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**THE ISLAMIC STATE AND TERRORISM: INNER WORKING OF ISIL
RELATED TO THE ROLE OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS**

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic State (IS) is one of the most deadly terrorist organizations completely different to the many ones existing nowadays. Its difference relies on the idea of achieving a worldwide *Caliphate*, meaning an organized self-productive institution ruled by Shar'ia Law as its political and religious code to govern, looking towards to be considered as a structured state. However, the purpose of this project is to analyze the role of Foreign Fighters, which has developed into one of its most important elements in order to spread a new wave of terrorist attacks around the world.

The main idea of the project is an attempt to answer a particular question: by the analysis of the profile of Foreign Fighters and the modus operandi of the attacks, Does IS performs its terrorist attacks as *organized cells*, as *self independent lone-wolfs* or by the new procedure known as *zombies* supervised by a Command Control Body? Or the Islamic State's propaganda is the only trigger needed to perform such violent outbreaks anywhere at any time?

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the world is facing countless problems in different scales. Many of these issues had been developing through many years of wrong actions and avoidable political, economic or military decisions. This essay is aimed to analyze a particular outcome of a conjunction between military/political actions taken by strong actors, which are not necessary to be mentioned, and had bring the Middle East, as the principal scenario for the birth of what we know today as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or simply: the Islamic State (IS).

The Islamic State (IS) is one of the most deadly terrorist organizations completely different to the many ones existing nowadays. Its difference relies on the idea of achieving a worldwide *Caliphate*, meaning an organized self-productive institution ruled by Shar'ia Law as its political and religious code to govern, looking towards to be considered as a structured state. However, the purpose of this project is to analyze the role of Foreign Fighters, which has developed into one of its most important elements in order to spread a new wave of terrorist attacks around the world.

The main idea of the project is an attempt to answer a particular question: by the analysis of the profile of Foreign Fighters and the modus operandi of the attacks, Does IS performs its terrorist attacks as *organized cells*, as *self independent lone-wolfs* or by the new procedure known as *zombies* supervised by a Command Control Body? Or the Islamic State's propaganda is the only trigger needed to perform such violent outbreaks anywhere at any time?

In order to reach to a proper response, the methodology use in this project is *Qualitative Research*. In other words, the analysis will be based on publications made by many sources (think tanks, scholars involved in active research about the issue, academic publications, among others) and by this review; the main question is developed, especially by exploring the patterns during the collection of information.

By the other hand, within this introduction, from my point of view is necessary to make a brief explanation about the concept of *Jihad*, which is one of the principal tools used by IS in order to legitimize its actions during the development of this phenomena. This concise analysis of the meaning of *Jihad* could be very helpful in order to understand why this concept has emerged in our times as an important fact to take into consideration when the Islamic State is discussed or explored.

DEFINITION OF JIHAD

The basic translation from the Arabic word *Jihad* comes as a result to be “struggle”¹. According to Andrew Rippin, we can see that this fact was present since the early days of Islam by the understanding that the world was divided in two sections: “The house of Islam” and the “House of War”. Even in the holy text (Qur’an 22/39), some verses refer to a necessary armed struggle to the not believers, not matter how this struggle was qualified as been an attack or in self-defense.² However, this annunciation must always be accompanied by the support of the whole community, and also by the resistance of the others, only in that particular case³, this notion of *Jihad* is completely valid.

It is also important to clarify that by the interpretation in the words of Qur’an, people tend to classified that *Jihad* can be interpreted as a “holy war” which is completely wrong. The term “holy war” was first embraced by the Christians, who had especially applied the concept of fighting “under the flag of the cross” in the times of Crusades.⁴ By this statement, we can start to appreciate how this concept has been flagged as a regular and common statement of the Muslim society towards defending the meaning of *Jihad*, regarding that history has proved to be incorrect.

That statement can be one of the most interesting points to separate both religions logics to engage in war. Despite the common factor among them, which is that war sometimes is inevitable, in the case of Islam, Islamic Law embraces the teachings of Mohammad according to identify if the action of war would be conducted to achieve a certain goal which would provide justice and fairness as an outcome. Therefore its main objective is to realize that the way of conduct the war should be regarding the Prophets reasons, an engagement to be right and just.⁵ In this sense, we could understand that the legal bases to applied *Jihad*, are origins on Islam principles, therefore it gives them a solid, concrete validation. However it is also dangerous, in the reason that if these actions are made as an “attack” by looking forward to its goals, how

¹ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War. I: Pp 1.

² Rippin, Andrew. Muslims: Their religious beliefs and practices. II: 65.

³ Rippin, Andrew. Muslims: Their religious beliefs and practices. II: 66.

⁴ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War. I: Pp 2.

⁵ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War. I: Pp 3 II: Pp 4.

can we accept only one side of the proposal? What is right and just for Islam may not be necessarily understood as the same in the other side.

By this point, we have only analyzed the term in a violent reaction; nonetheless there is also a need to analyze the *Jihad* as a non-violent action taken into the non-believers. Both practices became effective during the Medina period, where Mohammad was not only a spiritual leader; he was also a political leader spreading the word of Islam among the new believers. The prophet himself expressed the idea of non-violence act by “struggling” as speaking the truth against those who not believe in their faith.⁶ Even as the beginning of the spread of Islam, the Prophet tried to emphasize the use of this *Jihad* in a social struggle to impose its belief by the use of words, discussion and common understanding. Mohammad was recognized as a man of peace, however he understand that for those times words can reach a limit, therefore he made sure that violence can be accepted only if it fulfill or contradicts the principles of Islam.

As a final analysis of this topic, it must be emphasized that there are some verses expressed in the Qur'an where *Jihad* can be understood, as far as a response of being attacked, especially if they had done nothing wrong but belief. The Prophet refers to the believers that they need to address any kind of persecution, or attack with the same response until the ones who beginning with the conflict desist of their struggle.⁷ Here, this notion gets its valid point from a defensive view, because according to the history, Islam began in a pacific announcement of the presence of God as a unity, where most of the people around them were pagans. In other words, when they felt in persecution because of being a minority, they did not replied either violently or pacifically because they were outnumbered, nonetheless later on the Qur'an will address this subject as their validity to response to those kind of threats.⁸

BASIC RIGHTS OF ISLAMIC LAW IN RELATION TO WAR

Going a little bit further in this analysis, it is necessary to associate the basic laws of Shari'a, and how can they be influence in the acts of *Jihad*. Within the Shari'a

⁶ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). *Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War*. II: Pp 7.

⁷ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). *Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War*. V: Pp 13.

⁸ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). *Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War*. V: Pp 14.

there are five Basic Rights: Religion, Life, Mind, Honor and Property.⁹ It can be noticed that these basic rights are in accordance with any civil society nowadays, not necessarily in that order, however for the times which were created, it is the perfect example to understand why religion may become such an important topic later on especially when it comes to solidify a new community.

Leaving aside the first right, which is complete understandable, the second right expresses respect for life without been murder, torture, even starvation, as for the third right is emphasizes the need to be away of any kind of intoxication (physically or mentally) taken into consideration social facts such as acquire wrong education up to lying. In the fourth right, the fact regards of the social importance of maintaining family integrity and the respect among the others, when finally the last right concerns about to be safe against thefts, destruction.¹⁰

All these rights were to be practiced by all the Muslim community in times of war by the simple fact that that war was guided by a spiritual belief, which embraces a moral and ethic value of respect.¹¹ Through the history that we have been reading and understanding until know, we cannot be complete sure is these practices were fulfilled to the text. Exceptional cases can be found by going in detail through the whole history of Islam, perhaps Saladin and his notorious respect and mercy towards the crusaders, however just analyzing the spread of the Caliphs after Mohammad death, we can seen that the only principal fact to respects the non believers, was the fact that they can be involve in their society either by conversion or taxation, they were spared their lives indeed, nonetheless their territories where occupied and a religion was imposed as the principal (not the only one) of the region.

It is seem for a bit of a conflict to understand this values, because it is impossible to demonstrate tolerance until a certain point. Even going further, when the first religious split among Muslims began, the ones who were considered a minority (Shi'ites) were even persecuted by the Muslims who were in charge (Sunnis), for example the Fatimids. Somehow, if this vision is applied to our contemporary history, it looses its complete significance, by just understanding the way the Islamic State (IS)

⁹ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War. IV: Pp 11.

¹⁰ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War. IV: Pp 11-12.

¹¹ The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought. (2009). Jihad And The Islamic Law Of War. IV: Pp 13.

grows constantly through many regions, annihilating and persecuting any kind of belief, even Islam.

MISUNDERSTOOD OF *JIHAD*

Approaching to the end of this section, it can be said that since the early ages of the *Jihad*, there has not been a consensual decision of its proper understanding. Either it has been as a response to any threat (especially a religious) or a violent accusation of fighting heresy no matter its outcome (IS in our actual society). According to what has been expressed in this analysis, if the meaning needs to assert the real action, its common use would be only associated to a “struggle”, basically to the religious fact which Mohammad intended to express at the beginning.

However, the main point of the introduction was to explain how *Jihad* has been presented through its roots, how it has been used combining it with the Islamic Basic Rights in order to shape its proper application, which can be positioned between a defense mechanism in order to react to a threat, or a tool for engage into conflict holding the banner of religion among its preach. By the latter, it is completely understandable how the main message of the Prophet has been mislead, in the reason that Islam had not began the use of the term “holy war” as its own. It might even address that statement had been some type of “western words” in an “Islamic practice”, which had been badly expressed by the society in order to define what is *Jihad* to the world community.

Therefore as a conclusion for this explanation, it can be emphasized that meaning of *Jihad* has been in major debate by centuries regarding its correct use or when can its practice refer to a just cause. Nonetheless since the current events and the misuse of the meaning, it has been portrait as a justification for mass killings and the spread of fear, injustice, intolerance and violence across the globe. It is important to understand how and when, *Jihad* had lost its sense and started to be relate as a conception between religion and war, to be the banner of injustice and violent imposing when it represents completely the opposite.

CHAPTER I: WHO ARE THE FOREIGN FIGHTERS?

After a brief introduction regarding the concept of *Jihad*, the paper is now taking shape to examine the principal topic about the proper understanding of the phenomenon known as Foreign Fighters (FF). The concept of Foreign Fighters has not a universal definition per se, however as the composition of the concept arise, it can be stated that refers to individuals who gets involved in a conflict, which is not developed in their own country. Therefore, the reasons to joining this fight can be different, nonetheless it can be categorized in two major groups: first is related to certain ties with local fighters through “pre-existing connections or friendship gangs”¹². In other words, is a matter of transforming old costumes from former groups that were involved in illicit activities such as drug trafficking, delinquency with no future at all, into a *mujahedeen group* defending and pursuing a cause.¹³

On the other hand, a particularly group of young people, who had always felt misunderstood, underestimated, surviving with difficulties faced in their daily life, plus permanently feeling excluded and with lack of opportunities within their societies. These fragile groups are becoming more solitary and isolated, looking for a place to belong, a space where they can embrace a purpose of living, a cause. This behavior is developing into a mixture of feelings, where the final outcome is anger.¹⁴ Therefore, the motor driving both groups to decide their commitment to the fight is merely based on exploiting their necessity to feel connected or belonging to a cause, where their lives can provide significance about their purpose or their duty in the society.

Despite of this division, both groups are emerged into a process that is commonly known as *Radicalization*. This concept has been formally addressed after the 9/11 attacks, in order to understand the process which individuals change their behavior and especially, understanding the consequences of this shift. The main focus to analyze was why individuals living mainly in European societies, decide to embrace violent activities as their way to expression this “anger” that was developed during the

¹² Rik Coolsaet. Egmont Paper 81: *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighter Wave, What drives Europeans to Syria and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*. Pp 3.

¹³ Rik Coolsaet. Egmont Paper 81: *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighter Wave, What drives Europeans to Syria and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*. Pp 3.

¹⁴ Rik Coolsaet. Egmont Paper 81: *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighter Wave, What drives Europeans to Syria and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*. Pp 3.

process.¹⁵ Through the development of this new threat, it could be expected that the first way to address the issue was to collect information of possible suspects turning into “radicals”, in order to elaborate a general profile, which could help to identify any clue before the fulfillment of their tasks.

PROFILE ANALYSIS

During the development of the post 9/11 attacks, the counterterrorism policies lead by Belgium and Netherlands, were focus on the development of a general profile system, which would help to analyze the behavior of possible attackers. The principal shift towards to the analysis of developing a profile for the suspects was the main difference between the perpetrators in the U.S (attacks made by foreigners, after a period of carefully planning and financing) and the attacks in London and Madrid (made by people grown within European societies, from migrant communities settled decades before).¹⁶

One of the first attempts to elaborate these profiles, were develop by the counterterrorism officials in Belgium shortly after September 2001, once taking into consideration the “anger behavior” of young Moroccan students in France. This social expression was now under surveillance by Belgian and Dutch Intelligence Services, especially by the latter in the reason that they had been watching closely particular cases of young Dutchmen recruitment by what is described as “fundamental Muslims” mainly from abroad. The ages of the youngsters oscillated between 18 to 31, most of them Netherland nationals with Moroccan origins.¹⁷

The conclusions of the studies were drafted in a report, which mainly summarize and matches the characteristics of the second group: young people feeling completely lacked from comprehension, in an identity and in a social level as well. For them, this visualization portrayed by radical Islam faith brought them what their societies did not offer: confidence, closeness among them and especially, a purpose to find their identity. However, the most important fact from this report is the feeling from this youngsters to

¹⁵ Rik Coolsaet. “*Al Radicalization is Local*” *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an elusive concept*. Pp 3.

¹⁶ Rik Coolsaet. “*Al Radicalization is Local*” *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an elusive concept. The Genesis of a Concept (2001-2004)* Pp 5.

¹⁷ Rik Coolsaet. “*Al Radicalization is Local*” *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an elusive concept. The Genesis of a Concept (2001-2004)* Pp 7.

be involve in a fight between right and wrong, which at the end results as complete commitment to their actions.¹⁸

Another very important outcome from this report relies on the importance to understand two main things: first of all, that *Radicalization* is a complex and very long process, which aims particularly the involvement of the individual to join and fight in the *Jihad*. By the other hand, is also the first time that instead of only focusing on the group joining to this process, there is a brief analysis of the role of the “Recruiter” as a matter of fact, the role of this individual becomes a key factor in order to achieve the commitment of the group into the cause. Is the one, which has to play along with tons of patience and psychological manipulation towards convincing the fragile group of youngsters into fulfilling their tasks in this new journey acquired.¹⁹

Up to this point, it can be seemed that the Terrorism Analysis has been trigger since the development of the attacks, meaning that the investigation was a response to the actions developed in U.S by the 9/11 attacks nonetheless it took a complete different analysis with the Madrid Bombings of 2004, in the reason that we have been discussing in the previous paragraphs. This consideration into local groups of people engaging into violent behaviors towards especially to western societies, developed many concerns about the analysis for preventing further attacks, meaning that was not only necessary to focus into a Profile Analysis, but into understanding the reasons of what was causing particular group of people to join and accept this ideals as well.

This new feature was denominated as “home-grown”, and it was especially emerged after the 2003 US invasion to Iraq, which helped to fuel once more anti-western feeling among locals but it widespread to migrant communities in Europe, particularly Muslim. This phenomenon was a complete shift towards in how the radicalization process took shape. This new awakening of hate against foreign invasion in Iraq, trigger many people to join the view of radical Islam thought but the message was not necessary to join the fight with direct involvement, there were no necessary to use former soldiers to gather groups and brainwash the communities. The former connections, and the importance of the unity among people sharing the radical view of

¹⁸ Rik Coolsaet. “*Al Radicalization is Local*” *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an elusive concept. The Genesis of a Concept (2001-2004)* Pp 8.

¹⁹ Rik Coolsaet. “*Al Radicalization is Local*” *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an elusive concept. The Genesis of a Concept (2001-2004)* Pp 8.

Islam in some of these communities were already present.²⁰ Therefore, it was time to take into consideration many other layers, especially to understand the nature and the principal cause of this path of radicalization.

The new approach of studying *Radicalization* was now concern about the main causes that might turn a certain individual against the society. It was labeled as “root-causes” and it was linked most of all due to social factors such as poverty, inequity, lack of opportunities and general frustration. Within the world of Terrorism Analysis, these characteristics are known as part of the *Strain Theory*, which emphasizes that terrorist mobilization might be the response from a group of people living under these conditions.²¹ Once more, it can be seemed that the common issue regarding the understanding of the process of radicalization tends to be related to a kind of social discrimination, or at least, a feeling from it.

From a personal point of view, the process of understanding the root causes of the dilemma is a key factor in order to address the proper way to develop counterterrorism effective policies. In order to understand why a certain group of individuals are convinced to join violent acts in order to be listened is a sign of addressing a necessity as soon as possible. This do not mean that it can stop the problem immediately, whoever it can create relieve and portrayed a different view especially to the problematic of youngsters been more and more attractive to radical ideals in order to express the inconformity with the system.

Up till now, it has been discussed how the *Radicalization* process was analyzed from the beginning of the counterterrorism policies, developed especially by Europe after the 9/11 attacks. However, this section of the project is to comprehend if there exist a particular profiling system to point out if an individual is involved into this process. This is a very sensitive subject since it can be dealing with physical appearances that in fact will be dealing with discrimination, nonetheless people changing habits and behaviors might be a hint towards developing a comprehensive study into profiling possible subjects.

First of all, is necessary to address some physical indicators. There is a huge dilemma surrounding this topic in the reason that some of the characteristics are shared with the whole Muslim community not necessarily engaging into *Jihadist thought*.

²⁰ Rik Coolsaet. “*Al Radicalization is Local*” *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an elusive concept. The Genesis of a Concept (2001-2004)* Pp 9.

²¹ Peter Neumann, Brooke Rogers. *Recruitment and Mobilization for the Islamist Movement in Europe. Introduction: Social Movements Theory*. Pp 7.

Some of these features are related to exceeded long of the beard (common lengths do not exceed the three fingers measure), or the shortness of their hair cut, use of the *Jelaba (Traditional Islamic Dress)* or a form of wider pants up to the ankles along with sometimes the use of traditional hat and a particularly rejection to use shorts or engage in sport activities.²²

However, there is a much important fact rather than physical appearances and is to take into consideration the changes within the individuals behavior. Per instance, the individual takes extraordinary attention to avoid places where alcohol consumption is permitted, stop smoking or even listening to music. Its social life is less and less reduced evading public places and especially, shifting their behavior with women even to stop looking at them.²³

Individuals start to change its behavior even with their close ones. They would like their family or closest friends to understand its new point of view. The relation toward its family (especially women) would turn into obligates them to cover their bodies when they want to go outside or even to avoid been around when male visits are at home. This behavior becomes some intrinsic that sometimes individuals break communication with people that do not approve its new point of view.²⁴

These features come along with many other aspects regarding political and religious expressions, which somehow can differ with a common view of the topics, especially when the individual is concentrated in blaming all of Muslim's suffering to the West, embracing the use of violence or approval of any fierce reaction as a form of self-defense. Along with interests in acknowledging and reading information from jihadist sources (which might not be expressed openly) however with the use of Internet, is nowadays a useful tool to collect any kind of material in relation to it.²⁵

Finally, this individual practices led to find other people with the same views in order to establish a group. The features for this union involve practicing collective prayers, where often involve the spread of their propaganda if the gatherings are held in Mosques per example. However, most of these groups choose to hold their religious

²² Javier Jordan, Fernando M. Mañas. *External Signs of Radicalization and Jihadist Militancy*. Anthena Intelligence Journal Vol 2 N°1. *Individual Indications: Physical Appearances*. Pp 2-3.

²³ Javier Jordan, Fernando M. Mañas. *External Signs of Radicalization and Jihadist Militancy*. Anthena Intelligence Journal Vol 2 N°1. *Individual Indications: Individual Behavior*. Pp 4.

²⁴ Javier Jordan, Fernando M. Mañas. *External Signs of Radicalization and Jihadist Militancy*. Anthena Intelligence Journal Vol 2 N°1. *Individual Indications: Individual Behavior*. Pp 4.

²⁵ Javier Jordan, Fernando M. Mañas. *External Signs of Radicalization and Jihadist Militancy*. Anthena Intelligence Journal Vol 2 N°1. *Individual Indications: Individual Behavior*. Pp 5.

practices at private places in order to avoid any kind of infiltration. Among the prayers, groups also rely in outdoor activities where the individuals can strength their ties but mainly are to feel more freely to express their common views of thoughts.²⁶

It needs to be clear that many of these features are not officially labeled as profiling possible radicals, whoever it helps in order to understand or analyze individuals towards comparing many subjects, which had been involved in or had been suspects to be joining terrorist activities. Counterterrorism organizations are trying to develop better and reliable guidelines in order to address the analysis of human behavior as primarily, therefore the importance taken into the comprehension of “root-causes” such as the environment surrounding individuals had been up leading the research in the last years.

The elaboration of counterterrorism policies had to be very careful in order to address profiling drafts in the reason that is very common to step into discrimination while studying human behavior within societies. Most of this features, especially the physical appearances are common within the whole Muslim communities and this kind of approach had been very difficult to follow without any collateral damage.

IS IDEOLOGY SHAPING FOREIGN FIGHTERS?

Another important fact to take into consideration while the studies of individuals into the path of radicalization are under the loop is to comprehend the role of ideology. Ideology plays a key factor in order to separate Radical Islam from Islam. However, from a personal point of view, is necessary to express that there is no a “new” ideology developed by IS, rather a more strong interpretation with its roots in Wahhabism, which coincidently or not, is Saudi Arabia state ideology.

The Al Saud tribe was one of the most prominent tribes in Saudi Arabia, growing stronger near what nowadays will be known as Riyadh. In the same area, there was Muslim scholar named Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab, who was raised on the studies of Islamic Law, by Hanbali School approach. However he was studying near Riyadh by that time in order to finish its higher education.²⁷

One important feature related to analyzing ideology, is to understand differences within the Islamic practices, which can be found in the religious texts meaning followed

²⁶ Javier Jordan, Fernando M. Mañas. *External Signs of Radicalization and Jihadist Militancy*. Anthena Intelligence Journal Vol 2 N°1. *Individual Indications: Collective Behavior*. Pp 6.

²⁷ Chapin Metz, Helen. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*. The Saud Family and Wahhabi Islam.

by every Muslim and others were developed by common practices (known as popular Islam). Per instance, Shi'a Muslims were always guided by the wisdom of their Imams, even after they passed away; their followers visited their tombs to continue seeking for a proper advice. This kind of particular dependence was very disturbing to Muhammad Abd al Wahhab, which defended the principal of only one God with no sharing its power, either to Imams or especially places.²⁸

When Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab returned to Riyadh, he had the support of Muhammad Ibn Saud, which was formally recognized by the adoption of a Muslim oath, pledging alliance to each other in order to become the only political authority, first aiming that region, but latter aiming for the whole country. This alliance grew stronger conquering the whole country by spreading the religious- political authority of Wahhabism, which its principal aim was the persecution of popular Islam and specially the Shi'as, which they accused to spread wrong interpretations of Islam.²⁹

By 1979, King Khalid understood the importance of Wahhabism not only necessary within its country, but also to defend a Sunni majority country under Soviet influence and control, Afghanistan. With this opportunity, Saudi Arabia could embrace a long-term tittle pursued since the beginning of its constitution as a religious-political country: the big defender of Islam. With US support, the Saudi government started a plan for spreading Wahhabism by the settlement of religious schools, mosques and textbooks within the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.³⁰

As a consequence of this joint action between the US and Saudi Arabia economic support, a call for a new jihad emerged from a faction of Muslim population, combining Wahhabism ideology with military equipment, which latter will become the basis of Al Qaeda and at the same time, the birth of the Taliban.³¹ Additionally, any of the main supporters to the "aid" for Afghanistan could foreseen that many militants will also retained this new ideology, and would bring back the military expertise with the radical Islamic thought to their countries, spreading the fundamentals of Al Qaeda especially in the Arabian Peninsula.³²

²⁸ Chapin Metz, Helen. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*. The Saud Family and Wahhabi Islam.

²⁹ Chapin Metz, Helen. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*. The Saud Family and Wahhabi Islam.

³⁰ Carol E. B. Chosky, Jamsheed K. Chosky. *The Saudi Connection: Wahhabism and Global Jihad*.

³¹ Carol E. B. Chosky, Jamsheed K. Chosky. *The Saudi Connection: Wahhabism and Global Jihad*.

³² Carol E. B. Chosky, Jamsheed K. Chosky. *The Saudi Connection: Wahhabism and Global Jihad*.

As it is formally known, the basis of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) was mainly conformed by a former Al Qaeda member named Abu Musaab Al Zarqawi, when in 2006 he established the Islamic State of Iraq.³³ His ideals of total annihilation of Christians, Jews and Shi'as were starting to diverge from Al Qaeda's support by that year, however this new project completely collapsed when he was assassinated by the US in the same year.³⁴ The ideology that was developed early by Al Zarqawi, shared the principal common view with Wahhabism, especially link in the defense of what is called "true Islam".

IS follows a doctrine which is commonly called "Jihadi-Salafism"³⁵ which is part of the ideology represented by the Sunni Islam, whoever is an extremist view of the Islamic religious textbooks which are nowadays involved in a constant debate in order to its proper understanding. Jihadi is link to the ideals expressed by the Muslim Brotherhood to embrace Islam and export it (not on a violent reaction) as proper response to Western influence in the region.³⁶

Nonetheless, the term Salafism, is the one that obtains much attention due to the reason that embraces the seeking in becoming what they call: true Muslims, meaning the belief in only one God and the elimination of idolatry, especially by the destruction of places for worship such as figures, tombs or saints.³⁷

On the other side, the Islamic State has declared a mixture of the two types of jihad against the apostates: a "defensive jihad" which is mainly address towards the Muslims leaders of the region, considered traitors, sinners, liars and friends of the West; and a "offensive jihad" against the apostates in their own territories, and here is where again the Wahhabism ideology is present, in the reason that this persecution is related to the idolatry.³⁸ However is very important to underline, that towards aiming in the region, the Islamic State is mainly focused in Shi'as territories, especially what is known as *Shia Crescent (Iran, Lebanon and Syria)*.³⁹

After this brief historical review, it can be understood how the adoption of this ideology had played a major role attracting many foreigners to join the conflict. As it is commonly known, Saudi Arabia had many influences within the Middle Eastern region

³³ Sami Moubayed. *Under the Black Flag. Chapter V: The Jihadis of Iraq*. Pp 94.

³⁴ Sami Moubayed. *Under the Black Flag. Chapter V: The Jihadis of Iraq*. Pp 94.

³⁵ Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Pp 7.

³⁶ Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Pp 7-8.

³⁷ Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Pp 8.

³⁸ Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Pp 10.

³⁹ Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Pp 11.

as the stronghold of Sunni Islam. The Islamic State had gone way beyond this ideology interpretation, but still defending the source of Sunni Islam as the only true source of truth among any other religions.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

The phenomenon of Foreign Fighters is the most interesting topic regarding the analysis of the Islamic State. The purpose of this section is to review the figures of Foreign Fighters joining the war on Syria and especially, to understand why the message from terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State is so attractive to many people from all over the world. However is also very important to understand the role of Foreign Fighters returning to the countries where they grew up (Europe in this case), in order to be involved in any violent activities, particularly related in terrorist attacks.

According to The Soufan Group, by 2014 the first numbers related to foreign fighters joining the war in Syria were 12,000 from at least 81 countries, where around 3,000 of them belong to Western states.⁴⁰ There are 3 important terrorist groups, which benefit from the flow of people joining the war in Syria: Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra and The Islamic State, with the share characteristic of being founded by Al-Qaeda members. These groups are known to be well financed, better organized and most of all, very inclusive to new recruits.⁴¹

There are many reasons why Foreign Fighters decide to join the terrorist groups as first option. One of them is that most of these groups do not have a problem managing the language and skills; it is not necessary to speak Arabic or not having any military experience, only the willing to be committed to the terrorist groups ideals. By the other hand, while Foreign Fighters start its journey, among the first people they met are Jihadi fighters, which become their guides and mentors making it easier their involvement to Jihadi cause.⁴²

On the other hand, the phenomenon had also take a big role into the Syrian Government as well, particularly from 3 different countries: Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. Per instance, the main actor is Iran playing an important role supporting the regime

⁴⁰ Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Key Findings.* Pp 6.

⁴¹ Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Key Findings.* Pp 6.

⁴² Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Introduction.* Pp 10.

especially from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard training especially the regular Syrian army and the Iraqi militias. In terms of military personal, Hezbollah had delivered around 3,000 people to support and enforce the military power of the Syrian regime.⁴³

As a consequence, these numbers had been uprising to in the following years. Since 2014, the number of Foreign Fighters joining the conflict had reach up 27,000 to 31,000 people from 86 different countries.⁴⁴ By this statement, is clearly concerning how these terrorist groups had become more and more attractive to the foreigners, nonetheless is very interesting the increase from other countries involvement as well.

Among the many countries that had provided information regarding the phenomenon of Foreign Fighters, the top 3 countries in 2014 were: Tunisia (around 3,000 people), Saudi Arabia (2,500 people) and Morocco (around 1,500).⁴⁵ However, by the year 2015, it can be seen what was expressed before regarding the increase in the number of individuals joining the war and a sudden change: Tunisia had increased its numbers up to 6,000 people, then Saudi Arabia had maintain its figures and Russia had taken the third place with 2,400 people.⁴⁶

One of the most interesting facts to take into consideration while reviewing this information is that despite the involvement of Foreign Fighters from all over the world into the conflict, most of these individuals belong to the Middle Eastern Region.⁴⁷ As the chart from Annex 2 demonstrated, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Jordan are among the top countries providing manpower to the conflict, however Turkey also is another important actor and very open to express its struggle against this phenomenon by announcing its detentions from people coming back after joining IS.⁴⁸

The main difference that this phenomenon had brought to the scenario of analysis is the use of social media as its main tool to attract many recruiters as it can. Applications such as Twitter or Facebook had proven to be very effective to widespread IS violent ideology and its message to the world. By spreading propaganda, testimonials from former fighters, or even extreme messages of violence (beheadings,

⁴³ Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Introduction.* Pp 10-11.

⁴⁴ The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. Key Findings.* Pp 4.

⁴⁵ Annex N° 1.

⁴⁶ Annex N° 2.

⁴⁷ The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. The Numbers.* Pp 6.

⁴⁸ The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. The Numbers.* Pp 6.

public executions), the group had got the attention from many other supporters as fundraisers as well in order to welcome everyone who shares its views.⁴⁹

Many of these foreigners might also like to join these groups in the reason of having already a contact or particularly by checking the experiences shared by these individuals on the media. Various new members shared their life under the Islamic State, portraying a simple life with optimistic outcomes surrounded by acceptance, friendship and especially, a purpose in their lives, especially if these actions are surrounded by courageousness and bravery.⁵⁰ Despite the other kind of propaganda related to violence, many foreigners are willing to take the risk of joining especially due to the last statement, since they are people living vulnerable realities at their home places, looking for a meaning in their lives.

Another significant characteristic about Foreign Fighters regards on the average age of the people involve in this phenomenon. It can be expressed that most of the individuals joining the war on Syria are mainly between 18 to 29 years old. To cite an example, there is a testimonial from Ahrar al-Sham member, who described a Swedish couple arrival in 2014 because of the call of *Jihad*. He was 22 years old converted to Islam and his wife was 21, both of them were provided with guns and accepted in the group.⁵¹

As it can be seen, the terrorist organizations are by far not necessarily interested in military experiences or expertise, the important thing is the willingness from the foreigner to join the ideals and help to the struggle. For most of these young individuals, experience is gained by time and by involvement into the conflict. From this assumption is what makes the Foreign Fighters very interesting and at the same time very dangerous people, in the reason that there is not prove until now, how much emotional damage they had been exposed to after this sort of war experiences.

Therefore, this phenomenon had brought many concerns especially to Western societies in the reason that many of their nationals involved in these journeys might return to their countries, transformed into complete different individuals as they once were. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, this issue was something that could be

⁴⁹ Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Key Findings*. Pp 7.

⁵⁰ Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Who Goes*. Pp 17.

⁵¹ Richard Barret Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria. Who Goes*. Pp 16.

foreseen by Intelligence apparatus, however it was very confusing just to understand the interest of certain people to be drag by this problem.

First of all, the worries rely on the spread of Sectarianism within the region. As it was express before, the Sectarian division among Islam as well points out the roots of the conflict, and this assumption had been brought especially by IS extremist ideology of attacking particularly Shi'a Muslims. The Foreign Fighters involve in this conflict will embrace this ideology and help to spread this violence as well, prolonging its length and its cruelty. However the most dangerous threat concerning Foreign Fighters is denominated "blowback effect" and it means that these violent experiences would be taken back to their countries of origin, becoming a possible trigger to be getting in contact with terrorist activities.⁵²

According to some scholars, this effect should be analyzed individually in the reason that there is not enough evidence to prove that all of the Foreign Fighters returnees are engage in terrorist activities, nonetheless a specific case such as the gunman that killed 4 people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels, on May 2014. This individual belonged to a jihadist group from France and it was proved that he went to Syria for about a year, to fight among the Islamic State.⁵³

It has to be taken into consideration that some of the returnees Foreign Fighters from Syria, were already European citizens with Middle Eastern origins, therefore they had been living in certain communities for long time. It means that since this phenomenon had appeared and had got many attention about its dynamics, analysis had also been interested to point out possible places where *Radicalization* might occur more easily than anywhere else.

The most interest fact about these places is that are widespread within different countries some of them pretty new such as the Lisleby District of Fredrikstad in Norway, and other very commonly known as principal spaces for promoting *Radicalization* among its residents such as: Bizerte, Ben Gardane (Tunisia), Derna (Libya), Pankisi Gorge (Georgia) and the Molenbeek District in Brussels (Belgium).⁵⁴

⁵² Lorenzo Vidino. *New (and old) Patterns of Jihadism: Al-Qa'ida, The Islamic State and Beyond. Chapter 2: European Jihadist in Syria: profiles, travel patterns and governmental responses.* Unprecedented Numbers and Fears. Pp 31.

⁵³ Lorenzo Vidino. *New (and old) Patterns of Jihadism: Al-Qa'ida, The Islamic State and Beyond. Chapter 2: European Jihadist in Syria: profiles, travel patterns and governmental responses.* Unprecedented Numbers and Fears. Pp 33.

⁵⁴ The Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. Hotbeds of Recruitment.* Pp 10.

While the Foreign Fighters phenomenon is brought back to Western cities the concerns are constantly growing among its governments, which are not ready to decide which action should be taken in order to prevent any kind of aggression. The particular current analysis is to focus on how these militants that had been returned from Syria and Iraq, are imposing its acquired experiences (the use of weaponry, knowledge of guerrilla tactics, explosive devices assembly, among others) through the groups interested in joining to these activities. The problem that governments nowadays are facing is that many of these groups are blended within the society and is very difficult to clearly identify its members or even worse, its intentions.

DIFFERENT ROLES WITHIN THE ISLAMIC STATE

The Islamic State (IS) has proven to be beyond a newly regular terrorist organization due many reasons, nonetheless one of its main strengths relies on the use of the media to spread its twisted message and radical ideology, and in order to reach places as far as it cans. Within this worldwide call, it is very interesting to analyze how the idea to become a *Caliphate* is in need to recruit many people from different backgrounds. By this statement, this section will focus in understand how IS was structured based on their needs in order to create an inside body to control and maintain the idea of the *Caliphate*.

As a very brief introduction, the connection with former Ba'athists is the core of the general organization within the Islamic State.⁵⁵ Many of the Ba'athist high ranked military officials supporting the Saddam Hussein regime until its death in 2007, were pledging alliance to IS in the same year (after the birth of the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006) in order to survive.⁵⁶ From my point of view, this scenario might be seeing in two different ways: survival sometimes does not mean loyalty, and for IS loyalty is essential to its goals, to its cohesion. By the other hand, the experience and expertise from this officials had brought the military strength that IS has proven from the beginning of its expansion, especially in territorial grounds.

Due to its major territorial expansion, the self proclaimed *Caliph Abu Bakr al Baghdadi*, realized that in order to properly control the state it was necessary to delegate the power. The Islamic State posses two major deputies: *Abu Muslim al Turqmani* (supervising the State of Iraq) and *Abu Ali al Anbari* (supervising the State of Syria).

⁵⁵ Annex N°3.

⁵⁶ Richard Barret. *The Islamic State. Objectives and Ideology Political and Religious*. Pp 20.

The leadership of the organization is a pyramid where the *Caliph* represents the maximum authority and beneath one side there is the *Shura Council* (*close reliable officials running the military and administrative organization of the Islamic State*). By the other side, there is the *Sharia Council* (*key element to impose IS particular interpretation of Sharia Law under their territory and in charge to select the Caliph as well*).⁵⁷ The final structure is complemented with 8 different Councils: Financial, Leadership, Military, Legal, Fighters Assistance, Security, Intelligence and Media.⁵⁸

With the general organization taken into place, the second aspect and one of the most difficult one to IS, is the administration body. After the first year of territorial gained, the *Caliphate* enters in its second stage, which regards the importance of territorial administration. Since it had been analyze the particular message expressed by IS propaganda, most of its content regards to the spread of violence against anyone who does not share its ideology and this had been a very difficult barrier in order to acquire the personal necessary to build the bureaucracy of the *Caliphate*.⁵⁹

However, at the same time IS understood that if violence is its main message to their subjects, perhaps the way of managing violence might be a proper tool to develop its proper bureaucracy. In other words, first of all, the spread of violence must be in accordance of the goals settled by IS from the beginning. It had to be planned; to be very well targeted avoiding affecting supporters or possible new comers. In response to this action, all the resources will be well spent and in any particular miscalculation, it will be easier to relocate the capital.⁶⁰

As any bureaucratic apparatus, IS needed to find revenues in order to produce incomes, which can facilitate the ongoing of these activities and at the same time, the people involved in this framework needed to be reward.⁶¹ As it has been noticed by the development of its expansion, IS had managed to acquire territories rich in oil producing, which had been its primarily source of income. By the other hand, the spread of its violent message had also achieved funding from other terrorist

⁵⁷ Richard Barret. *The Islamic State. Structure*. Pp 28-29.

⁵⁸ Annex N°4.

⁵⁹ Richard Barret. *The Islamic State. Objectives and Ideology Political and Religious*. Pp 23.

⁶⁰ Patrick B. Johnston, Jacob N. Shapiro. *Foundations of the Islamic State Management, Money and Terror in Iraq, 2005-2010. Chapter III: The Organizational Economics of Insurgency and Terrorism*. Pp 49.

⁶¹ Patrick B. Johnston, Jacob N. Shapiro. *Foundations of the Islamic State Management, Money and Terror in Iraq, 2005-2010. Chapter III: The Organizational Economics of Insurgency and Terrorism*. Pp 50.

organizations willing to help and support financially to this ideals. Nonetheless, as they portrayed the image of being more than a regular terrorist organization, IS managed to act as a state, by applying taxation to any business activity within their territories and applying any penalties and fines to its subjects in violation of the legal code that had been established in their conquered territories.⁶²

The Islamic State had become more and more attractive to the world in accordance to the flows of people joining the group as it can be seen in the later paragraphs. Linked to that information, it is necessary to understand how IS necessities in recruitment are hierarchized and how the group will be benefit from the people arriving to its territory. From a personal point of view, IS have three pillars in which their organizational structure had prevail until now: first, the importance of well provided military expertise and experiences. Second, a strong ideological organized Sharia Council (shaping the laws and behaviors of its individuals living within) and third the use of Media tools, in order to recruit not only potential soldiers but neutral personal as well, to address many civilian fronts (medicine, engineering, administration and particularly, women).

While discussing the phenomenon of Foreign Fighters is inevitable to link the attraction to its military expertise and experiences. The Islamic State had demonstrated to be a well equipped and managed military structure especially during its first year of expansion in 2014. This strength demonstrated from the beginning from the so called *Caliphate* had been one of the main reasons why many people is attracted to the idea of joining a powerful organization which was commanded in this field by a former Georgian fighter called Omar al-Shishani (died in July 2016)⁶³. Despite this recently low hit to IS, one of the main characteristics from the military personal is its commitment, enthusiasm and fearless behavior in order to display their violence during their attacks. Sum up to a military strategy based on the use of terrorist attacks such as parked bomb vehicles and suicide bombings, plus the advertising through the media by issuing this kind of operations under reports or videos, had been one of the most

⁶² Patrick B. Johnston, Jacob N. Shapiro. *Foundations of the Islamic State Management, Money and Terror in Iraq, 2005-2010. Chapter III: The Organizational Economics of Insurgency and Terrorism*. Pp 51.

⁶³ Roland Oliphant, Josie Ensor. "Isil admits minister of war Omar al-Shishani killed" <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/14/islamic-state-admit-minister-of-war-omar-al-shishani-killed/>

important tools to get attention from possible recruits all over the world as well other organizations in order to obtain monetary funds to continue its operations.⁶⁴

The military strength demonstrated in the first year of expansion, proved that the first aim of IS was to make a military campaign conquering as much territory as it can. Within this expansion, the principal task about conquered land was to securitizing the area. In other words, while IS continued expanding, many soldiers were left behind in order to provide security measures among the new territories. The military presence is completely necessary in order to spread the idea of controlling the population in cases of insurgency of any other threat, therefore the necessity of bringing a continuous flow of new Foreign Fighters, could help either to use them in direct engaging or to train the newcomers with this securitizing experience among new territories.

In order to provide a total securitization of the held areas IS combine military presence with the second pillar: the spread of Sharia Law. As it was mentioned before, *the Sharia Council* plays a key role in this action, especially by the establishment of *Sharia police force*, particularly in charge of supervising the population behavior under Islamic costumes and practices. To provide legitimacy of the proper religious behavior the Islamic State had recruited prominent preachers and thinkers supporting the spread of the ideology portrayed, especially Saudi nationals entirely linked to Salafism preaching and practice such as Abu Human Bakr Bin Abdul Aziz al Athari, who was expelled from Bahrain in the reason of its radical discoursing.⁶⁵

Therefore, one of the roles of Foreign Fighters within the Islamic State is attracted by this strong military demonstration with experienced and charismatic leaders helping to build a enthusiastic and confident soldiers to join the conflict with no fear at all of the consequences. By the other hand, it is not only this military display that caught attention from recruits worldwide, as it can be seen, many scholars with radical views are also attracted to the ideological message and this is a opportunity for them to be accepted, supported providing the perfect getaway to preach and help to continue with the process of recruitment.

The third pillar of IS attracting Foreign Fighters to its call is related to important use of the Media. The use of this tool had not been always addressed, as the main channel to spread the group's ideology, though is also the main tool for attraction to potential recruits in many different levels. IS wanted to portray a reliable salafist anti

⁶⁴ Richard Barret. *The Islamic State. Military Operations*. Pp 35-37.

⁶⁵ Richard Barret. *The Islamic State. Structure*. Pp 30.

western ideal government looking for more local acceptance by providing another different approach from the constant corruption and weak authority from the local governments.⁶⁶ By this statement, it's clear that salafist supporters could play a key role especially in the local administration of conquered lands which could create a considerable movement among the supporters in the majority of the population (Sunni) towards the local control from the Assad Regime (Shi'as).

A particular case of the phenomenon related to Media recruitment to fulfill a social duty rather than military, is the foundation of IS relevant magazine *Dabiq*. The digital magazine is one of the most interesting and valid tools of information for recruiting and for spread IS propaganda (achievements, publicity, self training steps, among many other topics). A German citizen called Abu Talha al-Amani started it, after having a brief military experience with IS he decided to step down and put all of his effort in spreading IS official propaganda through Media.⁶⁷ Regarding this example, the analysis can prove that from an starting point of primarily focusing in calling up for soldiers, other areas were necessary to be covered if the idea of a "State" wanted to be spread worldwide.

Another practical example to describe how IS wants to be portrayed as a state is by recruiting people of expertise in social necessities, such as providing a reliable Health Care sector. Dr. Abu Yousef, an Australian physician had joined a medical team in Raqqah (Syria), city under controlled by the Islamic State. During his interview, he expressed its commitment to "join the jihad and help the Muslim community in the area that he can, which is medical field"⁶⁸. While the interview was taken place, the importance of showing the environment where he is working among its testimonial of calling up for more personal from the medical area to join, can be taken as a recruitment advertising in order to show a complete different scenario from engaging in war and violence. This example, is very interesting to help IS becoming a solidify state by providing basic services to its population, attracting many people from different social areas in order to help build up a new society, its newborn *Caliphate*.

⁶⁶ Richard Barret. *The Islamic State. Administrative Operations*. Pp 41.

⁶⁷ Marco Arnaboldi, Lorenzo Vidino. *Twitter and Jihad: The Communication Strategy of IS. Part III: The Objectives of the Propaganda. The Caliphate, Social Media, and Swarms in Europe: The Appeal of IS Propaganda to 'Would Be' European Jihadist*. Pp 130.

⁶⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xh6LRZV0i0> Australian doctor join IS in Raqqah/Syria.

What caught much attention from Foreign Fighters roles into the Islamic State is the number of females, especially from European origins, which are willing to join the call for *Jihad*. One of the most common patterns of women joining the Islamic State is by the marriage arrangement to a *mujahedeen*, especially after meeting and preparing everything by the Internet. Nevertheless, there were particular scenarios where the female presence was also related directly in the conflict, such as two girls from Vienna (Bosnian origins) with 15 and 16 years old, leaving their homes in order to reach Syria, posting by social media the use of *niqab* along carrying weapons.⁶⁹

Most of the propaganda by IS in order to recruit females, is related to attract and convince women to join the *Caliphate* with the main purpose of building the future society, giving birth to the new soldiers and citizens of their state. For example, a famous IS supporter blogger called Umm-Layth (from British origins, settled down in Syrian town Manbij since 2014) usually supports ideals such as “We are created to be mothers or wives (...)” or “(...) Sisters don’t forsake this beautiful blessing being able to raise the future Mujahedeen of Shaam”.⁷⁰

As a conclusion for this first chapter, it seemed necessary to emphasize the importance of reviewing some of the methods addressing a proper profiling for individuals which might be going through a process of radicalization, taken into consideration the role-played by ideology, going through why Foreign Fighters are interested in joining IS and finally highlighting some examples about the recruitment of expertise needed to sustained their conditions as “state”.

⁶⁹ Lorenzo Vidino. *New (and old) Patterns of Jihadism: Al-Qa’ida, The Islamic State and Beyond. Chapter 2: European Jihadist in Syria: profiles, travel patterns and governmental responses. Who are the European foreign fighters? Pp 34.*

⁷⁰ Ruth Michaelson. “How the wives of ISIS are attracting western women to Syria”.
<http://www.vocativ.com/world/isis-2/wives-isis-attracting-western-women-syria/>

CHAPTER II: ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC STATE TERRORIST ATTACKS

The following section of the research is based on understanding the role of the phenomenon of Foreign Fighters related to terrorist attacks, especially in Europe, where the Islamic State had taken responsibility as one of its principal targets. By analyzing two of the major attacks withheld in European territory such as the November 13th 2015 Paris Attack and the March 22nd Brussels Attack, the investigation will try to develop certain objectives: first, to identify if there is a link between the Foreign Fighters phenomenon with the terrorist attacks. Second, to understand if there is a particularly *modus operandi* by IS in order to commit terrorist attacks. It will try to point out if the attacks are taken into action by three different approaches: *terrorist cells*, *lone wolf attacks* or a new concept developed during the last years known as *zombies*.

During the current investigation, it had been an interesting terrorist attack linked to *lone wolf approach*: one held in the city of Nice (France) on July 14th 2016. It is worth to briefly address it; in the reason that it can help to reach a better conclusion about the analysis of Foreign Fighters within IS terrorist attacks.

The examination of these attacks and approaches will help the investigation to acquire specific information and features of the procedures and connections, especially in Paris and Brussels attacks, that would help to answer the project's question as the conclusion of the analysis.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND TERRORIST ATTACKS:

NOVEMBER 13TH 2015: PARIS ATTACKS

On a Friday night on November 13th 2015, Paris suffered the worst terrorist attack of its history. Although the country has held many other kinds of manifestations regarding terrorism, this attack is considered the first terrorist attacks involving different types such as suicide attacks or suicide bombings.⁷¹ Nonetheless, France had become a particular objective, particularly to the Islamic State as Terrorism is developed; no one is safe or expected to become a victim of this kind of violence.

The night involved 6 to 7 attacks simultaneously through the city of Paris, causing desperation and confuse among the whole country. The attacks started with a suicide bomb attack at 21:20 in a Gate of the Stade of France, located in the Saint Denis

⁷¹ International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT). *The Paris Black Friday 13/11/2015: What do we know? What should we do?* Pp 2.

neighborhood of the city.⁷² The first explosion occurred after a failed attempt from the suicide bomber to enter the stadium before he approached the security check. President Francois Hollande was attending a football match, however with the second explosion, he is safely evacuated. The two explosions had already one civilian casualty as a consequence.⁷³

By the 21:25, in the 10th District, terrorist armed with assault rifles arrived in a black automobile to the restaurants Le Carillon and Le Pettit Cambodge. Around 100 bullet cases were recovered in the scenarios, leaving 15 people killed and over 10 people with live-threaten wounds.⁷⁴ By 21:32, in the 11th District Rue Fontaine au Roi, 5 people are killed and 8 people are terribly wounded by being gunshot outside the Cafe Bonne Biere. As it happened in the latter District, the shooters were mobilizing in a black automobile and leaving around 100 bullet shells in the scene.⁷⁵

Around 21:36, two shooters arrived in a black automobile to 92 Rue de Charonne killing 19 people and injuring at least 9 other individuals, while were sitting outside Le Belle Equipe Restaurant. As in the previous attacked places, 100 bullet shells were later recovered from the scene.⁷⁶ The following minutes after this action, a suicide bomb attack is taken place in the Compton Voltaire Boulevard, critically injuring 1 person and leaving many others with minor wounds. The official investigation will prove that the bomb mechanism is the same one used in the first two suicide bomb attacks in the stadium.⁷⁷

At 21:40, three individuals heavily armed arrived in a black Volkswagen Polo to the Bataclan Concert Venue, where an American band was performing. According to witnesses, while the three subjects entered the concert, they started to shoot randomly to the crowd, even though many people started lying down to the floor (execution style). The attackers were screaming “Allah Akbar” as well making statements about Syria and Iraq, while were shooting and taking many hostages among the crowd. The terrorists

⁷² International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT). *The Paris Black Friday 13/11/2015: What do we know? What should we do?* Pp 2.

⁷³ BBC. “Paris Attacks: What happened on the night”. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>

⁷⁴ BBC. “Paris Attacks: What happened on the night”. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>

⁷⁵ BBC. “Paris Attacks: What happened on the night”. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>

⁷⁶ BBC. “Paris Attacks: What happened on the night”. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>

⁷⁷ Michael Martinez. “Timeline: What happened in Paris Attacks”. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/14/world/what-happened-in-paris-attacks-timeline/>

controlled the scenario until 00:20 when the police stormed in the place, provoking a shoot out against the terrorist, causing 1 of them getting killed by gunfire and an explosion produced by its suicide belt, while the other 2 attackers activated their explosives. The total civilian casualties reached up to 89 killed and around 99 others critically injured. As a result, the total amount of victims of the attack was 130 dead and around 300 people injured, within around 100 of them in critical conditions.⁷⁸

MARCH 22ND 2016: BRUSSELS ATTACKS

It was a regular Tuesday morning when around 08:00 am two different explosions blasted in the Departure area of the Zaventem Airport in Brussels (Belgium). The place where the explosions happened were located near the check-in desks, according to the first media footage uploaded by many witnesses. Afterwards, the authorities will confirm a minimum of 11 civilian casualties and more than 90 people injured within both explosions.⁷⁹

In the process of analyzing the event, clear footage captured three individuals in the airport Departure area. Authorities claimed 2 of the three, were suicide bombers. One of them named Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, which had previously a criminal background. The other individual was recognized as Najim Laachraoui who was a suspect for the Paris attacks, related to be in charge of elaborating the bombs and a the third individual, who left the scene before its explosive package was not detonated.⁸⁰

During the first two explosions, all the efforts to control the situation and help the injures were concentrated in the airport, suddenly at 09:10 am a third explosion occurred in Maelbeek subway station, which is an area surrounded by European Union main office buildings. Around 20 people were killed and many hundreds were injured, later on the authorities will identify Khalid el-Bakraoui, brother of Ibrahim, as the suicide bomber responsible for the explosion.⁸¹

The following hours after the attacks, the security forces decided to established a city lockdown in order to control any possible threat and at the same time, to start a

⁷⁸ BBC. "Paris Attacks: What happened on the night". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>

⁷⁹ The Guardian. "Timeline of the Brussels attacks". <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2016/mar/22/where-the-brussels-attackers-struck>

⁸⁰ Aljazeera. "Brussels attacks: Names of attackers and victims emerge". <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/brussels-attacks-160324051558090.html>

⁸¹ The Guardian. "Timeline of the Brussels attacks". <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2016/mar/22/where-the-brussels-attackers-struck>

reorganization of the events and continue the pursuit of the other suspect. After the release of the suspects photographs, a main lead appeared by a taxi driver who recognized the three individuals as morning passengers to the airport and helped the security forces to began a raid in an apartment in the Schaarbeek district where 15 kg of explosives among with two other chemicals used for bomb fabrication (acetone, oxygenated water) and detonators were found.⁸²

The final outcome of these terrible attacks was 31 people killed by the explosions between the airport and the subway station, along with more than 270 injured in both attacks.⁸³ Europe was now facing one of the most terrible scenarios related to terrorist attacks since the once taken place in Madrid in 2004. The new ways of proper intelligence cooperation and shared information might be the path to understand how these terrible situations can be stopped.

LINKING BOTH ATTACKS TO FOREIGN FIGHTERS PHENOMENON

The terrorist attacks held on Paris turned into a completely new way to understand how vulnerable was not only Europe, but the whole world, against undisrupted and coward violent attacks against civilians. With the following days, the security bodies started a series of raids among the city by tailing and compelling information about possible suspects behind the attack. An abandoned black Volkswagen near the Bataclan theatre was linked to a Belgian national named Salah Abdeslam, who became the first prime suspect in pursuit.⁸⁴

However, during the examination of evidence, the security forces also found out that another suspect was even more important to be found, his name was Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was under surveillance radar since the uncovered plot of an IS cell in Verviers (East Belgium) in January 2016, were after a fierce battle between the police and suspects of terrorist activities, Abaaoud became a wanted extremist by the police by the allegation of being the head of this terrorist cell. He was a Belgian national, with

⁸² The Guardian. "Timeline of the Brussels attacks". <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2016/mar/22/where-the-brussels-attackers-struck>

⁸³ Claire Phipps. The Guardian. "Brussels bombings: what we know so far".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/23/brussels-bombings-what-we-know-so-far>

⁸⁴ Ben Farmer, Telegraph Staff. "Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11996120/Paris-attack-what-we-know-about-the-suspects.html>

origins from Morocco who spent sometime in Syria and appeared in IS videos, driving a truck transporting mutilated bodies supposedly to a mass grave.⁸⁵ All the connections to be referred as the “mastermind” of the Paris attacks were later confirmed by an interview made by *Dabiq Magazine*, where Abaaoud reveals how he was able to plan several attacks under the “local intelligence services nose” by travelling back to Belgium with two other jihadists (the ones killed in Verviers raid) obtaining weapons, hiding places and preparing ways to expand the fear within the European societies.⁸⁶

Abaaoud was well known to European intelligence services categorized as a one among the 32 people in charge of “Belgium’s Jihadi recruitment network”, even trying to recruit his younger brother, by bringing him to Syria in January 2014. According to family members, they had not known anything from both brothers since that year, after receiving a call from Syria where he was declared as a *martyr*.⁸⁷

On November 18th 2015, after a couple of days later of the Paris attacks, the intelligence services organized a raid in the Saint Denis neighborhood in northern Paris. After following many tips and evidence since the attacks, Special Forces were looking for an apartment where suspects had been located. After a prolonged gun battle and followed by two separately explosions, three suspects were killed. Authorities confirmed that the main target of the operation was Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the principal organizer of the Paris attacks, along with his cousin Hasna Aït Boulahcen and a third individual which was connected to the Paris attack by fingerprints found in the abandoned car which was used for the shootings in the 10th and 11th District.⁸⁸

In the Annex N° 5, the second picture shows the identification of the people involved in the Paris attacks.⁸⁹ The main important facts to underline about this group relies in family connections (Salah’s brother was the suicide bomber Comptoir Voltaire Café), a possible dangerous subject undermined by authorities named Omar Ismail

⁸⁵ Joss Halliday, Jonathan Bucks. “Abdelhamid Abaaoud: what we know about Paris attacks mastermind”. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/abdelhamid-abaaoud-suspected-mastermind-of-paris-terror-attacks>

⁸⁶ Joss Halliday, Jonathan Bucks. “Abdelhamid Abaaoud: what we know about Paris attacks mastermind”. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/abdelhamid-abaaoud-suspected-mastermind-of-paris-terror-attacks>

⁸⁷ Joss Halliday, Jonathan Bucks. “Abdelhamid Abaaoud: what we know about Paris attacks mastermind”. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/abdelhamid-abaaoud-suspected-mastermind-of-paris-terror-attacks>

⁸⁸ The Guardian. “How the events of the St-Denis raid unfolded-a visual guide”. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2015/nov/18/st-denis-raid-what-we-know-so-far-paris-attacks>

⁸⁹ Annex N°5.

Mostafei, radicalized between 2010-2014, especially after his trip to Syria in 2013. Turkish authorities labeled him as a “possible terror suspect” notifying the French government in December 2014 and in June 2015, with no reply until after the attacks.⁹⁰

By the other hand, there was a young Jihadi named Bilal Hadfi, who is the perfect example of how the youngest people can absorb the radical propaganda so easily, as well traveling to Syria and joining IS. Finally, the close familiar environment experienced by radicalized individuals characterized this group. Abaaoud and Abdeslam share childhood friendship and both of them lived in Molenbeek neighborhood were on March 18th 2016, Salah Abdeslam was arrested after more than 4 months on the run since the Paris attacks.⁹¹

Immediately after the Paris attackers were identified and the following attacks in Brussels occurred, the intelligence services understood that both attacks were certainly connected or the individuals had been previously met or somehow maintain any kind of communications among them. One of the hypothesis surfaced after the Brussels attacks, was that the perpetrators acted as a reply for Salah’s arrest. Nonetheless, there are other features that can explain bit more detailed information, which rather develops the hypothesis of being one single network of jihadists.

As it was expressed before, one person of interest beside Salah Abdeslam and Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was connected in both attacks was Najim Laachraoui. His fingerprints were recovered in the both attacks and he was the second suicide bomber identified in the Brussels airport.⁹² Along Laachraoui, another high profile suspect linking both attacks is Mohamed Abrini, detained in April 9th 2016 in Brussels. He was accused of being part in logistics activities related to the Paris attacks, especially by being seeing in surveillance videos with Salah Abdeslam days prior the Paris attack, using a car, which was possible one of the vehicles used to help the attackers reach the

⁹⁰ Ben Farmer, Telegraph Staff. “Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers.”

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11996120/Paris-attack-what-we-know-about-the-suspects.html>

⁹¹ Ben Farmer, Telegraph Staff. “Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers.”

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11996120/Paris-attack-what-we-know-about-the-suspects.html>

⁹² Larry Buchanan, Hayeoun Park. “Uncovering the links between Paris and Brussels Attackers”. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/23/world/europe/how-the-brussels-and-paris-attackers-could-be-connected.html>

Stade of France. In the other hand, he confessed that he was the person involved in the Brussels airport attack, who did not proceed to detonate the bomb and fled the scene.⁹³

Finally, it had been demonstrated that the individuals who perpetrated both terrorist attacks were connected by many ways: most of them were from Belgium or at least were leaving in Belgium, especially in the Molenbeek District. Another key factor shared by these individuals were the intention to visit or managed to reach Syria, per example Abaaoud who did arrive to Syria and stayed for an unknown period. Many of them were carrying a petty crime background or being jailed at the same time. In the particular case of Abbaoud and Khalid el-Bakraoui, both shared experience with terrorist ties before the attacks. Lastly, many fingerprints from Paris attackers were found in apartments that were rented by Brussels attackers; therefore they were living or at least know each other somehow.⁹⁴ The image number 2 in Annex N° 6 can also provide detailed information about this evidence.

By assembling this factors together, it can be expressed that the group of individuals are in a high percent related to the phenomenon of Foreign Fighters strongly developed in the Islamic State agenda. The commitment of their actions, among the proven connections with each other plus the claim of responsibility by IS in both attacks, can help us to certify that there is a channel of communication through jihadist around the world and the establishment of the so called *Caliphate* in Syria.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS MODUS OPERANDI

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Terrorist attacks can be plotted in many different ways, nonetheless the investigation will only focus in three types which are mainly related to the attacks perform by the Islamic State: *terrorist cells*, *lone wolf attack* and a brand new category named *zombie*. The procedures taken by IS in order to use terrorist attacks as its main signature had been very effective especially in terms of results for the *Caliphate*, causing complete desperation and fear all over the world.

⁹³ Larry Buchanan, Hayeoun Park. "Uncovering the links between Paris and Brussels Attackers". <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/23/world/europe/how-the-brussels-and-paris-attackers-could-be-connected.html>

⁹⁴ Larry Buchanan, Hayeoun Park. "Uncovering the links between Paris and Brussels Attackers". <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/23/world/europe/how-the-brussels-and-paris-attackers-could-be-connected.html>

The first approach is the commonly known *terrorist cells*. This is considered as the smallest component into a large and complex terrorist organization, it works as a group of individuals sharing a common goal, a common ideology, with an expertise in a specific role, supervised and guided by a command and control chain, demonstrating planning and coordination when the task is fulfilled.⁹⁵ These individuals are highly trained or have some previous knowledge into their specific roles (bomb making, guerilla tactics, logistics, weapons handling) becoming a well-organized group, which are only waiting for an order to perform their action.

After the detailed information about Paris and Brussels attacks, the main assumption is that according to proven links and connections with each other, these individuals were part of an *sleeper cell*, meaning that the group was organized and each of them had their specific roles (suicide bombers, gunmen, logistics). Usually the members of the group are deeply committed to the ideology and to the purpose, therefore these actions are taken to the last step, which is dying and causing as much casualties as they can.

Usually, when a *cell* is dismantled or eliminated, does not necessary affect other *cells* within the whole framework. Security is one of the most important elements of cells, due to this reason particularly, therefore many of the *cells* are not aware of the existence of other *cells*, making the tracking and identification of the groups very complex to the intelligence services.⁹⁶ Another important feature among *cells* is related to family closeness, work relationships or even environmental circumstances⁹⁷, which was also, shared by the Paris and Brussels attackers (Abdeslam brothers, some of them being from Belgium living in the Molenbeek District).

The second approach is a very complex one especially to identify and prevent: *the lone wolf*. Completely opposite to *cells*, these individuals are self-independent and present no coordination at all by the time their attacks are performed. Usually they do not have any skill or expertise in any area (weapons, logistic, bomb making) and rely very much on improvisation, nothing sticks right up to a plan or to a coordinated action.⁹⁸ The *lone wolf attacks* represents a leaderless action, in the reason that the

⁹⁵ Marco Lombardi. *Global Security: Terrorism and Organized Crime*. Lecture from Master in Middle Eastern Studies Program (2016), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.

⁹⁶ Terrorism-Research. "Terrorist Groups". <http://www.terrorism-research.com/groups/>

⁹⁷ Terrorism-Research. "Terrorist Groups". <http://www.terrorism-research.com/groups/>

⁹⁸ Marco Lombardi. *Global Security: Terrorism and Organized Crime*. Lecture from Master in Middle Eastern Studies Program (2016), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.

person involved in this situation decides to take involvement only by portraying the ideology or a certain cause, which it thinks it represents. Most of the time, the representatives of the ideology or the cause are not aware of the support carried by the attacker until it is proven, mainly by the attacker itself.⁹⁹

During the studies of the *lone wolf approach*, another important feature that might be a characteristic within these individuals is that they might be suffering from a mental disease or a physiological disorder. Some famous cases of *lone wolf attackers* such as Anders Behring Breivik (killed 77 in the Oslo Attack in 2011) who was initially declared “schizophrenic and psychotic” along with “narcissist personality disorder”¹⁰⁰ However, the project will later focus in one particular case related to *lone wolf approach* with many of these characteristics, nonetheless with an interesting development during its investigation.

Finally, the last approach is a concept recently developed named *zombie approach*. The word *zombie* comes from the cyber domain vocabulary meaning an infected computer seems apparently normal until an external stimulus activate the virus targeting an specific objective. Therefore, the *zombie approach* is related to individuals with expertise and trained to fight, which are already socially connected in their societies making them easily blend into the population, linked with the cause or the ideology (mainly driven by sentimentalism) waiting for signal in order to engage the attack.¹⁰¹

In a personal opinion, this is by far the most accurate approach handled by IS in the current era. This approach is one of the most difficult to identify in the reason that not everybody can be under the intelligence services surveillance without a reason, therefore many individuals can be easily recruited by many ways, maintaining a low profile, blending among us. It can also be considered that Salah Abdeslam or Abdelhamid Abaaoud could also belong to this approach in a certain way, until both were added to the intelligence watch list. Both of them were European citizens with

⁹⁹ William E. Dyson. *Terrorism: An Investigator's Handbook. Section I: The natures of terrorism and the threats it presents. Chapter 2: Defining, Delineating and Dissecting Terrorism.* Pp 35.

¹⁰⁰ Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalenko, Benjamin Van Son. “Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: a comparisson of assassins and School attackers”. *Are Lone-Wolfs suffering from mental disorders?*.

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/240/html>

¹⁰¹ Marco Lombardi. *Global Security: Terrorism and Organized Crime.* Lecture from Master in Middle Eastern Studies Program (2016), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.

Middle Eastern origins, despite they grew up in Belgium apparently carrying a regular life, nonetheless waiting for a signal in order to began their *Jihad*. *Zombies* can undoubtedly move through their social connections, gathering information, analyzing where and how to perform a better strike, maximizing the threat and the victims as well.

LONE-WOLF CASE: JULY 14TH 2016 NICE ATTACKS

On Thursday July 14th 2016, around 22.45 a 19-ton cargo truck drove into the Promenade des Anglais Boulevard in the city of Nice (France) which was holding a people gathering for the country's national holiday: the Bastille day Celebration. The driver initially killed 2 people in the first meters of the Boulevard until reached the most crowded area, running people over left and right. Around 17 people are killed from the initial point to the first 700 meters of the path. When the truck reaches Voilier Plage Restaurant, runs into a group of people leaving around 10 more bodies. The truck advanced its way to Hotel Negresco and began shooting against three police officers and from this point, the truck switches from the street to the sidewalk.¹⁰²

Up till now, the truck had been driven 1.8 kilometers since its start and now is facing police gunfire while continues its driving through the Boulevard. In its final way, the truck stamp left around 20 more people between wounded or killed, until is finally stopped by being shot dead from the Police in front of the Casino du Palais.¹⁰³ The France Prosecutor Mr. Francois Molins stated that 84 people were killed and 202 got injured as a final toll of the attack, on the same statement the identification of the attacker was revealed, his name was Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, 31 years old born in northern Tunisia.¹⁰⁴

According to his father, Mr. Bouhlel was a very lonely and depressed child who suddenly could become very angry as a response to this behavior. Many of his former neighbors in Tunisia expressed that he had no signs of being in the path of radicalization; instead he preferred the company of women and liquor. When he was 17 he suffered from a mental breakdown, which lasted for about two years. After this episode, he moved to Nice where he got a job and later he got married, procreating three

¹⁰² The New York Times. "A Trail of Terror in Nice, Block by Block".

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/14/world/europe/trail-of-terror-france.html>

¹⁰³ The New York Times. "A Trail of Terror in Nice, Block by Block".

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/14/world/europe/trail-of-terror-france.html>

¹⁰⁴ Alissa J. Rubin, Lilia Blaise, Adam Nossiter, Aurelien Breeden. "France says truck attacker was Tunisia native with record of petty crime".

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/16/world/europe/attack-nice-bastille-day.html?_r=0

children. His marriage lasted until 2014, where he got divorced and moved to the apartment where the police made the raid after the attack.¹⁰⁵

Two days later of the attack, the Islamic State using its common news agency Amaq claimed the responsibility of the attack, qualifying Bouhlel as its “soldier”. IS expressed that Bouhlel act was a response of the call for attacking citizens belonging to the coalition nations. However, until now there is no evidence, which can openly connect the Nice Attacks with the Islamic State, in the reason that there is no proof of Bouhlel’s direct involvement with IS comparing to the many connections discovered among the attackers of Paris and Brussels.¹⁰⁶

The interesting fact about this attack is completely related to the project’s question, regarding how the attacks are carried by the *Caliphate*. This might be a perfect example of how far can IS propaganda reach to its audience, especially to individuals which might be under *lone-wolf approach* not necessarily getting attention by intelligence services trying to reach Syria or getting in contact with a Recruitment Network, but being under the influence of the tons of messages posted in the web. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that Bouhlel suffered from a mental disorder which might have helped to perform this act with no regret at all, and by taking the opportunity of harming many people, IS can easily take this opportunity to claim responsibility by expressing that its message is working.

¹⁰⁵ Chris Stephen. “Nice attack bewilders Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel’s relatives”.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/16/nice-attack-bewilders-mohamed-lahouaiej-bouhlel-relatives>

¹⁰⁶ Alissa J. Rubin, Aurelien Breed. “ISIS claims truck attacker in France was its ‘soldier’ ”.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/17/world/europe/isis-nice-france-attack.html>

CONCLUSION

IS THERE A COMMAND CONTROL BODY BEHIND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ATTACKS?

Finally, the analysis of the terrorist attacks and its approaches would help the investigation to understand the following question: is there a Command Control Body within the Islamic State, which is completely in charge to arrange any attacks or plots to conduct terrorist attacks worldwide, by the use of *terrorist cells*, *lone-wolf attacks* or *zombie approach*? Or the Islamic State's propaganda is the only trigger needed to perform such violent outbreaks anywhere at any time? After the review of the information presented in this project, it can be expressed that the answer could be a combination of both assumptions.

One of the assumptions refers to an organizational body, which is in charge of coordinating the entire topic related to Foreign Fighters, especially related to its task as tools for terrorist attacks. As it was presented in the first chapter of this project, there is a Foreign Fighter Council, which is in charge of providing aid to these individuals, nonetheless is not clear specifically what kind of support the Islamic State had delivered either economically, militarily or ideologically. According to Europol Public Information, Intelligence services believe that IS managed to develop an "external actions command trained for *Special Forces style* operations abroad" targeting the European Union particularly.¹⁰⁷

Within this first assumption, it is necessary to underline that IS prefers to use a n already assembled local *terrorist cells* with the particular difference of being managed by an individual who might received training in Syria, however is not always necessary.¹⁰⁸ In other words, IS relies on assembled groups commanded by a leader with direct involvement with IS (the case of Paris attackers) creating an easier scenario to control the individuals, which are already prepared to engage into an attack. As it was expressed in the previous chapter, these individuals share common expertise such as weaponry handling and explosives managing.

Being part of a local assembled terrorist group usually means being part of local society, and this is linked directly to the *zombie approach*. At least one individual

¹⁰⁷ Europol Public Information. *Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks. Terrorist Involved.* Pp 5.

¹⁰⁸ Europol Public Information. *Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks. Terrorist Involved.* Pp 5.

would be under this category in the meaning of easily blending within their own society, establishing the necessary connections to clearly move around without raising any suspicion either from authorities or the public in general. The individual is completely free to plan, to prepare and to wait until the signal is displayed, the “call”, which becomes the green light to take any action.

Linked to this assumption of an “external action command” it can be expressed that IS authorities are not directly involved in the performance of the attacks from Syria. The blueprints or the main ideas of plots and assaults might be developed in Syria; nonetheless the game changer relies on trusting local leaders to proceed with free tactical coordination about how, when and where to deliver the attacks, supporting the Islamic State strongest signature: “strikes at will, at any time and almost at any chosen target.”¹⁰⁹

By the other hand, in terms of analyzing *lone-wolf attacks* it is important to address one of IS top officials and main supporters of the approach: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (killed on August 30th 2016). He was identified as the N°2 leader within IS structure, where he was one of its main charismatic propagandist, famously known by a video posted in September 2014 where he stressed the importance to attack any disbeliever engaging in the war against IS, by “killing them in any way or manner (...) Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with a car (...)”.¹¹⁰ By his statement, it is important to understand how IS embraced the idea of promoting *lone-wolf attacks* within their combatants rank, supporting and claiming any related actions to this approach. This is one of the main reasons why the Nice attacks was immediately related to the Islamic State, despite of any relevant connection proven until now.

Reaching up to this point, from a personal point of view, the second assumption might be connected with the *lone-wolf approach*, in the reason that *lone-wolf attacks* does not necessary require any planning or structure in order to be done. The effort and the organization dedicated from the Islamic State to the spread of its variety of propaganda, relies on reaching every corner of the globe. The message is completely

¹⁰⁹ Europol Public Information. *Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks. Terrorist attacks / Target selection.* Pp 7.

¹¹⁰ Robert Windrem, Tracy Connor. “ISIS says N° 2 Leader Abu Muhammad al-Adnani is Dead in Syria”.
<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-says-no-2-leader-mohammad-al-adnani-dead-n640171>

distributed among all of the population, and it is impossible to control all individuals beginning the path of radicalization, when most of the attention is dedicated to “people of interest” within the Intelligence apparatus.

Therefore, like it was expressed in the previous paragraphs the proper answer to the main question of this project, is a combination of both assumptions. The Islamic State managed to create an external command control body in order to coordinate and handle international attacks, as a main tool of spreading a physical message of its retrograde ideology, using primarily local *sleeper terrorist groups* (well organized, trained in weaponry and explosives) mostly supervised by individuals who were or are directly connected with top officials in Syrian territory, occupied by the Islamic State. People involved in these units are usually familiar with their environment, allowing them to easily proceed with their plans catching no attention, especially from authorities (therefore, is connected as well with the *zombie approach*).

On the other hand, the undeniable effective use of media in order to spread the radical message of violence portrayed by the Islamic State ideology, had also influenced many people in order to get engage in their declared worldwide *Jihad*, especially by performing *lone-wolf attacks*. The complex situation facing the analysis of *lone-wolf attacks* is its nature of unpredictable scenario, where the final outcome is even more complicated to understand, especially while evaluating the main reasons of the attack. The Islamic State had taken advantage of this situation, by claiming responsibility in many recent *lone-wolf attacks* (Orlando mass killing shootings, Wurzburg stabbing attack), linking this approach to IS modus operandi of terrorist attacks. Nonetheless, particularly in the Nice attacks, there is no physical proof to link the attack with IS, despite their claiming of responsibility in the following days.

The main target of the Islamic State is to use fear and confusion when any attack is performed, in the reason that in the fragile world that we are currently living, mistrust is the effective tool to control the masses. The Islamic State had been strongly affected in territory loses, nonetheless the key factor is to fight its ideology which is now spread and influencing many people under our noses, expecting signals in order to continue performing infamous and coward terrorist attacks.

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<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-says-no-2-leader-mohammad-al-adnani-dead-n640171>

ANNEX N° 1

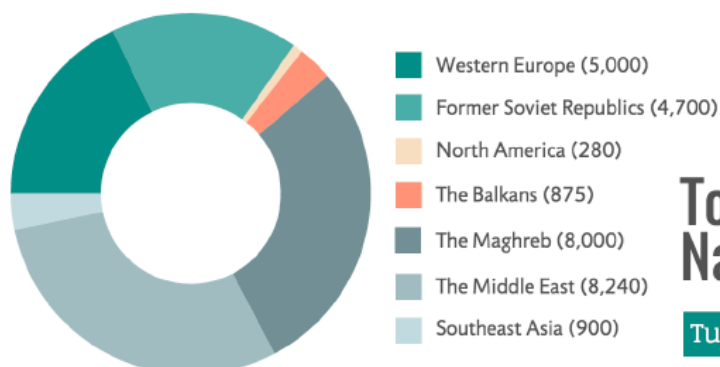
The following States have provided numbers or estimates of their citizens or residents who have gone to Syria to fight, though some have now returned or died.

Algeria:	about 200	(Official estimate, May 2014, plus up to 200 helpers)
Australia:	about 250	(ASIS, April 2014)
Belgium:	about 250	(Official figure, April 2014, 200 still in Syria)
Canada:	30	(CSIS, February 2014)
Denmark:	100	(PET, May 2014)
Finland:	over 30	(Supo, March 2014)
France:	over 700	(Official figure, April 2014, 275 still in Syria)
Germany:	270	(BfV, January 2014, 'about 300' March 2014)
Indonesia:	30 - 60	(Official estimate, May 2014)
Ireland:	25 - 30	(Ministry of Justice, February 2014)
Kosovo:	100 - 120	(OSCE report, March 2014)
Kyrgyzstan:	several	(10+) (Kyrgyz Security Service, May 2013)
Morocco:	about 1,500	(Official figure, April 2014)
The Netherlands:	120	(Ministry of Justice, February 2014)
Norway:	40 - 50	(NIS, February 2014)
Russian Federation:	over 800	(FSB, April 2014)
Saudi Arabia:	about 2,500	(Official estimate, May 2014; 1,200 MoI)
Singapore:	one	(Official figure, March 2014)
Spain:	51	(Official figure, April 2014)
Sweden:	about 30	(Säpo, April 2013)
Switzerland:	about 10	(Swiss Intelligence Service, May 2013)
Tunisia:	about 3,000	(Official figure, April 2014)
Turkey:	about 400	(Official estimate, April 2014)
United Kingdom:	about 400	(Official estimate, March 2014)
United States:	dozens(70+)	(FBI, May 2014)

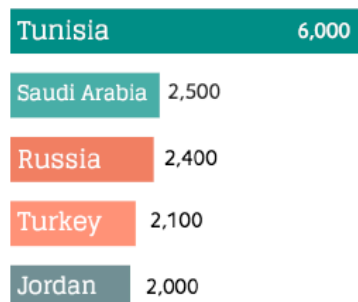
Source: Richard Barret, Senior Vice President of the Soufan Group. *Foreign Fighters in Syria*. June 2014.

ANNEX N° 2

Foreign Fighters by Region

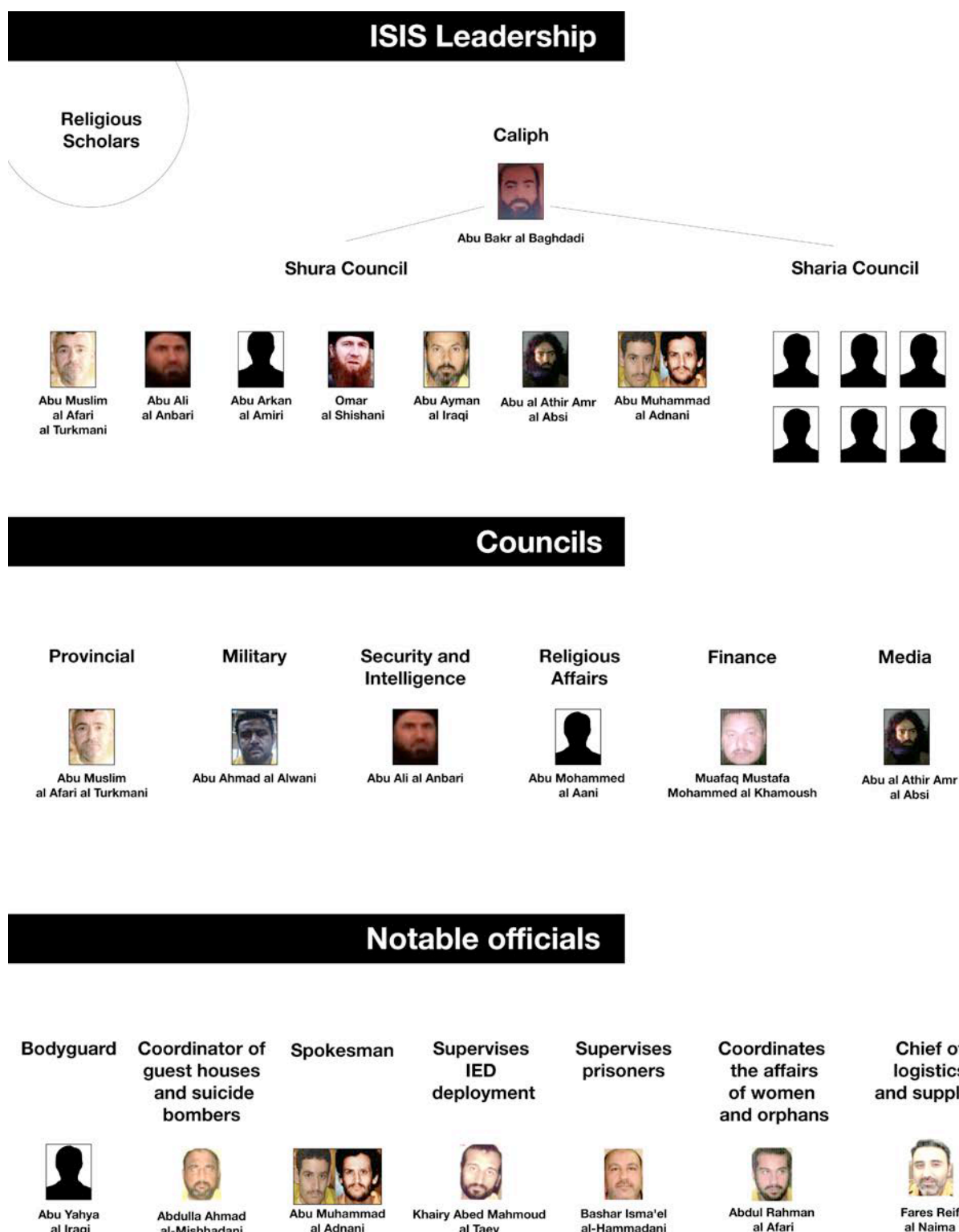


Top Foreign Fighter Nationalities



Source: The Soufan Group. Foreign Fighters: *An Update Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*. December 2015.

ANNEX N° 3



Source: Richard Barret. *The Islamic State*. November 2014.

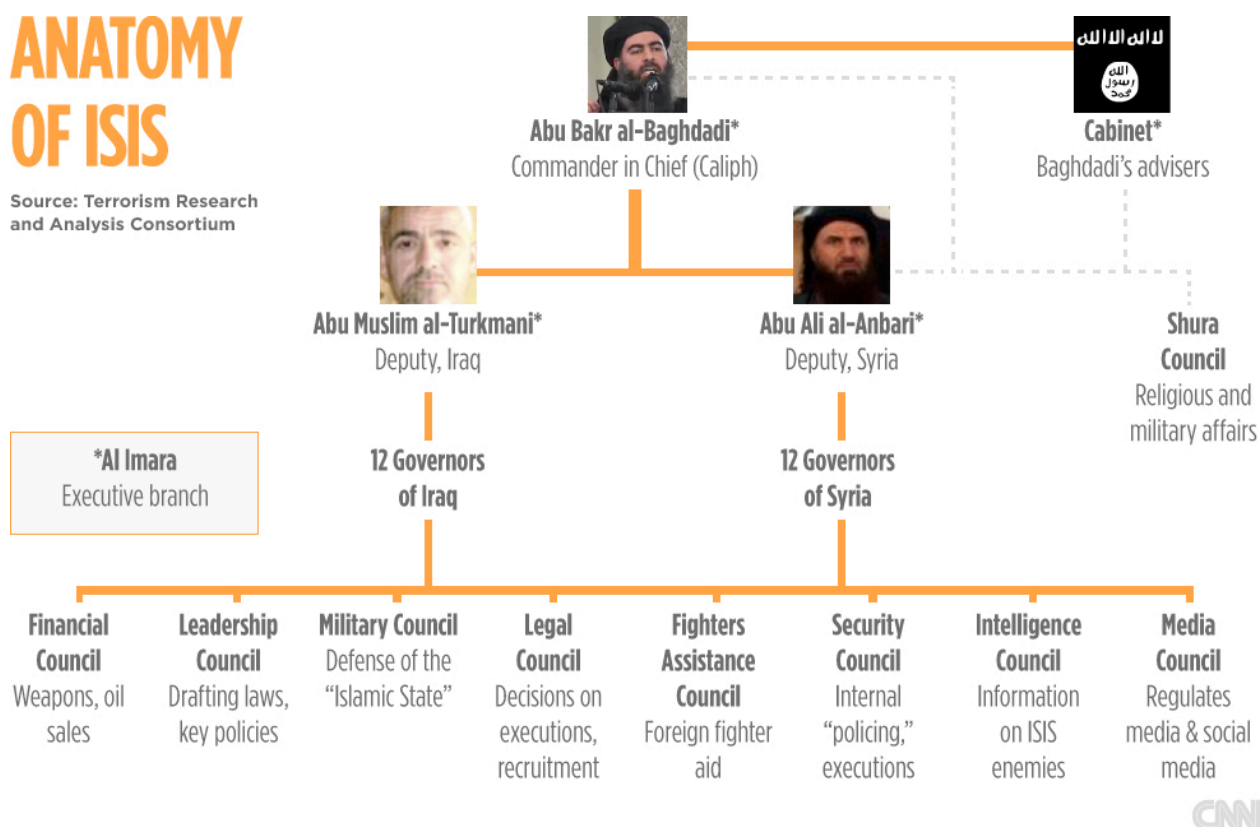
Note: Two Major Deputies:

- Deputy supervising the State of Iraq: *Abu Muslim al Afari al Turkmani*.
- Deputy supervising the State of Syria: *Abu Ali al Anbari*.

ANNEX N° 4

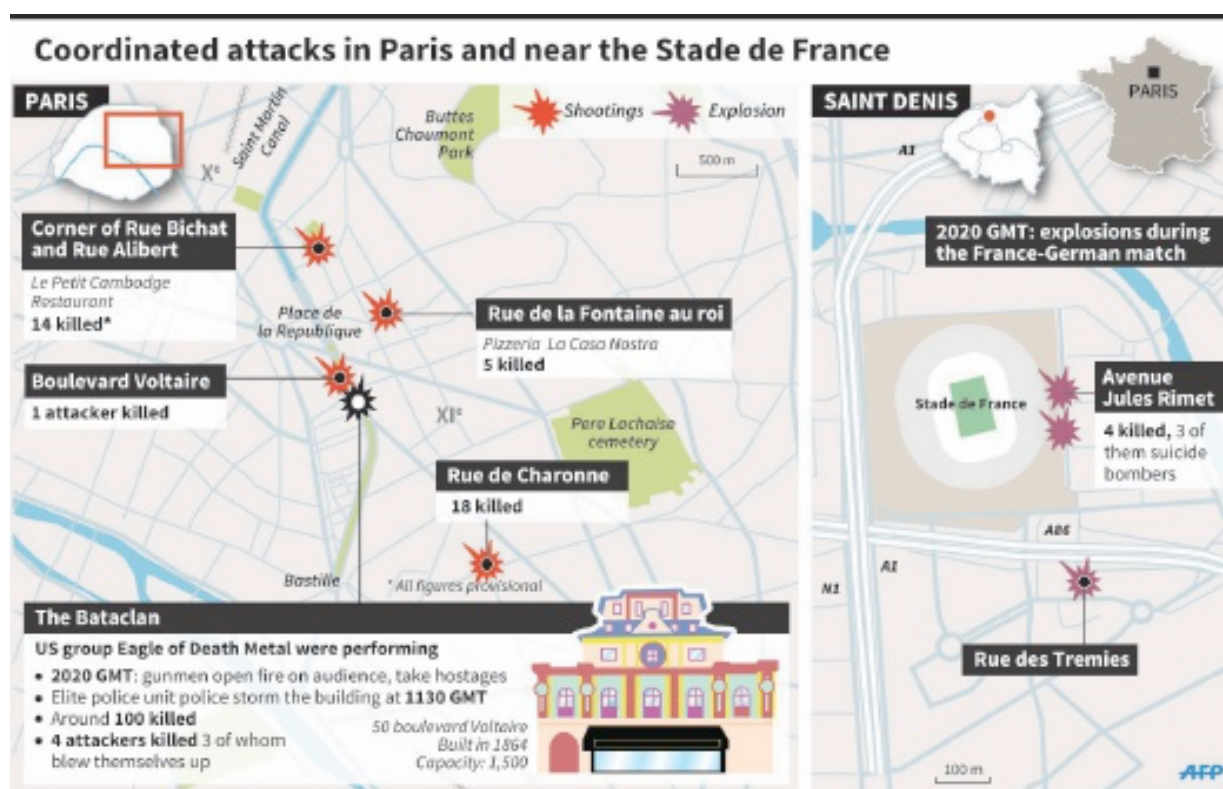
ANATOMY
OF ISIS

Source: Terrorism Research
and Analysis Consortium



Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2014/09/world/isis-explained/>

ANNEX N° 5



1) Source: Associated Free Press (AFP) Paris attacks infographics.

<http://www.nst.com.my/news/2015/11/111435/paris-attacks-death-toll-rises-128-infographic>



Source: Pictures AFP, EVN, EPA, Belgian Police

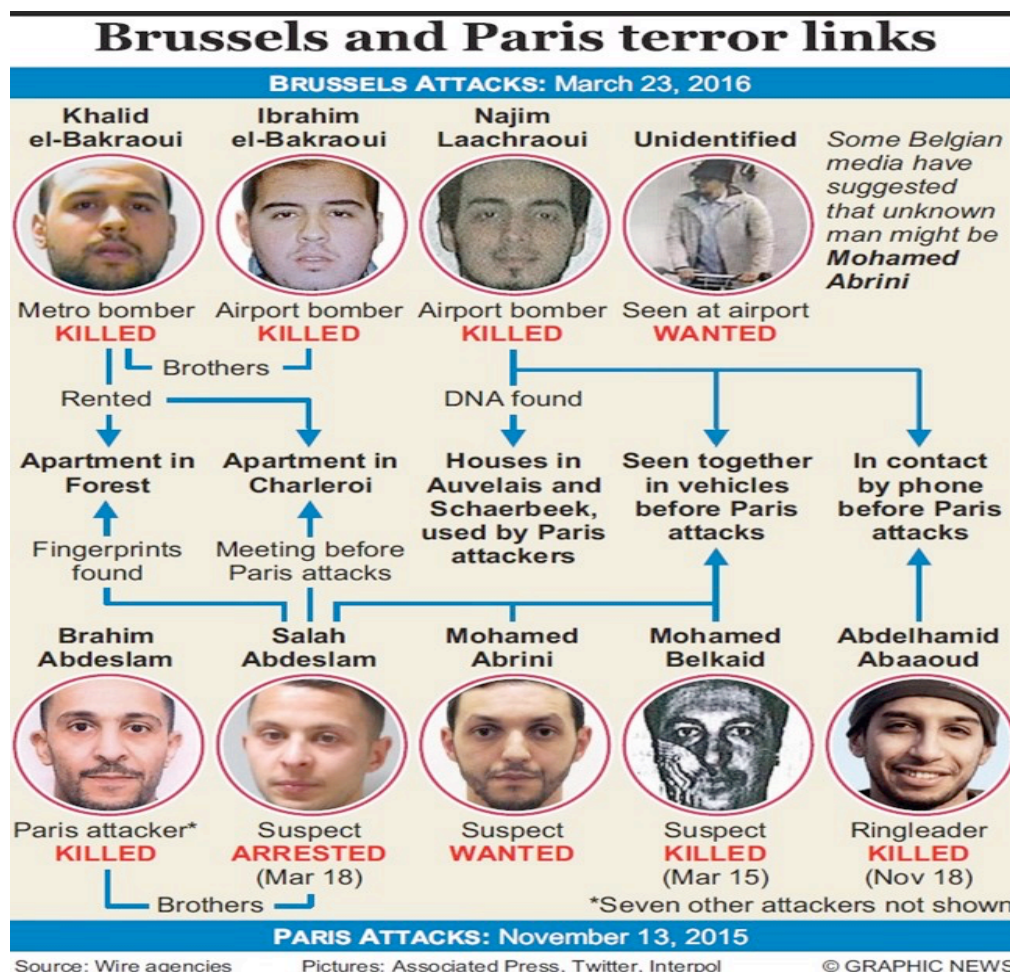
BBC

2) Source: BBC

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34832512>

ANNEX N° 6

1) Source: <http://flashpointssurvival.com/terror-attacks-in-brussels-infographic/>



2) Source: Graphic News.