon historical events from the past – sometimes manipulating the accuracy to its purposes – along with the 'supernatural' elements of the religious aspect (being the chosen, carrying Allah's plan), in order for jihadists to present it as the solution to those that feel disengaged with the current 'version' of the global society. More importantly, by demonizing the West as the 'enemy' and those that support these views as 'infidels', Islamic fundamentalism manages to legitimize the violent actions that its members require to participate as the lawful norm. What this creates, is a circle of radicalization where Islamic fundamentalism becomes the dominant religious identity amongst the aforementioned youngsters within the Muslim minority.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter explains how the identity crisis amongst Muslims and Western citizens was created and what are the causes and consequences of this 'existential anxiety'. The past twenty years, the international environment has become witness of an increasingly rapid shift towards a stronger interaction between cultures, ethnicities and ideologies. This cultural globalization has affected societies and individuals alike with the most important effect being the sudden rise of radical ideologies as a reaction against the latter. One of these ideologies is Islamic fundamentalism which derives most of its

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[70] Kinnvall, 2004 755-756

[71] Ibidem, 756-757

strength by appointing the religion of Islam into a politicized form. This is what has been named by academics as 'political Islam' which attracted attention during the 1980s[72]. Many of these social insecurities lead to individuals falling prey to the beliefs of Islamic fundamentalism. This tactic has been successfully used by extremist organisations such as terrorist groups that seek to recruit faithful followers in order to eradicate those who they consider as infidels and set Islam as the dominating ideology. By manipulating the identity crisis within the younger generations, these jihadist organisations convince them that they have been 'chosen' for greater actions and that not all is lost. Through this radicalization process, insecurities are being replaced by hope and purpose. However, we are still far from fully grasping how this identity search is linked with an organization such as ISIS and how they use this to recruit individuals within French prisons, something which will be analyzed further in the chapters that follow.

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[72]One of the first academics that spoke about the term of political Islam, noting that there was a very thorough connection between political actions and political influence, is Martin Kramer who is an expert on Middle East studies and American-Israeli relations. See: Kramer, S. Martin, "Political Islam", Sage Publications, 1988.

**Chapter 2: The Jihadist Leader: ISIS's Radicalization Tactics**

As noted in the previous chapter, Islamic fundamentalism became an important aspect of radicalization in the 21st century due to its doctrinal nature and methods used by organisations in order to promote this ideology in the global environment. One of the most successful terrorist groups that achieved the creation of an international movement, that managed to affect and recruit many individuals to its cause, is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, most commonly known as ISIS. Through its vast array of tactics and after successfully creating a strong ideological base and gaining the territorial strength needed, this terrorist group eventually managed to gain the acceptance of many Muslims and even those that did not share connections to the Islamic identity, as Chapter 3 will discuss with the radicalization incidents in French prisons. However, before analyzing the tactics that ISIS has been using to successfully radicalize individuals from European states and gain followers for his campaign it is important to understand how it was created. Its connection to how this radical approach to Islamic identity came to be will provide with the evidence required in order to successfully analyze how the organization has been using this identity creation as its primary asset. As not all the details regarding the history of ISIS serve the interests of the thesis, instead the analysis will focus mainly in the events of Iraq and Syria that contain information about how the Islamic State managed to rise to power from an isolated prison named Camp Bucca.

Creating the Islamic State: From Camp Bucca to the Syrian Crisis

There has been a long discussion in academia about the creation of ISIS. Many note that the tensions within the Islamic communities of the Shia and Sunni's and the imbalance that began with the Iraqi conflict and its complete escalation after the U.S. invasion in 2003 set the stage for its creation[73]. Furthermore, evidence from the Chilcot report[74] that was provided by the UK referred to how the 2003 campaign may have indeed provided the required factors for the birth of ISIS. However, amongst the discussion regarding the US involvement in the Islamic state origins one of the events seems to stand out. The story of US led prison named 'Camp Bucca' provides some

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[73] More at: "What is 'Islamic State'?", BBC, 2015, available at: www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144

[74] For more information regarding the Chilcot report's findings see: Wintour, Patrick. "Intelligence Files Support Claims Iraq Invasion Helped Spawn ISIS", The Guardian, 2016, available at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/06/intelligence-files-support-claims-iraq-invasion-helped-spawn-isis

interesting evidence on how this jihadist identity which would later become the ideological base of the Islamic State came to be.

Created in 2004 in the region of Southern Iraq by the US army forces as a structure that would manage to isolate and hold imprisoned those that were deemed dangerous, Camp Bucca would later host key figures of the Islamic State organization. This act combined with the Iraq invasion of 2003 from the US led army are what enlarged hatred for the Western countries even more from those that already were close to the jihadi identity. Among them would be the renowned leader of ISIS and self-proclaimed 'emir' of the Muslim world after the death of his predecessor Zarqawi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi[75]. Besides those that would later be involved in the Islamic State's campaign, within the prison, individuals that were suspected[76] of previously attacking American soldiers were being held in order to isolate the threat of Jihadism in the area in the wake of the US so-called liberation attempt of the Iraqi region. However, tensions within the prison would prove far more dangerous than what the West could have calculated at the time of its establishment, especially when most of these inmates would be set free by 2009. The mistreatment of prisoners furthermore demonized the campaign in Iraq as the world and especially the Muslim communities were considering the invasion of the region closer to a domination scheme rather than a liberation war that sought to transform Iraq into a democratic state. Numerous articles in the Western countries condemned the Camp Bucca prison as fallout of justice where prisoners were held without evidence and were not allowed any form of communication with the outside world[77]. As early as 2007, the prison was already divided within Islamic beliefs – one being more radical than the other – as every incident inside the prison was being dealt by Islamic law[78]. Specifically, as the hatred for the West escalated after 2004 due to the Western approach towards the Middle Eastern conflicts, anything that wasn't completely combatting Western beliefs was being punished strictly through the 'Sharia' courts that were established within the prison setting[79]. Evidently, despite being an

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[75] Chulov, Martin. "ISIS: The Inside Story", The Guardian, 2014, available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story

[76] It is important to note that not all of suspicions were accurate and could also have been used as a cover to further increase the capturing of alleged jihadists.

[77] McCoy, Terrence. "Camp Bucca: The US Prison that Became the Birthplace of ISIS", The Independent, 2014, available at: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/camp-bucca-the-us-prison-that-became-the-birthplace-of-isis-9838905.html

[78] Ibidem

[79] Ibidem

attempt to surround and alienate the jihadist threat from the larger constituency, the prison setting of Camp Bucca served as a form of jihadist identity signifier for what would later become known as one of the most influential terrorist organisations in the international environment, ISIS.

The reasons why Camp Bucca has been framed as a birthing place for ISIS derive from the US led campaign which essentially created an organization that would manage to radicalize individuals more efficiently than previous attempts. One important point that is being discussed in the sources regarding Camp Bucca lies in how the prisoners were treated within the prison. By being continuously mistreated in combination with the general dissatisfaction and hatred against the West and primarily the US, this hatred escalated greatly within the collective nature of the prison setting. As noted, there would never have been another possibility for all these radical individuals such as Baghdadi and others to be in touch for such a long time[80]. Within the isolated environment of the prison these extremists managed to thoroughly expand their ideas and formulate a plan on how they would overthrow the West and create the new Islamic caliphate[81]. The jihadist identity within the Camp Bucca prison soon became immensely strengthened by the collective nature of its inhabitants. Those who hated the West and wanted to take revenge would bind together inside the prison under this religious identity. Meanwhile, the US forces were already too held up with the war in Iraq that as long as there was a place to drop off those who they deemed as jihadists, they refrained from paying too much attention to what exactly was happening within the prison[82]. When things began to escalate, the armed forces decided on creating compounds where those that were considered as extremist Sunni's would be separated from the more moderate ones[83]. However this tactic failed, as the establishment of 'Sharia' courts led to them either joining into the extremist view of Islam by becoming further radicalized or being punished for not being a true believer[84]. Isolation within the newly formed compounds in order to be successful required a complete and thorough monitoring. In the case of the extremists, monitoring from the US forces was minimal and as sources

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[80] Chulov, "ISIS: The Inside Story", 2014

[81] Craw, Victoria. "Camp Bucca Seen as Critical Point in Formation of Islamic State" 2015, available at: www.news.com.au/world/middle-east/camp-bucca-seen-as-critical-point-in-formation-of-islamic-state/news-story/6e175467dcac08e442b1b0a9cce0edbc

[82] McCoy, "Camp Bucca", 2014

[83] Parks, Brad. "How a US prison camp helped create ISIS", New York Post, 2015, available at: nypost.com/2015/05/30/how-the-us-created-the-camp-where-isis-was-born/

[84] Ibidem

note, even if they attempted to keep an eye on the situation, their lack of knowledge in Arabic put them at a strong disadvantage[85]. The inmates could preach to each other about the Islamic faith and the jihadi struggle in their own native language[86], something that aided the strengthening of an Islamic extremist identity.

After the events of Camp Bucca, where by 2009 numerous inmates were set free, the plan to create ISIS began taking action. The countries of the Middle East have had a long history of religious identity division between the different groups that contain the Shia and the Sunni as well as the Baathist party. In Iraq after the US invasion and the rise of Shia power, increasing numbers of the Sunni minority felt hateful towards the constant disengagement of them from the political scene, and as scholarly work notes, it was this dissatisfaction and division within the Sunni group that gave ISIS its chance to establish its influence[87]. Starting from Iraq by providing the role of a patron and supporter of the oppressed Sunni religious group, the then Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) used the failed attempts of the Iraqi President Nuri al-Maliki that sought to facilitate a balance with the country, in order to further enhance tensions[88]. Creating a strong Sunni identity against the government of Iraq was pivotal for the organization, as it would enhance its military capabilities in personnel. Many joined the new leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as he promised a strong Muslim community and a solution to the Shia oppression[89]. The second point that provided Baghdadi with the relevant strength he needed in order to employ his campaign against the West, was the civil unrest that has been taking place in Syria since 2011. The first step was to dispatch members of the organization to Syria in late 2011 so as to monitor the situation and establish a foothold in the region until time was right for Baghdadi to make his move. Creating the Al-Nusra terrorist cell in the region, his plan was to create another Islamic State this time in Syria, in order to further strengthen the organization's capabilities. After achieving that, Baghdadi moved to dissolve the two organisations, ISI and Al-Nusra, in order to bring into power the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2013[90]. While this decision was

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[85] Parks, "How a US Led Prison Helped Create ISIS", 2015
[86] Ibidem
[87] Gerges, A. Fawaz. "ISIS: A History", Princeton University, New York, 2016, 13
[88] Ibidem,13
[89] Ibidem,13
[90] Ibidem,16

received with dissatisfaction by some of the organization's members in the end Baghdadi prevailed[91].

From the prison setting of Camp Bucca, to the Iraqi and Syrian crisis and the Arab Spring, ISIS managed to achieve a stunning victory in creating a strong religious organization that in later years would manage to turn into an empire of vast wealth and immense power. This major success comes down to the creation of a strong Islamic identity and a call for a pan-Muslim struggle against the world[92]. Evidently it becomes visible that the same tactics that managed to radicalize those that created ISIS would be used as the primary tool to create a lasting religious identity globally, as more and more individuals seem to connect to the organization's goals and fall victims to its ideology, thus becoming the new soldiers of Jihad.

<u>Creating the Caliphate: ISIS Propaganda Campaign in the Middle East</u>
The fact that ISIS has been named as one of the most successful terrorist organizations finds legitimacy in its successful tactics during the group's campaign for the creation of a caliphate. Manipulating the conflicts in the Middle East, recognizing the need for a strong Islamic identity and then in a rather short time – almost a decade – managing to achieve a great percentage of that campaign , ISIS has been combining old and modern terrorist tactics thus outmatching all of its predecessors. As the previous section pointed out, the creation of ISIS began as a careful orchestrated plan by those that felt hateful for how the Western states continued becoming involved with their domestic politics. Furthermore, extremists such as Baghdadi sought to relieve their fellow Muslim states from a mild approach to Islamic faith and create a strong caliphate that would overpower any other form of ideology while at the same time providing a global setting for all the true Muslims to live in. However, before expanding in the Western world, the organization had to secure its place firmly within the Middle East countries by creating a base from where the members of the group would formulate their strategies and plan the next steps.

The Islamic State's strategy was to firstly destabilize the governments of states such as Iraq and Syria, in order to successfully manipulate those that felt dissatisfied from their current policies. By achieving that, ISIS would weaken their political

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[91] Gerges, "ISIS: A History", 2016, 16
[92] Ibidem, 5-6

authority making them to lose their legitimacy over their countries[93]. Here the religious aspect seems to have played a tremendous role in their plans as Islamic faith is an important factor of these states. Creating a collective Islamic identity and managing to convince the citizens of these countries that this was the only way to stay true to the Islamic law was vital for ISIS. Many Islamic analysts have pointed out that the leaders of the organization were being influenced by important works that provided a series of tactics that would lead to the creation of an Islamic caliphate encompassing all Muslims. These works include a) *The Management of Savagery*[94] by al-Hajill, b) *Introduction to the Jurisprudence of Jihad*[95] by al-Muhajjer and finally c) The *Essentials of Making Ready*[96] by an individual known as Dr. Fadl. While all three of them are considered important, academic discussion has mainly focused on the first one since it provided with a 'map' of how to establish their domain in the world.

The first way of achieving that was by capturing vital territories that were needed for the establishment of the 'Caliphate'. After having achieved the dissolution of Syria in late 2013-14, the soldiers of the Islamic State returned to their point of origin, Iraq, in order to capture the territory needed for their plan. In a very short amount of time ISIS fighters managed to capture Mosul[97]. Having also captured the city of Raqqa in Syria the taking of Mosul was very important for ISIS. Being the second largest city of the Iraqi state it was the perfect opportunity for Baghdadi to announce the establishment of the Caliphate and appoint himself as the sole leader of the 'new' Muslim era. The Islamic State had now control over important territorial places providing them with sufficient land to build their base. Al-Raqqa which was named as ISIS capital in Syria provided the organization with important assets that were mainly used as economic pores in order for them to finance their campaign[98] and included mainly oil and agricultural assets. While today, the city of Raqqa has been returned back

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[93]Smith, Ben & Rob Page. "ISIS and the Sectarian Conflict in the Middle East", Research Paper 15/16, House of Commons Library, London, 2015, 17, available at: researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/RP15-16

[94] What this book provided was a strictly different approach from older attempts on how to successfully create the caliphate. See more: at Gerges, "ISIS: A History", 2016, 34

[95] The 2nd book pointed out the importance that the Jihadists should try to keep the Islamic identity united in their cause in order to achieve success. See more at: Ibidem, 34

[96]The final book that is said to have influenced ISIS wrote about how Islam should be attributed to Jihadi trainings. See more at : Ibidem, 34

[97]Rapoport, C. David. "Why Has the Islamic State Changed its Strategy and Mounted the Paris-Brussels Attacks?", Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 10, No. 2, Terrorism Research Institute, 2016, 24-25, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/26297550

[98]Gerges, 2014, 17

to the Syrian government forces after a decisive battle that took place in 2017, it is still considered as an important victory for the jihadists. Moreover, a small but crucial victory of the Islamic State was the capturing of the small village named Dabiq in 2014. This was important because many ISIS soldiers claimed that this was prophesized in the holy writings of Muhammad[99] . The capturing of the village also led the organization into creating their most influential asset for legitimizing their cause, within the Muslim communities not only of the Middle Eastern countries but also globally, which was the publishing of the English written magazine named after the village, "Dabiq"[100]. Eventually, besides the array of successful military strikes and territorial captures, the organization sought to also create an efficient 'propaganda machine' that would convince people to join them. By utilizing these victories over territories in Iraq and Syria, ISIS sought to produce a reassuring image that it would provide complete and totally safety for those that were true to Islam, through their massive propaganda campaign while on the other hand effectively striking fear to those that opposed them with their massive numbers of faithful soldiers and constantly enlarged territory. Their success in gaining followers however was not only to target the local Muslim communities but instead sought to soon expand over to the Western countries in order to achieve a total victory against their former 'oppressors'.

The fast-paced victories that the Islamic State managed to achieve in Iraq and Syria provided the organization with a very important asset for its later plans as they would serve as their 'chosen glories' argument. Managing to win key battles with only a few soldiers fighting against its enemies and in such a short time, was important because of the organization's reception from the Muslim communities around the world. Having witnessed how ISIS was tearing through the ranks of its enemies, Western or 'unfaithful' Muslims alike, in such a short amount of time, many Muslim individuals were shocked by the organization's robust strength and immense faith in Islam[101]. Many of them became entranced by the organisations tactics. Believing that ISIS's sayings about bringing forth a new age for the Muslims of the world and that the acquisition of what they considered 'paradise on earth' might become possible, many individuals from around the world moved in these territories in order to take part in the

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[99]Rapoport, "Why Has the Islamic State Changed its Strategy", 2016, 25
[100]Ibidem, 25
[101]Ibidem, 25-26

Islamic State[102]. On the other hand, people from the already captured cities by ISIS, were convinced to join[103], becoming visible that this terrorist organization managed to surpass its predecessors such as Al-Qaeda, on how widely its cause was received. Those of Sunni identity who were closer to ISIS perception of the Islamic faith had already left their countries in order to join the fight in Syria and become 'glorified soldiers' for the Caliphate. The outcome of that, was that the Islamic State managed by 2015 to rule over a territory that was inhabited by almost eight million Muslims (mainly of Sunni religion). However, as it has been outlined in previous passages, what strikingly divided ISIS from its predecessors like Al-Qaeda is its consistency in recruiting people from the West instead of mainly focusing in recruiting fighters from the neighboring countries. After having established a strong jihadist community in the countries of Iraq and Syria in late 2012 and having dealt with what the so-called enemies within their midst which included the leaders, governing bodies and values of the Muslim countries, ISIS proceeded to its next plan. As early as 2013, which marks the introduction of its global campaign, the Islamic State leaders sought to convince the Muslim citizens of the West to leave their lives and join their campaign for the creation of a global caliphate that would become the home of all the true believers of the Islamic religion. Their first large scale attempt to a global recruitment strategy came in October 2013.[104] Members of ISIS created and released numerous recruitment posters that were explicitly in English in order to gain the attention of those abroad[105]. However the decisive step towards a global vision would only come later on.

Gazing Towards the West: ISIS Propaganda in Europe

ISIS's tactics for ensuring total victory against the West consisted of a two-way plan of attack. Their version of Jihad was spurred mainly from the influence of Islamic writings that perceived religion through strong extremist lens was that of an offensive Jihad. This meant that they had to achieve a complete and total defeat of their enemy. On the one hand they launched a series of gruesome attacks within the most important countries of Europe such as France, Belgium, the UK and Germany. What these attacks succeeded in, was primarily to allow fear and despair be rooted deeply within the European people by watching their fellow citizens perishing. Secondly, the attacks served as a flashing

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[102]Rapoport, 2016, 25

[103] Lister, R. Charles. "The Syrian Jihad: Al- Qaeda", Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, 235

[104]Ibidem, 235

[105]Ibidem, 235

depiction of how powerful the organization was, in order to point out that there was no other option but to join the Islamic State and become a Muslim. This would help ISIS gain followers from these individuals that had become 'impressed' by the organization's dedication. On the other hand, the Caliphate had mapped out a thorough propaganda strategy in order to promote Islam and the need for people to adopt their ways.

After the English written posters of 2013, the next decisive step towards capturing the attention of foreigners around the world came through a video that was filmed within the territory of ISIS and depicts three jihadist soldiers 'mujahedeen' as they are commonly named. What is striking about this specific video is that all three of them are from Western countries (two from the UK and one from Australia). As the video goes on, the first speaker comments about the vision of the Islamic State and what it means to truly uphold the law of God. A key part of the video lies in the words of the second speaker though who sentimentally points out:

"We are all brothers and sisters … are you willing to sacrifice the fat job you've got, the big car you've got, the family you have—are you willing to sacrifice this for the sake of Allah? Definitely if you sacrifice something for the sake of Allah, Allah will give you 700 times more than this … All my brothers living in the West, I know how you feel when I used to live there; in your heart you feel depressed … the cure for the depression is jihad for the sake of Allah. You feel like you have no honor … my brothers, come to jihad and feel the honor we are feeling, the happiness we are feeling."[106]

ISIS sought to manipulate the aforementioned identity crisis within Europe in order to gain followers for its cause. The words "We are all brothers and sisters" or "Brothers in the West I know how you feel when I was there" are being transmitted as a form of acknowledgment and connection between those who already found their way to ISIS, their 'redemption' as they call it and those who are still trapped in the Western way of living. The final words of the British jihadist strongly relate to the existential anxiety feelings in the Western societies "the cure for the depression is Jihad for the sake of Allah". As noted in Chapter 1, Abrahamic religions and the vision of a higher power, in this case Allah, is used here as a signification of life. It seeks to attract those

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[106] For the full video see: " al-Ḥayāt Media Center presents a new video message from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shām: 'There Is No Life Without Jihad'", Jihadology, 2014, available at: jihadology.net/2014/06/19/al-%E1%B8%A5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-al-sham-there-is-no-life-without-jihad/

that are in need of a new identity. Becoming a fighter for the Islamic State is the solution to that identity crisis. The most important aspect of the video however has to do with the choice of the speakers. As noted before, all three of them are not from Muslim ethnicity. This of course is happening on purpose. It means to outline that Islamic faith and Jihadism can apply to anyone on whatever part of the world they are. Especially for those in the West it seems to be considered as a turning point from being an 'infidel' to taking up the true mission of Allah. This distribution of videos has indeed been one of the key methods of ISIS in order to gain the attention of the Western constituency, since it allowed the organization to reach a large number of foreign populations. ISIS has been regarded by numerous scholars and experts as being one of the most successful organisations in recruiting and radicalizing mainly Western citizens into joining the ranks and become jihadists. The creation and publication of videos that promote their achievements by providing viewers with countless gruesome images of their enemies has been an important asset for the jihadists. On the other hand exclaiming how joining ISIS will provide the true version of happiness is the second tactic. But there are other important assets that make this jihadist propaganda so effective.

Social media can be viewed as a 'rising star' when it comes down to reaching a constituency. This is not different for organisations wanting to address possible new recruits. ISIS has been using numerous social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook and Instagram in order to reach those that it considers as possible new members[107]. This powerful social media machine was observed by the Western experts as early as 2015. When asked by CNN news, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki pointed out in an interview that:

"There's no question what we're combating with ISIL's propaganda machine is something we have not seen before,"[108]

Recent studies from experts on jihadism and terrorism have also outlined how successful the organization has been in using social media to promote its activities and come into contact with possible new recruits. One particular research, found that one of

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[107]Klausen, Jyte. "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq", Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Vol. 38, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015, 1, available at: (doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2014.974948)
[108]For details on the interview see: Mullen, Jethro. "What is ISIS' Appeal for Young People?", CNN, 2015, available at: edition.cnn.com/2015/02/25/middleeast/isis-kids-propaganda/index.html

the most prominent social media platforms was that of Twitter. Most of the content sent out by Twitter accounts that were operated by members of ISIS had to do with ways of recruiting new members or 'proselytizing' as it is more commonly known in ideologies[109]. Another purpose of Twitter messages had to do with presenting the recipient with a better understanding of what it means to partake in Jihad[110]. Other scholarly works pay more attention to the concept of narratives that are being transferred through the use of social media. By 'sharing'[111] images or videos, ISIS members try to create specific narratives in order to produce a convincing argument for their cause[112]. These narratives mainly serve the purpose of demonizing Western policies as being harmful and selfish against those who support Islam. A common framing of the West in the writings of ISIS propaganda refers to them as 'crusaders', a reference from the Christian Crusades.

Other characterizations of the Islamic State's propaganda have framed the organization's tactics in trying to create a sort of social movement. By providing its audience with messages, videos and images, ISIS succeeded in being regarded as an organization with clear goals that spur from their own 'historical significance[113]'. This historical significance provides the Islamic State with a legitimate cause and a convincing framework for becoming appealing to those that seek what was before named as a 'way out' and a 'sense for belongingness'. By managing to hijack the technological advancement of the Western countries and infiltrate social media, ISIS has become extremely efficient in adapting its strategies in order to gain as many followers as possible. This efficiency contradicting to the Western usage has been noted even by former members of the organization. As Maajid Nawaz explained, "We are way behind. They are far superior and advanced than we are when it comes to new media

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[109]Klausen. "Tweeting the Jihad", 2015, 11

[110]Ibidem, 11

[111]Sharing here refers to the online term of sending something to someone's personal account

[112]Mahood, Samantha & Halim, Rane. "Islamist narratives in ISIS recruitment propaganda", TheJournalofInternationalCommunication,2016,17-18,availableat: 10.1080/13216597.2016.1263231

[113]Pelletier, R. Ian, Leif Lundmark, Rachel Gardner, Gina Scott Ligon & Ramazan Kilinc. "Why ISIS' Message Resonates: Leveraging Islam, Socio- Political Catalysts and Adaptive Messaging", Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2016, 4-5, available at: (doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1139373)

technologies"[114], pointing out how efficient ISIS has been within its propaganda campaign.

Concluding Remarks

From the setting of Camp Bucca back in 2004 until the latest operations of the Islamic State it has become known that the organization has had a thorough planning for its goals. What is visible through the story of ISIS is how important is has been for the strengthening of ideals and beliefs, the creation of a collective identity. This identity was created within the premises of a prison (Camp Bucca) that gave the opportunity to the members of the not yet created Islamic State to formulate their plan on how to create their Islamic 'empire'. Furthermore, the general tensions that the Iraqi conflict and later on the Syrian or the so called 'Arab Spring' provided the terrorists with a very unique opportunity. By posing as the curators and protectors of the true Muslim identity and faith (coming mainly from the Sunni minority) these extremists managed to gain important territories within the Middle East and attain numerous followers in combination with an almost 'sovereign' pseudo-state. By combining decisive strikes with the influence on those who feel disengaged from the West, ISIS created one of the most successful propaganda campaigns both on a local and international level that managed to recruit countless followers that would adopt the identity of a jihadist. However since 2014, the primary targets have been European states such as France or Belgium. Specifically, France has been a crucial case for radicalization as its prison environment seems to have turned into a 'place' for Jihad and bears striking similarities to Camp Bucca. But it is important to get a better understanding of why a country such as France has become such a strong target for the Islamic extremists and how the problem of the French prisons, which will be discussed thoroughly on the next chapter, connects with ISIS success in luring individuals to adopt this radical identity.

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[114] Quote from: Mullen, "What is ISIS' appeal for young people?", ,2015, available at: edition.cnn.com/2015/02/25/middleeast/isis-kids-propaganda/index.html

## Chapter 3: The French Problem: Combatting Islamic Radicalization in Prisons

The case of Islamic radicalization in European countries has been an important and crucial issue that has had consequences on both domestic and international level. For terrorist organisations, the need to attain followers that share their ideology and can continue their work has been one of the most important causes in their strategy. Especially for an organization such as the Islamic State, its goal has always been to create a global caliphate for all 'true' Muslims. This required a decisive plan in order to achieve victory over the countries of Europe. As noted before in Chapter 2, influenced by writings, the leaders of ISIS sought to achieve the creation of a pan-Islamic identity that could be adopted by the Muslim minorities in these countries but also become viable for those that had no connection to Islam. By calling on those in European countries to launch attacks, while also provoking these countries to act on these attacks through retaliation, it was easier for ISIS to target and convince those European Muslim citizens that belonged in the younger generations and could feel the xenophobic incidents more vividly in order to gain followers. The latest issue that Europe has been facing comes from the sudden rise of Islamic radicalization within the French prisons. Many Muslim youngsters that enter the prison environment suddenly become radicalized into adopting this jihadist identity. This has proven to be a very difficult issue for the French state to deal with. However, the choice of France by ISIS was not one of chance but rather a consideration of crucial factors that would provide the jihadists with a clear passage into the Western countries.

### Targeting the French State: The Islamic State's Strategic Choice

The transition from the local targets in the Middle-East to coordinated attacks against the West has not been something that took place without a plan. As it was shown in Chapter 2, the Islamic State's expansion underwent a very thorough and specific planning that consisted of first ensuring the creation of its empire and training soldiers within the territories of Syria and Iraq before advancing to other Arabic states. While the first part of establishing a base in its two foundational states (Iraq and Syria) overall can be perceived as a successful campaign, the expansion to the neighboring countries did not go as smoothly as predicted. Having ignored the West up until then, ISIS only started demanding of its followers to attack these countries in late 2014 early 2015, targeting primarily the French and Belgian countries.

This sudden shift towards Western European countries has been explained by experts on terrorism and strategic studies such as Rapoport as being a consequence of the retaliation from the West against ISIS. Specifically, in September 2014 the United States organized military attacks along with other EU countries using air strikes against the Islamic State's territories[115]. This situation prompted the organization to order strikes against the West by its soldiers in every possible way in order to utterly eradicate them[116]. Interestingly enough, it was not the U.S. who was considered the first target by ISIS but rather Europe and specifically France. During the first months of 2015, random attacks from Islamic extremists took place in the country. While the victims were not large in numbers, as the attacks had a more strategic element than a destructing one, it was clear that Islamic extremists were operating in the French state. However, the turning point happened in January 2015 as the next attacks that took place were closer to the large casualties that Islamic terrorism was usually known for. The so-called 'Paris Attacks' consisted of hits that took place in different spots of Paris which were mainly places where people would gather in numbers (football courts, concerts and nightclubs)[117]. The most infamous target is the 'Bataclan Theatre' where terrorists stormed the site and attacked unarmed civilians with the use of Kalashnikov guns[118]. This has been considered as the deadliest attack against the French country since WWII, as it led to the death of almost 130 civilians and the injuring of 376 others.

The primary reason for this choice of country from ISIS was also due to France being a strategic advantage to the organization. Statistically the most radicalized and strong believers of ISIS from the West have come from the countries of France and Belgium. To that perspective it could be considered as none of the possible factors on why the targets would be one of the two aforementioned countries. As both are inhabited by a very large population of Muslims, the Islamic State's plan could reach a bigger constituency and possibly achieve the radicalization of more individuals[119]. However, a key aspect of why it was easier for ISIS to attract Muslims from France rather than other European countries also has to do with the French ideals. By analyzing

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[115]Rapoport, 2016, 27

[116]Ibidem, 27

[117] For a complete timeline of the Islamic attacks against the French state see: "Timeline: Attacks in France", BBC, 2016, available at: www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33288542

[118] For details regarding the attack on the Bataclan theatre see : "What Happened at the Bataclan?", BBC, 2015, available at: www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34827497

[119]Ibidem, 29

the country's culture, one comes to important findings in regard to how minorities are treated.

France is a country that has been shaped greatly from the ideals of the French Revolution. In other words, it has always been important for the country to take pride in its democratic and liberal freedom of ideals and beliefs[120]. To that perspective one could expect that this would then seem as the ideal environment for what was discussed in previous chapters as 'cultural globalization' where different cultures, ethnicities and religions interact with each other. Here however, emerges a key issue rooted deep within the history of France that contrasts this strong humanitarian approach. This has to do with the robust idea of the French identity rooted within the nation. Specifically, it has to do with the long-lasting pride of being identified as French. This has created implications with immigrants and especially those of Muslim ethnicity. What is named by scholars as the "French melting pot" [121]has also been viewed during the colonial past of the country, mainly addressing the need for anyone that wants to live and settle in French territory to be able to shift their identity and adopt the 'proud' ideals of the French nation. What this national pride has done for the Muslim minorities in France strongly connects with what was described as social disengagement. A strong contestation between the Muslims and their adopting country (France) comes from the differences within tradition and cosmopolitanism. Even from a young age, Muslims in school have to deal with issues of culture where sometimes they are not accepted by others. One example can be seen with the 'head-scarf' in schools. As noted before the importance of everyone having the same rights could sometimes prove difficult to enforce without closing off some people[122]. And while this is not an issue that is exclusive to the French country and of course since the Muslim minority has existed within the country for at least thirty years having learned to assimilate and mediate their religious beliefs and culture for them to blend in better with the environment, there have been some important differences in recent years. The sudden rise of Islamic terrorism has further enhanced the perception that Islam may be a concrete threat to the security of the French citizens. The 2015 deadly attacks that were made on the call of ISIS have

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[120] An-Na'im, Abdullahi. " Human Rights and Islamic Identity in France and Uzbekistan: Mediation of the Local and Global", Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2000, 13, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/4489310
[121]Ibidem, 13
[122]Ibidem, 921-922

created a difficult environment for the Muslim minority in France. Many of them are being suspected of being possibly involved with terrorist organisations. The rise of nationalist policies in the French country and general mistreating of the Muslims has created a grave need for them to find their place in society while keeping their religion and culture. This provided a perfect opportunity for the Islamic State to target the French nation and begin unfolding its radicalization propaganda.

However, the most important aspect of France being the main incubator of potential terrorist fighters has to do with its prison environment. The French country has been dealing with a rapid expansion in Islamic radicalization originating from its prisons. This is an important issue because of how it differentiates in contrast to how radicalization happens in society. One pivotal point to make here is that the French prisons contrary to other countries in the Western European region have the largest number of Muslim inmates as almost more than half of all the prison inmates come mainly belong to the younger generations, as it is then when they are more prone to commit petty thefts and crimes. This can also be seen in reports made in 2015 where more than 68.000 inmates within France were Muslim[123]. Furthermore, French prisons are extremely more difficult to observe from a society environment due to how little training prison guards have towards radicalization issues. As many of the cases involve people who entered prison without having any connection to terrorism and then became radicalized leading up to enrolling in an organization such as ISIS, it becomes realistic how important is to observe and predict when radicalization takes place. Since up until recently there were no experts within the prisons that could aid the guards, their little experience made the environment extremely potent for jihadists to recruit soldiers[124]. By adapting to the situations and blending in they have managed to create a potent issue that has put France into a primary position in creating radicals that serve as time-bombs waiting to be unleashed in societies. This sudden change of identity from someone that has no prior connection to any form of terrorism and then becomes 'enchanted' by the idea of taking up Islam and fighting for ISIS as well as how the latter manipulates the inmates to recruit them within their group, needs further analysis in order to grasp how

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[123]  Birnbaum, Michael. "French Prisons, Long Hotbeds of Radical Islam, Get New Scrutiny after Paris Attacks, The Washington Post, 2015, available at: www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/paris-killers-radicalized-in-prison-now-leaders-want-to-fix-that-problem/2015/01/28/52271e28-a307-11e4-91fc-7dff
[124]Ibidem

identity formation interacts within the isolated environment of a prison evidently leading to radicalization.

The Prison Dilemma: Promoting the Jihadist Identity in French Prisons

Radicalization in prisons has been one of the most difficult situations that the French state has had to deal with, for almost five years now. As noted before, the rise of ISIS and its relentless campaign against France created a rapid expansion of radicalization within its Muslim community. This radicalization however even managed to spread to those that had no connection to terrorism or Islamic faith. By taking advantage of the poor living conditions within prisons, the constant diminishing of religious freedom in regard to the Islamic faith and in connection to the growth of identity searching from new inmates, the jihadists began spreading their ideals to other inmates. Reports that were published as early as ten years ago point out that the grave conditions within French prisons would undoubtedly prove to pose a serious threat later on. The fact that inmates have to live crammed within cells that are dirty and unsanitary in combination with the psychological consequences of isolation has some drastic effects on their personality[125].

Isolation in a prison environment is something that affects any type of prisoner whether they have committed serious crimes or are inside for petty thefts. Many of the inmates that are in these prisons have to deal with this daily, something that furthermore enhances their need for finding someone to feel comfortable with. Reports from NGO's or News sources have shown that French prisons have been considered as having one of the largest numbers of suicide attempts in Europe. Specifically, in a 2011 report from 'The Local' in France, in comparison with other European countries France dealt with at least 100 deaths from suicide whereas the UK or Italy the numbers were nearly 50 or 60 deaths[126]. This strikingly proves how disturbing the conditions are within the prison environment and this is exactly where the religion of Islam and its use by jihadists comes to take effect. By discretely coming into contact with inmates that seem to be in these problematic positions the imprisoned terrorists can then 'pitch' radical Islam as a salvation method making them believe that there is hope in their life. In other words they provide them with the 'chosen' argument that was described in Chapter 1. Crucial

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[125] John, Tara. "Inside the Heart of French Prisons", Time, 2017, available at: time.com/4681612/french-prisons/

[126] Melvin, Joshua. "French Prisons Have most Suicides in Europe", The Local, 2014, available at: www.thelocal.fr/20140429/french-prisons-most-suicides-in-europe

and important examples of that strategy are those of Amedy Coulibaly who was the terrorist behind the attack on a kosher store in Paris that took the life of four unarmed people and the case of Cherif Kouachi who was responsible for the Charlie Hebdo newspaper attack in 2015. Both cases were radicalized within the French prison environment[127].

Karim Mohktari is a man who entered prison when he was 18 years old and without prior connection to radical Islam or terrorism but rather for robbery[128]. His example also provides some interesting evidence on how the jihadist identity is created within French prisons. In an interview in 2013 Karim pointed out that:

"When you arrive in prison you feel completely abandoned. You get there and you need to find some strength,"[129]

"You're seeking hope and when someone holds out a hand, you take it".

He then continued pointing out that during his encounter with the jihadist he was prompted to: "kill the infidels wherever you find them"[130]

"The idea was to go get myself trained and become a violent Jihadist,"[131]

Mohktari's case is important because he is one of the few individuals that managed to resist falling victims of this radicalization scheme while most in his case fell prey into becoming members of the new jihadi generation. What can be taken by his interview is the direct method that the jihadists use in order to find possible new soldiers that they then can turn into terrorists. By approaching people that have entered this solidary environment of prisons, they provide them with what is mentioned as a 'hand of hope'. Specifically, this happens by prompting them to take up on reading the Quran and its writings, convincing them that in its passages lies the redemption for their past crimes[132]. As Mohktari refers in his interview, there is not much to be done nor is it easy

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[127]Iqbal, Jawad. "Prisons Face a Bigger Rethink to Tackle Threat of Radicalization", Financial Times, 2017, available at: www.ft.com/content/49d37696-633e-11e7-8814-0ac7eb84e5f1

[128]Parts that are used from Mohktari's interview are being quoted in the following article: Sage, Alexandria. "France Struggles to Fight Radical Islam in its Jails", Reuters, 2013, available at: www.reuters.com/article/us-france-radicalisation-insight/france-struggles-to-fight-radical-islam-in-its-jails-idUSBRE9460OQ20130507

[129]Ibidem

[130]Ibidem

[131]Ibidem

[132]Ibidem

for someone to reject that. It is crucial to understand that these are people who have basically 'lost their lives' and are trying to pay for their crimes. And being already dissatisfied with the fact that their society turned them into outcasts and sent them to jail, and then having to deal with the terrible living conditions in prison where again no interest is shown by society to rehabilitate them it will obviously further enhance their dissatisfaction and make them even more hateful of the French society. However Mohktari's case is not the only case of someone who has fallen prey to this radicalization strategy and came face to face with the potential to become member of the new class of jihadist terrorists.

Mehdi Nemmouche is yet another important example of an individual that was radicalized within the prison environment of France. In 2014 he was the prime suspect for attacking and murdering four unarmed Jewish civilians in a museum in Brussels[133]. Born and raised in France, Nemmouche had always had a tendency towards minor crimes as every attempt to succeed in a legal job was met with defeat. While he managed to receive his Vocational High School Degree (BEP) and enrolled in a Technical Institute in order to complete his education to become an electrician, he did not manage to finish it[134]. His family background which consisted of him never meeting his father and being committed to a 'children's home'[135] is considered to also having played a decisive role in his later life choices. As being noted in his file by the French authorities:

"Placed at the age of three at a host family because of serious mental disorders of the mother, Mehdi Nemmouche, born of unknown father, lives when he does not sleep in his vehicle, at his grandmother's, to whom he had been entrusted by the judge at the age of 17. His career has been full of many behavioral issues in response to his personal and family history"[136].

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[133] Translated from French Newspaper article published by Le Monde "Mehdi Nemmouche: What We Know about his Career" (original as "Mehdi Nemmouche : Ce que l'on Sait de son Parcours", Le Monde, 2014), available at: www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/09/08/mehdi-nemmouche-ce-que-l-on-sait-de-son-parcours_4483458_3224.html

[134]Ibidem

[135]Ibidem

[136]Translated from French Newspaper article published by Le Monde "The Erratic Youth of Mehdi Nemmouche" (original as "La Jeunesse Erratique de Mehdi Nemmouche", LeMonde, 2014), available at: www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/06/07/la-jeunesse-erratique-de-mehdi-nemmouche_4434063_3224.html

A young Mehdi became known to the police by taking part in numerous incidents of robberies or minor thefts up until the age of 22 where he was finally arrested and committed into French prison for the crime of robbery in 2008-2009 where he served five years before finally being set free in 2012.

As in previous cases, Nemmouche's road towards radicalization has no changes for how he was approached. It is important however to note here that until his association and interaction with radical Islamists in prison there has been no evidence that he was interested in religion or the Islamic faith. This is exactly why the theory of religious identity is important because of how it can influence those who at first have no close connection to Islam. In prison Mehdi suddenly began asking to attend the collective prayers and started to regularly join the other Islamists. After being transferred through numerous prisons Nemmouche was placed in a solitary custody and continuously refused all his remission requests by the authorities[137]. Although this step was taken by prison authorities in order to better monitor his progress and keep him in custody in fear for him turning into a terrorist, it actually managed to have the exact opposite effect. Mehdi's final years in prison made him adopt an entirely radical Islamic identity as he was constantly involved with the inmates. His final step would be completed in 2012 when after being released from French prison he immediately left the country and joined ISIS in Syria in order to complete his training and become at fighter for the Islamic State[138].

What becomes visible from the aforementioned points is that France has had a serious issue with its prison system as well as dealing with the Islamic religion amongst inmates. The overcrowded prison cells, the horrible living conditions combined with the tremendous rise in Muslim inmates in French prisons and the general dissatisfaction towards the state for not respecting their religious beliefs and needs, has led to them adopting a hateful view of the West which is further expanded when they begin interacting with extremists that take up the role of bringing them closer to Islam acting as their mentors. The past few years France has begun taking subtle steps in order to successfully counter this rise of Islamic extremism but results seem controversial.

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[137]"The Erratic Youth of Mehdi Nemmouche", 2014
[138]Ibidem

‘Solving’ a Problem: The French Strategy for Countering Jihadism in Prisons

The recent destructive attacks against the country in combination with the rising numbers in radicalization created a need for a decisive solution to what has turned out to be one of the crucial security problems of the French state. The 2015 attacks in Paris that took the lives of more than 130 civilians tragically served as wake up call for the French government who decided to take up action and formulate a strategy in order to successfully counter the large threat.

The first action was the assimilation of a trial program in 2016 that would take place within the prison setting. Its purpose was to successfully monitor the inmates and be able to observe their actions within the prisons. Interactions with other radicals or sudden interest to Islam from prisoners in combination with any change in their behavior would be used as signs to categorize the inmates in those who may have a tendency to become ‘radicalized’ or even have already become radicalized. In other words the main purpose of the program would be to gather those who were believed to have adopted these radical ideals and separate them entirely from prisoners that do not[139]. Thus by dividing the inmates, the French authorities sought to diminish the chances of them getting into contact with the rest of the prisoners and tarnish them with radical ideals. After being separated into groups, those that had been labeled as radicals had to participate in a six-month programme where they would be taught and educated in order to understand the errors of their radical ideology[140]. Amongst their teaching seminars, the programme offered numerous workshops from former-extremists or victims of Islamic fundamentalism (terrorism survivors)[141]. What the French government sought to achieve in this case was to rehabilitate those who seemed to have turned to Jihadism. Furthermore, by appointing psychologists and sociologists that would evaluate their conditions and their actions, the state tried to provide them with a different option in their identity crisis in order to point them to another direction from that of becoming a jihadist and help them take their lives into their own hands.

There are many obstacles and problems that can be outlined however from this first programme. Many have criticized the controversies of gathering up those that are

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[139] “French Prisons Trial Programme to De-Radicalise Inmates”, Al Jazeera News, 2016, available at: www.reuters.com/article/us-france-radicalisation-insight/france-struggles-to-fight-radical-islam-in-its-jails-idUSBRE9460OQ20130507
[140] Ibidem
[141] Ibidem

deemed as a threat within the prison cells. By creating a space were those with radical Islamic beliefs would co-exist on the one hand it might achieve some small diminishment of radical ideals being transferred between inmates however this won't eliminate the problem but only partially contain it. What is important to note here is that this programme was trying to be implemented in numerous prisons amongst France some of them being only temporary placements of inmates before their final transfer to other parts of the country. As being noted by employees of these prisons such as Fresnes Prison, gathering radicalized inmates together not only did not solve the problem but rather enhanced it and made it even more dangerous[142]. Similar tactics were used in other prisons where this de-radicalization programme was used. As one of the spokesmen of the Prison Officers Union quoted in an interview with Al-Jazeera:

"What needs to be understood is that Fresnes is a prison for those awaiting trial, so once they've been sentenced, they'll be sent out to other prisons"[143].

Others criticized this gathering of radical inmates in prison environments as creating a new 'French' Guantanamo[144]. But what is even more important and crucial of this policy is that it didn't take into consideration the shortenings of the prisons in terms of stuff and conditions. The fact that the numbers of Muslim inmates are so large within French prisons makes it pivotal for having sufficient stuff members in order to be able to monitor and prevent cases of radicalization rather than just grouping inmates in an even smaller environment. Unfortunately, in the past few years there have been neither enough guards nor prison officers to make that possible as the numbers show that a single guard has the duty of guarding more than 100 prisoners[145]. In addition to the lack of able staff that could help the government authorities prevent radicalization in prisons, the continuous shortage on Muslim 'pastors' or Imams as they are known within the Islamic faith[146] is yet another problem. This lack of positive Islamic faith provides the extremist option with much room to further corrupt those who suffer from these insecurities. As evidence shows, since there is no official representation of the Islamic religion in prisons, inmates tend to look up to the radicals who in turn take up the role of

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[142]"French Prisons Trial Programme to De-Radicalise Inmates", 2016

[143]Ibidem

[144]Ibidem

[145]Birnbaum, Michael. "French Prisons, Long Hotbeds of Radical Islam, The Washington Post, 2015

[146]"French Prisons Trial Programme to De-Radicalise Inmates", 2016

imams[147]. This is being further ensured by experts that try to battle the phenomenon with examples being Yannis Warrach who noted in an interview of 2016 that:

"If there's no imam available, either because he is not there frequently or because there isn't one in the prison, they will instead rely on other inmates, who very often have a very, very fundamentalist understanding of Islam"[148]

Another important feature that the French government needs to take into consideration when implementing strategies for countering radicalization is that the past two years the strategy of fundamentalists has changed. While before 2015 and the Paris attacks, signs of radicalization were quite visible between prisoners, recent inmates seem to have been toned down. They don't leave their beards growing anymore and even abstain from praying in order not to raise suspicions and continue to be left with the general population. This beca me known by a report from the CGLPL (Contrôleur Général des Lieux de Privation de Liberté) for the Osny prison[149] which stated that:

"Since the end of 2014 instructions seem to have been given for [prisoners to] dissimulate so as not to display the outward signs of fundamentalism … calls to prayer issued from windows … have practically stopped, as have collective prayers. Instances of violence towards personnel have fallen. Outward manifestations of missionary activity have virtually disappeared"[150].

The latest strategic implementation by the French government was made known to the public months ago in February 2018 by Prime Minister Edouard Phillipe[151]. This new de-radicalization project, which is named as "Prévenir Pour Protéger" (Prevent to Protect), follows along the lines of previously implemented programmes in an attempt to deal a decisive blow in the hard consequences of radicalization in both French

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[147]"French Prisons Trial Programme to De-Radicalise Inmates", 2016

[148]Ibidem

[149]The Osny prison together with Fresnes and Fleury-Mérogis comprise the three main prisons where the first de-radicalization programme took place by the French government in 2014. See:
"Jihadism in French Prisons: Caged fervor", The Economist, 2016, available at:
www.economist.com/europe/2016/09/17/caged-fervour

[150] de Bellaigue, Christopher. "Are French Prisons 'Finishing Schools' for Terrorism?", The Guardian, 2016, available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/17/are-french-prisons-finishing-schools-for-terrorism

[151]More information at: Moulholland, Rory. "France Pledges 1,500 Jail Places to Isolate Radicalized Inmates", The Telegraph, 2018, available at
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/23/france-pledges-1500-jail-places-isolate-radicalised-inmates/

prisons and society. The Prime Minister noted during his government's strategy announcement in Lile that the plan would be to create approximately 1.500 new areas that would host those who are radicalized[152]. In addition to that, three new centers will be created in order to host those who return from the now lost cities of ISIS in Syria or Iraq. By doing so, the French government aims to further minimize the dangers of radicalization in prisons by dealing with those who are deemed as dangerous with a different approach. Plans will also be made for those who are set free from prisons and are kept into observation by the French authorities. This will become possible by employing them into jobs that will not disengage them from society any longer[153]. More to that, special care units will be established that will seek to provide children of either fighters or radicals with a different teaching method in order to prevent them to follow in their parents steps[154]. While this new programme seems again to repeat some of the mistakes of previous trial projects that the French state has been experimenting on, it also takes a wider approach on combatting radicalization in the country. By taking into consideration how the French society interacts with the events of prisons, it seeks to achieve a broader solution through constant monitoring and observation of how the inmates operate when being in prison where they come into contact with other radicals[155]. A broader solution however will also try to deal with what happens after they leave prison. Precisely where it differentiates from previous approaches is that it continues to provide these individuals with help even after they are released from prison in order to prevent them from joining the war in the Middle East but rather by being absorbed within society. However, it is still too soon to be able to predict whether or not this programme will be able to solve the issues of identity that France has been dealing for the past years and whether it will manage to finally decisively deal with Islamic radicalization.

Concluding Remarks

The case of France provides with some interesting findings in regards to how radicalization and identity formation is perceived by both the Western countries and non-state actors such as the Islamic State. The dissatisfaction from the jihadist leaders regarding the difficulties in their Middle-East campaign in combination with the

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[152]Moulholland, "France Pledges 1,500 Jail Places to Isolate Radicalized Inmates", 2018
[153]Ibidem
[154]"France Pledges 1,500 Jail Places to Isolate Radicalized Inmates", The Local, 2018, available at: www.thelocal.fr/20180223/france-to-seal-off-1500-radicalized-inmates-in-prisons
[155]Moulholland, 2018

Western attacks against their bases, led them to enhance and speed up their plan to infiltrate and attack the West. To that perspective, France was viewed as the better target due to its large numbers of Muslim population and its general behavior towards minorities. As the effects of cultural globalization took effect within the French society in addition to the fear of terrorist attacks, the government's policies created feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction towards migrants in the country's population. Especially within French prisons where these young Muslims comprise the largest group of inmates, ISIS managed to successfully create a radicalization strategy that drew exactly on those feelings of anxiety which come from the identity crisis these individuals suffered while they were growing up in France. However, after their imprisonment these sentiments were enlarged even more by the isolation factor within prisons. Ultimately, the jihadist identity that ISIS members provided them with is what was received as the only chance to take control of their lives. The fact that the prison living conditions are less than humane combined with the enormous shortage towards able personnel left the country vulnerable to attacks as it happened in 2015 with the devastating Paris attacks. This further pushed the French government to adopt hard policies that aimed at separating and de-radicalizing those that were deemed as a possible threat, which up until the present have not been successful in many aspects of the country, something that creates unease for what the global consequences can be from this rising tendency to radicalization in prisons.

**Conclusion**

The events in France during the past few years provide an interesting case for how identity formation is linked with radicalization. Although the examples of individuals adopting radical ideals from an ideology that seeks change through violence and elimination of enemies, predates ISIS's plans and Islamic fundamentalism, there are some new arguments that can be drawn from them. The effects that globalization has had in the international environment have indeed changed and shaped many aspects of the traditional model of society. But, while matters of economy and politics are important, there are others that governments and institutions have not paid the required attention and have slowly but surely turned into grave threats. For example, what was discussed throughout the thesis as cultural globalization has had crucial effects on European countries such as France. The most important effect however that served as the center of analysis for this thesis is the notion of 'identity'. In other words, the answer to how this identity gap that resides amongst the Muslim youth of France and which then increases drastically through their imprisonment, can be found within the analysis of precisely this 'existential anxiety'. In this case, the solution for this individual is to adopt and reframe their identity using the jihadist ideology. But as with every analysis and case study, not everything has the same results or follows the same pattern. And as with identity formation and Islamic radicalization not all individuals have had the same effects. What becomes visible through the analysis of the Islamic State, the jihadi way of thinking and how they infiltrated the French society, is how efficient ideologies become when they are shared through a collective mindset.

However, to create such a way of thinking there are some requirements that need to be fulfilled. One example between the case of ISIS and that of the French state derives from the analysis of the prison environment. But obviously it is also valid to point out that prisons are not the only places where individuals get radicalized. It is however obvious that radicalization in prison seems to have more potent effects than radicalization in the larger sense of a society. The reason for that lies in the specific environment of prisons as noted beforehand. One crucial characteristic of prisons is that they set a person into a state of complete isolation from everything he has known so far. Isolation is important for two reasons. Firstly, it enhances sentiments of anxiety or insecurity that a person might have felt while being in the outside world, sometimes being even possible that these led to them committing crimes. Secondly, on the opposite

side it provides a person or group of persons with the element of time. Time is important for the creation of ideologies and their stabilization process within an individual. Ultimately, this existential anxiety that a young Muslim is trying to deal with due to reasons explained beforehand (xenophobia, difficulties in securing a job etc.), when combined with the isolation factor of prison such as the French ones (terrible living conditions, no positive influence of Islam), is what speeds up the process of them falling prey to the jihadi way of life.

The example of ISIS is pivotal for this argument because of how it originated. Within Camp Bucca in Iraq, extremists and those that were considered as a threat to the re-shaping of the Middle Eastern states by the West, were put into this exact state of isolation which supposedly would eradicate these ideologies that plunged countries such as Iraq. But as it turned out, this way of thinking was not such a successful plan. Had it not been for the element of time was made possible for the prisoners within Camp Bucca in combination with their isolated state, they might not have had a chance to strengthen their ideological bonds and formulate a plan that later gave 'birth' to the Islamic State. But what is strikingly interesting in their case, is that ISIS members have shown a profound ability to adapt to Western policies and use them as their own in order to achieve their goals. By creating an organization that served as the protector of Islamic faith globally, they managed to win the respect and loyalty of Muslims that felt oppressed by the constant diminishment by either Western countries or those with different approaches of Islam. Using Islam and its strength as an ideology to convince people that there is a way out from this identity crisis, they soon managed to create a resemblance of an 'empire' in the Middle East before moving forward to attack the West. Here again prisons were important in their strategy. Countries such as France who have a large Muslim minority and were dealing with this exact insecurity that came from terrorist attacks of the past, took up a hard-nosed policy that left many of the Muslims feeling estranged and disengaged from the French society. The constant educational and working hardships led many young Muslims to dwell into a life of 'petty' crimes in order to make a living or sometimes to gain a sense of vengeance against France. And as it is natural, many of them were sent to prisons.

But prisons in France are different from other Western countries that also suffer from Islamic radicalization. The terrible living conditions in combination with the country having the highest ranking number of Muslim inmates in Europe and the fact

that no 'positive' application of the Islamic faith is allowed within prisons, provided the jihadists with a unique opportunity. Taking up the role of teachers and religious practitioners, they managed to manipulate some of the prisoners that shared these psycho-social factors that have been mentioned in the course of this thesis. Evidently they successfully convinced them that becoming a jihadist and following the path of ISIS was not a choice that they should make but rather a path they are meant to follow. Eventually, they managed to 'pitch' the idea that becoming a jihadi soldier and fully commit to Allah will in turn solve their existential anxiety. Because these individuals are now part of this collective identity (Jihadism), isolation and their existential fears seem to be gone. And it can be safely said that their strategy was indeed successful, as many of the radicalized cases had no prior connection to Islam and some were not even Muslim to begin with. The isolated environment of the French prison served as the basis for Islamists to strengthen that collective sentiment, an identity that those feeling estranged from society were more than happy to embrace. The effects of this strategy have been made visible within the French state, as for the past four years it has been suffering from devastating terrorist hits where many of the attackers were French citizens that became radicalized into the prison environments of the country. This has had a multitude of reactions both domestically from the French and internationally.

What was realised by attacks such as the one at the Bataclan or the Charlie Hebdo hits in Paris, is that there needs to be a decisive strategy that not only focuses on how to combat terrorism with military tactics such as bombing strategic bases of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Although late 2017 was a concrete military success in the Western campaign to aid the government forces of the Middle Eastern states to regain the territories that they had been previously lost to the Islamic State, as it happened in the case of Al-Raqqa or Mosul, not much has changed when it comes to combatting radicalization. The attacks undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to the morale and the pores of the organization (economic and strategic) but the strategies to combat radicalization were not so successful. The fact that the French government proposed a solution that would focus on gathering those that were deemed as a threat to national security and gather them into specific cells that would keep them enclosed in order to monitor and reshape their identity has had a number of issues. As evidence shows, this tends to repeat the mistakes of Camp Bucca. What has now been happening since 2016 is that the jihadists have managed to cope with the fact that authorities judge from specific

signs whether or not someone is a threat and have now found a way to go around this. By laying low and keeping up with appearances they can withstand the authorities' checks and not get caught. Especially in France however, this has proven to be a far more problematic issue than in other European countries such as the UK for example that also suffer from Islamic radicalization. Because France is a country with such a large Muslim population in prisons but has also been considered as the main target of ISIS in past attacks, one would expect that the government would implement strategies that would help prevent rather than react. However, the ever shortening of personnel in prisons with guards that are clearly not fit for being able to understand who gets radicalized by whom, the small numbers of academics that could help provide solutions to issues of identity or psychological problems that inmates suffer and finally the disturbing prison conditions that have been criticized by many for more than ten years can hardly be viewed as a prevention strategy. And this creates serious problems because at some point inmates that get radicalized eventually are released from prisons and as it happened in the cases explained in previous chapters they then flee into Syria to complete their training as jihadists and get ready to wage war on their Western enemies. What this creates is a diversion of a problem that may originate from a very specific point, for example one individual that gets radicalized in a French prison, but then enlarges into a global consequence as this fighter can then take part in an attack at any country.

Final Words

Throughout the analysis of this thesis the main argument that was presented is that Islamic radicalization is an issue that might originate from countries of the Middle East but has managed to expand into a global phenomenon by manipulating a series of effects that Western societies have had to deal with, originating from cultural globalization more than two decades ago. In a country like France where there is such a mixture of different cultures, religions and traditions and which generally resembles a concrete example of other Western countries as well, there is no doubt that problems would eventually arise between the different groups. When people face the dilemmas of needing to change their identity in order to be able to coexist better or in other situations might be convinced to adopt a new identity because they feel estranged from society, there are issues that need to be taken into consideration. The fact that France has been dealing with terrorist attacks and the fear created by them, has made the people feel

insecure about what ideologies such as Islam actually mean. On the other hand, governments of Western countries such as France, being numb from the general dissatisfaction, continue the same practices by grouping up and stigmatizing those who they deem as a threat. And as it has been proven, grouping people of the same ideas only enhances them in their struggle. What ISIS successfully achieved in France was to make those in fear or those feeling disengaged from society to believe this will be solved by taking up arms as soldiers of Jihad. And it is through the prison environment that the organization provides them with the ideological training before completing their actual training by going to Syria upon their eventual release from prison. The jihadist identity was born precisely as a form of struggle against oppression in the Middle East. But the way the West has been dealing with international terrorism and the flooding of ideologies within their countries has given room to those Muslims who feel 'oppressed' to link their struggle with that ideology hence adopting this jihadist identity. And what is even more crucial to that is that there are cases were people with no connection to Islam or Muslim ethnicity were suddenly turned into terrorists, something that clearly shows how successful Islamic radicalization has been.

As a final note, further research should take place to provide a solution to how these social or psychological problems are being perceived by people and why they go as far as to completely adopt ideologies that promote violence and mayhem. The case of Jihadism and its global consequences, the correlation to isolation in prisons such as the French example is one very important case that sadly seems to not have been dealt efficiently by local and international actors. However, there are other ideologies such as the rise of nationalism drawing from ethnicity rather than religion in order to radicalize those that feel oppressed by others. This is where future research should focus. Understanding why and how ideologies become identities and provide efficient solutions that will decisively deal with the problem rather than only try to contain it.-

## List of Abbreviations

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| BEP | Brevet d' Etudes Professionels (Trans. Certificate of Professional Studies) |
| CGLPL | Controleur General des Lieux de Privation de Liberte (Trans. General Inspector of Places of Privacy and Liberty) |
| CNN | Cable News Network |
| EU | European Union |
| ISI | Islamic State of Iraq |
| ISIL | Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant |
| ISIS | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| USA | United States of America |

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