



Department of Political Sciences
Chair in History of International Relations

**PARIS AND BARCELONA TERROR
ATTACKS: A Comparative Analysis of the
Radicalization Process of Abdelhamid Abaaoud
and Younes Abouyaaqoub**

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Introduction	4
<i>Why isn't there an exact definition of terrorism?</i>	8
<i>An Introduction to Radicalization theories</i>	10
CHAPTER 1	12
Theories of Radicalization	12
<i>1.1 Staircase To Terrorism – Fathali M. Moghaddam</i>	12
1.1.1 Ground Floor: Psychological Interpretation of Material Conditions	14
1.1.2 First Floor: Perceived Options to Fight Unfair Treatment	16
1.1.3 Second Floor: Displacement of Aggression	17
1.1.4 Third Floor: “Moral Engagement”	18
1.1.5 Fourth Floor: Solidification of Categorical Thinking and the Perceived legitimacy of the Terrorist Organization	18
1.1.6 Fifth Floor: The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanism	19
<i>1.2 The Rise of Radical Islam – Quintan Wiktorowicz</i>	21
<i>1.3 The Psychology of Terrorism – John Horgan</i>	28
<i>1.4 Understanding Terror Networks and Leaderless Jihad – Marc Sageman</i>	32
<i>1.5 Radicalization in the West – Silber & Bhatt</i>	38
1.5.1 Pre-Radicalization	40
1.5.2 Self-Identification	41
1.5.3 Indoctrination	42
1.5.4 Jihadization	43
<i>1.6 Protecting the Homeland – Lawrence Kuznar</i>	46
1.6.1 Root Causes of Terrorism	48
1.6.2 Dynamics of VNSAs	50
1.6.3 The Role of Ideology	52
<i>1.7 Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us – Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskaleiko</i>	56
1.7.1 Individual Radicalization	57
1.7.2 Group Radicalization	60
1.7.3 Mass Radicalization	61
<i>1.8 Clandestine Political Violence – Della Porta</i>	64
1.8.1 Escalating violence	67
1.8.2 Competitive escalation	67
1.8.3 Activation of militant networks	67
1.8.4 Organizational compartmentalization	68
1.8.5 Action militarization	68
1.8.6 Ideological encapsulation	68
1.8.7 Implosion	68
<i>1.9 DRIA Model – Alessandro Orsini</i>	70
1.9.1 Disintegration of Social Identity	71
1.9.2 Reconstruction of Social Identity	71
1.9.3 Integration in a sect	72
1.9.4 Alienation from the Surrounding World	73
CHAPTER 2	76
Paris Attack and Abdelhamid Abaaoud	76
<i>2.1 Early Life</i>	78
<i>2.2 Petty Crimes</i>	80
<i>2.3 From “Radicalized” into “Terrorist”</i>	83

2.4 Paris Attacks	92
CHAPTER 3	98
Barcelona Attack and Younes Abouyaaqoub	98
3.1 Early Life	100
3.2 Kinship Radicalization	102
3.3 Links with Belgium cell and Islamic State	108
3.4 Barcelona and Cambrils Attacks	111
CHAPTER 4	114
Comparative Analysis of Case studies and Radicalization Theories	114
Case Studies and DRIA Model	116
D: Disintegration of Social Identity	119
Abaaoud's Disintegration of Social Identity	119
Abouyaaqoub's Disintegration of Social Identity	120
R: Reconstruction of Social Identity	122
Abaaoud's Reconstruction of Social Identity	122
Abouyaaqoub's Reconstruction of Social Identity	123
I: Integration in a Revolutionary Sect	126
Abaaoud's Integration in a Revolutionary Sect	126
Abouyaaqoub's Integration in a Revolutionary Sect	127
A: Alienation from the Surrounding World	130
Abaaoud's Alienation from the Surrounding World	130
Abouyaaqoub's Alienation from the Surrounding World	132
Findings of the Comparative Analysis	133
CHAPTER 5	137
Comparative Analysis of Jihadist Massacres in Europe	137
Conclusions	146
Bibliography	152

Introduction

In the last past years, terrorism has represented the most complex challenge in international debates. For this reason, to understand roots and causes of terrorism is necessary to have a clear definition of terrorism, a linear structure of the process of radicalization, and the basic features of the methods and tactics of terror organizations.

For this purpose, before entering the core argument of this this work is necessary to analyze why it is hard to reach a global consensus about a terrorism definition. Hence, the first two paragraphs face the problem on terrorism definition.

The first chapter is dedicated to the radicalization theories in order to have a clear structure of the process of radicalization. This argument is enriched by the second and the third chapter in which two case studies are dedicated to a better understanding of the radicalization processes with the comparison of the lives and the radicalization process of two European terrorists, Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Younes Abouyaaqoub. The fourth chapter deeply analyze the validity of the DRIA model with the two case studies presented earlier. To end with, the last argument is dedicated to a comparative analysis of Jihadist massacres in Europe and recent terrorist trends.

The first issue in this paper is to address the problem on reaching a global consensus on the definition on terrorism and to identify a correct definition for the purpose of this work. In order to understand the definition of terrorism it is essential to state that even if terrorism is one of the most dangerous threats on international level, there is not a global consensus on the definition of the phenomenon. Thus making clear the complexity of the argument.

Having clarified what terrorism means, we need to look for the reasons, pushes and pool factors that convince people to take the root of terrorism in order to clarify what process of radicalization means. A better understanding of the terrorist's psychology is essential to develop a more effective counter-radicalization strategies and preventive policies to fight terrorism.

Therefore, it is necessary to profile terrorists and to identify demographic and socio-economic factors that have contributed to the development of a more integrate and complete framework of the radicalization process.

In recent times, the role played by strategic communication in supporting international terrorism, spreading its ideology and encouraging recruitment, emerged more clearly in international debates. Hence, a correct understanding of the attractive power of the extremist discourse that affect young people allow to concentrate prevention efforts to address radicalization.

For this purpose, this work focuses on the most authoritative authors that theorized radicalization process, in order to give a clear structure of the path toward radicalization.

Many authors tried to explain the process that has led an individual to engage in terror activities. Most of them identified structured process with different stages and levels and tried to categorize the process of radicalization, other tried to address the problem focusing on some basic elements such psychology, sociology or social-economy.

After the 9/11 terrorist attack, many scholars and security officials have tried to understand the process by which individuals and groups move to terrorism. The hope was to predict and prevent future attacks. However, in the past years the term radicalization became the main focus in order to prevent terrorism.

For this purpose, the first chapter reviews some of the milestones of thinking about radicalization, as scholars and security officials struggled to discern the precursors of terrorist violence. The enormous and still expanding literature on radicalization cannot be fully represented here. However, milestones in radicalization research are fully explained in the first chapter.

The selection of the main theory of radicalization were determined on the basis of contribution to psychological theorizing of radicalization, salience to security officials and author's experience at academic and government-sponsored conferences.

The authors presented in the first chapter are: *Fathali M. Moghadam*, that tried to conceptualize the radicalization process through the "Staircase model" which focused on the reason why in a large number of people in society, only a very small minority end up committing acts of terrorism; *Quintan Wiktorowicz*,

with his book “Radical Islam Rising” (2005) where the author explained, through its reach empirical detail, the spread of radical Islam in Western Societies; *John Horgan*, with his book “Psychology of Terrorism” (2005) he presents a critical analysis of existing knowledge on terrorist psychology, he highlights the substantial shortcomings and limitation of the current research and he presents the “IED Cycle Model” in order to trace the cycle of terrorism from involvement to engagement to disengagement; *Marc Sageman*, a former CIA case officer working with the Afghan resistance during the Soviet invasion, attempts to explain terrorism from a scientific approach using tools as statistics, survey techniques and data-driven analysis and with his books “Understanding Terror networks” (2004) and “Leaderless Jihad” (2008). The author focuses on the assumption that terror networks are built through kinship and friendship; *M. D. Silber* and *A. Bhatt*, with their “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat” (2007), drawing on five case studies of arrests and prosecution, the Report argues that there is a remarkable consistency in the behaviors and trajectory of each of the plots across stages and that this consistency provides a remarkable tool for predictability; *Lawrence Kuznar* and colleagues, in “Protecting the Homeland From International and Domestic Terrorism Threats” (2010) they argue that the main key point of this work is to understand the complexity of the interaction that produce terrorist violence, in fact, the main argument of the authors is that terrorism is inherently dynamic; *C. McCauley* and *S. Moskalenko*, with “Friction” (2011) explaining an amazing contribution to the study of radicalization, in fact, they identify twelve mechanism of radicalization which they divide into three sections, Individual radicalization, group radicalization and mass radicalization; *Donatella Della Porta*, with a comparative study of his book *Clandestine Political Violence* (2013) in which she describes common mechanism of radicalization to violence in four types of underground groups like Italian and German leftist, Italian rights, Basque ethno-nationalists and al Qaeda jihadists.

The second and the third chapters will analyze two case studies; Abdelhamid Abaoud, the Belgian-Maroccan Islamic terrorist known as the mastermind of the November 2015 Paris attacks; and Younes Abouyaaqoub, the van driver that killed 14 people on “La Rambla” in Barcelona on August 17th 2017. The aim of these chapters is to describe all the mechanisms, theories and models explained in the first chapter in two different case studies. Describing the process of

radicalization of the two terrorists, we will highlight the main difference between them and emphasize the significant moments of their lives in order to compare them with the theories explained in the first chapter.

In light of the main theories of radicalization, the fourth chapter will analyze the two process of radicalization and compare it with the DRIA model of Alessandro Orsini. The aim of this section is to apply the theories of radicalization proposed by the authors examined in the first chapter to two case studies of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, and Younes Abouyaaqoub. In particular, it will be examined the validity of the DRIA model to two case of homegrown terrorism in Europe and searching for consistency with the other radicalization theories.

Finally, the fifth chapter is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the main terrorist attack in Western Europe from 2015 to 2017. The aim of this chapter is to analyze ISIS's military capability to organize terror attacks. Alessandro Orsini analyzed and compared the ISIS attacks from the November 13th 2015 massacre in Paris to the Barcelona massacre on August 17th 2017. The main finding of the author is that, contrary to the narrative developed by the media, ISIS has not been able to increase the military capabilities of its cells in Western Europe. In fact, the comparison between the massacres of ISIS shows that, ISIS's penetration capabilities in Western European democracies have proved to be inferior to the fears spread by ISIS propaganda and that they have been amplified by the Italian media.

This work is an attempt to develop an understanding of the radicalization process of terrorists and to develop a scientific model to analyze terror organization trends in order to help to contain it and prevent it. In fact, in the conclusive chapter the lessons learned by the Paris and Barcelona terrorist attacks and the main findings of this research will be addressed.

Why isn't there an exact definition of terrorism?

To understand terrorism and adopt effective strategies to address the problem of radicalization most of the authors try to reach a clear definition of the phenomenon. Why is it so difficult to reach a global recognized definition of terrorism? First, I will explain the challenge of the international community to decide a unique definition of terrorism. Later we will analyze the main theories of radicalization.

For some researchers' terrorism is defined as a form of violence. For others is a war method. Some think that terrorism is morally justified while others include the definition of their moral judgement. There are two reasons why no established definition of terrorism has been put together. First because "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter"¹. The question of who a terrorist is depends on the subjective outlook of the definer. The second reason why a general definition of terrorism has not been agreed, is related to the variety approach to achieve a recognized definition. There are different types of terrorism, one distinction can be: domestic and international terrorism. The first relates to actions within the territorial borders of a single state and the threatening of citizens or interest of a single state. The second refers to terrorist acts against citizens of another state in a foreign country. Today, by giving credit to recent advantages in technology, a growing number of domestic terrorist group has developed an international dimension. The borderline between international and domestic terrorism is becoming increasingly blurred. These are the main reasons of the division of the scientific international debate about the interpretation of terrorism. The scientific debate about some basic feature of terrorism have agreed upon some common elements.

For the purpose of this discussion, and according to the interpretation of the scientific community, terrorism is defined as a politically motivated violence, perpetrated by individuals, groups or state-sponsored agents, intended to generate feelings of anxiety in a population in order to influence decision making and to

¹ Hoffman, Bruce, 2001: Terrorism - the undeclared war, Frankfurt am Mein.

change behaviors. Overall, it may be said that it is a form of psychological warfare that has as a principle: "scare your enemies, promote your cause"².

Rather than spending time searching for a definition that will satisfy the global community, we shall focus on the subject of this study. The first question to address is why these violent acts are manifested so drastically, and what are the real reasons that drive such behavior. There are no easy answers to these questions. What is clear is that terrorism is characterized, first and mainly by the use of violence.

Over the years, violence has been used by small groups to achieve political changes. As a matter of fact, terrorism differs from criminal violence because of its degree of political legitimacy. Terrorism is designed to achieve political change and for the purpose of obtaining power. Martha Crenshaw, Senior Fellow at the center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) states:

“Terrorist violence communicates a political message; its ends go beyond damaging an enemy’s material resources. The victims or objects of a terrorist attack have little intrinsic value to the terrorist group but represent a larger human audience whose reaction terrorists seek.”³

Having clarified how terrorism is defined, we need to look for the reasons and the factors that convince people to take the root of terrorism.

² Consolazio, Fanny, Publications, ICIS

³ Crenshaw, M. (1981). The Causes of Terrorism. *Comparative Politics*, 13(4), 379-399.

An Introduction to Radicalization theories

Today, terrorist threats represent one of the most serious dangers on international level, also because, contrary to the past, it operates with new methods and tactics. In recent years, the role played by the strategic communication in supporting international terrorism, spreading its ideology and encouraging recruitment, emerged more clearly. Most of the studies focus on the “narrative” of terrorism that is considered an essential part of the radicalization process. In fact, a correct understanding of the attractive power of the extremist discourse, that affect young people, allow to concentrate prevention efforts using effective de-radicalization techniques, especially toward the most vulnerable communities.

In public debates the term radicalization is used despite its correct definition which remains uncertain. For example, it has not been verified that a radicalized ideology is a necessary premise to embrace terrorism. There are different paths and mechanism of the involvement in a terror organization. Therefore, radicalism, radicalization and involvement in a terrorist organization are different processes. Furthermore, to have radical ideas and to embrace ideologically a cause, does not mean to engage concretely in terroristic acts.

What is essential to understand, is the processes by which people adopt beliefs that justify violence and their path toward terrorist acts. We need to refer to a conceptual framework able to integrate micro mechanisms that refer to individuals, and macro mechanisms, that refer to social and cultural background. Only in this way effective prevention techniques can be put into place in the fight against terrorism.

After the bombings, thus terror attack in London on July of 2005, Madrid train bombings in August 2004, Charlie Hebdo shootings on January 7th 2015 and the November 2015 Paris attacks, the concern of policy makers has turned to homegrown terrorism and the term “radicalization” became a buzz word. The term radicalization suggests the use of the following definition of radicalization as a process by which a person adopts beliefs systems, which justify the use of

violence to affect social change and move towards a more active support of violent means for political purpose.

To understand radicalization, we need to examine not only what is the meaning, but also the main theories and main attempts to systematize the radicalization process.

CHAPTER 1

Theories of Radicalization

1.1 Staircase To Terrorism – Fathali M. Moghaddam

One of the first authors that have tried to conceptualize the radicalization process of terrorists was the Iranian psychologist, professor at Georgetown university, Fathali M. Moghaddam. He applied his psychological approach to explaining radicalization and terrorism. According to the author, psychologists have a vital responsibility to combat terrorism because of three main reasons⁴. The first, because the most important basis for terrorists' action are the subjectively interpreted values and beliefs of the individual. The second reason is because terrorist actions are intended to bring specific psychological experience. The third, is because terrorism has extremely harmful psychological consequences. Psychology has given an important contribution to the terrorist explanation also because there is an urgent need for greater attention to the social and psychological processes that have led to terrorist acts. However, there is little validity of the explanations of terrorists that assume a high level of psychological disorder or that terrorists come from economically deprived backgrounds or little education.⁵

The attempts to profile terrorists can yield greater benefits when identification of demographic and socioeconomic factors are incorporated within a broader conceptual account of processes leading to terrorists acts. The main outcome of the author's research is the staircase model which focused on the reasons why in a large number of people in society, only a very small minority end up committing acts of terrorism. The model involves a metaphorical staircase, where each step is

⁴ Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The Staircase to Terrorism. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 161–169.

⁵ Atran, S. (2003, March 7). Genesis of suicide terrorism. *Science*, 299, 1534 –1539.

influenced by a specific psychological process leading to the terrorist act at the top of the building. The staircase leads to higher floors and whether some remains on a particular floor depends on the doors that a person imagines to be open for her/him. The important factor is the perception of the individual on their opportunity. In fact, as they climb the staircase, they see fewer and fewer choices, until the only possible outcome is the destruction of the others or/and oneself. It is like a “decision tree” and has proved to be a powerful tool in psychology.

The staircase to terrorism is conceived as having one ground floor and five higher floors. Each floor is characterized by a particular psychological process. The ground floor is dominated by feelings of relative deprivation and is occupied by millions of people. Some individuals from the population that perceive injustice will climb to the first floor in search of a solution.

In the first floor, individuals seek ways to improve their situation in order to achieve greater justice, but if they do not see possibilities of influencing procedures through which decisions are made, they are more likely to keep climbing.

In the second floor the individuals are still perceiving injustice, anger and frustration. In some circumstances they are influenced by leaders to displace their aggression onto an “enemy”, and if they are more encouraged to displace aggression, they will further climb the staircase.

In the third floor there is the most important transformation that takes place among those who are stepping into a gradual engagement with the morality of terrorist organizations. Those who become more engaged with the morality of terrorist organizations and keep climbing are ready for recruitment as active terrorists. In fact, recruitment in terrorist organizations takes place on the fourth floor, where potential terrorists, after the legitimation of a terrorist organization, learn to categorize the world in a rigidly “us-versus-them”⁶ ideology.

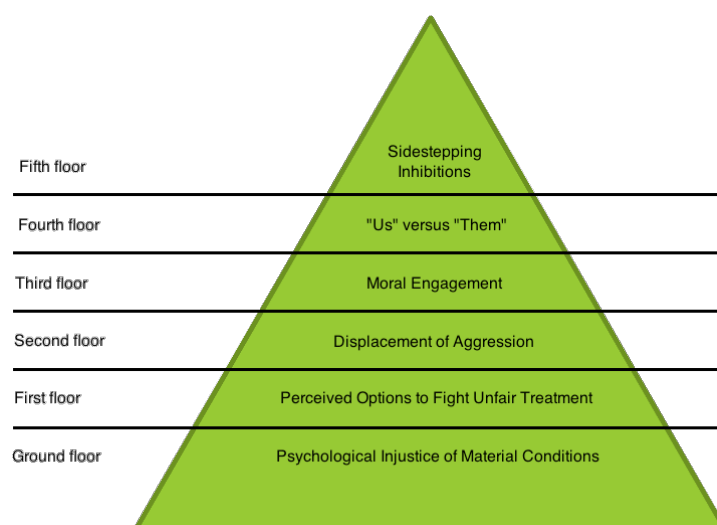
On the last floor, specific individuals are selected and trained to fight their inhibitory mechanism that prevent them from injuring and killing. Here the individual is formed to carry out terrorist acts.

⁶ Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The Staircase to Terrorism. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 161–169.

The staircase to terrorism is a metaphor. Metaphors have proved to be highly useful in psychological science and are helpful to better explain the root of terrorism. The metaphor provides a general framework to organize psychological knowledge and to direct future research and policies.

Now it is important to explain deeply each stage of the staircase model in order to understand the fundamental steps towards the radicalization process of individual.

Figure 1: Staircase to terrorism



1.1.1 Ground Floor: Psychological Interpretation of Material Conditions

In order to understand those who climb to the top of the staircase is imperative to deeply comprehend the perceived injustice and the feelings of frustration and shame among hundred millions of people occupying the ground floor.

According to the author, material factors such as poverty and lack of education are misleading factors to understand terrorist acts. He states some examples to sustain the argument. Palestinians, who support armed attacks against Israeli targets, tend to be greater among individuals with more years of education. Similarly, low level of education and impoverished backgrounds were not found

to be the main characteristics of captured terrorists of al Qaeda, nor Bin Laden or the al Qaeda members who perpetrated the 09/11 terror attack.

Moghaddam focuses on the importance of perceived deprivation. He mentioned the Runciman's distinction⁷ between *egoistical* deprivation, where an individual feels deprived because of his position within a group, and *fraternal* deprivation, involving feelings of deprivation comprehensive of the position of an individual's group relative to that of other groups. The last one is a better predictor of feelings of discontent among minorities and sometimes such feelings translate into collective action. The fraternal deprivation is more likely to arise when group members feel their path has been blocked, and this can lead to collective mobilization. In addition, the literature on collective mobilization also emphasizes the importance of subjective perceptions⁸. Moghaddam asserts the example of the French Revolution and the Iranian Revolution and other collective up springs in which it is perceived injustices and relative deprivation that coincide with collective nonnormative action. In fact, perception of injustice may rise for a variety of reasons, including economic and political conditions and threats to personal or collective identity. A perceived threat to identity is the core feature in the case of religious fundamentalists because of the unique ability of religion to serve identity needs.

Identity is of central importance on this argument. Increasing globalization, secularization and Westernization are undermining non-Western identity and ways of life. Moghaddam & Solliday (1991) introduced the concept of "good-copy problem"⁹ that is, the feeling that the very best they can achieve is to become a good copy of the Western model of women and men propagated as an ideal by international media.

Another important feeling of the people occupying the ground floor is the perceptions of fairness. Moghaddam states an important example:

⁷ Runciman, W. G. (1966). *Relative deprivation and social justice: A study of attitudes to social inequality in twentieth-century England*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁸ Taylor, D. M., & Moghaddam, F. M. (1994). *Theories of intergroup relations: International social psychological perspectives*. Westport.

⁹ Moghaddam, F. M., & Solliday, E. A. (1991). "Balanced multicultural-ism" and the challenge of peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 3, 51–72.

“An individual may be living in extremely poor, crowded condition in Bombay and not feel unjustly treated despite the opulent living conditions of others around him or her in the city; however, another individual may be living in relatively comfortable conditions in Riyadh but feel very unjustly treated.”¹⁰

This description of the concept of perception of fairness is consistent with the rising expectations nourished by the democratic lifestyles spread by the international mass media. This has fueled feelings of deprivation among vast population and among those angrier, arising greater sympathy for extremist antiestablishment tactics.

1.1.2 First Floor: Perceived Options to Fight Unfair Treatment

In the first floor people seek ways to improve their situation and achieve a greater justice. But if they do not see possibilities to influence the procedures through which decisions are made, they will keep climbing. In this floor people try different doors exploring diverse solutions to injustice.

According to the author, two psychological factors shape their behavior on the first floor; individual's perceived possibilities for personal mobility to improve their situation; and their perceptions of procedural justice.

Research on equity theory endorses the view that people strive for justice and feel distressed when they experience injustice.¹¹ Hence, if individual mobility is open and fair, there will be less tendency to attempt in nonnormative action to reach personal gains and goals. This is why procedural justice are fundamental to the concept of perceived injustices. In this sense, the availability of options to participate in decision-making is a key factor in perceived injustice and support

¹⁰ Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The Staircase to Terrorism. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 161–169.

¹¹ Brockner, J. M., & Wiesenfeld, B. M. (1996). An integrative framework for explaining reactions to decisions: Interactive effects of outcomes and procedures. *Psychological Bulletin*, 120, 189–208.

for authorities. This concept can be explained as *procedural justice*¹²; how fair people see the decision-making process to be. Opportunities for participating in decision-making are lacking in many parts of the world. There is a general agreement that opportunity to be heard, mobility and participatory democracy are lacking in the Middle East and North Africa, in particular in Saudi Arabia, the main country of origin for many of the most influential terrorist networks currently active in the World.¹³

The individual who blames insistently “others” for their condition and their perceived injustice will climb the stairs to the second floor.

1.1.3 Second Floor: Displacement of Aggression

The idea is that terrorists’ acts involve the concept of displacement of aggression. In Freudian psychology the term “displacement” explains an unconscious defense mechanism whereby the mind substitutes either a new aim or a new object for goals felt in their original form to be dangerous or unacceptable. In such behavior, aggression may be displaced onto people with little or no connection with what is causing anger or frustration. For example, a man is angry with his boss, but he cannot express this properly, so he hits his wife. The wife, in turn, hits the children.

This displacement of aggression onto out-groups includes educational systems that encourage rigid us-versus-them thinking and fanatical movements. In this context, individuals who develop a readiness to physically displace aggression and who actively seek out opportunities to do so, eventually, will leave the second floor to climb further.

¹² Tyler, T. R., & Huo, Y. J. (2002). *Trust in the law*. New York: Russell. Sage Foundation.

¹³ Schwartz, S. (2002). *The two faces of Islam: The House of Sa’ud from tradition to terror*. New York: Doubleday.

1.1.4 Third Floor: “Moral Engagement”

In this floor, terrorist organizations arise as a parallel morality that justifies the struggle to achieve their “ideal society” by any means possible. From the perspective of the society, terrorists are “morally disengaged”, particularly because of their willingness to commit acts of violence against civilians. However, from the perspective of the terrorist organization and their morality, terrorists are morally engaged, and it is the “enemy” governments who are morally disengaged. Recruitment has the aim to persuade individual to become committed to the morality of the terrorist organizations through different tactics. The most important tactics to attract an individual are isolation, affiliation, secrecy and fear. The main goal is to develop their parallel lives in complete isolation and secrecy. Recruits are trained to keep this parallel life even from their wives, parents and closest friends. The lack of perceived openness of society, has perceived harsh governmental measures against them all contributed to the isolation and the sense of affiliation with their group.

Having started from the ground floor in which they share feelings of injustice, frustration and shame, potential terrorists now find themselves engaged in extremist morality of isolated, secretive organization with the aim to change the world by any means available.

1.1.5 Fourth Floor: Solidification of Categorical Thinking and the Perceived legitimacy of the Terrorist Organization

After reaching the fourth floor and entering in the secret world of terrorist organization there is little opportunity to walk out alive. The author in this section is very clear toward the path of recruitment. The first category of new recruits becomes part of small cells, each numbering four or five people, with access to information only for the other member of their cells. In the second category of recruits, individuals who are recruited should carry out violent attacks and become suicide bombers. The entire operation of recruitment, training and

implementation of terrorist acts, takes no more than 24 hours. The individual recruited in the second category is typically given a great deal of positive attention and treated as a kind of celebrity.¹⁴ Habitually, informal friendship networks and a need to belong is what binds individuals to such cell. This process, with the immersion into secret small-group activities led to the legitimation of terrorist organizations and to the strengthening of the categorical us-versus-them view of the world. Social categorization is a powerful psychological process, which can lead to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.¹⁵ A categorical us-versus-them view of the world is one of the basic features of terrorist organizations. However, there is another important element of terrorist organizations; the belief of just means to an ideal end. Conformity and obedience will be very high in the cells of the terrorist organization, where the cell leader represents a strong authority figure and where nonconformity, disobedience, and disloyalty receive the harshest punishments.¹⁶ During the stay on the fourth floor, the individuals find their options have narrowed considerably. Now they are part of a tightly controlled group from which they cannot leave alive.

1.1.6 Fifth Floor: The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanism

In this floor the main goal is to train the individual to violent acts. Terrorism involves act of violence against civilians, and the main question is how terrorist organizations train their members to carry out such violence that result in the killing of innocent civilians.

In the fifth floor there are two particular psychological processes, the first involves the social categorization, and the second involves psychological distance between in-group and out-group. The categorization of civilians was explained

¹⁴ Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The Staircase to Terrorism. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 161–169.

¹⁵ McGarty, C. (1999). *Categorization in social psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

¹⁶ Moghaddam, F. M. (1998). *Social psychology: Exploring universals in social behavior*. New York: Freeman.

above and involves the concept of threatening everyone, including civilians, outside their tiny group of the terrorist organization and treat them as the enemy. Acts of violence against civilians is justified because civilians are part of the enemy and because they did not actively oppose the “enemy”. The second process is the concept of “inhibitory mechanism”¹⁷ defined by Lorenz (1966). Lorenz argued that inhibitory mechanism serve to limit intraspecies killing. This mechanism involved the limiting of the aggression of humans against one another and can be triggered through eye contact, crying and other means when an attacker is in close proximity to the victim. Lorenz’s argument is that among humans, inhibitory mechanism have been sidestepped through the use of modern weapons that allowed an aggressor to destroy a target from distance.

Terrorist organizations use two tactics to sidestepping the inhibitory mechanism. One is categorizing the target, including civilians as the enemy and dividing them in-group from the out-group in order to distance themselves from the other humans. The second one is that the victims are not aware of the imminent danger before the attack, so they did not have an opportunity to behave in ways that might trigger inhibitory mechanism.

The staircase to terrorism is an important contribution to the radicalization theme and to the understanding of the path towards radicalization into a terrorist organization. Moghaddam studied a psychological process leading to terrorism and the staircase model is an expression of this in-depth research. Thanks to this contribution now the psychological path toward radicalization is more clear and structured in a stage model. The aim of the author is that this contribution can help to reach more efficient counter-radicalization policies direct to prevent disaffected youth and others from becoming engaged in the morality of terrorist organizations. According to the author, policies must be revised to address foundational problems at the bottom of the staircase rather than focusing on policies for the individuals that have already climbed all the way up the staircase and are already committed to carrying out terrorist acts.

¹⁷ Lorenz, K. (1966). *On aggression* (M. Wilson, Trans.). New York: Har- court, Brace & World.

1.2 The Rise of Radical Islam – Quintan Wiktorowicz

Another important contribution to theories of radicalization comes from Q. Wiktorowicz with his book *Radical Islam Rising*, published in 2005. The author explained the spread of radical Islam in Western societies and why groups like al Qaeda have been supported by thousands of citizens of the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western democracies. The author explains why individuals, rejecting their national identity, have heeded international calls to “jihad” and formed extremist groups to fight their own countries. This book represents one of the first systematic attempts to explain why Westerners join radical Islamic group. The author’s insights are based upon an unprecedented access to a radical Islamic group in the West, in particular, the case study of al Muhajiroun, a transnational movement based in London that supports Bin Laden and other Islamic terrorists. Through its rich empirical detail, this book explains why ordinary people join extremist movements.

Wiktorowicz studied the case of al Muhajiroun extremist group, founded in Britain in 1996 by a Syrian-born cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed. Omar Bakri was an important figure in developing Hizb ut-Thariri, an international pan-Islamist political organization with the aim to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate, in the United Kingdom before leaving the group and heading another Islamist organization, the al Muhajiroun. After Omar Bakri clashed with Hizb ut-Thariri leaders over his incisive public statements, he left the organization to establish a new one. Al Muhajiroun was dedicated to the establishment of “Islamic states wherever there are Muslims, including Britain”¹⁸ and engaged more openly, than Hizb ut-Thariri, in activism and in the support of violence. Al Muhajiroun became a central focus in debates about political expression and national security in the United Kingdom after September 11. Activists encouraged Britains to fight for the Taliban against United States in Afghanistan and to support jihad in Iraq 2003.¹⁹ The group was officially disbanded on October 13th, 2004.

¹⁸ Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2005). *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD

¹⁹ Ibid.

Wiktorowicz was given full access to al Muhajiroun activists for his study. He immersed himself in the movements' Ideology and events. The author seeks to explain why Muslims in the West are drawn to radical groups and how they are convinced to engage in what the author calls "high-risk, high-cost activism". The author describes in his book the difficulty of being an al Muhajiroun activist. Members were expected to attend a dizzying array of required weekly activities and to center their lives on the movement. Often this means sacrificing work, family, friends and other. In addition, activists had to pay dues and donate one third of their salary to the organization. Given organizational time commitments, activists took jobs that paid less but allowed them to participate in group activities.²⁰ In addition, members were often jailed and targeted by antiterrorism measures. Al Muhajiroun activism was costly and risky, and despite these disincentives to affiliate, the group attracted 160 formal members and other 700 followers throughout the United Kingdom.

The most fascinating aspect of his findings is the explanation of the group technique for drawing people into the movement. In order to understand how this group attracted recruits and to understand their procedures, the author conducted interviews with activists during 2002, notably with Bakri's explicit permission. The author studied hundreds of movement documents, attended numerous group activities, demonstration, religious lessons and after this evaluation process he commissioned a small survey of 104 London based Muslims. Drawing upon this empirical base, the book asks and answers three interrelated questions to explain why individuals would engage in radical Islamic activism.

The first question is; what explains the initial interest in such movements? Since a necessary precondition for embracing al Muhajiroun's Ideology is that individuals are willing to listen to its alternative view, the group focused on creating "cognitive openings"²¹ that could shake individuals' previous beliefs. The author argued that individuals are initially inspired by a cognitive opening, that shakes certainties in previously beliefs. They should be willing to expose

²⁰ Fair, Carol. (2007). Quintan Wiktorowicz. *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 39. P. 245.

²¹ Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2005). *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD

themselves to a new way of thinking and a cognitive opening helps receptivity. Cognitive opening can include experiences like discrimination, socioeconomic crisis, political repression, which means that there is no single catalyst for initial interest. For example, some joiners experience an identity crisis because of encounters with racism or Islamophobia. This can lead these individuals to think about how they fit into British society and the role of Islam for Muslim minorities in the United Kingdom. Hence, movements can foster cognitive openings through activism and raising consciousness, challenging and debating alternative ideas. The aim is to persuade audiences that old ways of thinking are inadequate for addressing recent social concerns. In some cases, some individuals spark a process of religious seeking in which they search for answers. However, not everyone who experiences cognitive opening is drawn into an extremist group like al Muhajiroun. It is a basic feature for eventual joiners who responded to the opening through religious seeking. If local imams and mosques failed to provide guidance to these individuals, they become eligible to other form of experimentation, and one form can be extremist organizations. In particular, disaffected seekers with social ties with al Muhajiroun through personal relationship with other activists, become more likely to seek for an alternative inside the extremist movement. The strategic role of activist is also to attract other joiners and to address the concern of new potential seekers, filling the gap left by traditional Islam.

The second question is; once individuals are exposed to the movement and express their initial interest, how are they persuaded that a radical group like al Muhajiroun is a credible source of Islamic interpretation? The basic feature of an extremist group is the legitimation of their members. If the movement is not seen as legitimate, initial interest will dissipate, and a seeker will look into other groups. In addition, the new interpretation of Islam should not be only legitimate and authoritative, but also more authentic than the other alternatives. Accordingly, these movements are voluntary in nature. The idea of “brainwashing” and indoctrination as a top-down process is now replaced by a contemporary reconceptualization of active agents engaged in a self-transformation journey. Certainly, the process of persuasion is characterized by debate and discussion in which movement activists try to convince seekers that the movement ideology

represents the “truth” and provide logical solutions to their concerns. However, a willingness to listen to alternative ways of seeing the world, does not imply participation. The role of determining authority and validity of the movement is essential to attract new seekers. Hence, Islamic scholars play a central role as intermediaries between sacred text and rapidly changing condition in everyday life. There is no formal instrument to force Muslims to trust the credibility of a particular interpretation of Islam. In fact, for the seeker, the evaluation is based on their personal perceptions, sometimes also based on charisma. One technique to reach consensus and reputation is to undermine the reputation of other scholars who disagree with radical religious interpretation. Opposing clerical intellectual as emotional, corrupt and ill-informed about politics can be a strategy to discredit the other and to gain authority. Al Muhajiroun must convince audiences that they have the authority to issue and promote interpretations in the first place, and the figure of Omar Bakri Mohammed’s reputation is important for seekers. The author explains the importance of the positive evaluation of Omar as a scholar that was reinforced by his character and personality: “He seems self-sacrificial and autonomous from external influences. And he is a likeable character, something that enhances message receptivity”.²² The goal is to establish the movement’s reputation and sacred authority so that religious seekers are more likely to attend its religious study circles and lessons, where they can be exposed to the process of movement socialization.

The third question is; how are individuals convinced to engage in risky activism? To answer this question it is imperative to explain the process of socialization. Through a process of religious education, lessons and other activities, the movement tries to shift individual understandings of self-interest in a manner that facilitates progression to risky activism. The central emphasis is on socialization prior to participation. Ideology is assumed constant after initial interactions with the movement. However, it is necessary to examine the process of socialization by which individuals come to internalize the ideology in the first place as a result of movement activities. Socialization is a central factor to explain high risky activism. The point is that the individual ideology derives from earlier

²² Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2005). *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD. P. 26.

socialization experiences. Accordingly, socialization measures as religious service attendance, the importance of religious beliefs in their lives and prior activism in other social movements are all factors that impact the development of beliefs prior to joining the extremist movement. Also, pacifists' movements based their commitment on the support of basic values and principles prior to activism. Prior socialization experiences heavily influence the view of radical groups, in fact, most of the people will reject the movement as "extremist", "militant" or "irrational". However, a crisis can open the path toward "cognitive opening" that was already explained above. Relevance is given to the way in which movements can use socialization to alter beliefs and perceptions of self-interest. Interests are not static, they change as a result of changing in political, social learning, persuasions etc. The movements use socialization in order to promote their ideology. In this case, and in most cases of terrorist organization, there is a shift in preference from narrow self-interest to a belief in civic obligation and desire to work for the public goods in order to "resolve society's problems" by encouraging shift from self-interest behavior toward greater concern for the public.

This is why the author poses another related question. If we assume, as the contemporary research indicates, that radicals are rational actors, why do they engage in behaviors that violate the norms of self-interest?

Rather than viewing Islamic activists as grievance-stricken reactionaries, the author reconceptualizes Islamic activists as strategic thinkers engaged in cost-benefit calculations. In addition, he states that the empirical studies of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan have demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice ideological ideals for political gains and movement activists which make strategic decisions about organizational resources and relationships, participation in political alliances, responses to economic liberalization and intra-movement competition.²³ Radical movements are now analyzed as strategic thinkers. In addition, the author mentions the work of Michael Doran that conceptualizes al Qaeda as a rational actor, arguing that the long term goals are set in devotion to a radical religious ideology, but in short term behavior it is a rational political actor operating

²³ Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2005). *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD. P. 13.

according to the dictates of *realpolitik*, namely, political choices based on reality and pragmatic solution and not on ethics and universal principles.²⁴

Accordingly, the cognitive openings, the reputation of the movement, and the process of socialization, are all means that open the process inside the individual that led to replace self-interest with public concern. In the case of radical Islamic groups, seekers are trained to believe that true believers must engage in violence because this kind of activism is a divine order, inspiring activists to radicalism. Therefore, the act of sacrifice can still be seen as the behavior of a rational actor if one understands the preference for salvation.

Wiktorowicz makes an authoritative research on explaining the process by which individuals join extremist groups such as al Muhajiroun. He also explained an important difference between joiners and non-joiners. The latter had a firm grounding in their Muslim faith and identity before their cognitive opening, while the former did not. Whereas, the author acknowledges that the issue of non-joiners is an empirical gap in his work. Despite the shortcomings on policy implications and on non-joiners, this study should be of interest to a wide array of academic scholars and students in the fields of political sciences, sociology and security studies.

The two authors presented till now, Moghaddam and Wiktorowicz, have conducted their studies with two different approaches. The research question is the same, why individuals join terrorists' organizations. While Moghaddam tried to respond with a structured model of the typical radicalization process, Wiktorowicz, tried to apply a deductive process of research. He takes an empirical case and he tries to explain the basic features and character of the typical individual that decides to engage in an extremist organization like al Muhajiroun. The main difference of the two research methods is the starting point. While Moghaddam bases his research on the inductive method, Wiktorowicz bases his research on empirical cases. He takes data from reality and tries to explain and theorize the main features of why individuals decided to join an extremist organization.

²⁴ Doran, M. (2002). The Pragmatic Fanaticism of al Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle Eastern Politics. *Political Science Quarterly*, 117(2), 177-190.

According to Moghaddam there are 5 stages to radicalization, while for Wictorowicz there are three main goals for an extremist organization in order to attract joiners. Moghaddam focuses on the individual perspective and psychology, while Wictorowicz focuses on the procedures, rules, principles, and features of an extremist organization. The starting point is different, while the findings are similar. Both authors highlight the necessity of an individual to be in search of transformation and changes. These seekers are searching for something “true”. They feel dissatisfied with their lives. In fact, they are searching for something different.

Another author that used a different method in order to understand and explain terrorism and radicalization is John Horgan. The author suggests that viewing terrorism as a process, may lead to a better conceptual development of terrorist and may also lead to the development of more practical and efficient counterterrorism initiatives.²⁵ Finally, this can lead to the formation of a clear position for psychology within an interdisciplinary approach to analyze terrorism.

²⁵ Max Taylor & John Horgan (2006) A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18:4, 585-601

1.3 The Psychology of Terrorism – John Horgan

Another important author that tried to explain the psychology of terrorism is John Horgan, a lecturer of Applied Psychology at the University College in Cork. The author argues that in order to understand terrorism, researchers need to ask themselves the right question about the issue. Horgan urges to set aside the “Why” of terrorism studies and devote more attention to the “How”, since knowing how terrorism emerges can empower life-saving security responses. Horgan distinguished between dated efforts to understand a terrorist mind and recent efforts to uncover exploitable fact about the development, engagement and disengagement of people attracted to terrorist lifestyle. He emphasizes that the search of a single terrorist profile or inner mental risk factors is fruitless, while the search for behavior associated with terrorism is more promising.

At the very beginning of his book, the author describes in detail the footage of execution of the American hostage Mike Berg. And the question arouses spontaneously. Why do we need to explain such act? The first impression is to condemn this act and a sense of anger pervade us. The mistake is to simplify what would be misunderstood as reality. The main reason for writing this book is to try to explain why psychology played a little or no role in understanding terrorism and to try to address the confusion about what “psychology of terrorism” means. The attempts of contemporary discussion about the psychology of terrorism, has gaping absence of empirical, data-driven analysis. Terrorism seems to relate to social movements and political processes and these seems to have been the remit of other disciplines rather than psychology, such as political science.

The author explains why the research on terrorism is lacking empirical data. Most of the data available is made through secondary sources like books, newspaper report, terrorist communiqués, statements, speeches and sometimes autobiographies. Less effort has been put into listening to what terrorists themselves have to say. It is inevitable that in order to understand the development and structure of terrorist behavior, we have to meet with and speak to people who have been, or are, involved in terrorist violence. In fact, the author

addresses the book to critical readers in order to understand realistically terrorism and the current situation.

In his book, "Psychology of Terrorism" (2005) he presents a critical analysis of existing knowledge on terrorist psychology and he highlights the substantial shortcomings and limitation of the current research. Evident-based research not only illustrates the lack of any psychopathology in terrorists, but demonstrates how "normal", in psychological terms, are those who engage in terrorist activity.²⁶

The author emphasizes several points that distinguish his approach from that of others. His model is not a stage theory, that, according to the author, allows to develop a simple categorization of complex situations. This is one of the main problems linked to the current attempts to trace a "profile" of terrorists. In fact, according to Horgan, there is little or no sense in thinking that the identification of the alleged common features could actually be exploited for practical purposes. Assessments of behavioral traits cannot be expected to predict single manifestations. Personality traits cannot be obtained from single behavioral responses. On the contrary, in order to develop an accurate profile of terrorist it is necessary a certain stability over time and in different situations in a wide range of social and emotional context. Thus, in order to understanding terrorism, in particular at the individual level, personality traits are not sufficient to understand why people engage in terrorism.

With this purpose, the author presents a model focused on a different approach. In order to understand terrorism, the author considers involvement and engagement in terrorism activities as a process. Horgan proposed his IED Cycle Model, tracing the cycle of terrorism from Involvement to Engagement to Disengagement. This model allows to identify in a more targeted way the main behavioral characteristics associated with each phase and to use knowledge about these behaviors to plan preventive strategies.

Only the initial phase of involvement is interesting in the context of this thesis. In fact, with regard to becoming a terrorist, the author recognized the importance of the distinction between radical ideas and violent action. The author explains that the process of radicalization is a progression of terrorist action and that radicalized individuals are more present than terrorists.

²⁶ Horgan, J., Horgan, J. (2005). *The Psychology of Terrorism*. London: Routledge

Horgan emphasized three ideas that turn a radicalized individual to a terrorist in action.

First, the progression to terrorism is gradual, from involvement in legal activism to small acts in support of terrorism to shooting and planting bombs. Increased commitment to the movement appears to be characterized by a slow marginalization away from conventional society and toward a much narrower society where extremism becomes all-encompassing.²⁷

Second, a sense of dissatisfaction or disillusionment with the individual's current activity that makes an individual more open to influence. Circumstances making an individual more open to influence can include loss of loved ones, work, way of life, home. This phase is characterized by alternative avenues developing in conjunction with increasing involvement in peripheral activities. It is a necessary quality that the movement must put in place to solidify commitment by individual members. These circumstances have been called in different ways on the base of the studies; "unfreezing" in social psychology; "biographical availability" in sociology; and "cognitive openings" in social movement theories.

Third, is the idea that the community support for violent action helps motivate violence and status to militants. For example, all suicide bombers, across the world, have one thing in common. They believe that they will achieve more in death than they ever could in life, a very powerful motivating factor not only in initial recruitment but also in terms of sustaining that person's commitment to the movement once a member. In practical terms, involvement might result in heightened status, respect, or authority within the group, the broader radical movement, and the wider Muslim community. A sense of approval from other person can catalyze socialization into more extreme behavior.

However, these three ideas did not answer to the first question that the author poses; Why are there such few terrorists? Although these three ideas say something about the trajectory to terrorism, they are perhaps too general in order to understand why activists and terrorists are few.

²⁷ J. Horgan. From Profiles to pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism. *The Annals of the American Academy*.

Horgan propose a solution to understand terrorism, in which, first is necessary to define terrorism, then to define the cause of terrorism, and finally to deal with causes rather than the symptoms of terrorism. In order to define terrorism, Horgan argue that legitimate governments have engaged in terrorist acts like car bombings, kidnapping, and assassination, either by proxy or directly within war zones. These activities are not out of the possibility for any military or paramilitary group. The difference between terrorist activity conducted by legitimate government and non-legitimate actors is that government acts through the rules that they have established in order to regulate functions of war, like Geneva Conventions. Accordingly, breaking the rules would discredit legitimate governments 'condemnation of group like the Irish Republican Army.

Additionally, Horgan identifies the problem of trying to fit localized and regional issues into a single and easy framework for determining causes of terrorism. Criminologists and psychologists have used terrorist's autobiographies and immersions into communities with terrorist groups to determine the psychological profile of certain terror groups like the IRA, but, according to the author, such efforts are not entirely effective.²⁸ Although, Horgan describes these efforts as only generalizations from past terrorists' activity. It is impossible to provide a totally accurate psychological profile of terrorists because of the evolution of methods used. However, Horgan conclusions include the idea that terrorists fit some psychological profile but also intellectual do not know enough about psychological profile of terrorists.

²⁸ Katers, N. (2008). *The Psychology of Terrorism* (review). *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1(2), 149-150. Michigan State University Press. Retrieved November 26, 2018, from Project MUSE database.

1.4 Understanding Terror Networks and Leaderless Jihad – Marc Sageman

An author that breaks from the past theories is Marc Sageman. He lived close to the Mujhadin in Afghanistan and he based all his theories on the findings in the field. Contrary to Horgan's assumptions, he attempts to explain terrorism from a scientific approach using tools as statistics, sampling theory, measurement, survey techniques and data-driven analysis. Sageman criticized the popular biographical approach because it emphasizes individual and ignores situational factors. Furthermore, the "root causes" approach examining the social condition is deterministic and static. Other authors that put too much reliance on case studies are wrong because basing conclusions on a single event or individual often can lead to astray. Sageman calls for a middle-range approach to build a bridge through the gap between biographical (micro-level) and sociological (macro-level) approaches. Whereas in his previous volume, *Understanding Terror networks* (2004), the author worked from a dataset of 172 terrorist subjects, in his second book, *Leaderless Jihad* (2008), he built a database of over 500 terrorists from which to draw conclusions.

Marc Sageman is a forensic psychiatrist and a former CIA case officer working with the Afghan resistance during the Soviet occupation. He seeks to examine the evolution in the global jihadi movement since the destruction of al Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan and the transformation of the organization into a diffuse informal network. Sageman offers a keen insight in a thoroughly documented assessment of the rise of al Qaeda aspirant and inspired terrorism. With his earlier study, in *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) the author argues that terror networks are built through kinship and friendship. These connections often precede radicalization and who you know plays a large part in collective recruitment process. Sageman's thesis is known as the "bunch of guys" or so called "halal" theory of terrorism. This theory suggests that individuals go through the radicalization process collectively, amid friends and comrades sharing common interests. Any attempt to find a common social factor predisposition for

terrorism runs into the problem of specificity, profile based on personal characteristics such age, sex, national origin, education, religion, socio-economic background have very little value in identifying terrorists. The striking element that connects terrorists is the absence of top-down recruitment and brainwashing. The main characteristic is the “bunch of guys” that refers to a small, self-organizing terrorist cells that usually have little or no contact with the global terrorist groups.

The greatest contribution comes in chapter three where the author describes a series of common misperceptions about the origin of terrorism. Based on an analysis of 172 individual cases including Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, Habib Moussaoui, he refutes some assumptions about what drives an individual to terrorism. He dismissed economic deprivation, brainwashing, *naïveté*, ignorance, lack of family responsibility, sexual frustration as primary factors towards radicalization. The author also demonstrated that terrorists are “normal” in psychological terms; mental illness, pathological narcissism, paranoia and authoritarian personality indicating they are not basic features of mujahedin. Also, criminality does not play a significant role in his sample. While in discussing educational levels, Sageman observes high prevalence of individual pursuing technical studies like engineering and medicine. These findings seem to reject much of the conventional wisdom about terrorists as ignorant.

According to Sageman, members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle-class, educated young men from caring and religious family, who grew up with strong positive values of religion, spirituality, and concern for their communities.²⁹ Furthermore, just before they joined the jihad, the prospective mujahedin were socially and spiritually alienated and probably in some form of distress. Sageman was able to show that there are family and friendship links among his cases and that these links are the key to understanding individual trajectories to terrorist action.

In his second book, *Leaderless Jihad* (2008), the author argued that the major terrorist threat was no longer al Qaeda but small self-radicalized groups of Muslims in Western countries described as the “bunch of guys” model of radicalization. These informal local group, trying to emulate al Qaeda, are

²⁹ Sageman, M. (2004). *Understanding Terror Networks*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

homegrown terrorists from a scattered global network, this is why the author called them leaderless jihad. They are physically unconnected, they are a virtual social movement that connects and provides them with inspiration and guidance. According to the author the terrorist threat completely changed. The threat to the West has evolved from infiltration by outside trained terrorists to inside homegrown, self-financed, self-trained terrorists. The most effective countermeasures to combat the past terrorist organization, based on outside trained terrorist, was boarder protection. Now, the most effective countermeasure to combat homegrown terrorist threat is to interrupt the radicalization process before it reaches its violent end.³⁰ This is the main finding of Sageman in his second book.

Leaderless Jihad begins with a story about Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the terrorist who kidnapped a Wall Street Journal Reporter, Daniel Pearl. The author described his life from the perspective of his family and friends. Several reported to the media that Omar was “such a nice guy”. Other accounts explain Omar radicalization process as the natural result of alienation and discrimination as a second-generation Pakistani living in London. However, the author explain that the true story is much more complex. Despite different visions of family, friends, fellow inmates, Omar himself explained the centrality of the path toward radicalization.

Sageman pointed out that the threat is no longer “foreign fanatics” but rather individuals who grew up in the West and became radicalized there. In the fourth chapter, the author fully develops his four factor model that move Muslims in Western countries to terrorist violence: moral outrage in response to stories and videos of Muslims suffering from Western violence, seeing the world and the war on terrorism as a war on Islam, personal experience of discrimination while living in the West, face-to-face or Internet contacts that connects individuals with opportunity to attack. There is not a sequential model because there are many interactions among these dimensions of radicalization and each individual doesn’t need complete each step to become fully radicalized.

³⁰ Sageman, M.(2008). *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

1.4.1 Moral Outrage

The Moral Outrage is the influence of the suffering of fellow Muslims. Images, videos, discussions on Muslim suffering worldwide are the most common acts that trigger moral outrage for a terrorist. The author explains the important role of the media as a vehicle for broadcasting moral violations.

1.4.2 War Against Islam

The War Against Islam, Sageman explains, is the basic feature to mobilized violence. Sense of moral outrage is insufficient to mobilize an individual to join the jihad. They need to interpret moral violations that affect them personally. In fact, to the global jihadists, the West is perceived to be engaged in an apocalyptic war against Muslims and Islam. Terrorists view themselves as “heroes” waging a war against an evil of “Jews and Crusaders” that is manipulating the world. An important argument of the author here is that all global Islamist terrorist ideologies share amoral reductionism in order to simplify the causes and their remedies to complex events. This simplicity makes them explain and easily accept the organization principles and goals.

1.4.3 Resonance with Personal Experience

The Resonance with Personal Experience is fundamental in order to affect individuals personally. An individual is more likely to adopt the jihadist interpretation if it resonates with everyday experiences. Through linkages between moral outrage from local to global context reinforced the view of the war against Islam as part of the same whole. When Muslims feel personally involved in this perceived struggle they are more likely to join the global jihadist cause.

1.4.4 Mobilization Through Networks

The author argues that Mobilization Through Networks is a key ingredient that can transform angry young Muslims into terrorists. Many of the terrorist networks emerged from neighborhood hangs, Muslim student associations and study groups formed around radical mosques. Sageman's findings are that a mere of twelve Islamic institutions in the world generate about a half of his sample of terrorists networks. This disproportionate nature is due to the role of kinship and friendship in joining the jihad. As the informal network becomes more ideologically homogeneous, the group acts encouraging escalation of grievance and beliefs in conspiracy. In-group love breeds out-group hate.

Sageman emphasizes also the emotional aspect of radicalization: competition for status and glory, anger and humiliation in reaction to perceived injustice to Muslim by Westerners, love for comrades and shame for doing less than those who die as martyrs.

Another radical change in modern times is the growth of Internet that has dramatically transformed the structure and the dynamics of the threat of global Islamist terrorism. Internet changed the nature of terrorists' interactions. Most of the terrorism analysts misunderstood the influence of Internet on the radicalization process. They focused on passive websites displaying terrorist propaganda and self made bomb making instructions. However, according to Sageman, the real engine of radicalization on the Internet comes from online communication systems such e-mail, list servers, forums and chat rooms. Communication and inspiration among global jihadist shifted from face-to-face interaction to the Internet. Prior to this, most terrorist networks were a result of personal connection. The shift toward virtual mobility has resulted in a number of significant changes in the global Islamist terrorism. For example, Sageman states that the average age of terrorist subjects of his original sample was 26, while the average age of those detained since 2006 is 20 years old. This reflects a significant decrease and enhances the role of Internet for youth in the global Islamist terrorist organization. Computer-mediated communication make the

“leaderless jihad” possible. Online interactions also empower loner jihadi who are the only “lone wolves” offline.

According to Sageman, while al Qaeda Central, known as the core operational leader, is hiding and degraded, the al Qaeda social movement is alive and well fueled by American invasion and occupation of Iraq. At the time of writing, the author explains that after the attacks in Casablanca, Spain, London, and Amsterdam, the thousands of arrests of terrorist plotters show the widespread nature of the threat. Today, Sageman explains, terrorists plots have no or only weak link to al Qaeda Central. While the global Islamist terrorist pool has increased, there has been deterioration, in the quality of operation because homegrown terrorist are self-trained which limits their operational effectiveness. In fact, the concept of leaderless jihad is the result of these bottom-up homegrown terrorist networks and the leaderless and disconnected structure at the same time its strength, because of its survivability and adaptability, and its weakness, because of the lack of clear direction and strategic goals.

An authoritative author, Bruce Hoffman (2008), famously disagreed with Sageman’s judgement that self-radicalizing Western Muslims are now a bigger threat than al Qaeda organization, because terrorists with skills gained in training camps associated with al Qaeda are likely capable of more deadly attacks.³¹

³¹ C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko (2017). *Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model*. American Psychologist, Vol. 72, No. 3, 205-216.

1.5 Radicalization in the West – Silber & Bhatt

Another important contribution was advanced by two New York Police Department analysts M. D. Silber and A. Bhatt in their *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. They proposed a stage model similar to that of Moghaddam (2005) and Sageman (2008) who provided examples of individuals who develop a radical ideology only after joining a militant group through friendship or kinship.

Silber and Bhatt focused on 11 jihadist terror plots that took place in Madrid (2004), London (2005), Toronto (2006), Australia and Netherlands. Drawing on five case studies of arrests and prosecutions, the Report argues that there is a remarkable consistency in the behaviors and trajectory of each of the plots across stages and that this consistency provides a tool for predictability. The report described that its case studies yield a consistent pattern of four stages with consistent features characterizing each stage of the process.

This study is based on the idea that all recent plots are seen as inspired but not directed by al Qaeda. These plots have been planned by local resident or citizens, who have targets in their country of residence, using the al Qaeda ideology as their inspiration and reference point. Recent terrorists who conducted terror attacks in Western countries were almost all citizens or resident of the state attacked. While al Qaeda claimed responsibility for each attack after the fact, these attacks were not under the command and control of al Qaeda central. Rather, they were conducted by local al Qaeda inspired affiliate organization.

The report of the NYPD is focused on terrorism as the ultimate consequence of the radicalization process. The aim was to identify stages of radicalization prior to the planning of a violent act. According to the authors, effective counterterrorism measures are effective only if are directed on the first phase of radicalization. Although the process of radicalization is not unique to the West, the scope of this report is limited to the Western paradigm in order to highlighting the indicators that define population who are more vulnerable to the Islamic message and to

define how individuals become radicalized while living under the influence of Western culture and values.

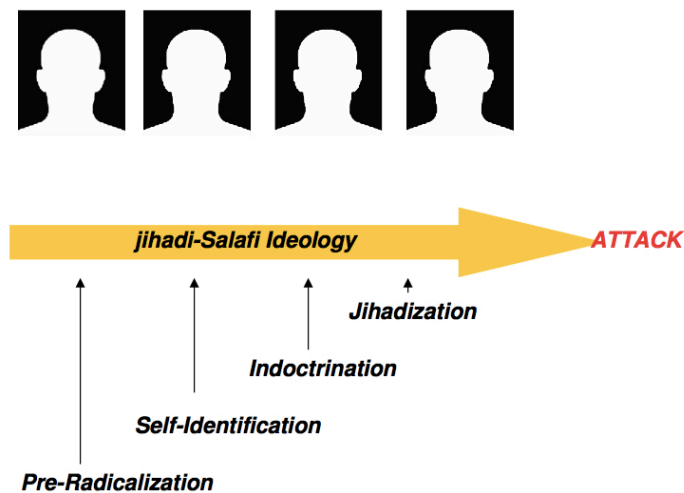
Silber and Bhatt differ from other authors with regard to the role of ideology in the process of radicalization. According to the authors, ideology plays a central role in understanding the radicalization process. In particular, the Jihadi-Salafi ideology is what motivates young men and women, born or living in the West, to carry out “autonomous jihad” against their host countries. It defines the conflict, guide movements, identifies the issues, drives recruitment, and is the basis for action. The authors found that ideology has served as the inspiration for numerous homegrown groups including the Madrid bombers, Amsterdam’s Hofstad Group, London bombers and Toronto arrested.

Jihadi-Salafi ideology is only a part of the broader Salafi movement. The general goal of this Sunni interpretation of Islam is to create a pure society that applies a strict reading of the Quran and aim to the implementation of sharia law and the establishment of a worldwide Caliphate. Extreme intolerance and hostility towards those who do not believe are core elements provided by Wahhabi religious thoughts and provide the primary theological foundation for jihadi-Salafi doctrine. According to the authors, for Western Muslims, especially those of the second or third generation who are seeking to learn about their Muslim heritage, the Salafi interpretation is the most widely exposed. The personal search for Muslim identity can lead to the desire to find an appropriate Islamic response to the political crisis involving Muslims worldwide. The perceived “war on Islam” can lead onto the search for guidance for action from their religion. The jihadi-Salafi interpretation paves the way to terrorism by its doctrine, which suggests that violence is a viable and legitimate mean to defend Islam from perceived enemies.

After understanding the role of ideology in the radicalization process of Muslims in the West, the two authors presented their model of radicalization process composed of four distinct phases: Pre-Radicalization, Self-Identification, Indoctrination, Jihadization. The authors explain some premises of this model: Each of these phases is unique and has specific features, all the individuals who begin the process do not necessarily pass through all the stages and may abandon the process at different points. Although this model is sequential, individuals do

not always follow a clear linear progression. However, the individual who passes through the entire process is more likely to become involved in a terrorist act.

Figure 2: The Radicalization Process, NYPD, Silber and Bhatt.



1.5.1 Pre-Radicalization is the point of origin for individuals before they engage in the process of radicalization. It represents their life before they were exposed to and have adopted jihadi-Salafi Islam as Ideology. The majority of individuals involved in this phase began as ordinary people with ordinary jobs and little or no criminal history. Despite the absence of a clear profile of a likely candidate for radicalization, the authors analyzed a variety of demographic, social, and psychological factors that make individuals more vulnerable to the radical message.

The findings of this first phase are that individuals who are attracted to radical thoughts are from fifteen to thirty-five-year-old male Muslims seeking to identify who they are while trying to find their place in society. Middle class families and students seem to be the most fertile ground for the seeds of radicalization. The psychological and socioeconomic factor that have been associated with those who have chosen to radicalize include bored or frustrated successful college students, unemployment, second or third generation immigrant, new immigrants, petty

criminals or former detainees. Furthermore, these individuals seek other like-minded individuals in order to form a group, cluster or network. Common features of these individuals are age, residence, school, interest, personalities, and ethnicity.

In fact, the demographic make-up of a country, state, city plays a significant role in providing the fertile ground for the growth of radicalization. The communities of ethnic populations that are largely Muslim often serve as “ideological sanctuaries”³² for seeds of radical thought. The greater is the purity and isolation of these ethnic communities, the more vulnerable they are to be penetrated by extremists. As a matter of fact, living in a diaspora provides a sense of isolation and desire to bond with other of the same culture and religion in order to feel more accepted.

1.5.2 Self-Identification is the phase in which individuals are influenced both by internal and external factors and begin to explore Salafi’s ideology. Individuals most vulnerable to experiencing this phase are often at a crossroad in life. They are trying to establish a personal identity, a direction while seeking approval and validation for the path taken. They gradually move away from their old identity in order to associate themselves with the group and adopt their ideology as their own. The cause of religious seeking is a cognitive opening, a crisis that shakes their own certitudes in previous beliefs and opens to new worldviews. According to Silber and Bhatt there are many trigger factors that can serve as cognitive openings including; economic reasons such as losing a job; social causes as alienation, discrimination, racism or perceived injustices; political causes such international conflicts involving Muslims; and personal reasons like death of close relatives. Political and personal conflicts are often the cause of identity crisis. The tactic used by extremists is to bring “moral shock” in order to proliferate extremist political campaign. Conflict of Muslims in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kashmir, Israel/Palestine and Iraq may initiate feelings of moral outrage which resonate lauder to Muslims who are experiencing an identity crisis. These

³² D. Silber, Mitchell & Bhatt, Arvin. (2007). Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat. The NYPD Jihadist Report.

answers seekers will be exposed to the Salafi interpretation of Islam and most often the vehicles for this exposure are family or friendship ties, social networks, religious movements or political movements, student associations or the Internet. Although, this phase is characterized by a self-selection process by which individuals first join a group and then become radicalized. Subsequently, cluster of like-minded individuals begin to form and these cluster develop into actual jihadist cells that are committed to conduct terrorist act.

Finally, the two authors argue that two key indicators within this self-identification stage are; the progression towards Salafi Islam; and regular attendance at Salafi mosque. In order to adopt Salafism, there are typical signatures of the process as becoming alienated from former life and affiliating with likeminded individuals, joining or forming a group in order to strengthen one's dedication to Salafi Islam, giving up cigarettes, drinking, gambling, wearing traditional Islamic clothes, let the beard grow and become involved in social activism and community issues.

1.5.3 Indoctrination is the phase in which an individual progressively intensifies his beliefs and fully adopts Jihadi-Salafi ideology. In this phase action is required to support and sustain the jihadi cause. While the self-identification phase may be an individual step, association with an extremist group is an important factor as the process deepens and the radical view is encouraged and reinforced. The key of this stage is the acceptance of religious and political worldview that justifies, encourages, legitimizes or support violence against un-Islamic, including the West citizens and allies. The result is action and military jihad.

According to the authors, there are two key factors that an individual is experiencing at this stage of radicalization which are; the withdrawal from the Mosque; and politicization of new beliefs. The mosque serves as an extremist incubator but it also is, a place where these individuals meet their like-minded fellows. The withdrawal from the mosque is part of the radicalization needs. The individual level of extremism surpasses that of the mosque. In addition, the mosque is perceived as a threat to exposing the intention of the group. The other

key factor is the politicization of beliefs. Thanks to the Salafi ideology, these new identities begin to transfer this radical view and mindset also to the real world. Global events are now perceived as a conspiracy by unbelievers on Islam and Muslim world. In this phase, the world becomes divided in two sides: the enlightened believers and the unbelievers. Hence, the group members become their new family, substituting the need for any interaction with the outside world. This cohesive group of people is now an alliance based on social, psychological, ideological and ethnic commonalities.

1.5.4 Jihadization is the phase in which members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and view themselves as holy warriors or mujahedin. They will plan and execute a terrorist attack. While other phases of radicalization may take time in order to gradually be fulfilled, the jihadization phase can be very rapid, taking only few months or even weeks. In this phase small groups dynamics play a much more prominent role because individuals see themselves as part of the movement and group loyalty becomes fundamental. “Group-think” becomes a force multiplier for radicalization and imperial in order to pave the way for action.

The jihadization stage contains many sub-stages, all of which occur but not necessary gradually. These sub-stages are mainly three: accepting jihad, training for jihad, and attack planning.

The first sub-stage is accepting jihad, they often travel abroad in order to experience the final catalyst for the group action or seeking further religious justification for their newly adopted jihadi mindset. For those seeking religious justification, attending a religious retreat acts as a “suicidal trigger”³³ providing justification for suicidal jihad. While for those seeking action their first intention is to fight as mujahidin for a particular cause. However, some of them are redirected to return home and fulfill jihadist objectives by conducting terrorist acts in their western homeland. Often, individuals familiar to Western urban setting and culture lack physical and mental endurance to survive in underdeveloped and

³³ D. Silber, Mitchell & Bhatt, Arvin. (2007). Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat. The NYPD Jihadist Report.

severe environments such Afghanistan, Kashmir, Iraq and Somalia. This can limit their acceptance as fighters.

The second sub-stage of Jihadization is training for Jihad. Individuals become more isolated from the society but more attached to the group. The only people they trust are their comrades. Prior to launching the attack, they participate in group activities that helps to define roles and capabilities of each individual while solidifying the group cohesiveness. These activities include “Outward Bound”-like activities, such camping, paintball games, target shooting and outdoor simulation, and mental reinforcement activities in order to prepare each individual member to die. Members who will be a suicide bomber need to fortify their resolve to die. Extremist websites, chatrooms, jihadist video that glorify the death by jihad are some means to reinforce the potential suicide bombers.

The last sub-phase of jihadization is attack planning. They begin conducting research while holding secretive tactical group discussion on mode of attack, targets and operational scenario. Hence, the internet plays a central role in this phase in order to choose targets, mode of attack and technical capabilities. Another indicator of this phase is acquiring material and developing devices. The majority of devices used were either commercially available or reasonably obtainable.

The ultimate stage of jihadization is the actual attack. However, by this time all the potential preemptive indicators have been expired and the chances for law enforcement and intelligence measures for preventing an attack are extremely low.

The main findings of Silber and Bhatt report on radicalization in the West are that the four stages of radicalization are clearly evident in each of the case studies they proposed. This consistency provides a tool of predictability for future terrorist’s attacks. The transnational phenomenon of radicalization in the West is a function of the people and the environment they live in. It occurs because the individual is looking for an identity and a cause that they sometimes find in the extremist Islam. However, there is no useful profile to assist law enforcement and intelligence to predict who will follow the path toward radicalization. Meanwhile, Europe failed to integrate the second and third generation of its immigrants into

society, both economically and socially. Europe left many young Muslims between secular West and their religious heritage, and this makes them more vulnerable to being extremists. Ideology has a leading role in the process of radicalization because Salafi ideology combines the extreme interpretation of Islam and activist commitment or responsibility to solve global political grievances through violence. During the indoctrination phase, when an individual adopts this ideology they begin to interpret the world from a new context and under extremist lens reinforcing extremist and Salafist object and arguments. Finally, in the jihadization phase, when an individual commits to jihad, the role of the internet serves as an enabler, providing broad access to information on targets, their vulnerabilities and the design of weapons.

1.6 Protecting the Homeland – Lawrence Kuznar

Lawrence Kuznar and colleagues (2010) in *Protecting the Homeland From International and Domestic Terrorism Threats*, provides a compilation (42 Chapters, 52 authors, 375 pages) of thinking about terrorism in relation to three particular issues relating to radicalization: root causes, dynamics of violent non-state actors (VNSAs), and ideology. The main argument of the authors was the complexity of interaction that produces terrorist violence. In fact, one important statement of this work is:

“One key insight researchers have gained through studies of terrorism is that the phenomenon is inherently dynamic. VNSAs undergo a dynamic life cycle, individuals undergo a dynamic process of radicalization, the relations between VNSAs and their state opponents are constantly evolving, and the networks through which VNSAs operate are dynamically shifting. (p. 13)”

This volume was given compelling attention to the dynamics of action and reaction in conflict between VNSAs and states. The aim of the authors is to change the prospective of seeing terrorism. Most of the scholars and policy makers tried to analyze terrorism in order to reach a simple formula for radicalization and a clear program that will prevent people to deliberate targeting other people. This paper explains that there is no magic formula, there is only a variety of perspectives that provide new ways to think about terrorism. If terrorism is considered as a very complex phenomenon, also the solutions, countermeasures of terrorism need to be articulate and complex, not even simplistic. The distinctive trait of this research paper is the multiplicity of perspectives represented, thanks to the contribution of over forty authors that span the spectrum of social sciences.

The viewpoint of this paper is that the only certainty about terrorism is “Dynamic”. There is no formula that applies.

“Terrorism is the result of interaction between human beings who live in an environment with other individuals and groups, with government that does or does not meet their needs and expectations, who interact on a daily basis with others, who they may increasingly identify with radicals based on a variety of reasons, who may have experienced trauma and perceived discrimination either first or indirectly, who may meet a charismatic leader and hear a resonant message that meshes with their psychological vulnerabilities”³⁴

The basic assumption is that the radicalization process can start and end in a variety of ways, the actors can change their minds about ideology, give up or be arrested or killed. It is a complex, non-linear path that, cannot be expressed in a simple cause-effect statement or simple causal diagram. For this reason, terrorism is seen as a changing dynamic without a clear path. However, the authors make some basic collective statements about terrorism:

1. There is not only one solution in term of terrorist profile, radicalization trajectory, level of extremis, organization characteristics, motivations, and counter-terrorism responses or solutions.
2. Our understanding of terrorism should be based on empirical data and case studies
3. Technology is a “game changer” in terms of motivation
4. Root causes are necessary in order to understand the emergence of individuals or groups likely to use terror tactics, but is not sufficient
5. Group dynamics are necessary as are charismatic leaders or instigators, but is not sufficient
6. Credible messages and leaders are necessary in order to disengagement, but not sufficient
7. Ideology is important at least as a way to frame issue and justify actions
8. Individual solutions exist but must be tailored to the level of extremism and role and be combined to truly combat radicalization and terrorism

³⁴ Kuznar et al (2010). *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism threats*. Topical strategic Multi-Layer assessment (SMA), Multi-agency and Air Force Research Laboratory, Multi-disciplinary White Papers in Support of Counter-terrorism and Counter-WMD. L. Fenstermacher (AFRL), L. Kuznar (NSI), T. Rieger (Gallup), A. Speckhard (Georgetown University Medical Center).

Over forty authors were asked to provide perspectives over the three main aspects of terrorism: root causes, dynamics of Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs), and the role of ideology. In the next paragraph the root causes of terrorism providing diverse view concerning economic and political conditions of the environment that foster terrorism, will be explained. The second section analyses different dynamics of VNSAs considering social networking and group dynamics that support terrorism. The final argument is about ideology that is increasingly implicated in terrorism. This argument covers diverse viewpoints on the role of ideology as a cause or consequence of terrorism.

1.6.1 Root Causes of Terrorism

This section underlines the propensity for people to employ terror tactics, including the role of emotion in escalating violence and relationship between neurobiology, crime and violence.

Additionally, the authors aim to seek the root causes of terrorism and presents new developments and recent researches that highlight findings from a variety of disciplines. The main discussion is about the key distinction between those who perpetrate or execute violence and those who instigate it.

Two types of radicals were identified by T. Rieger describing the “Anatomy of Swap”³⁵ as a result of empirical analyses from 140 countries. The type one tended to be “intolerant” individuals with political grievances who lack confidence in national and local leaders and live in areas where fears are about personal safety. The second type of radicals tended to be victims of intolerance, downscale in term of income, ideology seeking, and espoused a willingness to sacrifice their lives for a cause. T. Rieger finds that countries with both type of radicalism of at least three percent experience three times the amount of violent activity of those with lower levels of radicalism.

³⁵ Rieger, T. & Kamins, C. (2006). Why you are failing to engage customers. The Gallup Management Journal, December 14, 2006.

Another important contribution comes from McCauley and Moskaleiko in which they outline a series of mechanisms for individuals and group radicalization. The individual mechanisms include radicalization through personal grievance, political grievance, the “slippery slope”³⁶ resulting from increased identification with the group, relationships, status, and “unfreezing”, namely, the elimination of prior commitments that trigger the need for connection. Whereas the group level mechanism includes group polarization and the tendency to “us versus them” thinking. The authors conclude that there is no path to political radicalization and that the participation to illegal political violence depends on culture, time and place.

Another important distinction was proposed by A. Speckhard. She highlights the key differences if violent radicalization occur in conflict zones or non-conflict zones. In the first one, individuals are motivated by trauma and desire for revenge while in non-conflict zones radicalization is highly contextual and varies according to local grievance like discrimination, socio-economic inequality, alienation and marginalization. Additionally, charismatic leaders can recruit with messages of potential mission, excitement and sense of meaning, leading to bring conflict zones effects into non-conflict zones.³⁷

In order to understand roots of terrorism, Masumoto explains the role of emotion in the escalation of hostility. Group emotions serve as motivations for groups behaviors,³⁸ making attribution about in-group and out-group and regulating such behaviors. According to the author, understanding key emotions such as anger and disgust is important in understanding the dissociation and breakdown of relationships and progression from aggression to hostility and violence.

An interesting study was conducted by O’Connor, who discusses the root causes of terrorism in neurology and criminology. Biosocial criminology has identified a number of factors related to violence including brain functioning,

³⁶ McCauley, C., & Moskaleiko, S. (2008). Mechanisms of political radicalization: Pathways toward terrorism. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20, 405-433.

³⁷ Speckhard, A. (2008b). Unpublished research interviews with UK Muslims of immigrant descent in Birmingham, Leeds and London.

³⁸ Matsumoto, D., & Juang, L. (2007). *Culture and Psychology* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

childhood development, hormones and neurotransmitters.³⁹ Because some emotions like unfairness, grievance and injustice have been proven to have biological connections, the author considers both sociological and biological factors in understanding the propensity to engage in terrorism.

These are only few authors that proposed their own point of view about root causes of terrorism. However, while root causes are important and necessary to understand individuals and group decisions, they are not sufficient to explain why individuals engage in collective violence. The distinction between instigators and perpetrators of terrorism motivates the need to consider dynamics of VNSAs that is the topic of the next section of this multi-approach paper.

1.6.2 Dynamics of VNSAs

In this section researchers have underlined that terrorism is inherently dynamic. Violent Non-State Actors undergo a dynamic life cycle, individuals undergo a dynamic process of radicalization, the relation between state opponents and VNSA are constantly evolving and the networks through which VNSAs operate are dynamically shifting. Accordingly, this section proposes different views about structure, organization and recruitment of terrorist organizations.

According to Sageman these new “terrorist wannabees”⁴⁰ cannot be controlled by al Qaeda. They are a new source of threat to domestic and international security. However, he argues that containment strategies must neutralize the main drivers of radicalization including appeals to glory seekers and that all counter-terrorism messages need to be backed by consistent actions. An author that opposes Sageman’s view is B. Hoffman. He states that there are existing threats from other homegrown terrorist groups but emphasizes that the most current

³⁹ O'Connor, T. (1993). Inequity and crime. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania.

⁴⁰ Sageman, M. (2008). *Leaderless jihad*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

threat is from an established terrorist organization with strong leadership, named, al Qaeda.⁴¹

An empirical analysis by three authors, Perliger, Pedahzur and Kornguth identified four waves of terrorism since late 1800s.⁴² Anarchist groups, decolonization movements, guerrilla groups, and the current groups who focus on achieving maximum casualties and emphasize nationalist and separatist ethnic goals. According to these authors al Qaeda has shifted from hierarchal structures to networks structures.⁴³ They identify four basic organizational configurations involved in militant jihadi violence; paramilitary; sleeper cell; and homegrown networks. These configurations vary in member profiles, recruitment mechanism and structure.

Gupta explores three broad forces: messengers, messages, and context. Messengers are connectors, accumulators of knowledge, and they attract followers. Messages must be simple, concrete, credible, with contents that appeal to emotion, and contain a compelling storyline. The context, namely, sociopolitical, historical and cultural, determines the grip or the “stickiness”⁴⁴ of the message. The context is an interpretation of recent events that points to the timing being right. Terror cells are born when radicalized members of a group find a way to act upon their convictions and when inspiration meets opportunity.⁴⁵

According to Shellman and Asal there is a dynamic between three actors: Violent Non-State Actors, Non-State Actors, and government. Terrorist are assumed to be rational actors trying to maximize a shared goal with constrained resources. In addition, the two authors underlined the importance of modelling not only terror activities but also Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic

⁴¹ National Intelligence Council. (2007). National intelligence estimate: The terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland. Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council. Retrieved from http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf

⁴² A. Perliger, A. Pedahzur, S. Kornguth (2010). Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. Organizational and Ideological Dynamics of Islamic Terrorist Groups in the Fourth Wave of Terrorism. P. 150-162.

⁴³ Hoffman, B. (2003). Al Qaeda, trends in terrorism, and future potentialities: An assessment. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, 429-442.

⁴⁴ Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. NY: Random House.

⁴⁵ Gupta, D. (2008). *Understanding terrorism and political violence: The life cycle of birth, growth, transformation, and demise*. London: Routledge.

activities that enable the systematic exploration of how government policies affect choices and behaviors of VNSAs and other segment of the population.⁴⁶ For example, a consistent finding is that government repression is an important explanatory variable for terror attacks.

The two final papers of this section provide some unique insights into characteristics and strategies of terrorist organizations and dynamics of VNSA. The first one of Lemieux focused on terrorism and financial strategies. The author points out that terrorist organizations not only seek to find logistics and operations, but it also engages in strategic financing to support long term activities such as recruitment, training, propaganda, infrastructures and facilities in order to fill a gap created by the government failure to provide basic services.⁴⁷ The second paper wrote by Mullins and Dolnik explore the overlap between terrorism and crime. Terrorist organizations and organized crime often collaborate when its advantageous for both. Some terrorist organizations engage in petty crime as a way to generate funding. Sometimes, criminals are recruited by terrorist organizations. Both terrorist and criminal share; method (fundraising, intelligence technique); profit motives; profiles (young men) albeit different goals.⁴⁸ However, consistent differences are that memberships in a criminal network are transient, whereas in a terrorist network member experience intense pressure to stay and maintain group stability.

1.6.3 The Role of Ideology

There are some scholars who believe that the key motivation underlying the current global terrorism is ideology, while other believe that ideology is a

⁴⁶ Shellman's original data collection was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), while the data expansion effort with Schrodtt was funded by the Defense Advanced Research Programs Agency (DARPA).

⁴⁷ F. Lemieux (2010). Financing Terrorism: Entrepreneurship, Business Strategies, and Moral Issues. Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. P. 209-220.

⁴⁸ S. Mullins and A. Dolnik (2010). Relations between Violent Non-State Actors and Ordinary Crime. Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. P. 220-228.

mechanism useful for rationalizing violence that was motivated by grievances. However, there is no denying that the framing of radical messages involves sophisticated communication strategies which employ images, narratives and ideological memes that resonate with susceptible individuals or groups. In fact, this section provides some perspective on the role of ideology in strategic communication strategies of VNSAs and diverse views on how ideology may operate and whether ideology is a cause or a consequence of terrorism.

According to Dauber, there are three form of communication: discursive (language), visual (images), and symbolic acts (behaviors that send a message).⁴⁹ These communication mechanisms are used to persuade with rhetoric, argument and narrative frames and new media and technology are contemporary “game changers” in term of enabling more sophisticate influence messaging.

Despite the tendency to interpret the target audience of VNSAs, Harlow, identifies several potential target audiences of terrorism: foreign publics, foreign policy makers, domestic audiences, existing VNSA group members, and potential recruits. According to the author the last two subjects are the true audience of most strategic communications.

Furthermore, according to Paz, Internet is used as a “soft power” vehicle for propaganda, indoctrination, publicity, teaching and promote transnational global solidarity. Hence, the first priority of militant jihadi websites is to target youth in order to indoctrinate them and build collective identity. The consequences are two contradictory developments, one, the appearance of consolidation and solidarity, the second, the emergence of a growing number of debates.⁵⁰

Therefore, Lia argues that the key to al Qaeda appeal relies in three key factors: their propaganda of simple message that resonate strongly with deeply grievances in the Muslim World, their powerful image as the world’s most feared

⁴⁹ C. Dauber (2010). Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. VNSA Stretagic Communications: Messaging and Media. P. 229-238.

⁵⁰ R. Paz (2010). Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. VNSA Strategic Communications: Reading Their Lips: The Credibility of Militant Jihadi Web Sites as “Soft Power” in the War of the Minds. P. 244-255.

organization, and al Qaeda's global character which is virtually open to anyone.⁵¹ They focus on foreign Crusades and simple messages that resonate to Muslim because of shared grievances.

Furthermore, an interesting different approach was made by Zuhur. He states that radical Islamic messages would not be compelling in the absence of: resistance to political or ideological domination by the West, failures of Western-style governments to create national loyalties, shock of modernization, rural-urban migration, poverty, failure of social movement to right grievance etc. All these circumstance push radicals into activism and promotes recruitment.⁵² According to the author extremist ideology is attractive, in part, because other ideologies fail to attract.

Thereby, a provocative psychology paper was proposed by Mort, Lawson, and Gous.⁵³ They discuss the role of ideology in motivation terrorism or violence as a mechanism to rationalize violent behaviors resulting from an aggregation of cognitive mechanism selected as a result of evolution that has been triggered by environmental cues. They argue that religion does not cause anything. Thus, apparent examples of religiously motivated violence, such as suicide bombings in Gaza, often are correlated with apparent beliefs, motivation, or rationalizations that have a religious component. However, there is no evidence for religious beliefs causing violent behavior. Hence, the connection between violent behavior and religious thoughts is the existence of common cognitive mechanism.

In conclusion, the research community cannot agree on the nature of a global terrorism threat, but they can certainly agree on a serious of existing threats that must be addressed using a portfolio of solutions based on a rich contextual understanding of the people involved in it. There is no "one size fits all" answer in

⁵¹ B. Lia (2010). Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. Explaining Al-Qaeda's Continued Appeal. Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI). P. 262-266.

⁵² S. Zuhur (2010). Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. Ideological Basis for Islamic Radicalism and Implications for Deradicalization. Institute of Middle Eastern, Islamic, and Strategic Studies. P. 268-280.

⁵³ J. Mort, E. T. Lawson, I. Cous (2010). Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats. Role of Ideology and/or Religion as They Impact or Motivate Terrorism or Violence against Civilians. P. 285-291.

understanding terrorism. However, this research was starting to shine a spotlight on the critical dynamics that fuel terrorism. Hence, solutions must be tailored to the level of extremism, organizational role, culture, age etc. and counterterrorism programs, in order to be successful, need to be executed by credible perceptions and worldview of individual or group.

1.7 Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us – Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko

Friction is an amazing contribution to the study of radicalization. It takes a refreshingly newer look to the issue of radicalization. C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko have both an academic background in social psychology and have done extensive research on terrorists and political environments. They clearly understood the psychology of an individual in concern with the influences of social groups and society. C. McCauley is a professor of Sciences and mathematics and co-director of the Solomon Asch Center for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at Bryn Mawr College. His publications and research focus on political conflict. While Sophia Moskalenko is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Her research and publications focus on group identification, political activism, radicalization, and terrorism. Each author brings an exclusive insight into understanding the radicalization problems in the world.⁵⁴

“Friction” is based on a historical analysis of the radicalization process using case studies from the era of the “People’s will”, the first stated terrorist group during Czarist Russia in 1880s, to the more contemporary profiles of terrorist organization. From this historical examination, the authors extract twelve mechanisms of radicalization that influence individuals to step into radical circles. The main argument of the authors is that radicalized individuals are not abnormal. They are normal people who lead normal lives, who have strong beliefs and passions and that at a certain point in their lives they begin to act on those strong beliefs in response to any number of internal and external influences.⁵⁵

The authors argue that sometimes, radicalization is good and radicalized people motivate others to take action for the good of humanity. They make two examples like Doctors without Borders and the 2010 Haiti earthquake as a response of

⁵⁴ Thompson, Robin L.. "Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us. By Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2012): : 195-196.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

radicalized behaviors and action employed for the good of others. The authors state:

“It is a psychological trajectory that, given the right circumstances, can happen to any person, group, or nation. The trajectory is not right or wrong; it is amoral in the sense that radicalization can occur for causes both good and bad”

According to Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko their readers need to understand that a mind shift is required to properly understand radicalization. Those who enter in the group must leave behind the orderly world in which normal people do not terrible things.

The authors identify twelve mechanisms of radicalization which they divide into three sections: Individual radicalization, group radicalization, and mass radicalization.

1.7.1 Individual Radicalization

In the first section, the authors identify six mechanisms of individual radicalization. They identified these mechanisms with the aim to show how normal people can be moved toward criminal and violent behavior by normal psychology.

The first mechanism is through *personal grievance*, the terrorist is radicalized due to perceived injustices. They are frequently described as seeking revenge for their own experiences of rape or death of husbands/wives, brothers, or sons. Radicalization by personal grievance seems familiar because it fits our own personal experience. When we perceive injustice, we want justice or revenge. Revenge means that we should be the ones who commit the punishing and the target for justice can be either individuals or a whole category of people.

The second is *group grievance* that focuses on the cases of self-radicalization of “lone wolf” terrorists who identify with a larger group through a process of

mixing both political and personal grievances.⁵⁶ Sometimes an individual is moved to individual radical action in response to political trends or events. Therefore, the motivating grievance can be of another individual or group or cause, even if the victimization does not include any direct harm to the one radicalized.⁵⁷ An example of this is Theodore Kaczynski, Unabomber, who gave up the position as Assistant Professor of mathematics at Berkeley University of California in order to live into the wild in a remote area of Montana. He wanted to escape the threat of technological progress because he believed that such progress was made only by denying human nature and by crushing individual freedom. He emerged from his wilderness cabin only to carry out mail bombs to people representing technological progress. His bomb killed three people and wounded twenty-three. In this chapter, relying on more case studies, the authors explain that trajectories from individual radicalization to political violence are relatively rare. None of these trajectories, including Kaczynski, can be explained in terms of personal grievance, unless a teaching position at Berkeley can count as grievance. Indeed, the authors argued that the lone-wolf terrorist depends on other ideas if not for action. Including Theodore Kaczynski's ideas drew on critics of the twentieth century's *Brave New World*. In addition, although groups of radicals are unlikely to tolerate the unreliability that goes with psychopathology, individualist radicals can be responding, at least in part, to some degree of psychopathology. But this is not always the case.

The third is a mechanism in which individual radicalize through *Slippery Slopes* engaging in repeated small actions that increase commitment. Terrorist groups count on the power of the slippery slope in bringing new members gradually to violence. Testing recruits for obedience, desensitization to violence and to find undercover government agents are action in slow escalation of assignment to new recruits. The authors state that:

“The power of slippery slope is that it can move individuals to opinions and actions that are in no way anticipated at the first step... there are no

⁵⁶ David C. Hofmann (2012) Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko. *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us*, Terrorism and Political Violence, 24:5, 865-866, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2012.728938

⁵⁷ C. McCauley, & S. Moskalenko (2011). *Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us*. New York: Oxford University Press.

terrorist who, looking back, cannot find any point at which they decided to become terrorist. One thing led to another in a way that seems, in retrospect, inevitable.”⁵⁸

The fourth is *Love*, the authors argue that effective relationships for someone already radicalized can move an individual towards radicalization. The prevalence of friends, lovers, and relatives among those recruited to terrorism has made personal relationships an important issue of terrorism. Individuals are recruited into terrorist group via personal connections with existing members, this means recruiting the network of friends, lovers or family. Trust and love can be strong as politics in moving individuals into an underground group. As a consequence, after an individual joins a radical group, love for friends and comrades in the group is likely to increase further as common goals and, additionally, common threats increase the group cohesion.

The fifth is *risk and status* that takes a positivist approach to explaining radicalism by arguing that disenfranchised, young and marginalized people are more likely to engage in risky behavior to achieve status due to evolutionary psychology and higher level of testosterone. According to evolutionary psychologists, individuals are driven by preferences that maximize reproductive success. Status is a complex characteristic that can display reproductive capacities. In the animal kingdom males establish status by displaying their health and dominance. In the “human kingdom” a way to display status and dominance is not only directed to woman but also toward men. Indeed, male competition for status may even be exacerbated in all-male situations such as prisons and gangs. Risk taking is then an honest signal of status in humans. By engaging in high-risk activity, a man displays courage, self-assuredness, and strength conveying to his audience that he is the better man. Each risk carries potential loss and gains. Someone of high status – with good education, good job, a BMW and a Rolex – has a lot to lose and little to gain in a bar fight. However, someone with no job, no education, no prospects, has more to gain and less to lose by taking this risk. In particular, physical aggression may be a domain where poor man stands a chance

⁵⁸ C. McCauley, & S. Moskalenko (2011). *Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us*. New York: Oxford University Press. P. 44-45.

to gain status over rivals. Hence, testosterone appears to be an important driver of status seeking. Young male (16-25 yrs old) have the highest level of testosterone of all demographic groups making them especially attracted to status seeking.

The last mechanism is *unfreezing* suggesting that sustaining value judgement depends on interpersonal network of others who reinforce those values. According to social psychologists like Kurt Lewin, confidence about our value judgements depends on a stable network of others who agree with us. If we leave our daily round of connections and ideas we are more opened to new connections and values. Hence, according to Kurt Lewin's model of unfreezing: first is the unfreezing of old connections and ideas; then the development of new connections and new ideas; finally refreezing in a new social network that provides the confidence of consensus for new values and new actions. Another concept similar to unfreezing, advanced by social movement theories, is the "biographical availability" defined as "the absence of personal constraints that may increase the cost and risk of movement participation"⁵⁹. Personal constraints may include, spouse, children and full-time job; individuals with these constraints are expected to be less available for the commitments required to participate in political activism and in general the younger people may have fewer constraints.

1.7.2 Group Radicalization

The second section focuses on the mechanism of radicalization within groups. The mechanism of radicalization is considered in small, face-to-face groups in which group members share a perception of group boundary and interdependence.

It begins with *group polarization* in which political discussion in groups lead to increased agreement about opinions. Groups of strangers brought together to discuss issues of risk taking or political opinion consistently show two kinds of change: increased agreement about the opinion of group members. The shift is toward an increased extremism on whichever side of the opinion is favored by

⁵⁹ D. McAdam (1986). Recruitment to high-risk activism: The case of Freedom Summer. *American Journal of Sociology* 92:64-90, p.70.

most individuals before discussion. Individuals whom are more extreme in the group are favored towards a certain direction and are more admired. They are seen as more devoted to the group, more able, more moral, as a better person.

When group *competition* begins by a common threat, terrorist groups respond with increased cohesion and idealization of in-group values. Hostility towards a threatening group is the obvious result of intergroup competition and conflict, but equally important is the effect of threat on the interaction among those feeling threatened. External threat produces cohesion that emerges when group members feel the same goals and values. The most reliable source of cohesion demonstrated in many small-group experiments is intergroup competition.

Finally, *group isolation* explores the coercive power of totalistic groups over individual members giving primacy to group consensus over personal opinions and ideas. When an individual belongs to many different groups with competing values, any group has little power over the individual. But when a group is isolated from the outside, its power over individual members is unlimited. The joining of cause and comrades in high-cohesion group is the goal of military training in every nation. Old connection must be broken, and new group loyalty must be built. Just as unfreezing opens individuals to influence from new attachments, group isolation opens groups to mutual influence in group dynamics. Isolated groups have unchecked power to determine value, meaning and consensus power in which groups can justify and even require extremist beliefs and actions against anyone who threatens the group. In an underground terrorist cell, isolation is likely to multiply the intensity of violence and justify escalation of violent tactics.

1.7.3 Mass Radicalization

Another way to study mass politics is to identify mass phenomena in confrontation with small-group phenomena. An issue that may distinguish mass psychology and group psychology is meta-opinion that are opinions about the opinions of others. Public opinion often includes the average meta-opinion. The argument of McCauley and Moskaleiko is that the average opinion and meta-

opinion are likely to be similar in face-to-face group. However, we can mistake about actual distribution of opinion among a large and abstract group. In fact, meta-opinions can go wrong in a mass public in a way unlikely to occur in small groups. As a consequence, mass psychology is important to understand radicalization because perpetrators of political violence depend on a much larger group who sympathize with and support their cause. Most terrorist groups depend on mass base for new recruits, funding and material support.

In this section the authors argue that terrorist groups engage in “*jujitsu politics*” where they manipulate violent counter-responses in order to generate support for the terrorists among masses. Their strategy aims to use opponent’s strength against them. In an asymmetric conflict it is sometimes possible for the weaker side to attack in a way that overreaction helps the weaker undermine the stronger. Hence, terrorists count on the response of the state to mobilize those who sympathize with terrorist goals, to move passive terrorist sympathizers into active terrorist militants.

Hatred is described as a high level of hostility toward another individual or group. It is often observed that the group in conflict especially those involving violence, become more extreme in their negative perception of one another. Enemies are no longer seen as human. Della Porta quotes a Red Brigade militant as follows: “enemies are in a category, they are functions, they are symbols. They are not human beings”. Some theorists believe that hate is an emotion, a combination of anger, fear and contempt. While others believe that hate is an extreme form of negative identification, like a sentiment, that includes the idea that members of the enemy group share a “bad essence”. This idea of bad essence can make the sense of an impulse to attack all of them without regard of age, gender, or civilian status.

Finally, the authors argue that *martyrdom* is a constructed political tool used by terrorists to increase motivation to sacrifice among groups members and the public. In order to understand martyrdom, it is meaningful to analyze witness. There is something particularly powerful about a witness ready to sacrifice her life for her testimony. Martyrdom is a mechanism of radicalization, in fact, when others are moved to greater sacrifice for the martyr’s cause, they are moved to become martyrs themselves. Perhaps the choice can be motivated by desire for

personal status or glory, for money for family members or by fear or pain that made a hurting choice more desirable than the alternatives.

In conclusion, terrorism research tends to focus on “them”, the terrorists. But the mechanisms of radicalizations do not work only on the radicals and the terrorists. The same mechanism can fit on those who react to radicals and terrorists, “us”. The authors argue that in order to understand radicalization, research should put equal attention to how the dynamic of terrorist conflict not only radicalize “them” but also how radicalize “us” and our responses to terrorism. The degree to which radicalization occurs in response to the actions of competitors must be the starting point for understanding both radical and terrorists and government responses to these groups. Political radicalization of individuals, groups and mass publics occurs in a trajectory of action and reaction. This is a unique and telling insight which is bound to influence future research.

1.8 Clandestine Political Violence – Della Porta

Donatella Della Porta is an Italian political scientist, professor of political science and political sociology at the European University Institute in Florence. Her studies are based on social movements, corruption and political violence. Employed in past studies on groups like the Red Brigades in Italy and Red Army in West Germany, she published her most recent comparative study with her book “*Clandestine Political Violence*” (2013). The book describes common mechanisms of radicalization to violence in four types of underground groups: Italian and German leftist, Italian rightist, Basque ethno-nationalists, and al Qaeda jihadists.

Two aspects of her approach are distinctive. First, she uses a “most-different-case”⁶⁰ looking for similarities among very different cases that have the same outcome, even if she is looking for mechanisms and not causal factors. Second, in order to account for both social-psychological aspects and the contextual factors, the author proposes a modified social movement approach.

According to the author, the method used for this research is: relational, constructivist and emergent. Relational because it seeks to analyze the interaction among actors, constructivist because it seeks to analyze the actor’s reality, and emergent because it seeks to analyze the gradual development of violence out of combined macro-meso, and micro level of interaction. Therefore, the latter aspect is the most important. It means that political violence is investigated along with the context from which it arouses, rather than by focusing on the perpetrators alone.

In addition, the book seems to be a call for a paradigm shift in terrorism studies. The author invites terrorism experts to distance themselves from their fixation on the perpetrators of violence and their characteristics, no matter whether these characteristics are seen through theories privileging ideology,

⁶⁰ Leach, D. K. (2016). *Clandestine political violence*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

grievance or something else.⁶¹ It is a call to pursue the paradigm developed in social movement studies, which emphasizes the contextual and emergent nature of social movement organizations. In her view, the term “terrorism” has suffered from different conceptual stretches that academic discourse have made it unproductive. She argues that the term functions to stigmatize an adversary further limits the discourse. A coherent group of phenomena can be placed under the term “clandestine violence” because these phenomena of political violence are characterized by the fact that the perpetrators act from the underground. The clandestinely is related with other contextual factors with respect to organizational structure of the militant group. These groups are therefore relatively small with limited military capacity and little or no control of territory. This new perspective is important because Della Porta does not hold the group’ ideology to be a defining element of her subject, hence, ideology does not enter into her analysis.

The core issue that the author seeks to explain is that the term “clandestine political violence” is chosen specifically to avoid the conceptual baggage associated with the term “terrorism” and that acts of clandestine political violence are characterized by three main features. The first, must involve significant episodes of violence, bringing about either threats or death or injuries directed at civilian populations. Second, clandestine political violence must involve symbolic communication designed to bring fear and terror in some factions of a population and increasing support from other group of population. Moreover, clandestine political violence is a product of social, institutional and organizational circumstances of the actors that typically lack territorial control.

Della Porta’s definition is an improvement compared to definitions of terrorism that tend to focus only on acts of violence or symbolic aspect of political violence.⁶² Most importantly, this new definition debunks anti-Islamic prejudices by illustrating how movement motivated by a variety of radical ideologies are moved by similar forces and processes to end up in the same place.

⁶¹ Chares Demetriou (2014). Clandestine Political Violence, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Volume 22:3, p.349-351.

⁶² Rafail, P. (2016). Clandestine political violence by Donatella della Porta cambridge university press. 2013. 338 pages. *Social Forces*, 94(3), e63-e63.

Moreover, the author focuses on empirical references covering different radical organizations such as Red Brigades, Red Army, ETA and al Qaeda. Because of the author focusing on mechanisms, the argument is largely a historical description of how these mechanisms operate in each setting. Della Porta analyzes each mechanism in a corresponding chapter through a combination of theoretical and empirical reference. Like Wiltorowicz, Della Porta began from the social movement theory, but she focused more on dynamics of competition and conflict between police and militants, and between activist factions in the same movement.

Clandestine Political Violence is divided into three main sections exploring: first, the mechanisms of radicalization, second, the logic of persistence of violence and, finally, the causes of decline of political violence.

In the first part, Della Porta recalls the impact of protest policing on social movements highlighting how through repression there is an increase in the perception that there is no other way out. The second section is dedicated to the causes of perseverance of violence. When the groups become more and more isolated and detached from a larger movement leading to the rise of violence, evolution of narratives used within clandestine organization and how it affect the militants' understanding of their realities, solidarity within radical groups. The final section attempts to reverse the fatalistic direction. The death of a comrade or the experience of jail can either push someone over the edge or the contrary, discourage someone from taking any further action. It all depends on larger situations, type of support and internal dynamics of the organization.

The mechanisms that Della Porta identified include seven main mechanisms accounting for the emergence of clandestine political violence. These mechanisms are divided in two distinct phases. In the first phase, three mechanisms lead the clandestine organizations to develop and regularly use violence tactics. This phase produces the process of polarization. The first three mechanisms are: escalating violence, competitive escalation and activation of militant networks. Other four mechanisms contribute more particularly to the development of the clandestine organization. During the second phase other mechanisms lead movement organizations to become increasingly isolated from the outside world. These mechanisms are: organizational compartmentalization, action militarization and

ideological encapsulation. The seventh mechanism is militant enclosure or implosion.

Della Porta analyses each of these mechanisms in a corresponding chapter through a combination of theoretical and empirical analysis.

1.8.1 Escalating violence

Violence was spread when the state was perceived to have overreacted to the emergence of a protest. Episodes of political violence tend to emerge within protest cycles where authorities are perceived to use indiscriminate violence and repression. It takes place through a process of double diffusion as activists and police adapt to each other's tactics and the police brutality leads to the development of more and more militant activist subcultures.

1.8.2 Competitive escalation

Experimentation with violent tactics emerged from attempts to outbid the other groups. It occurs that as social-movement actors and organization competes for tactical innovation and superiority they produce radicalization and the gradual acceptance of violence. This involves movement organizations competing with each other for support among radicalized militants as violence becomes more organized, normalized and ritualized.

1.8.3 Activation of militant networks

Militant networks developed in small and radical groupings in which political commitment and friendship mutually strengthens each other". As police violence escalates, young people are radicalized in families, schools and churches. Connections with family members, friends, or political actors serve as relay points into the more radical elements of a movement, drawing individuals inside underground groups. Which form the basis from which the first generation of activists are recruited into militant groups. As these groups perceive more violence interaction with police, they go underground and become more organized and violent.

1.8.4 Organizational compartmentalization

It takes place when organizations become more isolated and less open to new sympathizers and cells become more autonomous, even as networks become more hierarchical and fragmented.

1.8.5 Action militarization

Actions begin targeting people and escalate from wounding to killing. The groups move from political to a more military logic. When they become more isolated from the whole community they start targeting former pools of potential recruits, now seen as traitors to the cause.

1.8.6 Ideological encapsulation

Della Porta found that ideology did not drive violence, rather it adapted in order to justify violence. This is part of the process of ideological encapsulation.

1.8.7 Implosion

Once underground, clandestine organizations underwent a process of implosion in which interactions with the outside were reduced. All of this process culminates with militant enclosure or implosion, whereby the groups become more like total institutions with increasing pressure on members to end interaction with non-members, abandon dominant cultural norms, and conform to movement values and norms. The more isolated they become, the more violence is viewed as the only remaining strategy, trapping them in a cycle of escalating violence and repression.⁶³

Della Porta found that small cells cut off from sympathizers become more extreme in justifying and perpetrating violence. They become more focused on preserving group members than on advancing their original cause. Across the

⁶³ Leach, D. K. (2016). *Clandestine political violence*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

complex linkages of levels between macro (population), meso (group dynamic) and micro (individual), the key insight is that radicalization occurs in the dynamics of action and reaction in conflicts between activists and police, as well as in conflicts between competing activist groups. In this perspective, radicalization to violence is an emergent property of escalating conflict, especially when nonviolent activism is suppressed or failing.⁶⁴

Clandestine political Violence aims to present what should be a comprehensive relational and dynamic explanatory model of political violence, putting together environmental conditions (macro level), groups dynamics and organizational behaviors (meso) with individual motives and reasons (micro). In fact, the analysis of the sociopolitical sequences of action and context and of interrelationship between social structures, political contexts and biographical arguments in which violence is embedded is key to understanding the process that lead to extreme political violence and radicalization.⁶⁵ According to the author, isolating violence from its social and political background tends to reduce drastically our ability to understand the genesis and evolution of armed and clandestine forms of political contestation.

⁶⁴ C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko (2017). *Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model*. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 72, No. 3, p. 205-216.

⁶⁵ Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet (2015) *Clandestine political violence*, by Donatella Della Porta, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 8:3, p. 534-537.

1.9 DRIA Model – Alessandro Orsini

The professor Alessandro Orsini presents his DRIA model in his book “ISIS: the luckiest terrorist in the world and all that has been done to favor them” (2016). The DRIA model is the result of his research on the process of radicalization toward Islamic terrorism in Western Countries. It is based on the study of the lives of all those who manage to carry out a massacre or murder in our cities from 2001 to today in the name of Islam.

The DRIA model does not explain the radicalization process of all the terrorists in the world, which are thousands. The author argued that the model focuses only on those whom he proposed to call "Vocational terrorists" because they follow a "call" in the sense that they aspire to satisfy an inner need. They kill, but they also have the desire to die. They do not act for money or to improve their social condition. They have the feeling of having a mission to accomplish. This particular mental universe of vocational terrorists presents five fundamental characteristics:

1. Radical catastrophism
2. Waiting for the end
3. Obsession with purity
4. Identification of evil
5. Obsession with purification

Before being a form of violence, the vocational terrorism is a sort of narrative, a “discourse” that the author argues that sounds like this:

“The world is precipitated into an abyss of suffering and misfortune (Radical Catastrophism) and now is heading toward an imminent catastrophe (Waiting for the End), of which a category of men is responsible (Identification of Evil) and for this reason must be exterminated (Obsession of Purification) by a handful of morally superior men (Obsession with Purity)”

Orsini analyzed the lives of twenty-one vocational terrorists who perpetrated a murder or massacre in the United States and Europe between 2004 and 2016. He analyzed their lives and, after comparing them, he found that, in most cases, their radicalization process tended to follow four fundamental phases summarized in the DRIA acronym:

D = Disintegration of Social Identity

R = Reconstruction of Social Identity through a Radical Ideology

I = Integration in a Revolutionary Sect

A = Alienation from the Surrounding World

1.9.1 Disintegration of Social Identity

Because of a series of traumas, or failed experiences, the individual enters into a phase of existential malaise that pushes him to put in question the values in which he had always believed and, consequently, his place in the world. Some individuals engage in passive behaviors. Others become available to embrace new values in contrast with the previous ones. This mental predisposition, which sociologists call "cognitive openings", does not represent the solution to the problem. It represents the availability to embrace a new system of ideas from which they start a new existential adventure.

1.9.2 Reconstruction of Social Identity

Jihadist ideology is one of the ideas of the world, among many others, that allows the reconstruction of the social identity of an individual in search of new existential points of reference. Those who embrace it, discover that they have a great existential mission to accomplish.

On May 20, 2015, Foxnews, the US television channel, released an interview with an ex-jihadist Mubin Shaikh, co-author of the book *Undercover Jihadi*.⁶⁶ Shaikh explains that his process of radicalization began with an existential crisis. He no longer recognized himself in the values he had always believed in and began to approach the jihadist ideology, which led him to visit several Muslim countries in order to deepen the study of the Koran. He spent two years in Syria, where he completed his anthropological metamorphosis. However, in contact with the jihadist community, he was disappointed by his companions and began to develop a critical reflection on his violent ideas, which led him to decide to return to Canada and put an end to his militancy.

Shaikh says that many young people who have Western citizenship but parents from Muslim countries do not have the same opportunities as their white peers and that very often they fall into a painful existential condition, through which they are not more able to grasp the meaning of their existence. Thanks to the jihadist ideology, he continues, the lives of these young men are filled with a significance of the utmost importance: "Some of them, from zero, become a hero, overnight. "

It may be useful to quote the story of Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez, a 24-year-old graduate engineer in 2012, who killed five US soldiers in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on July 16, 2015. Before embracing Jihadist ideology, Abdulzeiz was convinced that his life had no value. One parent said that he had suffered from depression and probably bipolar disorder for years, he added that he had abused alcohol and sedatives and that, moreover, he changed jobs often and had numerous dismissals. He was talking about his life, which was worthless.⁶⁷

1.9.3 Integration in a sect

Once embraced the jihadist ideology, the radicalized individual goes in search for a group of people who share his ideas. In some cases, he is able to establish direct contact with other mujahideen. In other cases, he cannot. The people who

⁶⁶ Anne Speckhard et Mubin Shaikh, *Undercover Jihadi*, McLean VA, Advances Press, 2014.

⁶⁷ Manny Fernandez, Alan Blinder, Eric Schmitt, Richard Pérez- Peña, « In Chattanooga, a young man in a downward spiral », *The New York Times*, 20 juillet 2015.

made up the Kouachi brothers community were real people, like Amedy Coulibaly and Hayat Boumeddiene or Farid Benyet-tou, a radical Muslim preacher. Nevertheless, some people declare themselves soldiers of ISIS or al-Qaeda without ever meeting their members. This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of "imagined community," developed by the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, who explained how certain individuals become members of a group through the power of the imagination.⁶⁸ Michael Bibeau, who killed Private Nathan Cirillo in Ottawa on October 22, 2014, had never met any ISIS member in person. He claimed to be one of his activists. He tried to leave for Syria, but the Canadian government, aware of his radical ideas, refused to issue him a passport.

1.9.4 Alienation from the Surrounding World

The phase of alienation from the surrounding world is very important because it allows the members of the revolutionary sect to accept the idea of killing. In order to become a vocational terrorist, it is necessary to face an "anthropological transformation" favored by certain extreme forms of social isolation.

The alienation of the surrounding world has a manifest function and a latent function. The manifest function prevents contact with the Western world, considered morally corrupt, thereby satisfying the psychological need to feel morally superior. The latent function prevents the surrounding society from exercising its "moral authority" on the revolutionary sect, provoking doubts or remorse among its members. Thanks to the alienation of the surrounding world, nobody will be able to show to a radicalized individual the weakness and contradiction of his way of reasoning.

⁶⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Londres/New York, Verso, 1983.

After summarizing the four phases of the DRIA model, it is necessary to clarify five basic points. First, the DRIA model does not consider the process of radicalization of all terrorists, but only that of vocational terrorists. Secondly, the DRIA model denies that there is a cause and effect relationship between the four phases. A young man invested in a process of disintegrating social identity is not doomed to embrace jihadist ideology. Third, the DRIA model asserts that jihadist ideology is decisive in the march toward vocational terrorism, but it is not jihadist ideology that produces the existential crisis. Fourth, the DRIA model asserts that the fundamental problem is not in being poor or rich, but rather in being affected by a crisis of social identity. Fifth, the DRIA model invites us to distinguish the concept of "social marginalization", which is a socio-economic condition, from the concept of "social marginality", which is a socio-psychological condition. A socially marginalized individual is a person deprived of material resources. A marginal individual is a person who no longer recognizes himself in the values of the society in which he lives and refuses his old life.⁶⁹

The ideas on which the DRIA model is based are many, but two are decisive.

The first is that the terrorists are not crazy, they are people like us, and the stages they go through are the same as those that go through so many other people who do not become terrorists.

The second is that al Qaeda and ISIS are, in the first place, ideological phenomena. Before being beheadings and gunshots, they are ideas, thoughts, representations of the world, cognitive schemes of causal attribution. Hence, a way of interpreting the world that links events in a causes and effects chain. the cognitive scheme of causal attribution serves to simplify the complexity of reality and make it more easily to understand it. This can lead to similar reasoning: "if there are wars in the Middle East (effect) it is because of Israel (cause)" or "if the world is devoid of values (effect), it is because there are homosexuals (cause)".

In addition, in order to deeply understand the DRIA model is necessary to explain from what Orsini was influenced. The author's thought has been influenced by a philosopher and an anthropologist. The first is Nietzsche, from

⁶⁹ A. Orsini. (2016-2017). La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation. COMMENTAIRE, N° 156, HIVER 2016-2017

which he derived the tragic meaning of human existence understood as a continual search for existential meaning. The second is Clifford Geertz, who interpreted ideology as a way to respond to existential anxieties.⁷⁰

According to Geertz, men, unlike animals, must learn everything they do. For example, the bee does not learn to build the hive but the man learns to build a house. Our ideas, values or actions are not written in our genetic heritage. They are made by the culture. In a long essay devoted to the social and psychological causes of ideologies, Geertz wrote that when society is traversed by deep contradictions, individuals fall into existential anguish and seek in ideologies a means of curbing their distraction. In other words, Geertz argued that there is a direct relationship between existential crises and the need for absolute truths.⁷¹

According to Nietzsche, we Westerners who have built a rational and relaxed world, based on the constant tension between science and technology, we have killed God, in the sense that we have suppressed a conception of the world that sees the hand of a God hidden behind every natural event and who believes in the existence of eternal and absolute truth. The Western man is forced to construct his own truths and his own certainties to give birth and death to himself. This passage from Nietzsche, extracted from "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (1884), is among those who have influenced most the construction of the DRIA model. It expresses the meaning of anthropological metamorphosis and spiritual conversion which, in the DRIA model, are represented by the phases of the disintegration and reconstruction of social identity. It also expresses the existential drama and inner work of men who live "by declining". More generally, this passage expresses a tragic conception of human life, understood as the construction and continual reconstruction of its own "meaning".

⁷⁰ A. Orsini (2016). ISIS I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli. Rizzoli.

⁷¹ Geertz, C. (1964). Ideology as a cultural system. *Ideology and discontent*, 5, 55.

CHAPTER 2

Paris Attack and Abdelhamid Abaaoud

The aim of the second chapter is to describe the early life, the process of radicalization and the role of Abdelhamid Abaaoud in the November 2015 Paris attacks in order to compare it and examine it in the light of all the theories explained in the first chapter.

First, his early life will describe his character and his personality and the context in which he lived. Then, it will analyze the process of radicalization and his first action that led him to embrace the path toward terrorism. It will be analyzed his role in the terror cell that organized, not only the Paris attack, but contributed also to develop the plan of other terrorist attacks in Europe like the Varvier's plot, the attack perpetrated at church in Villejuif near Paris in April 2015, as well the Thalys train attack on August 2015.

After having described his life and his role in the terror cell, it will be analyzed the November 2015 Paris attacks were a series of coordinated terrorist attacks that took place on Friday, 13 November 2015 in Paris. Three suicide bombers struck outside the Stade de France in Saint-Denis during a football match. This was followed by several mass shootings and suicide bombing at cafés and restaurants where, finally, a gunman carried out another mass shooting at a Rock-Metal concert in the Bataclan theater. The terrorists killed 130 people and 413 people were injured. This was the bloodiest terrorist attack in Europe since the attacks of 11 March 2004 in Madrid.

The attacks were planned in Syria and organized by a terrorist cell based in Belgium. Abdelhamid Abaaoud is considered the mastermind of the November 2015 Paris Attack. He participated directly in the bombardment of the terraces of cafes and restaurants in the eastern part of Paris. Being able to escape after the attacks, five days later, he was finally killed during the police operation of 18

November 2015 in Saint-Denis. Abdelhamid Abaaoud had become what journalist David Thomson described as "the most famous face of French jihad".⁷²

After this brief description of what Abdelhamid Abaaoud, with other eight other militants, was able to do, we need to understand the trajectory that led him to perform these violent acts.

However, is important to mention that in order to understand radicalization is necessary to leave behind the orderly and comfortable world in which normal people do not do terrible things. It is required to examine how we are ourselves susceptible to radicalizing influences. Radicalization is not something that happens only to others like the mentally ill person or the evil character. It is a psychological trajectory that, given the right circumstance, can happen to any person, group or nation.⁷³

After the description of Abdelhamid Abaaoud it will be confronted with the experience of the second case study: Younes Abouyaaqoub the terrorist of the Barcelona attack in august 2017. Finally, the two process of radicalization will be analyzed and compared with the DRIA model of Alessandro Orsini and some of the milestones of the radicalization theories explained in the first chapter. These analysis will lead to verify the reliability of the model of jihadist massacres in the West of the author Alessandro Orsini in order to analyze, in the conclusive chapter, the recent trends of terrorist threat in Europe.

⁷² David Thomson. (2014). *Les Francais jihadistes*, Les Arenes, 256 p. (ISBN 978-2352043270)

⁷³ C. McCauley, & S. Moskalenko (2011). *Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us*. New York: Oxford University Press. P. 4.

2.1 Early Life

Abdelhamid Abaaoud was born on 8 April 1987 at Anderlecht, one of the nineteen municipalities of the Brussel-Capital Region. Oldest son of six children, his father is Omar Abaaoud who emigrate to Belgium from Morocco in 1975. Abaaoud spent his youth in the municipality of Molenbeek-Saint Jean in Brussels, where at least three of the terrorists of the Paris Attack grew up and lived.

Molenbeek is an area in Brussels where Belgian authorities admit that the radical Salafist ideology has flourished among young Muslims. Molenbeek has had “the highest concentration of foreign terrorist fighters in Europe”⁷⁴, according to Liesbeth van der Heide, at Leiden University's Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism, in the Netherlands. In addition, the municipality's major has described Molenbeek as a “breeding ground for violence”⁷⁵ also thank to the reputation of the neighborhood as a safe haven for jihadist in relation to the support shown by some residents towards bombers who carried out the Paris and Brussel attacks.⁷⁶

All these quotes are taken from journal like BBC, politico and le quotidien. However, is important to mention that most Wahabbist and Salafists do not support terrorism. Salafi Muslims are fundamentalists who strive to live an Islam of the seventh century. Most aim is to withdraw from the spiritual contaminations of the modern world and are not interested in political change, with or without violence. The challenge is to explain how only one in a thousand with radical belief is involved in radical action.

Surely, the context in which Abaaoud lived is characterized by high unemployment, ethnic cohesion and a sense of bad integration in the Belgian society. However, is to simplistic to describe Molenbeek as the main cause of the radicalization of Abdelhamid Abaaoud. Is equally important to analyze his

⁷⁴ "Paris attacks: Key suspect Abdelhamid Abaaoud". *BBC News*. 16 November 2015. Retrieved 17 November 2015.

⁷⁵ Levitt, Matthew (27 March 2016). "My Journey To Brussels' Terrorist Safe Haven". *Politico*.

⁷⁶ "Brussels attacks: Molenbeek's gangster jihadists". *BBC*. 24 March 2016. Retrieved 13 April 2016.

beliefs, feelings and actions in order to understand why he choose the path toward radicalization.

His parents enrolled him in a famous Catholic school of Uccle, one of the Belgium's top secondary school, the Collège Saint-Pierre from 1999 to 2000, which he attended only one year. One of his former classmates described him:

“He was very rude and bagged on everyone. He was a little thug. On the other hand, he was not an extremist. When I saw him in a video a few month ago, I recognized him: the same smile, the same way of speaking”.⁷⁷

Abaaoud was a common young boy, funny, turbulent and troublemaker. He was funny and liked to laugh and to challenge authorities like other common young boys with stubborn and rebel spirit. Probably, he was not part of the good students of the college Saint-Pierre, his mediocre points and his disciplinary problems would explain his departure to another school.

As we learned from the previous chapter and the theory of radicalization, Abdelhamid Abaaoud was a typical young boy, with no childhood trauma. Probably, his condition can be described as the oldest of six children in a Moroccan-belgian family in which the father was employed in the mining sector and than became owner of a shop. As we cited the staircase model of Moghadam, Abdelhamid Abaaoud in his early life can be categorize in the first floor of the model in which the perception of different option and opportunity of his life became fewer when he was departed by the Saint-Pierre college. The main characteristic of the first floor of the staircase model is perceive injustice and frustration. When an individual feel deprived because of his position within a group or relative to other groups, the “Fraternal deprivation” is more likely to arise. Especially, when a group member feel their path been blocked. In the case of Abaaoud his subjective perception can be the feeling of isolation and diversity from others that led him to change school and embrace the path toward petty crimes.

⁷⁷ Pa. D., « Abdelhamid Abaaoud ? C'était un petit con » [archive], article paru dans le quotidien *La Dernière Heure*, 21 janvier 2015.

2.2 Petty Crimes

Not so long after, Abaaoud started to getting into proper trouble with the Belgian law in 2002. It is first known by the authorities for petty crime like small delinquency and robberies.

Le Monde publicized a summary sheet of the Belgian Intelligence services concerning the course of Abdelhamid Abaaoud. This document, about twenty pages, dated April 2015, resumes step by step, chronologically, the criminal route of Abdelhamid Abaaoud. The paper has many holes, which the Belgian services do not try to hide, but is helpful to understand his criminal activity.

Abdelhamid Abaaoud began to experience legal problems in 2002 and increased prison sentences between 2006 and 2012 but never for more than three months.⁷⁸ In the Abaaoud family, Abdelhamid was the only one to have problems with justice with his brother Yassine, due to small delinquency. In 2010 Abaaoud and Salah Abdeslam, another important figure of the November 2015 Paris attack, were jailed for armed robbery in attempting to break into a parking garage. Abaaoud alone had spent time in at least three prisons, and had a number of arrests for assault, and other crimes. It seems that it was during their time in prison that Abaaoud and Abdeslam became radicalized.

Salah Abdeslam is a Belgium-born French national suspected of being the only surviving member of the group directly involved in the Paris attacks in 2015, thought providing logistical support, driving the assailants to their target locations, and having some involvement in the manufacture of the explosives used. According to “The Telegraph”, Abdeslam and Abaaoud were friends as children, where both lived in Molenbeek. Indeed, according to the woman to whom Abdeslam was briefly engaged in 2011, he and Abaaoud continued to be

⁷⁸ Elise Vincent (2015). “*Ce que les services belges savaient d’Abdelhamid Abaaoud*”, archive, sur *Le Monde*, 20 novembre 2015

close friends into adulthood.⁷⁹ However, following the arrest of Abdeslam, he claimed he met Abaaoud only in one occasion.⁸⁰

According to his father, Omar Abaaoud, interviewed in February 2014, the radicalization of his son began when he left the penitentiary of Forest in Brussel in September 2012. When he returned home, he starts to wear beard and changed friendships.⁸¹ Actually, according to the woman of Salah Abdeslam, she stated that he became radicalized from the influence of Abaaoud. According to a number of sources, several months before the attacks, both brothers Salah and Brahim Abdeslam had quit drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes and began to pray devoutly.

The lack of empirical data and basic information about the radicalization process of Abaaoud and Abdeslam led the research into hypothesis. Therefore, all the basic information acquired are through secondary sources like newspaper report, terrorist communiques, and statements. However, through this sources Abaaoud can be defined as the young boy that choose the path toward criminality and became a real criminal. After the jail he change dramatically, according to the father testimony. Hence, Abaaoud experienced what most of the scholar calls “cognitive openings” or “biographical availability” in prison or before the prison.

Cognitive opening can include experience like discrimination, socioeconomic crisis or political repression. Some can experience an identity crisis because of encounters with racism or Islamophobia. Hence, this can lead to some individuals to think about how they fit in the society and the role of Islam for Muslim minorities. According to J. Horgan, personality traits cannot be expected to predict single manifestation. On the contrary, in order to develop an accurate profile of terrorist it is necessary a certain stability over time and in different situations in a wide range of socio and emotional context. For this reason, is necessary to focus on the activity of Abaaoud in order to understand the choices

⁷⁹ "Salah Abdeslam's ex fiancée speaks out". Flanders News. 24 February 2016. Retrieved 24 February 2016.

⁸⁰ Edward Payne (26 March 2016). "Salah Abdeslam claims a minor role in Paris terror attacks". CNN. Retrieved 26 March 2016.

⁸¹ Elise Vincent (2015). “*Ce que les services belges savaient d’Abdelhamid Abaaoud*”, archive, sur *Le Monde*, 20 novembre 2015

he made in order to become a terrorist and not remain a radicalized individual and how he transformed radical ideas into violent action.

2.3 From “Radicalized” into “Terrorist”

The basic assumption accepted by most of the author explained in the first chapter, is that the radicalization process can start in a variety of ways and it can end in a variety of ways. It is a complex-non-linear path that cannot be explained in a simple cause-effect statements. Hence, in order to understand the radicalization process of Abdelhamid Abaaoud is necessary to explain action and belief that encourage an individual to choose the road toward terrorism.

According to the author explained in the first chapter, Marc Sageman, the basic elements to build terror networks are kinship and friendship. These connections often precede radicalization and who you know plays a large part in collective recruitment process. The “bunch of guys” theory suggest that individual’s go through radicalization process collectively, amid friends and comrades sharing common interests. These individuals seek other like-minded individuals in order to form a group, cluster or network. This process is characterized by self-selection process by which individuals first join a group and then becomes radicalized.

Now it is necessary to analyze how Abaaoud engage in violent activities and how he changed from a radicalized individual into a terrorist.

In Syria, French and Belgian militants from a variety of networks quickly came to socialize by sharing housing and fighting in the same units. French-speaking cluster involved in the Islamic State’s external operation developed strong interpersonal ties, often building on kinship that pre-dated the Syrian jihad.

Abaaoud joined a group known as Katibat al-Muhajirin (KAM) while fighting against Bashar al-Assad in Syria during 2013. The chief of the KAM was Abu Omar al Chichani that defected and officially announced his allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in September 2013 and most of his fighters, including Abaaoud, followed him.⁸²

⁸² Romain Caillet et Pierre Puchot, *Le combat vous a été prescrit ; Une histoire du jihad en France*, p. 234-236.

The KAM was a magnet for francophone volunteers to the Syrian jihad, composed mainly by Belgian and French jihadis.⁸³ In particular, a number of KAM members expressed an interest in external action and ostensibly praised those who had conducted such operation, like Mohamed Merah who perpetrated the 19 March 2012 Toulouse attacks in which, at the age of 23, he opened fire to the courtyard of the Hebrew school Ozar Hatorah, in Toulouse, while children was entering the classroom accompanied by their parents. As a consequence, some members of the cluster was inclined to return home to undertake terrorist activity and had been trained for this purpose.

In the meantime he was in Syria, the investigators discover a Facebook page in which Abaaoud and the group communicate. Abaaoud became one of the most mediatic figures of Belgian jihadism because of his activity on Facebook. In fact, according to “Le Monde” paper, Abaaoud was blamed to be involved in the simultaneous departure in Syria of seven young people.

Abaaoud returned in Europe between September 2013 and the end of January 2014. He returned to Molenbeek where the Belgian police trace him. During that time, he was convicted of abduction by the Belgian authorities for the recruitment, without warning his parents, of his 13-year-old brother Younes to join him in Syria.⁸⁴ Younis Abaaoud is considered the youngest jihadist of the Islamic State. Consequently, Abdelhamid Abaaoud was checked on 20 January 2014 at Cologne airport where he embarked for Istanbul together with his younger brother and a Malian man.

In addition, investigative evidence showed that Abaaoud had been in contact with Mehdi Nemmouche in January 2014, four months before the murder of the Jewish Museum in Brussel. Mehdi Nemmouche, a French extremist who arrived in Syria in December 2012, was also part of the KAM and belonged to the group led by Abaaoud whose aim was to commit terrorist attacks in Belgium. Nemmouche spent several weeks in Molenbeek before his attack against the Jewish Museum that was the first successful one carried out in Europe on behalf

⁸³ Jean-Charles Brisand and K. Jackson (2016). The Islamic State’s External Operations and the French-Belgian Nexus, CTC Sentinel, November/December 2016, Volume 9, Issue 11.

⁸⁴ “Alleged Belgian plot mastermind shamed family, says father”. *The Malaysian Insider*. 20 January 2015. Archived from the original on 18 November 2015. Retrieved 17 November 2015.

of the Islamic State. The level of organizational command and control of the Islamic State remains difficult to assess. Furthermore, the absence of any official claim responsibility, suggest that Nemmouche acted alone. It is also worth noting that Nemmouche complained about the lack of support he faced upon returning from Syria.

Therefore, in March 2014, independent journalists Etienne Huver and Guillaume Lhotellier visited the Syria-Turkey border where they obtained photos and video of Abaaoud's time spent in Syria. This material showed Abaaoud and others loading bloody corpses into a truck and trailer before Abaaoud told the camera:

“Before we towed jet skis, motorcycles, quad bikes, big trailers filled with gifts for vacation in Morocco. Now, thank God, following God's path, we are towing apostates, infidels who are fighting us”.⁸⁵

Other images founded in a mobile phone abandoned by jihadist from the same sources, which the media have chosen not to broadcast, show Abdelhamid Abaaoud playing football with a decapitated head. Finally, in August 2014, the Belgian authorities issued an international arrest warrant against him.

It appears that Islamic State only truly invested in an external operation wing in the second half of 2014, leading to its first large-scale and centrally directed action in Europe with the “Varviers” plot.⁸⁶

The Varviers plot is an anti-terrorism operation in Belgium carried out by Belgian police on 15 January 2015. The Belgian prosecutor's office stated that the raids were an anti-terrorist operation against a jihadist terrorist cell, believed to have links to ISIS and on the verge of committing terrorist attacks.⁸⁷ Belgian Police said that the group was on the verge of a coordinated attack of killing

⁸⁵ Raphael Satter; John-Thor Dahlburg (16 November 2015). "Paris attacks: Belgian Abdelhamid Abaaoud identified as presumed mastermind". Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved 19 November 2015.

⁸⁶ Paul Cruickshank and Brian Dodwell, “A View from the CT Foxhole: An Interview with John Brennan, Director, CIA,” *CTC Sentinel* 9:9 (2016).

⁸⁷ “*Belgique: opération contre un groupe jihadiste prêt à commettre un attentat, deux morts*”. Lindependant.fr 15 January 2015.

police officers in public roads and in police stations and found Kalashnikov assault fires, explosives, ammunition, communication equipment, and police uniform that could have been used for the plot.⁸⁸ Two men killed in the raid, Redouane Hagaoui and Tarik Jadaoun, were alleged by police to have links to the Charlie Hebdo shooting. Hence, investigations revealed that the cell was found to have been links with Abaaoud.

In fact, Abaaoud is considered as the operational manager of the foiled attacks in Varviers on 15 January 2015 with the aim to assassinate Belgian policemen. The alarm created in Belgium was celebrated by Abaaoud via official media channels roughly a month later, indicating organizational undertaking.

Turkey and Greece were used as a major facilitation and command hubs for the plot. Operating from there, Abaaoud emerged as a leading figure in this French-Belgian network, directly supervising the deployment from Syria and reception in Western Europe of the Varviers Islamic State attack team, providing them with operational guidance. Unable to return to Belgium, Abaaoud maintained extensive communication with his militant and played a central role in coordinating the Varviers cell's activities. He acted as a key node between Europe and Syria relying instructions from the Islamic State militant to the cell, updating the group's headquarters about operative activities.⁸⁹

By the summer 2015 the Islamic State began to invest external efforts by directing a large number of operatives, leaving Syria in small groups in order to launch a major wave of violence in Western Europe. The opening of the migrants "Balkan route", following the Macedonian decision to allow migrants 72-hour permits to transit through the country, offered the group a unique momentum.⁹⁰ It could dispatch militants with more ease by using Syrian passports and infiltrate them into the refugee flow. According to European investigation, the Belgian Islamic State operative took the same route to enter Europe, travelling from Syria

⁸⁸ "Trial of Verviers terror cell suspects opens in Brussels". *France 24*. AFP. 9 May 2016. <https://www.france24.com/en/20160509-trial-verviers-terror-cell-suspects-opens-brussels>

⁸⁹ Jean-Charles Brisand and K. Jackson (2016). *The Islamic State's External Operations and the French-Belgian Nexus*, CTC Sentinel, November/December 2016, Volume 9, Issue 11.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

to Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Germany and Belgium.⁹¹

Figure 3: The Paris-Brussels Attack Network Dispatched from Syria

Suspect	False ID	Entry in Europe	Pick up date (location)
Scout			
Bilal C.	Jdjad Samas	July 16, 2015 (Hungary)	Unknown
Ringleader			
Abdelhamid Abaaoud	Unknown	Aug 1, 2015 (Hungary)	Unknown
Stade de France			
Bilal Hadfi	Unknown	Aug 25, 2015 (Hungary)	Aug 30, 2015 (Hungary)
Unknown	Ahmad al-Mohammad	Oct 3, 2015 (Greece)	Unknown
Unknown	Mohammad al-Mahmood	Oct 3, 2015 (Greece)	Unknown
Bataclan			
Ismael Mostefai	Salah Jamal	Sept 9, 2015 (Hungary)	Sept 17, 2015 (Hungary)
Samy Amimour	Husein Alkhlf	Sept 9, 2015 (Hungary)	Sept 17, 2015 (Hungary)
Foued Mohamed-Aggad	Foad Moosa	Sept 9, 2015 (Hungary)	Sept 17, 2015 (Hungary)
Mobile Team			
Brahim Abdeslam	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Chakib Akrouh	Unknown	Aug 25, 2015 (Hungary)	Aug 30, 2015 (Hungary)
Support / Brussels Attacks			
Mohamed Belkaid	Soufiane Kayal	Sept 3, 2015 (Hungary)	Sept 9, 2015 (Hungary)
Najim Laachraoui	Samir Bouzid	Sept 3, 2015 (Hungary)	Sept 9, 2015 (Hungary)
Others			
Osama Krayem*	Naim al-Hamed	Oct 2, 2015 (Germany)	Oct 2, 2015 (Germany)
Sofien Ayari**	Monir al-Haj Ahmed	Oct 2, 2015 (Germany)	Oct 2, 2015 (Germany)
A. Ahmed	Ahmad al-Khald	Oct 2, 2015 (Germany)	Oct 2, 2015 (Germany)
Adel Haddadi***	Khaled al-Omar	Oct 3, 2015 (Greece)	Never materialized
Muhamad Usman***	Faisal al-Aifan	Oct 3, 2015 (Greece)	Never materialized

Two of the Stade de France suicide bombers using passports under the names of Ahmad al-Mohammad and Mohammad al-Mahmood gained access to Europe through the migrant's route on October 2015. In fact, they entered Europe with two other jihadis who were caught before reaching Paris in time for the attacks, the Algerian Adel Haddadi and the Pakistani Muhamad Usman. These militants are not the only ones dispatched by the organization to Europe, in fact, investigations have revealed that other operatives were also sent to Europe during the fall and winter 2015.

According to a BBC report on 19 November 2015, France's Interior Minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, told reporters that he had received intelligence that Abaaoud passed through Greece. Greek officials insisted that there was no evidence that

⁹¹ "Macedonia: Immigrants Gain Safe Passage with Amended Asylum Law," *Independent* (Macedonia), June 18, 2015.

Abaaoud had been in that country. However, the French Interior Minister confirmed that Abaaoud left Syria and no EU states had signaled his return.⁹²

While French and Belgian militants proved active in international plots, they still had to report up the chain of command. Therefore, Abbaoud did not act on his own in the Verviers plot, he had to wait for emir's feedback before moving forward the plan. In fact, according to Nicolas Moreau, a French Islamic State defector, Abaaoud's supervisors included two Tunisians who had the final say over the vetting process and dispatch.⁹³

It seems that he escapes back to Syria for some time, as he says in an interview with Dabiq, the ISIS magazine, in which he makes fun of the Belgian authorities, being stopped by a police officer who compared him to a photo but did not identify him. In July 2015, following the Varviers raid, he was convicted in absentia and sentenced to twenty years in prison for organizing terrorism. Indeed, Abaaoud was put under investigation as a possible link to four of the six attacks foiled in France since spring 2015, such the attack by Sid Ahmed Ghlam at church in Villejuif near Paris in April 2015, as well the Thalys train attack, which occurred on 21 August 2015.

A report by the FBI indicates that Abdelhamid Abaaoud has called his family in Belgium to announce his death. This allowed him to make trips to Europe without arising suspicion. In addition, according to a report published in the American review of Combating Terrorism Center in January 2018 by two Spanish researchers, Fernando Reinares and Carola Garcia-Calvo, about the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, Abaaoud would have liked to launch in Barcelona 2015 a series of attacks, coordinated with Kalashnikovs and explosive belts in concert halls, restaurants and at sporting events, of the same model as those of November 2015 in Paris. However, the two authors believed that the network of 2015 was not related to the cell that finally committed the attacks of August 2017 in Barcelona.

⁹² No by-line. "Paris attacks: 'Ringleader' Abdelhamid Abaaoud killed in raid". BBC News. Retrieved 19 November 2015.

⁹³ Ibid; Suc, "Ces terroristes qui menacent la France 2/3: la chaîne de commandement qui conduit aux attentats;" authors' interview, source close to the investigation, September 2016.

From this perspective of the action that led Abaaoud to become a real terrorist, we can state that he passes through all the phases described by the theories explained in the first chapter.

For example, according to the NYPD of Silber and Bhatt, Abaaoud perfectly match with the stage model presented by the two authors. Abaaoud fall within the category of Western Muslims of the second or third generation radicalized under the influence of Western culture and values. In the first stage of Pre-radicalization Abaaoud was searching for identification with other individuals and seek to find a place in society. After being imprisoned, he changed his behaviors and started getting radical beliefs. In the second stage of Self-Identification he was establishing his personal identity by joining the KAM group in Syria while seeking approval and validation for the path taken. He gradually moves from old identity in order to associate with the group and adopt to the ideology of the group. He alienates from the former life, until he gets to call to his family to announce his death. Then he entered the third stage of “Indoctrination” within the group. In this phase is required to support the jihadi cause. While the self-identification phase may be an individual act, association within an extremist group is an important factor as the process deepens and radical view are encouraged and reinforced. The result is military jihad, in fact he became a key figure of the Belgian cell of the Islamic state and recruited other militants like Salah Abdeslam. The final phase is “Jihadization” in which members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and view themselves as holy warriors. The main goal of his life became to plan and execute terrorist attacks, as he does for the Varvier’s plot, the attack in Villejuif as well the Thalys train attack, and finally the November 2015 Paris attack.

To sum up, it is not clear where and when Abaaoud decide to engage in terrorist activity. His first real terrorist action, according the information available, is leaving Molenbeek to fight in Syria joining the KAM group. However, it is not possible to describe this moment as the key moment in which he became a terrorist. Was he certain of what he was doing? He never had second thoughts? Was He manipulated? As his brother later, assume during a TV interview after the Paris Attack. Unfortunately, this research cannot answer these questions.

However, recalling the authors of chapter 9, McCauley and Moskalenko, cases of individual radicalization by personal grievance show considerable overlap in experience with cases of group radicalization. It is worth nothing to mention that the process of radicalization is a multiple mechanism that include different element and the construction of own's path toward radicalism. In fact, Abaaoud trajectory to terrorism shows many mechanism at work such; personal grievance, based on perceived injustices; group grievance, based on self-identification with a larger group like KAM and ISIS; slippery slope, based on repeated actions that increase commitments like bringing new members like Salah Abdeslam gradually to violence and desensitization to violence when he makes a video that show Abdeslam playing with a decapitated head; and risk and status, that young and marginalized people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors to reach status and approval.

Other mechanism that influenced the road to terrorism are group grievance such; group polarization, in which political discussion in groups led to increased agreement about opinions; competition by a common threat accelerating group cohesion and idealization of in-group values; group isolation, in which members give primacy to group consensus over personal opinions and ideas.

Individual mechanism and Group mechanism may overlap in experience with case of radicalization. The two authors recognize that these two kinds of grievance are often found together. Indeed, either kind of grievance is likely to produce the other. In fact, personal grievance can lead an individual to seek out and cooperate with other feeling anger toward the same perpetrator: the personal become political. Whereas, group grievance can lead to involvement in conflicts with government and police that are experienced as unjustified repression: the political becomes personal. This mutual influence can make it difficult to understand if Abaaoud radicalized before for personal grievance or for group grievance when he joined the KAM terrorist group. Anyway, the mutual reinforcement of personal and group grievance may be only one example of how particular combinations of mechanism can be more potent than the simple sum of their separate effects. Furthermore, these mechanisms are not separated by levels, they are nested by levels. Individual mechanism do not disappear when an

individual joins a group, and a group mechanism will not disappear when a group participates in some larger organization, all the levels are interactive with others.

Indeed, recognizing multiple mechanism of radicalization means recognizing that terrorist can find success in many directions. The more totalistic the radical group, the more its success is defined in term of group survival and the less important is progress for those in whose name the terrorist act. Another time, the group before the person.

2.4 Paris Attacks

The November 2015 Paris attacks begins at 21:16 with three suicide bombers that stuck outside the Stade de France in the city's northern suburb, Saint-Denis, during a football match. This was followed by several mass shootings and suicide bombing at cafés and restaurants. Finally, three gunmen carried out another mass shooting and took hostages at Metal concert in the Bataclan theatre, leading to a stand-off with police. The attackers killed 130 people, by which 90 at the Bataclan theatre.

The Bataclan theatre had been threatened a number of times because of its public support for Israel and the two owners are two Jewish brothers that owned the local for more than 40 years before selling it in September 2015.⁹⁴

The plan of the attack was composed by three groups of men that launched six distinct attacks. Three suicide bombings in the Stade de France, a fourth suicide bombing in boulevard Voltaire, and shootings at four locations in four separate attacks, including the Bataclan theatre.

Stade de France explosions

Three explosions occurred near the country's national sport stadium, the Stade de France, in Saint-Denis, resulting in four death, including the three suicide bombers. The first bomber near the stadium was prevented from entering the stadium after a security guard patted him down and discovered the suicide vest, a few second after being turned away, he detonated the vest, killing himself and a bystander. The investigators later stated that the original plan of the attackers was that the first suicide bomber was supposed to detonate his vest within the stadium triggering the crowd's panicked exit onto the streets where two other bombers were lying wait. However, ten minutes after the first bombing, the second bomber

⁹⁴ Dan Bilefsky (14 November 2015). "Paris Theater Had Been Owned by a Jewish Family". The New York Times. Retrieved 14 November 2015.

blew himself up near the stadium and another 23 minutes after that, the third bomber's vest detonated nearby, near McDonald's restaurant.

Restaurant shootings and bombing

The first shootings occurred near the Canal Saint-Martin in the 10th arrondissement where attackers shot at people outside Le Carillon, a café and bar and shooting people inside the restaurant Le Petit Cambodge screaming "Allahu Akbar" killing 15 people and injured other 10. The assailants fled in one or two vehicles after the shootings. Other shootings were reported on rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi killing other 5 people. Furthermore, five minutes later two gunmen fired shots for several minutes at the outdoor terrace of the restaurant La Belle Époque killing 19 people before running to their car and driving away. Finally, a man detonated himself injuring fifteen people near boulevard Voltaire in the 11th arrondissement.

Bataclan theatre massacre

A mass shooting and hostage-taking occurred at the Bataclan theatre nearby the last shooting in restaurants near boulevard Voltaire. The American band Eagles of Death Metal was playing to an audience of around 1500 people. Three dark-clad gunmen with AKM assault entered the hall. They were Fouded Mohamed-Aggad, 23 years old, Ismael Omar Mostefai, 29 years old, and Sammy Amimour, 28 years old. One of the gunmen opened fire on the crowd. The attack lasted 20 minutes, until one terrorists got shot by the police. Survivors escaped via the emergency exit into the street, with some taking refuge in toilets and offices. Together the police charged the two surviving gunmen, and after a heavy barrage of fire, they killed the second before he could detonate his vest. The third gunman then blew himself up. In the end, it took for elite brigades to stop three gunmen.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed the responsibility for the attacks and stated that it was retaliation for the French airstrikes on ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq. As a response, the same day of the terror attack, France

launched the biggest airstrike named “Opération Chammal” as its contribution to the anti-ISIL bombing campaign, striking ISIL targets in Raqqa, Syria. Hence, a three-month state of emergency was declared across the country to help fight terrorism, which involved banning public demonstration, allowing the police to carry out searches without a warrant, put anyone under house arrest without trial and block websites that encouraged acts of terrorism.

France was on high alert for terrorism since the Charlie Hebdo shooting in January 2015 by militants belonging to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and increased security in anticipation of the 2015 United nation Climate Change Conference, scheduled to be held in Paris at the beginning of December 2015.

The transcript of some important interrogations carried out by France’s equivalent MI5, the DGSI, reveal valuable details about the tactics used by Abaaoud to train and equip IS fighters in Europe.

One important evidence was made by Nicholas Moreau arrested in 2015 after being escaped to fight in Syria in 2014. He, like many IS recruits, was a former petty criminal who had converted to Islam in prison and become disillusioned with life in France. He told to the interrogators he could not stand the “injustice” and “could not see any future in this country”.⁹⁵ He provide valuable information about Islamic State external operations department known as “Amni”, meaning Security, that sends trained fighters back to Europe to inflict death and destruction on their homelands.

Another important evidence comes from Reda Hame, captured in France in August 2015. He gave more precise details about Abaaoud. He stated that “Abaaoud was a very tough person, very determined and dangerous” and reveal that Abaaoud was in charge of provide training, weapons and instruction to fighters. Reda Hame travelled to Syria in June 2015 and Abaaoud attempted to recruit him for an attack in Europe. During their short Syrian stay, the selected operatives and their handlers discussed types of targets and outlined the parameters of the attacks. For instance, Abaaoud and Hame discussed the idea of

⁹⁵ P. Taylor, J. O’Kane and C.Isfryn, “IS in Europe: The race to the death”, BBC News Magazine, 23 March 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35872562>

attacking a place of public gathering, including rock concert with an automatic weapon in France, Belgium or U.K.

The French police report, together with hundreds of pages of interrogation and records suggest that there are lingering questions about how many others were involved in the terrorist group's network and the precise encryption and security procedures that allowed the attackers to evade detection during the three months before the attack. Furthermore, the documents show the trajectory of the Islamic State's growth from a group widely viewed as incapable of carrying out large-scale terror assault. Hence, they suggest that two years of previous failed attacks overseen by Abaaoud served as both test runs and initial shots in a new wave of violence called by Islamic State leaders. All the previous attacks by Islamic State fighters had relied on a single mode of operation: a shooting, an explosion or an attempted hostage-taking. However, in Paris the attackers set off to do all three, realizing the country's emergency response. That night, the French police were already spread thin by the explosion at the stadium, the beginning of café and restaurant shooting by the time the terrorist attacked the Bataclan theater.

The capture

As France was plunged into a state of emergency, Abaaoud and Salah Abdeslam were still alive. Abaaoud's rental car was spotted leaving Paris for an industrial area in eastern suburb and then abandoned in a station. Abaaoud was photographed by a security camera with another man. In the footage captured Abaaoud was wearing orange sneakers the same described by witnesses and video during the attacks.

On 18 November French authorities conducted a raid in the suburb of Saint-Denis in north Paris, targeted Abaaoud. The raid ended in the injury of five police officers, three death and five arrest. Abaaoud was one of the three fatalities. His body was found on the building's third floor, and his feet were still in the orange sneakers.

The November 2015 Paris attacks was the Europe's worst terrorist attack since the 2004 Madrid train bombing. The Islamic State's desire to maximize casualties and the impact of plots against the West results in orchestrating more sophisticated plots, involving a high level of planning, commitment, preparation and trained fighters instead of inspired sympathizers. The main characteristics that differentiate the case of the Paris Attack with recent terrorist attacks are two key elements:

1. Paris attacks was orchestrated by an organized Belgian cell in direct contact with the broader terrorist network
2. The attack was planned, sophisticated and involved commitment, preparation and trained fighters.

However, it is important to mention that after the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, several foiled plots provided evidence of planning and connection with militants abroad. The complexity of the 2015 attacks and the level of planning and preparation suggest that Islamic State fighters were evolving into organized terror networks. However, this is in contrast with the basic evidence with past plots and attacks in the West that have been described as lone wolf attacks and without coordination from jihadi headquarters. In fact, the Paris attacks of November 2015 are mainly different from other terrorist attacks perpetrated against Europe in recently years.

However, the Paris attack was not anticipated. Since the Charlie Hebdo attacks on January 2015, similar directional links have been uncovered in most of all foiled plots, including the project to target churches in Villejuif in April 2015, the foiled Thalys train attack in August, and a planned attack against a naval base in Toulon in October.

Since the beginning of 2015, security services had knowledge of escalating threats from European fighters, including Abaaoud, whose name was already associated with several plots against France including the church and train plots. Hence, plotters described him as someone obsessed, who wanted, to recruit volunteers to carry out attacks in Belgium and France.

The Islamic State and its operatives have demonstrated their intention and ability to plan complex plots involving large network of terrorist. This marked a change in previous trends in Europe, where individual terrorist attacks accounted for 12% of all attacks between 2001 and 2007, while rising to 40% of all terrorist attack since 2010.⁹⁶ Also, the discriminate nature of the targeting in the Paris attacks was a departure from previous trends.

Despite the Paris Attack emerge as a larger-scale plot, the threat represented by individuals or microcells will remain a consistent terrorist threat of our time, due to the difficulty to intercept communication between militants.

⁹⁶ Petter Nesser and Anne Stenersen, “The Modus Operandi of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 8:6 (2014).

CHAPTER 3

Barcelona Attack and Younes Abouyaaqoub

On 17 August 2017 the 22-year-old Younes Abouyaaqoub drove a van into pedestrians on “La Rambla” in Barcelona, Spain, killing 13 people and injuring at least 130 others. He then hijacked a white Ford Focus, killing the driver for escape. Nine hours after the Barcelona attack, other five member of the same terrorist cell, including the attacker’s brother, Houssaine Abouyaaqoub, drove into pedestrians in Cambrils, killing one woman and injuring six others.

All the attackers were wearing fake suicide vests adorned with plastic bottles to create panic and, in their eyes, die as martyrs. All five of the attackers were shot down by the police. Younes Abouyaaqoub, the driver of the van in Barcelona attack, was killed by the police in a town 30 miles west of Barcelona four days later the attack.

The attacks were the deadliest jihadist attacks in Spain since the Madrid 2004 train bombing. Catalonia had come under attack from a jihadist cell composed by 10 people, included four sets of brothers all indoctrinated by an Islamic State-supporting cleric in the Catalanian town of Ripoll.

Contrary to what can be supposed, the Barcelona attack in 2017 was not made by lone wolf or random jihadists. The plot was more sophisticate than the final implementation of the attack. In fact, the terror cell planned to carry out vehicle bomb attacks in Barcelona and possibly Paris, but, finally, changed and accelerated their plans after they accidentally blew up their bomb factory where they were manufacturing TATP (Acetone peroxide), an organic peroxide and a primary high explosive.

The Ripoll cell that perpetrate the attack in Barcelona and Cambrils was composed of four set of brothers that shared ethnicity, community, school and

sport team. According to the information achieved, the radicalization process of the cell members lasted no more than one year. Hence, the radicalization of these young men was favored by kinship and friendship and the role of the Imam of the town of Ripoll played a central role.

The Islamic State claimed the attackers were soldiers of the caliphate. However, it is still not clear whether the cell had any contact with the Islamic State. The network behind the November 2015 Paris attacks was also plotting to launch a similar attack in Barcelona that year.

3.1 Early Life

Born on 1st January 1995 in the city of M'rirt in Morocco, some 230 kilometers from Rabat. Younes Abouyaaqoub moved with his family to the Catalan town of Ripoll close to the French border when he was just four. The family is composed by his brother Houssaine, part of the terrorist cell, that was killed in the shoot-out with the police in Cambrils, his youngest sibling that is just three, the mother, Hann Ghanim, and the father Omar Abouyaaqoub that works in the lumber industry.

Younes has two cousins, all originally from the same small Moroccan town of M'rirt, Mohamed and Omar Hychami, also part of the terrorist cell. The relatives in M'rirt said they last saw Younes and Mohamed when they showed up for a brief, unexpected visit in March 2017. According to the female cousin of the two men, Mohamed was the more conservative one, but also that he had frequented nightclubs and drank alcohol before his behavior changed about three years ago. The cousin also blames Mohamed for influencing Younes. She argues that until the year before the attack, Younes was totally normal, but when he visited the family in March 2017, he refused to shake hands to woman, just like Mohamed. According to an aunt, Fatima Abouyaaqoub, the boys cannot read Arabic and whatever changed them happened in Europe, not in Morocco.⁹⁷

Younes lived a seemingly normal life in the small town of Ripoll, a community in the foothills of the Pyrenees of some 10.000 people. As a child, Younes Abouyaaqoub was educated to the Joan Maragall Primary School in the center of Ripoll, along with many other immigrants, and had good grades, according to his friends. Later he attended Abat Oliba High Scholl and later pursued a degree in electrical engineering. One friend of Younes described him as an “exemplary student... relaxed, pretty quiet and sort of shy”. Other friend added that: “He

⁹⁷ S. Errazzouki (2017). Moroccan suspect in Barcelona attack turned more conservative in past year – family, Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-spain-security-morocco-family/moroccan-suspect-in-barcelona-attack-turned-more-conservative-in-past-year-family-idUKKCN1B00S8>

never got into trouble like us. My father always held him up as an example, telling me I should be more like Younes. And look what's happened now...".⁹⁸

Younes was working in an industrial welding and maintenance plant on the outskirts of Ripoll. According to his friends, he was the highest earner among them. Additionally, he was devoted to cars, he got his driver's license as soon as he turned 18. He loved to play soccer, he played for the 18 and under Ripoll CF Team, the city Team. According to the team he was a total star.

According to Younes' friends: "it must have been someone very clever that brainwashed him because he was a really good guy".⁹⁹ Although, the family of Younes blame his radicalization on a local imam. His mother, Hann Ghanim, appeared before the press in Ripoll after the Barcelona attack. She believed that a local imam had radicalized the youngsters. "They are kids, they are very young and we believe that there has been a mastermind who has brainwashed them"¹⁰⁰.

In order to understand the radicalization process of Younes Abouyaaqoub we need to refer to the local imam that is supposed to be the mastermind of the radicalization of these young boys, of medium average of 23, that composed the terrorist cell that perpetrated the attack in Barcelona and Cambrils on August 2017.

Unfortunately, the informations are relatively poor, but a clear reconstruction of the life of the other members of the cell can help to analyze the group radicalization of the Ripoll cell.

⁹⁸ N. Carretero, (25.12.2018) Profile of Younes Abouyaaqoub: Shy, a good student and a car fanatic: Suspected driver in Barcelona Attack, El Pais. DOI: https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/08/22/inenglish/1503387806_352936.html

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ G. Hedgecoe, (19.08.2017), A mastermind has brainwashed them: Family of Barcelona terror suspect speak out, Irishtimes. DOI: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/a-mastermind-has-brainwashed-them-family-of-barcelona-terror-suspect-speak-out-1.3192201>

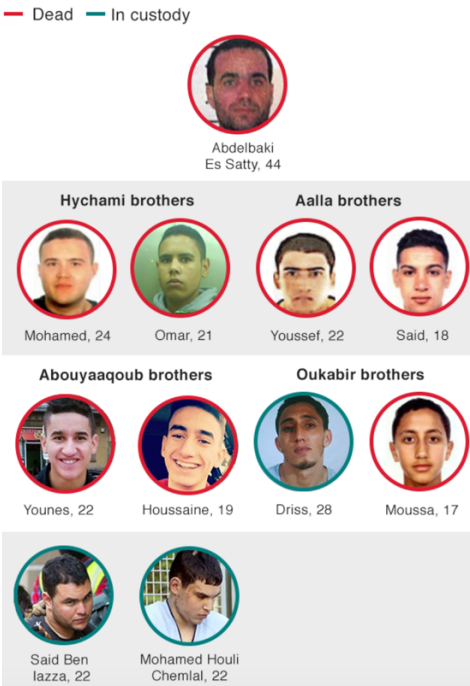
3.2 Kinship Radicalization

The terrorist cell behind the August 2017 attacks was composed of at least 10 men. Two of them, the leader Abdelbaki Es Satty and Youssef Aalla, died the day before the attack during a massive explosion on August 16 that destroyed a house in Alcanar. The Alcanar house was the cell's base of operations and its bomb factory, where members were making triacetone triperoxide (TATP).

With the loss of their bomb factory, other cell members changed their plans and improvised vehicle attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils the following day.

Most of the Catalan terror cell grew up in Ripoll. They were all first- or second-generation immigrants from Morocco and most were childhood friends who went to the same school. Seven out of the nine had completed secondary education, and of those, six attended professional training program. They included four set of brothers.

Figure 4: The Barcelona attack suspects were friends ¹⁰¹



¹⁰¹ S. Pirantly, (8 August 2018), Barcelona attack: The jihadists and the hunt for a second gang, BBC News. DOI: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44890504>

Besides the two men died in the Alcanar explosion, six others – Mohamed Hichamy, Houssaine Abouyaaqoub, Said Aalla, Moussa Oukabir, Omar Hichamy, Younes Abouyaaqoub – were shot dead by the police during the attacks.

Three members of the cell had previous criminal records for petty crimes: Youssef Aalla, Houssain Abouyaaqoub and Driss Oukabir, the eldest of the boys accused for robbery, sexual assault and domestic violence, but even his conduct had attracted little attention.

Teachers, social workers, school friends and other in Ripoll who knew these young men tended to have the perception that they were “good boys” and expressed shock that they become terrorists. They seem to have been well or completely integrated into local community. This suggests that these young men became socially disenfranchised not as a result of exclusion or segregation but because of the influence of the local imam Es Satty, who acted as an in-person radicalizing agent.¹⁰²

The Imam known as Abdelbaki Es Satty worked as an imam in Ripoll at one of the town mosques in 2015. It was the only Islamic place of worship in Ripoll. Born in 1973 in Morocco’s Rif mountain region, he moved to Spain in the early 2000 and had been in and out of prison until he was brought to Ripoll by a Moroccan woodcutter during the spring 2015.

He had traveled to Belgium looking for a job as an imam in the Brussels municipality of Vilvoorde, an area which is one of the most significant clusters of Belgian extremists reside.¹⁰³

Es Satty arrived in Ripoll in 2015 when he had already been immersed in jihadi circles in Spain for a decade. In fact, after he migrated from Morocco to Spain at the age of 30, he settled for a while in the Andalusian province of Jaén where he shared a residence with an Algerian man who would die in 2003 as a suicide bomber in Iraq.

¹⁰² F. Reinares and C. García-Calvo. (January 2018). “Spaniards, You Are Going to Suffer:” The Inside Story of the August 2017 Attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils. CTC Sentinel Volume 11, Issue 1.

¹⁰³ Guy Van Vlierden, “Molenbeek and Beyond: The Brussels-Attacks Axis as Hotbed of Belgian Jihad,” in Arturo Varvelli, ed., *Jihadist Hotbeds: Understanding Local Radicalization Processes* (Milano: ISPI, 2016), p. 55.

According to officials, Es Satty had terrorist connection, having been suspected of recruiting jihadist to fight in Iraq in 2006. US intelligence agencies believe that Es Satty had strong connections with members of the external-relation unit of ISIS.¹⁰⁴

Es Satty was the focus of counterterrorism investigation but never arrested. He served a prison sentence between 2010 and 2014 after being convicted of drug smuggling. Furthermore, it was known that he attended Salafi meetings in Catalonia.

From Ibrahim Aallaa, the father of Said and Youssef Aallaa, the Imam was a “bad influence” and he did not like him. According to Ibrahim, Es Satty interpretation of Islam was too strict and he told to their son to not go to the mosque to him.

When radicalizing and recruiting the young Muslims of Ripoll, Es Satty benefited from preexisting family and social ties among those who joined the cell.¹⁰⁵ In fact, out of nine he recruited, there were four pairs of brothers, with two set of bothers that were cousins. The nine were all neighbors and attended the same educational institutions and participated in the same recreational activities. Furthermore, investigation believed that cell members had undergone very rapid radicalization processes. However, a cousin of the terrorist reported that Es Satty had been meeting with some of them discreetly, outside his worship place, for no less than a year before the attacks. Subsequently, they all embraced a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam and the usual path was the elder brothers became radicalized first, then the younger siblings.

According to the friends of the young men, a year before the events in Barcelona, the Ripoll cell members began to notice a change in their behavior. They stopped wearing branded clothing and visited the mosque more frequently. “They closed themselves up a little” said one of the friends.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ J. Stevenson. (2017). The Barcelona terrorist attack. The international Institute for Strategic Studies. Vol. 23. Comment 30. Review Studies in Conflict & terrorism.

¹⁰⁵ Enric Borràs, “Driss Oukabir: ‘Ha siguit el fill de puta de l’imam,’” ara.cat, August 28, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ S. Pirantly, (8 August 2018), Barcelona attack: The jihadists and the hunt for a second gang, BBC News. DOI: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44890504>

Age and kinship appear to have been the determinant factors in how the cell was structured. Under Es Satty's charismatic authority, the elder brothers such as Las Ramblas attacker Younes Abouyaaqoub, Cambrils attacker Mohamed Hichamy, Driss Oukabir and Youssef Aalla played central operational roles. Investigators suggest that the younger brothers, including Houssaine Abouyaaqoub, Omar Hichamy, Moussa Oukabir, and Said Aalla, had more peripheral roles in the cell and were controlled and pressured into full compliance by their older brothers.

Kinship recruitment is facilitated by several psychological mechanisms that bind individuals together on the path to extremist. Furthermore, it deters ambivalent recruits from defecting to the authorities for fear of damaging their own relationships. Indeed, a New America study of 474 foreign fighters from 25 Western countries found that one-third have family connection to jihad, marriage or some other link to jihadis from prior conflicts or attacks.¹⁰⁷ These percentages are higher than the one reported by Marc Sageman more than a decade ago with his book "Understanding terror networks" (2004), when his sample of 172 jihadis yielded 14 percent with kinship ties.

History suggest that terrorist recruiters mobilized their own siblings and spouses for violent extremist causes. According to Donatella Della Porta's study of the Italian Red Brigades during the 1970s and 1980s, 298 out of 1.214 militants had at least one relative, wife, brother or sister in the movement, which account a little less than 25 percent.¹⁰⁸ In fact, two of the founders of the Red Brigades, Renato Curcio and Margherita Cagol were husband and wife. Six of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 were brothers.

Tight-knit kinship and friendship ties offer opportunities for radical socialization that simultaneously satisfy psychological needs such as avoidance of cognitive dissonance, the need for maintaining meaningful relationship, and

¹⁰⁷ Peter Bergen, Courtney Schuster, and David Sterman, "ISIS in the West: The New Faces of Extremism," *New America*, November 2015, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Donatella della Porta, "Left-Wing Terrorism in Italy," in Martha Crenshaw ed., *Terrorism in Context* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 139.

validation from valued peers.¹⁰⁹ Close associations may also entrap individuals through dynamics of peer pressure, groupthink, and what Della Porta calls affective focusing and cognitive closure. Namely, friendship and kinship ties can transpose radical political commitments and in turn, this commitment intensify bonds of loyalty among kin and kith.

Sometimes individuals with little or no prior history of radicalism, like Younes Abouyaaqoub, suddenly surface as terrorists. Those who do make such a leap without prior activism often are influenced at hand of radicalized family members or friends who transfer their radicalism onto others by virtue of having preexisting bonds of trust and personal interdependence. This suggest that not always individual motivations may be helpful in explaining why person get involved with terrorism because the motivation may not reside with the individual actor themselves, but in the small extremist milieu from which they hail.

Radicalization and recruitment are localized and highly personal tasks involving interpersonal ties, bonds of solidarity and trust. In fact, radicals must look for recruits within preexisting networks such educational institution, community centers, sport teams and workplaces. In fact, preexisting networks, including the extended family, can facilitate recruitment into radical groups in several ways:

- First, they often link individuals who share similar belief or social category, creating an immediate collective identity. Hence, it is much easier to recruit people with shared sense of unity or identity. Political ideas are infused with emotional commitments and high degree of deference. Like in the case of the Ripoll cell, they were all young men that shared same ethnicity, school, age and community.
- Second, a group that engages in high-risk activism depend on personal ties because trust and commitment are prerequisite for inviting people into the group. Recruiters first dip into the pool of family, friends and likeminded activists because trust is already established and the risk of

¹⁰⁹ M. M. Hafez (February 2018). The Ties that Bind: How Terrorists Exploit Family Bonds, Volume 9, Issue 2, CTC Sentinel.

defection is minimized. Narrative fidelity is enhanced by actual brother fidelity.

- Third, knit groups, of which families are one, present radicalizing agent with the possibility of “bloc recruitments”. This involves group commitments that are self-reinforcing. Once a few individuals make a commitment to a cause, it is difficult for those around them to stay behind. The unity of the group becomes bound to shared ideals and heightened emotional camaraderie. In fact, defection from the group entails a double betrayal, betraying the cause and betraying one’s family.¹¹⁰

The Ripoll cell has every characteristic explained above. Each sets of brother shares school, sport team and recreational activities. This suggest that the recruitment method used by Es Satty was based on kinship and friendship among members. This can explain the quick radicalization of the young men that organized the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks in 2017.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

3.3 Links with Belgium cell and Islamic State

In the Alcanar property was found a green-colored book where all cell members are portrayed as “soldiers of Islamic State in the land of al-Andalus”¹¹¹. After the attack in Barcelona the Islamic State-affiliated Amaq News Agency issued a statement claiming that “perpetrators of the attack in Barcelona were Islamic State soldiers and the operation was carried out in response to calls for targeting coalition countries”¹¹². It claimed the country was targeted because it had taken part in “the war against Islamic State” by providing training to the Iraqi Army and participating in the international coalition to fight the Islamic State. However, there is no evidence to light that the Barcelona cell was in touch with the Islamic State in Syria or Iraq. The exact nature of the relationship between the Ripoll cell and the Islamic State organization remains unclear.

However, international trips made by some Ripoll cell members in the years before the attack open up the possibility that the group developed some link with European networks connected to the Islamic State.

Younes Abouyaaqoub visited France at least three times between July and December 2016. He traveled by car to Paris, accompanied by one or more unidentified individuals on 11 and 12 August 2017, less than a week before the attacks.

Mohamed Hichamy and Yousseff Aalla traveled to Zurich in December 2016 and Driss Oukabir flew to Tangier in northern Morocco from Barcelona and back between 5 and 13 August 2017.

Investigators have established that members of the Ripoll cell, while in Paris purchased a video camera and taped the Eiffel Tower and the French government assessed that Paris could have also been a target of the Ripoll cell. The U.S intelligence and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) shared directly

¹¹¹ Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción núm. 4, *Diligencias Previas 60/2017, Auto* of August 22, 2017, p. 4.

¹¹² Referencias a España en la propaganda yihadista,” Grupo de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional, Universidad de Granada; “El Estado Islámico reivindica el atentado en Cambrils,” Vanguardia, August 19, 2017.

with the regional police of Catalonia (Mossos) and Statewide police agencies in Spain a bulletin three months before the attack that stated that unsubstantiated information of unknown veracity indicated that the Islamic State of Iraq and Ash-Sham (ISIS) was planning to conduct unspecified terrorist attacks during the summer against crowded tourist site in Barcelona, Spain.

The members of the Ripoll cell showed remarkable skills in forming the group and planning the attack without raising suspicions from security service or local community. In fact, Es Satty's leadership, given his longstanding experience in jihadi milieus, may explain the careful and meticulous conduct of his followers.

The Ripoll cell found no obstacles in purchasing some 500 liters of acetone in different location of Catalonia. Furthermore, Catalonia and Barcelona have been the most salient regional and provincial centers of jihadi activity in Spain since 2013.¹¹³

The country has experienced relatively low levels of radicalization. Only about 200 people have traveled from Spain to join jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq, compared to more than 1.500 from France and 1.000 from UK. However, Catalonia has seen disproportionately high levels of jihadist radicalization compared of other areas of Spain. Catalonia's situation can be better explained by the extensiveness of the region's Salafist scene. In fact, over the last twenty years, authorities have monitored the growth of some 60-70 Salafist mosques, spread throughout the area near the French boarder.

The "Salafi corridor" comprises an informal network of mosques, in many cases little more than garages or abandoned structures, usually located in small and mid-size towns like Ripoll. These town are home to large communities of mostly Moroccan agricultural laborers, and Salafist organizations have grown over the years in size and influence thank to the activism of their leaders. Usually it can be said that although the local Salafist scene in Catalonia is not directly engaged in violent activities, its rhetoric provides ideologically environment that leads many young Muslims to take the next step to embrace violence. This well-

¹¹³ Fernando Reinares and Carola García-Calvo, "Actividad yihadista en España, 2013-2017: de la Operación Cesto en Ceuta a los atentados en Cataluña," Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, *DT* 13/2017.

developed Salafist scene explains the disproportionately high level of radicalization in Catalonia more than other factors.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ L. Vidino (August 2017). The Roots of the Barcelona Attack in Catalonia, Salafist Terror is no Surprise, Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/spain/2017-08-25/roots-barce>

3.4 Barcelona and Cambrils Attacks

According to Spanish investigators, the aim of the terrorist who were making TATP in the Alcanar house was to carry out a terrorist action of a “big magnitude”. After the bomb-making preparation went wrong, the rest of the cell funded an alternative; improvised action.

It was only a matter of time before the police would identify the cell members. Younes Abouyaaqoub received a call at 3:00 PM on August 17 when he was driving a rented van on a beltway road about one hour away from Barcelona. As a result of this call, he decided to head toward downtown Barcelona. Investigators believe that from that moment, Younes and the remaining cell members redirected their attack effort in a hurried uncoordinated fashion.¹¹⁵

One hour later Younes drove the van into the popular Las Ramblas boulevard, which was full of tourists and locals. He plowed into pedestrians, zig-zagging for several hundred meters. 13 people were killed immediately and over 100 injured.

Younes fled the scene walking through an adjacent market where he hijacked a car at knifepoint, killing the driver. Subsequently, he breaks through a police checkpoint inside Barcelona, physically driven through the barrier that had been set up by the regional police, Mossos, after the attack.

Four days later, on August 21, Younes was recognized by people who spotted him in a rural zone. He was then located and shot dead. He was wearing a fake explosive belt to intimidate any person and to force police to shoot him dead so that he could attain martyrdom.

Nine hours after the Barcelona attack at around 1:15 AM on August 18, a new car, plowed into another pedestrian promenade in the eastside town of Cambrils 120 kilometers from Barcelona. The car then crashed into a Mossos vehicle. The men jumped out and used large knives and an axe. A woman was killed and several other people injured before the terrorists were shot dead by a policeman.

¹¹⁵ F. Reinares and C. García-Calvo. (January 2018). “Spaniards, You Are Going to Suffer:” The Inside Story of the August 2017 Attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils. CTC Sentinel Volume 11, Issue 1.

All together the two attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils left 16 dead and about 140 people wounded. However, according to investigators and considering the lethal resources assembled by the terrorist and their lethal intent, the death toll could have reached hundreds if they not accidentally blow up their bomb factory in Alcanar the day before the attack.

The Barcelona terror attacks is quite different from the November Paris attack for two basic elements:

1. Paris attacks was orchestrated by an organized Belgian cell in direct contact with the broader terrorist network, while Barcelona and Cambrils attacks was planned by a less structured Ripoll cell without direct contact with the Islamic State.
2. Paris attack was planned, sophisticated and involved commitment, preparation and trained fighters, while the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks was uncoordinated, unplanned and the fighters were less trained and armed.

However, we did not know what might have been the Barcelona attack if the Alcanar house had not exploded. Additionally, the members of the Ripoll cell showed remarkable skills in forming the group and planning the attack without raising suspicions from security service or the local community. They found no obstacles in purchasing 500 liters of acetone despite the 2013 European Union regulation on the sale of potential explosive precursors.

Accordingly, failure to detect the Ripoll cell and thwart the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks has raised many questions about counterterrorism capacity inside Catalonia. The month before the Barcelona attack, 33 police operation against jihadi terrorism were conducted in Catalonia, but despite these results, the work of the security service was hindered by insufficient implementation of existing legislation on the control of explosive and by deficiencies in coordination among security agencies.

Traditional rivalries and inter-organizational competition explain part of the problem.¹¹⁶ The secessionist tensions in a highly divided and polarized Catalonia have complicated counterterrorism coordination between Mossos, the regional police, and statewide police agencies like Cuerpo Nacional de Policía (CNP National Police) and Guardia Civil (GC, Civil Guard).

What stood out about the Ripoll cell, in addition to being formed by apparently well-integrated, second-generation young Muslims and being led by an imam who had been part of the jihadi scene for more than a decade, was its size. This suggests that even in the wake of the Paris and Brussel attacks, which were carried out by groups of comparable size, a large terrorist cell can still plan ambitious attacks without being detected.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

Comparative Analysis of Case studies and Radicalization Theories

Throughout this chapter, the research will focus on the two processes of radicalization, which will be compared with the DRIA model of Alessandro Orsini. Furthermore, some of the milestones of the radicalization theories will be included, which have previously been explained within the first chapter.

The aim of this section is to apply the theories of radicalization proposed by the authors examined in the first chapter onto two case studies; the one of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the terrorist of the November 2015 Paris attack and Younes Abouyaaqoub, the terrorist of the Barcelona attack in August 2017. In particular, the validity of the DRIA model will be applied to two cases of homegrown terrorism in Europe in search for consistency with the other radicalization theories.

This research is inspired by the work of Anne Aly & Jason-Leigh Striegher in “Examining the Role of Religion in Radicalization to Violent Islamist Extremist” in the review *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. The authors apply the four-phase radicalization model proposed by Silber and Bhatt to a case study of Australia’s first convicted terrorist, Jack Roche, based on the communication with Roche after his incarceration. In doing so, they examine the validity of the four-phase model to a case of “Homegrown” terrorism.¹¹⁷

As previously mentioned, literature on terrorism has been growing and expanding on the process of radicalization. Some theories of radicalization are conceptualized without any reference to actual empirical evidence, whilst others

¹¹⁷ Anne Aly & Jason-Leigh Striegher (2012) Examining the Role of Religion in Radicalization to Violent Islamist Extremism, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35:12, 849-862, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2012.720243

are enriched with it. However, interviews with terrorists can be difficult, and even when researchers do have access to them, it cannot be assumed that terrorists are able to clearly articulate and explain the reasons for their actions.

Even if the cases of Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Younes Abouyaaqoub have limited information, interviews and primary sources, it is possible to refer to the radicalization theories in order to analyze the validity of the theories with Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub's path towards terrorism.

To conclude, Alessandro Orsini's model of jihadist massacres in the West will be analyzed in order to verify the reliability of his model with the two case studies and with the recent trends of terrorist threats in Europe.

Case Studies and DRIA Model

After having analyzed the milestones of the radicalization theories, in order to understand in depth the process of radicalization, it was necessary to choose a theory that could relate with the two case studies proposed in chapters two and three. The selection of the DRIA model is based on a chronological methodology. As a matter of fact, all of the authors explained in the first chapter are represented by Moghaddam (2005) with the Staircase to Terrorism Model up to the DRIA Model (2016) chronologically, in order to highlight the development of the most recent theories based on the contribution of past theories. For this reason, the DRIA model is the most recent model and it is chosen for the comparison between theory and case studies in this work.

The DRIA model does not explain the radicalization process of all the terrorists in the world, which are thousands. The author argued that the model focuses only on those whom he proposed to call "Vocational terrorists" because they follow a "call" in the sense that they aspire to satisfy an inner need. They commit homicides by killing, but they also have the desire to die, suicide. They do not act for money or to improve their social condition. They have a feeling of having a mission to accomplish.

Even if the cases of Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Younes Abouyaaqoub have limited information, interviews and primary sources, it is necessary to address the question if these two terrorists can be defined as "Vocational terrorist" or not. In order to answer to this question, it is important to mention the fundamental characteristics present in the mental universe of vocational terrorists:

1. Radical catastrophist
2. Waiting for the end
3. Obsession with purity
4. Identification of evil
5. Obsession with purification

After having clarified which are the main characteristics of a vocational terrorist it is necessary to briefly explain the acronym of the DRIA model in order to compare it with these case studies. According to the author, the radicalization process tends to follow four fundamental phases summarized in the DRIA acronym:

D = Disintegration of Social Identity

R = Reconstruction of Social Identity through a Radical Ideology

I = Integration in a Revolutionary Sect

A = Alienation from the Surrounding World

Orsini argues that in order to understand the DRIA model it is necessary to distinguish the concept of "social marginalization", which is a socio-economic condition, from the concept of "social marginality", which is a socio-psychological condition. A socially marginalized individual is a person deprived of material resources. A marginal individual is a person who no longer recognizes himself in the values of the society in which he lives and refuses his old life.¹¹⁸

This reflection is consistent with Moghaddam's theory when he states that to understand the people living in the first floor of the Staircase to terrorism, in which the psychological process is the "Psychological Interpretation of Material Condition", it is necessary to analyze the perception of material conditions and injustices of an individual. This is an example:

"An individual may be living in extremely poor, crowded condition in Bombay and not feel unjustly treated despite the opulent living conditions of others around him or her in the city; however, another individual may be living in relatively comfortable conditions in Riyadh but feel very unjustly treated."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ A. Orsini. (2016-2017). La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation. COMMENTAIRE, N° 156, HIVER 2016-2017

¹¹⁹ Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The Staircase to Terrorism. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 161–169.

Furthermore, this concept was also analyzed by the author Sageman in his book *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004), when in the chapter three, the author describes a series of common misperceptions about the origin of terrorism. He dismissed economic deprivation, brainwashing, ignorance and mental illness as primary factors towards radicalization. In fact, these findings reject much of the conventional wisdom about terrorism as poor, ignorant, criminal and mentally ill.

Two other authors, Mc Cauley & Moskalenko, argue that radicalization may happen to them, but also to us. They define radicalization as:

“It is a psychological trajectory that, given the right circumstances, can happen to any person, group, or nation. The trajectory is not right or wrong; it is amoral in the sense that radicalization can occur for causes both good and bad”

Those who study radicalization must leave behind the orderly world in which normal people do not do terrible things and accept that in order to deeply understand a terrorist's mind it is necessary examine how we are ourselves susceptible to radicalizing influences.

With this purpose Alessandro Orsini presents his DRIA model in order to understand the trajectory of common people that become vocational terrorists. Now we will match this model with the life and the path towards terrorism of Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Younes Abouyaaqoub.

D: Disintegration of Social Identity

The first phase in which an individual finds himself in the direction towards the path of the DRIA model is the Disintegration of Social Identity phase. Here the individual, because of a series of traumas, or failed experiences, enters into a phase of existential malaise that pushes him to put in question the values in which he had always believed in. Some individuals engage in passive behaviors. Others become available to embrace new values in contrast with the previous ones. This mental predisposition, which sociologists call "cognitive openings", does not represent the solution to the problem. It represents the availability to embrace a new system of ideas from which they start a new existential adventure.

Abaaoud's Disintegration of Social Identity

Abdelhamid Abaaoud spent his youth in Molenbeek-Saint Jean in Brussels, an area characterized by high unemployment, ethnic cohesion, and bad integration in Belgian society. The Municipality's mayor described Molenbeek as a "breeding ground for violence"¹²⁰. However, as we learned from the DRIA Model, it is important to analyze the perception of Abaaoud and if he experienced failures or traumas that led him question the values in which he had always believed in.

His father was first employed in the mining sector and then owned a pub. His family condition was not awful. However, Abaaoud felt perceived injustices, relative deprivation and frustration for other reasons that we cannot determine with certainty because of the scarcity of information. However, we can follow through different hypothesis. Probably he was experiencing the "social marginality" in which his perception was to be different from others.

In fact, we know that his parents enrolled him in one of the Belgium's top secondary school from 1999 to 2000, which he attended only for one year. According to the description of his classmates he was "rude and begged

¹²⁰ Levitt, Matthew (27 March 2016). "My Journey To Brussels' Terrorist Safe Haven". *Politico*.

everyone”. Abaaoud was a common young boy, funny, and turbulent. He liked to challenge the authorities and was not part of the good students of the college Saint-Pierre. In fact, after one year he left for another school because of his mediocre grades and disciplinary problems.

Following these reasons, Abaaoud’s early life can be categorized in the first phase of the DRIA model in which the disintegration of the social identity begins. The perception of different options and opportunities for his life became fewer and fewer when he left the Saint-Pierre College. Probably, he perceived injustice and frustration of being kicked out by a Belgium top school when he was just 15. This could have shaken his sense of frustration, subjective perception of isolation and diversity from others. His mediocre grades led him to change school and embrace the path toward petty crimes. In fact, only two years later, in 2002, he started getting into proper trouble with the Belgian Authorities for petty crimes like small delinquency and robberies.

Abouyaaqoub’s Disintegration of Social Identity

Younes lived a seemingly normal life in the small town of Ripoll, a community in the foothills of the Pyrenees of about 10.000 people. As a child, Younes Abouyaaqoub was educated to the Joan Maragall Primary School in the center of Ripoll, along with many other immigrants, and had good grades, according to his friends. Later he attended Abat Oliba High School and pursued a degree in electrical engineering. A friend of Younes described him as an “exemplary student... relaxed, pretty quiet and sort of shy”. Younes was working in an industrial welding and maintenance plant on the outskirts of Ripoll. According to his friends, he was the highest earner among them.

According to Younes’ friends it must have been someone who was very clever in order to brainwash him. Even though Younes’ family blames his radicalization process in link to the local imam. His mother, Hann Ghanim, appeared before the press in Ripoll after the Barcelona attack. She believed that a local imam had radicalized the youngsters.

However, most of the authors cited in the first chapter argue that brainwashing cannot be the answer to the radicalization of a young boy. According to Sageman, deprivation, brainwashing, *naïveté*, ignorance, lack of family responsibility, sexual frustration are not primary factors towards radicalization. The case of Younes Abouyaaqoub is an example because he was educated and he had a good job. The influence of the local imam probably shakes his previous beliefs and, in the story of Abouyaaqoub, kinship and friendship play a central role to understand his process of radicalization.

According to the information achieved on Abouyaaqoub's life there is no presence of trauma or failure experiences. However, trauma and failure experience are not primary factors for radicalization. The perception of Younes is the most important factor to analyze. He seemed wellbeing and completely integrated into local community. This suggests that Younes became socially disenfranchised not as a result of exclusion or segregation but because of the influence of the local imam Es Satty, who acted as an in-person radicalizing agent,¹²¹ and probably, as a result of the network of friends that surrounded him. In fact, according to the female cousin of Abouyaaqoub his cousin Mohamed Hychami, another terrorist of the Ripoll cell, was the more conservative one. The cousin blames Mohamed for influencing Younes. She argues that until the year before the attack, Younes was totally normal, but when he visited the family in March 2017, he refused to shake hands to woman, just like Mohamed. According to the aunt, Fatima Abouyaaqoub, the boys cannot read Arabic and whatever changed them happened in Europe, not in Morocco.¹²²

What is sure is that Abouyaaqoub entered the phase of disintegration of social identity because he changed his behavior. He engages in passive behaviors with his cousin Mohamed and they become available to embrace new values in contrast with the previous ones and they start a new existential adventure thanks to the local imam of the Ripoll cell.

¹²¹ F. Reinares and C. García-Calvo. (January 2018). "Spaniards, You Are Going to Suffer:" The Inside Story of the August 2017 Attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils. CTC Sentinel Volume 11, Issue 1.

¹²² S. Errazzouki (2017). Moroccan suspect in Barcelona attack turned more conservative in past year – family, Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-spain-security-morocco-family/moroccan-suspect-in-barcelona-attack-turned-more-conservative-in-past-year-family-idUKKCN1B00S8>

R: Reconstruction of Social Identity

The second phase of the DRIA model focuses on the Jihadist ideology, being one of the ideas of the world, that allows the reconstruction of the social identity of an individual in search of new existential points of reference. Those who embrace it, discover that they have a great existential mission to accomplish. The radicalization process begins with an existential crisis, where an individual no longer recognizes himself in the values he had always believed in and begins to approach the jihadist ideology. Thanks to the jihadist ideology, the lives of young men are filled with significance of the utmost importance. This concept can be expressed like “Some of them, from zero, became a hero, overnight”.

Abaaoud’s Reconstruction of Social Identity

Abaaoud experienced legal problems when he was 15 and increased prisons sentences between 2006 and 2012. He had spent time in at least three prisons, and had a number of arrests for assault, and other crimes. It is clear he had problems with respecting and recognizing the authorities. Probably, one of the main reasons that pushes individuals to crimes like robbery and assaults is to improve their situation and to search for new solutions. This is consistent with Moghaddam’s first floor in which people seek ways in order to improve their situation and in order to achieve greater justice. It is hard to imagine a criminal that feels justly treated by authorities, but it is always challenging them. Consequently, we can state that, Abaaoud perceived that procedural justice was not open and fair and that he did not see possibilities to influence procedures through which decisions are made.

Abaaoud was jailed in 2010 with Salah Abdeslam, another important figure of the November 2015 Paris attack. Probably, their approach to jihadist ideology began during the time spent in prison. Throughout their time there in fact,

according to a testimony, Abaaoud and Abdeslam officially began their path towards radicalization.

Indeed, when Abaaoud left the penitentiary of Forest in Brussel in September 2012 he completely changed his behaviors. He started to wear a beard, changed friendships, stopped drinking alcohol and prayed devoutly. Probably, during the time in detention he approached to the jihadist ideology. As we learned by the DRIA Model the Jihadist ideology allows the reconstruction of the social identity of an individual in search of new existential points of reference.

Abaaoud can be defined as the young boy that choose the path toward criminality. After jail he changed dramatically, according to his father's testimony. Hence, Abaaoud experienced what most of the scholar call "cognitive openings" or "biographical availability" in prison or before prison.

Cognitive opening can include experience like discrimination, socioeconomic crisis or political repression. Some can experience an identity crisis because of their encounters with racism or Islamophobia. Hence, this can lead some individuals to think about how they fit in society and the role of Islam for Muslim minorities.

Abouyaaqoub's Reconstruction of Social Identity

Based on Abouyaaqoub's cousin testimony, the young man changed his behavior completely one year before the attack. He refused to shake hands to women, imitating his oldest cousin Mohamed Hichami.

In the case of Abouyaaqoub it is necessary to focus on two main issues in order to understand his process of radicalization. The first one is the role of friendship and kinship, because the Ripoll cell was composed by 4 brothers with strong interpersonal ties. For this reason, it is required to analyze the role of the other members of the cell to deeply understand the collective radicalization of the youngsters. Most of the Catalan terror cell grew up in Ripoll. They were all first- or second-generation immigrants from Morocco and most were childhood friends who went to the same school. Seven out of the nine had completed secondary education, and of those, six attended professional training programs.

The second factor is the role of the leader of the Ripoll cell, the local Imam Abdelbaki Es Satty. The Imam worked in Ripoll at one of the town mosques in 2015. It was the only Islamic place of worship in town. As previously mentioned, Es Satty was already been immersed in Jihadi circles in Spain for a decade, in fact, his roommate died as a suicide bomber in Iraq in 2003. He attended Salafi meetings in Catalonia and was the focus of counterterrorism investigation in Spain but was never arrested.

Younes' father states that the Imam was a bad influence for his son because of his interpretation of Islam being too strict.

According to the investigations, the cell members had undergone a very rapid radicalization process. According to the evidence Es Satty had been meeting with some of the members for no less than a year before the attacks. Subsequently, they all embraced a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam and the usual path got the elder brothers to radicalize first, then the younger siblings. A year before the events in Barcelona, the Ripoll cell members began to change their behavior. They stopped wearing branded clothing and visited the mosque more frequently.

What should be noticed is that when Younes Abouyaaqoub changed his behavior one year before the attack he probably was in the phase of Reconstruction of social identity thanks to the Jihadist ideology that allowed him to reconstruct his social identity and to find new existential points of reference. Furthermore, he discovered that he had a great existential mission to accomplish. Getting the world rid from the unbelievers.

As this phase suggests, thanks to the jihadist ideology the lives of young men are filled with significance of the utmost importance. Probably, all the Ripoll members felt this fundamental duty.

Here is request to analyze also the mechanism of kinship radicalization and the fundamental role of family, friends and relatives in joining the path toward terrorism.

Kinship recruitment is facilitated by several psychological mechanisms that bind individuals together on the path to extremism. Tight-knit kinship and friendship ties offer opportunities for radical socialization that simultaneously satisfy psychological needs such as avoidance of cognitive dissonance, the need

of maintaining meaningful relationships, and validation from valued peers.¹²³ Close associations may also entrap individuals through dynamics of peer pressure, groupthinking, and what Della Porta calls affective focusing and cognitive closure. Namely, friendship and kinship ties can transpose radical political commitments and in turn, this commitment intensifies bonds of loyalty among kin and kith.

Sometimes individuals with little or no prior history of radicalism, like Younes Abouyaaqoub, suddenly surface as terrorists. Those who do make such leap without prior activism often are influenced at hand of radicalized family members or friends who transfer their radicalism onto others by virtue of having preexisting bonds of trust and personal interdependence. This suggest that not always individual motivations may be helpful in explaining why a person gets involved with terrorism because the motivation may not reside with the individual actor themselves, but in the small extremist milieu from which they hail.

According to the author explained in the first chapter, Marc Sageman, the basic elements to build terror networks are kinship and friendship. These connections often precede radicalization which we know plays a large part in collective recruitment process. The “bunch of guys” theory suggests that individuals go through the radicalization process collectively, amid friends and comrades sharing common interests. These individuals seek other like-minded individuals in order to form a group, cluster or network. This process is characterized by self-selection process by which individuals first join a group and then becomes radicalized.

¹²³ M. M. Hafez (February 2018). The Ties that Bind: How Terrorists Exploit Family Bonds, Volume 9, Issue 2, CTC Sentinel.

I: Integration in a Revolutionary Sect

Once the jihadist ideology is embraced, the radicalized individual goes in search for a group of people who share his ideas. In some cases, he is able to establish direct contact with other mujahideen. In other cases, he cannot. Nevertheless, some people declare themselves soldiers of ISIS or al-Qaeda without ever meeting their members. This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of "imagined community," developed by the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, who explained how certain individuals become members of a group through the power of the imagination.¹²⁴ For example, Michael Bibeau, who killed Private Nathan Cirillo in Ottawa on October 22nd, 2014, had never met any of the ISIS members in person.

Abaaoud's Integration in a Revolutionary Sect

At this point it is necessary to analyze how Abaaoud engaged in violent activities and how he passed through to the Integration in a Revolutionary Sect phase according to the DRIA model.

Abaaoud joined a group known as Katibat al-Muhajirin (KAM) while fighting against Bashar al-Assad in Syria during 2013. In Syria, French and Belgian militants from a variety of networks quickly socialized by sharing housing and fighting in the same units. French-speaking cluster involved in the Islamic State's external operation developed strong interpersonal ties, often building on kinship that pre-dated the Syrian jihad. The KAM was a magnet for Francophone volunteers to the Syrian jihad, composed mainly by Belgian and French Jihadis.¹²⁵ In particular, a number of KAM members expressed an interest in external action

¹²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Londres/New York, Verso, 1983.

¹²⁵ Jean-Charles Brisand and K. Jackson (2016). *The Islamic State's External Operations and the French-Belgian Nexus*, CTC Sentinel, November/December 2016, Volume 9, Issue 11.

and ostensibly praised those who had conducted such operation, like Mohamed Merah who perpetrated the attacks on March 19th 2012.

When Abaaoud travelled to Syria he met other Belgian and French jihadists and received military training. This is consistent with the DRIA model phase of Integration in a Revolutionary Sect in which individuals are in search for other like-minded individuals who share same ideas. He was searching for identification with other individuals and sought to find a place in society. After being imprisoned, he changed his behaviors and started getting radical beliefs. In the third phase of the DRIA Model he was establishing his personal identity by joining the KAM group in Syria while seeking approval and validation for the path taken. He gradually moves from his old identity in order to associate with the group and adapt to the ideology of the group. He alienates from his former life, until he gets to call to his family to announce his death. This is remarkably consistent with the concept of deconstruction and reconstruction of social identity. Usually in this phase the individual changes his name, in fact Abaaoud was called “Abu Omar Soussi” or “Abu Omar al Baljiki” (Belgian Omar).

Association within an extremist group is an important factor as the process deepens and the radical views are encouraged and reinforced. The result is military jihad, in fact Abaaoud became a key figure of the Belgian cell of the Islamic state and recruited other militants like Salah Abdeslam. We can state that in Syria Abaaoud was exposed to the process of social categorization, which led him to embrace in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.

Abouyaaqoub’s Integration in a Revolutionary Sect

Contrary to Abaaoud, Abouyaaqoub was already in a sect and went through radicalization collectively. He did not search for other like-minded individuals because his individual where friends and cousins that shared the same ideas and that radicalized all together forming the Ripoll Cell.

In fact, out of nine members recruited, there were four pairs of brothers, with two sets of boths that were cousins. The nine were all neighbors and attended

the same educational institutions and participated in the same recreational activities. They were friends before their radicalization. This suggests that the Integration in a Revolutionary Sect was far easier for Abouyaaqoub than for Abaaoud that needed to travel to Syria to follow his path toward radicalization. Probably this is also the reason for the difference in the military capabilities of the two terrorists. However, this will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

Radicalization and recruitment are localized and highly personal tasks involving interpersonal ties, bonds of solidarity and trust. In fact, radicals must look for recruits within preexisting networks such as educational institutions, community centers, sport teams and workplaces. In fact, preexisting networks, including the extended family, can facilitate recruitment into radical groups.

However, the Ripoll cell was not brainwashed by the Local Imam. Probably they all had some indicators of the 5 characteristics of vocational terrorist like the sense of radical catastrophism, waiting for the end, obsession with purity, identification of evil and obsession with purification. According to the investigation, all of the Facebook pages of the Ripoll cell were full of Jihadi propaganda. However, it is not clear whether they were in direct contact with the leaders of ISIS.

In the Alcanar house explosion, a green-colored book was found where all the cell members were portrayed as “soldiers of the Islamic State in the land of Al Andalus”. Additionally, international trips made by Younes open up the possibility that the group developed some links with the European networks. Younes visited France at least three times between July and December 2016. Investigators have established that members of the Ripoll cell, while in Paris purchased a video camera and taped the Eiffel Tower and the French government assessing that Paris could have also been a target of the Ripoll cell.

The evidence shows that the Ripoll cell and, in particular, Younes Abouyaaqoub, radicalized collectively and felt to be part of the soldier of the Islamic State. We do not have complete information about the links between the Ripoll Cell and the Islamic State. However, the case of Abouyaaqoub is consistent also with the phenomenon understood as the concept of "imagined community," which explained how certain individuals become members of a group through the

power of the imagination. This perfectly matches the case of the Ripoll cell and the Islamic State.

A: Alienation from the Surrounding World

The phase of alienation from the surrounding world is very important because it allows the members of the revolutionary sect to accept the idea of killing. In order to become a vocational terrorist, it is necessary to face an "anthropological transformation" favored by certain extreme forms of social isolation.

The alienation of the surrounding world has a manifest function and a latent function. The manifest function prevents contact with the Western world, considered morally corrupt; thereby satisfying the psychological need to feel morally superior. The latent function prevents the surrounding society from exercising its "moral authority" on the revolutionary sect, arising doubts or remorse among its members. Due to the alienation of the surrounding world, nobody will be able to show to a radicalized individual the weaknesses and contradictions of his way of reasoning.

This phase corresponds to the end of "negative feedback". This concept refers to the moment in which an individual is completely integrated in the sect and the negative feedback of society does not recognize his choices. The negative feedback refers to the disapproval of society in values and activities. When an individual enters a Jihadi terrorist cell this is all put to an end.

Abaaoud's Alienation from the Surrounding World

Abaaoud was trained in Syria to sidestep his inhibitory mechanisms and to alienate from the world and embrace the totalitarianistic view of the terrorist organization. He ends his "negative feedback" of society travelling to Syria and engaging in the jihadi terrorist cell. Evidence is clearly highlighted in photos and videos obtained by two independent journalists, Etienne Huver and Guillaume Lhotellier. This material showed Abaaoud and others loading bloody corpses into a truck. Abaaoud told the camera:

“Before we towed jet skis, motorcycles, quad bikes, big trailers filled with gifts for vacation in Morocco. Now, thank God, following God’s path, we are towing apostates, infidels who are fighting us”.¹²⁶

Other images show Abaaoud playing football with a decapitated head. This is consistent with the process of sidestepping inhibition explained by Moghaddam in which Abaaoud completely categorizes civilians as enemies and exaggerates the difference between in-group and out-group. At this point he has psychologically distanced himself from other humans he intends to destroy, he is ready to lead the process in which he dehumanizes victims and prepares for terrorist activities. This is consistent with the five characteristics of vocational terrorists explained above in which Abaaoud felt the duty to fight to “purify” the world from its enemies. Additionally, his actions are consistent with the view of radical catastrophism in which an individual identifies himself with the “purifier of the world” by infidels. The final phase of the process of radicalization is when members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate to the jihad and view themselves as holy warriors. The main goal of Abaaoud’s life became to plan and execute terrorist attacks, as he does for the Varvier’s plot, the attack in Villejuif as well the Thalys train attack, and finally for the November 2015 Paris attacks.

His life became full of meaning, his perceptions are consistent with the quotes expressed at the beginning of this chapter in which the main goal of radicalized individuals is the shift from becoming “zero to hero” due to the jihadi ideology.

¹²⁶ Raphael Satter; John-Thor Dahlburg (16 November 2015). "Paris attacks: Belgian Abdelhamid Abaaoud identified as presumed mastermind". Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved 19 November 2015.

Abouyaaqoub's Alienation from the Surrounding World

According to friends of the young men, a year before the events in Barcelona, the Ripoll cell members began to close themselves. Isolation is the first mechanism that encourages group members to alienate from others. This mechanism fosters other mechanisms like, us-versus-them view, in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination and social categorization. All mechanisms that deepen the process of radicalization.

Likewise, Younes Abouyaaqoub entered the phase of alienation when he met with the local Imam El Satty. He completely engaged in terrorist activities in order to perpetrate the terrorist attack planned for Barcelona. Abouyaaqoub found no obstacles in purchasing about 500 liters of acetone in order to create an explosive, as the original plan had premeditated.

The phase of alienation from the surrounding world is harder to analyze because the Ripoll cell, and consequently, Abouyaaqoub were all friends and kin to each other. Radicalization appears to have been accomplished by personal contacts among individuals who knew one another. Most of them attended the same middle or secondary school, rendering the process of alienation relatively hard to trace.

Findings of the Comparative Analysis

The DRIA model is the last model explaining radicalization in my research, as it takes all of the previously stated theories on radicalization to try and conceptualize the four socio-psychological mechanisms leading to terrorism. The DRIA model is a more in-depth understanding of the situational condition that an individual experienced in the process of radicalization. The four phases; disintegration of social identity, reconstruction of social identity, integration in a revolutionary sect and alienation from the surrounding world, represent the phases in which a radicalized individual needs to face in order to become a vocational terrorist.

The DRIA model compared with the two case studies of Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub, completely reflect the entire path towards terrorism embraced by these two individuals. Even if in different ways, they all engage in the five phases of the DRIA model in order to become terrorists. However, while Abaaoud matches completely in each phase, the case of Abouyaaqoub presents some specifics.

According to the first phase, Abaaoud's disintegration of social identity may be traced back when he was departed from the Saint-Pierre College for his mediocre grades and disciplinary problems. The perception of different options and opportunities with other peers and the sense of frustration noted also by his friends and teachers, led him to embrace the path towards criminality. His existential crisis is evident also by the petty crimes he engaged in with his friend Salah Abdeslam.

On the contrary, in the case of Younes Abouyaaqoub, we are in presence of a brilliant young man with good grades, good job but a very bad influence from the local Imam which, had connections to the terrorist groups, his friendship and kinship networks. Younes Abouyaaqoub, collectively with the other cell members, cousins and friends, goes through radicalization with other family members, his youngest brother Houssaine (19 years old) and his two cousins Mohamed (24 years old) and Omar (21 years old). These young men all radicalized with Younes, but not at the same time. According to Mohamed,

Younes' cousin, he himself was always being more conservative compared to Younes. However, his youngest brother Houssaine had also shown signs of radicalization toward religious conservatism, but only a few months before the attacks. In Abouyaaqoub' life there is no evidence of trauma or experiences of failure. Younes seemed to be completely integrated into the local community. He played football with the town team and went to university like others. Suggesting that in the case of Younes' radicalization, the central role was played by the Local Imam, his friends and kin networks.

According to the second phase of the radicalization process, Abaaoud, probably faced the reconstruction of social identity, during the time spent in prison where he approached to jihadist ideology. In fact, when he left the penitentiary of Forest in 2012 he completely changed his behaviors.

On the contrary, Abouyaaqoub's reconstruction of social identity was always referred to the networks of the Ripoll cell. One year before the attack, his cousin noticed his change of behavior when he refused to shake hands to women during his trip to Morocco. Furthermore, the father of Younes states that the Imam was a bad influence for his children because of its interpretation of Islam being too strict. Younes, differently from Abaaoud, underwent a very rapid radicalization thanks to friendship and kinship.

According to the third phase, the Integration into a Revolutionary sect, while Abaaoud physically joined the KAM group in Syria, Younes grew up already in a revolutionary sect. The transformation from a normal group of friends to a revolutionary sect, or a "bunch of guys" as Sageman named in his theory, was due to the influence of the jihadist ideology promoted by Es Satty. In this phase the Imam plays a crucial role for the radicalization of the youngster. The Jihadist ideology allows them to reconstruct their social identity and to find new existential points of reference for all members of the group. The Imam knew that kinship recruitment was facilitated by several psychological mechanisms that binded individuals together on the path to extremism. Tight-knit kinship and friendship ties offered opportunities for radical socialization, that simultaneously satisfied psychological needs.

According to the fourth phase, the alienation from the surrounding world, Abaaoud faced his anthropological transformation favored by extreme forms of

social isolation when he was in Syria. Thanks to the video and photos that showed Abaaoud loading bloody corpses into a truck or playing with a decapitated head, we can suppose that Abaaoud completely accepted the idea of killing. He prevented any contact with the Western world that he considered morally corrupted, considering himself morally superior. He stopped his “negative feedback” from the society because he became completely integrated to the group which he recognized; ISIS.

On the contrary, according to the information we have, Younes did not engage completely into this phase. He was alienated by the surrounding world but not completely. The difference between Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub, is that Abaaoud was trained in Syria to fight his Inhibitory mechanism, as Moghaddam suggests, whilst Abouyaaqoub was not trained. He radicalized but not completely. He had no capabilities in making explosives, as we saw with the explosion of the Alcanar House, and he was not trained to use machine weapons. Furthermore, the difference between the strategy of the Paris attack, in which Abaaoud engaged in the restaurant shooting, and the strategy of the Barcelona attack, in which Abouyaaqoub drove into pedestrians, explains its differences. Most people know how to drive, not every person knows how to use a machine gun.

As Lorenz argues, the inhibitory mechanism serves to limit interspecies killing. This mechanism involves the limiting of the aggression of humans against one another through mechanisms such as eye contact, crying and other means when an attacker is in close proximity of the victim. If you are forced to kill a person, will you prefer to kill him/her with a van or a machine gun? Probably the first one as it gives you greater distance from the victim. Accordingly, Lorenz’s argument states that among humans, inhibitory mechanisms have been sidestepped through the use of modern weapons that allow an aggressor to destroy a target from distance.

Another important tactic used by terrorist organizations is to fight its inhibitory mechanism so that the victims are not aware of the imminent danger before the attack, so they do not have opportunities to behave in ways that might trigger inhibitory mechanism.

As we will further note in the next chapter, the difference between Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub is reflected also through the organization of the Paris attack and the Barcelona attack. In the Paris attack, the cell was sophisticated and trained

to kill in different ways, places and with different weapons, whilst the Ripoll cell was completely unprepared, disorganized and failed to perpetrate a terrorist attack like the one in Paris, despite the fact that they had 10 “militants of the Islamic State”.

CHAPTER 5

Comparative Analysis of Jihadist Massacres in Europe

In order to analyze recent trends of terrorist attacks in Europe it is essential to develop a clear scientific research method. Alessandro Orsini analyzes all of the terrorist incidents that have been connected to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Western Europe from the November 2015 Paris attacks to the August 2017 Catalonia attacks. The author argues that ISIS was not able to enhance the military capabilities of its terrorist cells in Western Europe.¹²⁷ In order to understand the findings of Orsini it is important to delineate what Military capability is. It is defined to refer to the quantity, type and sophistication of technology being used in combat operations and to which severity the security of state's threat is.

After the Barcelona terror attacks on August 2017 many authors tried to understand whether ISIS had increased its offensive capabilities in Western cities or not. In the articles *ISIS's Military Capabilities in Western Europe (2015-2017)* the author elaborates the conceptual tools to face this question through a combination of the historical method with the sociological one.

Combining the two methods means comparing the massacres of ISIS in Western Europe on the basis of the following information. Firstly, it is necessary to use the dates of the terror attacks from the Paris Attack (2015) until the Barcelona attack (2017) and count the number of days between one massacre and the other. Subsequently, it is necessary to consider:

1. Number of commando members;

¹²⁷ A. Orsini, L'Isis in Europa. Un'analisi comparata delle stragi jihadiste. Rivista di Politica, Numero 3, Luglio-Settembre 2017, p. 157.

2. Number of victims;
3. Weapons used to carry out the massacre;
4. Strategy of attack. Among these, the most important is represented by the number of attacks conducted, simultaneously and coordinated by the same commando.

In addition, the Orsini argues that in order to set up an appropriate tool for conducting a comparative analysis of jihadist massacres in Europe, it is essential to be meticulous in reviewing names of the bombers and their nationalities. The reason why this type of classification is indispensable is that terrorist attacks, conducted by foreigners, express greater capacity for movement and penetration by terrorists. Moreover, the attacks by foreign terrorists help to assess the quality of national intelligence service. In fact, regarding the ability of a government to defend the safety of its citizens, the attacks carried out by foreign terrorists are worse than the terrorist attacks carried out by fellow countrymen. In fact, a countryman terrorist can better camouflage himself from a foreign terrorist in the preparation phase of the massacre. In fact, ISIS and al Qaeda prefer attacks in European cities, which are conducted by militants living in the city to attack. An example is the massacre of the editors of “Charlie Hebdo” on January 7th, 2015, commissioned by al Qaeda in Yemen but carried out by two brothers from Paris, Charif and Said Kouachi.

According to the author, in order to assess whether the offensive capabilities of ISIS in Western Europe have grown or decreased, we need to, first of all, analyze dates. The first date, from which the investigation begins, is June 29th 2014, when al-Baghdadi proclaimed the birth of the Islamic State from the Mosul al-Nuri Mosque. One month later, Isis conquered Sinjar, in the north of Iraq, where it started the massacre of the Zaidi population, moving a great impression in international public opinion.

Since the dates that we will use are numerous, we try to fix our attention on three dates that, at least for now, are the most important ones. The dates are:

- June 29th 2014;
- November 13th 2015;

- March 22nd 2016.

Between the proclamation of the Islamic State on June 29th 2014, and the massacre of Paris on November 13th 2015, 17 months went by. This is the time in which ISIS needed to organize its first massacre in Western Europe. After the Paris massacre, the one in Brussels came on March 22nd 2016. The narrative developed by the Italian media after the events in Brussels established that the offensive capabilities of ISIS had grown between one massacre and another. However, the combination of the historical method and the sociological method led to opposite conclusions.

Between the massacre in Paris, 130 dead, and the one in Brussels which had 32 dead, 129 days passed by without ISIS being able to carry out attacks in Western cities. If the offensive capabilities of ISIS were proportional to the fears spread by Italian television or to the menace of al Baghdadi, ISIS would have had to carry out 129 massacres in 129 days. Moreover, between the Paris massacre and the Brussels one, ISIS should have increased:

- a) The number of militants engaged in the attacks
- b) The type of weapons used in massacres
- c) The number of places hit simultaneously in the attacked city
- d) The total number of deaths

Furthermore, the Brussels massacre would have had to deploy a largest commando than the one that acted out in Paris, with more powerful weapons or, at least, of equal power, which should have caused a higher number of deaths than the ones in Paris. However, quite differently:

- a) The commando that came into action in Brussels was made up of 5 jihadists against 9 in Paris
- b) The weapons used in Brussels were only explosive belts whilst in Paris explosive belts were used with grenades and machine-guns
- c) Brussels was hit in two places, the airport and the metro station whilst Paris had been hit in six different places

d) The dead of Brussels were 32 against the 130 dead in Paris

These data are very important because, contrary to what the common people tend to believe, who are particularly impressed by the figure of the kamikaze, the most lethal weapon used in Paris were machine guns and not explosive belts. In fact, the comparative study of terrorist attacks in Western cities, between 2001 and 2017, shows that an attack with a machine gun causes more victims than an attack with an explosive belt. Here is represented a table that shows this statement:

Table 1. List of Terror Attack in Europe from Paris to Barcelona

Where	When	Militants	Strategy	Weapons	Casualties
Paris	13 November 2015	9	6 Simultaneous Attacks	AKM Machine Guns, Grenades, Explosive Belts	130 dead 368 injuries

After 129 days...

Brussels	22 March 2016	5	2 Simultaneous Attacks	Explosive Belts	32 dead 340 injuries
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After 82 days...

Magnanville	13 June 2016	1	1 Attack	Knife	2 dead
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After 31 days...

Nice	14 July 2016	1	1 Attack	Van	82 dead 458 injuries
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After 10 days...

Ansbach	24 July 2016	1	1 Attack	Molotov, Ax, Knife	16 injuries
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After 2 days...

Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray	26 July 2016	2	1 Attack	Knife	3 dead 1 injured
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After 11 days...

Charleroi	6 August 2016	1	1 Attack	Machete	1 dead (terrorist) 2 injuries
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After 133 days...

Berlin	19 December 2016	1	1 Attack	Car	12 dead 56 injuries
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After 96 days...

London	22 March 2017	1	1 Attack	Car	6 dead 46 injuries
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After 16 days...

Stockholm	7 April 2017	1	1 Attack	Van	5 dead 14 injuries
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After 13 days...

Paris	20 April 2017	1	1 Attack	Kalashnikov	2 dead 3 injuries
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After 32 days...

Manchester	22 May 2017	1	1 Attack	Explosive Belt	23 dead 250 injuries
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After 12 days...

London	3 June	3	2 Simultaneous	Van, Knife	11 dead 48 injuries
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	2017		Attack		
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After 74 days...

Barcelona	17 August 2017	7	2 Simultaneous Attack	Van, Car	15 dead
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The comparison between the Paris and Brussels massacres showed that, instead of growing impetuously, ISIS has suffered a drastic reduction of its offensive capabilities. The comparative analysis shows that the Brussels massacre was less lethal than that of Paris on the basis of the indicators we have identified: fewer men, fewer firearms, fewer deaths, fewer places hit simultaneously.

After the Brussels massacre, on June 13th, 2016, Larossi Abballa, a French citizen of Moroccan origin, stabbed to death a policeman, Jean-Baptiste Salvaing, and his partner, Jessica Schneider, in their home in Magnanville, a town about 55 km west of Paris. The attack was claimed by ISIS.

On July 14th 2016 the Nice massacre takes place 113 days after the Brussels massacre on March 22nd 2016. The Nice massacre marks the transition from a "complex" dynamic massacre, like the Paris and Brussels attacks, to a simple dynamic massacre. More precisely, it is the transition from a complex, strategic and organized terror attack to a Lone Wolf terror attack.

Mohamed Bouhlel, the Nice terrorist, operated without the support of any organization and did not kill his victims using firearms. Being a truck driver, it was easy for him to use a truck to invest passersby. The deaths were relatively numerous, 86, due to a series of favorable circumstances such as the surprise effect in a very crowded place and the fact he was a professional truck driver.

The first attack after the Nice massacre took place on July 26th 2016 in Ansbach, Germany, but it was not a massacre, it was failed attack due to the inability of the terrorist. The Ansbach attack was carried out by Mohammad Daleel, a 27-year-old who came to Germany in 2014 as an asylum seeker from Syria. He jumped into the air with his backpack containing explosive, but he was the only one to die. His gesture caused 15 wounded.

The comparison between the Paris and Ansbach terrorists shows the difference between the damages caused by a terrorist supported by a terrorist organization and a terrorist that acts alone. The Nice massacre shows that an isolated terrorist without training, but with luck and cunning, can cause numerous victims. However, whether it is extreme left, extreme right, anarchist or Islamic terrorism, the history of terrorism suggests that Nice represents an exception and not the rule. The rule is that trained and organized terrorists are more deadly than isolated and disorganized terrorists, as evidenced by the victims caused by the bombers who shot down the Twin Towers on September 11th 2001.

Two days after the Ansbach attack came, on July 26th, the attack by Adel Kermiche against the Catholic church of Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, a Normandy locality. Adel Kermiche was a 19-year-old boy of Algerian origin who, with the complicity of Abdel Malik Petitjean, a 19-year-old boy born in France, slaughtered a priest, Jacques Hamel, while celebrating mass. The difference between the Paris massacre of November 13th 2015 and the attack by Adel Kermiche is clear. 130 people died in Paris and only one in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray.

The year of 2016 ended with the massacre in the Christmas market in Berlin on December 19th led by Anis Amri, that hit pedestrians with a van, killing 12 people. Even the attacks of 2017 in Western Europe confirm that the offensive capabilities of ISIS had decreased over time.

Fifteen months went by between the Paris massacre of November 13th 2015 and the first attack of 2017 in London on March 22nd. The bomber, Khalid Masood, a 52-year-old British citizen, was an untrained, lone wolf who, after leaping onto pedestrians with an off-road vehicle, killed four people and an unarmed guard with a kitchen knife. ISIS claimed the attack even if they had no role.

The second attack of 2017 hit Sweden. On April 7th 2017, Rakhmat Akilov, another untrained lone wolf, killed five pedestrians in Stockholm by investing them with a truck.

The third attack took place on April 20th in Paris by another non-trained lone wolf, Karim Cheurfi, who opened fire at the Champs-Élysées with an automatic rifle: he hit three policemen but killed only one, despite the power of the

possibilities of the firearm. Even here, the heads of ISIS didn't take place, however, they claimed the attack.

The fourth attack of 2017 is the only one carried out by a trained lone wolf, Salman Abedi, the kamikaze who killed 22 people at the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester on May 22nd. Investigators hypothesized that he was part of a cell connected to Libya.

The fifth attempt of 2017, on June 3rd on the bridge was led by an autonomous cell composed of three boys with no training: Khuram Shazad Butt, 27 years; Rachid Redouane, 30; Youssef Zaghba, 22 years old. None of them had received support from ISIS, who had no role in the attack, nor a preparation for the use of explosives. The victims were few compared to the number of the bombers. After jumping on pedestrians with a van, the three jihadists killed 8 people. Some were stabbed, others killed by the vehicle.

Finally, the sixth attack of 2017 took place on the 17th and 18th of August in Barcelona. The Barcelona attack confirms what emerges from the comparison of the ISIS massacres. The Ripoll cell, which carried out the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, was composed of 12 members. Despite being a larger cell than the one in Paris, the deaths caused by the attack in Barcelona were much less than those in Paris (14 dead against 130) and were caused by a single member of the cell. Of twelve members of the Barcelona cell, only one Younes Abouyaaqoub, was able to carry out a massacre by launching a van on the Rambla, without having any machine guns.

From the Barcelona massacre we have learnt that a very large cell is not necessarily a very dangerous cell. The compared analysis leads to the following conclusion: for those who are subjected to the attacks, it is better a very poorly trained Jihadist cell rather than a cell of only two well-trained terrorists, like the Kouachi brothers, the authors of the massacre against the editors of Charlie Hebdo on the 7th of January 2015. In fact, three fundamental indications show that the Ripoll cell was numerous but not lethal:

1. The first is represented by the explosion of the building of Alcanar, where the terrorists had crammed about 120 cylinders of gas which they wanted to hit the Sagrada Familia. The error, which caused the

explosion, leads to believe that the Ripoll cell was not a professional terrorist fabric. It is a rule of professional terrorists that the experiment with the explosives should not be conducted in the same place where the powder magazine is located. The three terrorists, who were handling the explosives in the house in Alcanar, were responsible for a disaster. The experiment went wrong, and they died with the explosion.

2. The second indicator, which leads to believe that the Barcelona terrorists were completely unprepared, is represented by the way the Cambrils attack was organized, which can be defined as one of the greatest failures in the history of jihadist terrorism. Despite the significant number of members of the commando, the outcome of the attack was only one death. In confirmation of the unprofessionalism of the bombers, the five terrorists were killed by a single policeman, and the five Cambrils terrorists were disarmed.
3. Finally, the third indicator from which the Ripoll cell dilettantism emerges is that none of its members had technical skills to make explosive belts, which were all fake.

In conclusion, the articles of Alessandro Orsini analyzed and compared the ISIS attacks from November 13th 2015 massacre in Paris to the massacre on August 17th 2017 in Barcelona. The main finding of the author is that, contrary to the narrative developed by the media, ISIS has not been able to increase the military capabilities of its cells in Western Europe. In fact, the comparison between the massacres of ISIS shows that, ISIS's penetration capabilities in Western European democracies have proved to be inferior to the fears spread by ISIS propaganda and amplified by the Italian media.

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis is to prove that in order to understand radicalization it is necessary to leave behind the orderly and comfortable world in which normal people do not do terrible things. It is required to examine how we are ourselves susceptible to radicalizing influences. Radicalization is not something that happens only to others like the mentally ill person or the evil character. It is a psychological trajectory that, given the right circumstance, can happen to any person, group or nation.

Raising awareness about the process of radicalization will reduce the misperception that terrorists are mentally ill people with psychological problems. In light of the main theories of radicalization, this paper analyzed, all the mechanisms, trajectories and reasons that explain why some individuals engage in terrorist activities.

Some authors argued that the radicalization process can be reassumed as a stage model, in which one individual needs to take steps toward terrorism, such as the Staircase model of Moghaddam or the NYPD Report of Silber and Bhatt. Other authors tried to respond to the question analyzing basic psychological mechanisms present in almost all terrorist minds.

However, all of the radicalization theories explained in the first chapter of this work served as a general framework to analyze the process of radicalization of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the mastermind of the November 2015 Paris attack, and Younes Abouyaaqoub, the terrorist of the Barcelona attack in August 2017.

The study of the early life, the process of radicalization, and the trajectory that led Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub to perform violent acts suggests that the process of radicalization is a multiple mechanism that includes different elements and the construction of one's own path toward terrorism.

Abaaoud's trajectory to terrorism shows remarkable consistency with the mechanisms explained by the authors Mc Cauley and Moskalenko such as; personal grievance, based on perceived injustices; group grievance, based on self-identification with a larger group like KAM and ISIS; slippery slope, based on

repeated actions that increase commitments like bringing new members like Salah Abdeslam gradually to violence and desensitization. Therefore, when he makes a video that shows Abdeslam playing with a decapitated head; and risk and status, that young and marginalized people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors to reach status and approval.

Individual mechanisms and group mechanisms may overlap in experience with case of radicalization. Recalling the authors described in chapter 1.7, Mc Cauley and Moskaleiko, recognize that these two kinds of grievance are often found together. This mutual influence can make it difficult to understand if Abaaoud radicalized because of personal grievance or because of group grievance when he joined the KAM terrorist group. In anyway, the mutual reinforcement of personal and group grievance may be only one example of how a particular combination of mechanisms can be stronger than the simple sum of their separate effects. Indeed, recognizing multiple mechanisms of radicalization means recognizing that terrorists are able to find success in many directions.

Even the case study of Younes Abouyaaqoub and the Ripoll cell shows remarkable consistence with Sageman's "Bunch of Guys" theory in which he explains that family and friendship links are the key to understanding individual trajectories to terrorist action. In fact, he argued that the major terrorist threat was no longer al Qaeda but small self-radicalized groups of Muslims in Western societies. These informal local groups, like the Ripoll cell, trying to emulate al Qaeda, are homegrown terrorists from a scattered global network. This is why Sageman called them Leaderless Jihad. In fact, to sustain the argument of Sageman, the chapter 3.3 analyses that there is no evidence that the Ripoll cell was in direct contact with the Islamic State in Syria or Iraq.

Furthermore, consistency is proven also with Donatella dalla Porta's argument. She states that sometimes individuals with little or no prior history of radicalism, like Younes Abouyaaqoub, suddenly surface as terrorists. Those who do make such a leap without prior activism often are influenced at hand of radicalized family members or friends who transfer their radicalism onto others by virtue of having preexisting bonds of trust and personal interdependence.

This suggests that not always individual motivations may be helpful in explaining why the person gets involved with terrorism because the motivation

may not reside with the individual actor itself, rather in the small extremist milieu from which they hail.

Hence, the research suggest that the radicalization of these young men was favored by kinship and friendship. In fact, as analyzed in chapter 3, the Ripoll cell was composed by a set of four brothers all first- and second- generation immigrants from Morocco. Most were childhood friends who went to the same school. This suggests that age and kinship appear to have been the determinant factor in how the cell was structured.

Hence, history suggests that terrorist recruiters mobilized their own siblings and spouses for violent extremist causes. Recalling, Donatella Della Porta's study of the Italian Red Brigades during the 1970s and 1980s, 298 out of 1.214 militants had at least one relative, wife, brother or sister in the movement, which account to slightly less then 25 percent.

In fact, preexisting networks, including the extended family, can facilitate recruitment into radical groups in several ways like the case of Abouyaaqoub that according to his female cousins, Younes was influenced by his cousin Mohamed, also part of the Ripoll cell.

All these features present in the Ripoll cell, consistent with the theories explained in the first chapter, explain the quick radicalization of the young men that organized the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks in 2017 and the radicalization of Abdelhamid Abaaoud the mastermind of the November 2015 Paris attack.

The comparison of the two processes of radicalization highlights that in order to become involved in terror activities it is essential to have personal grievance or a feeling of deprivation that leads an individual to engage in small activities that bring the individual to find other fellows in order to share goals, feelings and thoughts and finally, to the legitimation of a terror organization, rigid categorical thinking and to the dehumanization of victims.

This process can be defined in different ways, with different words but all the main theories of radicalization share the same argument. In order to deeply understand why an individual engages in terror activity, it is essential to combine the complex linkages of the levels between population dynamics (macro level), group dynamics (meso level) and individual dynamic (micro level).

After having clarified radicalization theories and having compared the radicalization process of the two terrorists, it is important to mention also the findings of the research about the difference between the Paris and Barcelona attack in order to analyze future trends of terrorist attacks in Europe.

The main finding of this research is that the Barcelona terror attacks are quite different from the November Paris attacks for two basic elements:

1. The Paris attacks were orchestrated by an organized Belgian cell in direct contact with the broader terrorist network. On the other hand, the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks were planned by a less structured Ripoll cell without a direct contact with the Islamic State.
2. The Paris attack was a sophisticated plan which involved commitment, preparation and trained fighters, while the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks were uncoordinated, unplanned and the fighters were less trained and armed.

If five terrorists, as happened in Cambrils on August 28th 2017, killed only one person after being locked up in a car, this can be view as good news in the perspective of the analysis of jihadist attack in Europe. The five terrorists would have been much more lethal if they had hit the city at five different points with machine guns. The contrast is evident with the terrorists of the Paris massacre of November 13th 2015, who received military training in Syria and caused 132 deaths.

Europe is now at the end of a wave of jihadist violence that began on the 13th of November 2015 in Paris. In 2015, 150 people were killed by jihadist terrorist attacks, followed by 135 in 2016, 62 in 2017 and 2018 ended with only around 20

fatalities from terrorist attacks in Europe.¹²⁸ This represented a major decline from the previous three years.

The last attack occurred while writing this research, on December 11th, 2018, when a lone attacker, Cherif Chekatt, armed with a handgun and a knife, killed five people and injured a dozen in the Christmas market in front of the Strasbourg Cathedral. The Islamic State issued a press release praising Chekatt as a “soldier”, but the role ISIS had in the attack remains uncertain.

As we learned by the recent trend of European Islamic terrorism, ISIS is facing a decline. After years of high-profile, Islamic State inspired terrorist attacks in Europe, the 2018 was relatively tame. About a dozen jihadist attacks took place this year. Thereby, many of these incidents were amateurish, with perpetrators who professed their allegiance to the Islamic State but seemed to be merely inspired by the group rather than having any real connection with it.

The decline in violence is partly the result of the Islamic State’s collapse in the Middle East, which has made it more difficult for the group to recruit and organize attacks in Europe. However, it is also the product of improvements in European counterterrorism. In fact, according to the Europol, in 2016 only three attacks were foiled while 13 were carried out to completion; in 2017, 11 were foiled while only ten were completed. In 2018 it is almost certain that more attacks were prevented than completed.

Due to the scientific research method developed by Alessandro Orsini, it is possible to argue that ISIS was not able to enhance the military capabilities of its terrorist cells in Western Europe. In fact, the Barcelona attack of 2017 confirms what emerges from the comparison of the ISIS massacres from 2015 to 2017.

The Ripoll cell, which carried out the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils was composed by 12 members. However, of those twelve members of the Barcelona cell only one, Younes Abouyaaqoub, was able to carry out a massacre by launching a van on the Rambla, without having any machine guns.

The unprofessionalism of the Ripoll cell is evident. There are three main indicators that shows that the Ripoll cell was not similar to the Paris one:

¹²⁸ Klausen, Jytte. “Why Jihadist Attacks Have Declined in Europe.” *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 4 Jan. 2019, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2018-12-19/why-jihadist-attacks-have-declined-europe.

1. The explosion of the Alcanar house, the day before the Barcelona attack, is the first element that suggests that the Ripoll cell was not well-trained and had no confidence with weapons, explosives and terror techniques;
2. The second indicator, which leads to believe that the Ripoll cell was completely unprepared, is represented by the strategy used for the Cambrils attack. In fact, the Cambrils attack can be defined as one of the greatest failures in the history of jihadist terrorism. Despite the significant number of cell members, the outcome of the attack was only one dead. The five terrorists were unprepared, disorganized and disarmed and they all were killed by one single policeman;
3. Third, none of the Ripoll cell members had technical skills to make explosive belts.

In conclusion, the comparison between the massacres of ISIS shows that, ISIS's penetration capabilities in Western European democracies have proved to be inferior to the fears spread by ISIS propaganda and amplified by the Italian media. At the moment, Europe can be seen as safer from terrorism than it has been in years. However, terrorism has its own cyclical fluctuations. The pattern is usually that terrorist networks use new tactics to surprise unprepared governments. Terrorists then regroup, change tactics, and prepare to initiate a new campaign.

What is essential to understand, in light of this research is that in order to study terrorism and radicalization it is necessary to analyze both the attractive power of the terrorist organizations that lead individuals to become terrorists and also to analyze the military capability of these new types of individuals. I hope that this work may be used as a contribution to the study of radicalization theories and can foster further studies with the aim to analyze the link between radicalization and military capabilities of a new wave and new type of radicalized individuals.

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Summary

Introduction

In the last past years, terrorism has represented the most complex challenge in international debates. For this reason, to understand roots and causes of terrorism is necessary to have a clear definition of terrorism, a linear structure of the process of radicalization, and the basic features of the methods and tactics of terror organizations.

For this purpose, before entering the core argument of this this work is necessary to analyze why it is hard to reach a global consensus about a terrorism definition. Hence, the first two paragraphs face the problem on terrorism definition.

The *first chapter* is dedicated to the radicalization theories in order to have a clear structure of the process of radicalization. This chapter focuses on the most authoritative authors that theorized radicalization process, in order to give a clear structure of the path toward radicalization. The chapter reviews some of the milestones of thinking about radicalization, as scholars and security officials struggled to discern the precursors of terrorist violence. The enormous and still expanding literature on radicalization cannot be fully represented here. However, milestones in radicalization research are fully explained in the first chapter.

The selection of the main theory of radicalization were determined on the basis of contribution to psychological theorizing of radicalization, salience to security officials and author's experience at academic and government-sponsored conferences.

Many authors tried to explain the process that has led an individual to engage in terror activities. Most of them identified structured process with different stages and levels and tried to categorize the process of radicalization, other tried to address the problem focusing on some basic elements such psychology, sociology or social-economy.

The *second* and the *third chapters* will analyze two case studies; Abdelhamid Abaoud, the Belgian-Maroccan Islamic terrorist known as the mastermind of the November 2015 Paris attacks; and Younes Abouyaaqoub, the van driver that killed 14 people on “La Rambla” in Barcelona on August 17th 2017. The aim of these chapters is to describe all the mechanisms, theories and models explained in the first chapter in two different case studies. Describing the process of radicalization of the two terrorists, we will highlight the main difference between them and emphasize the significant moments of their lives in order to compare them with the theories explained in the first chapter.

In light of the main theories of radicalization, the *fourth chapter* will analyze the two process of radicalization and compare it with the DRIA model of Alessandro Orsini. The aim of this section is to apply the theories of radicalization proposed by the authors examined in the first chapter to two case studies of Abdelhamid Abaoud, and Younes Abouyaaqoub. In particular, it will be examined the validity of the DRIA model to two case of homegrown terrorism in Europe and searching for consistency with the other radicalization theories.

Finally, the *fifth chapter* is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the main terrorist attack in Western Europe from 2015 to 2017. The aim of this chapter is to analyze ISIS’s military capability to organize terror attacks. The comparison between the massacres of ISIS shows that, ISIS’s penetration capabilities in Western European democracies have proved to be inferior to the fears spread by ISIS propaganda and that they have been amplified by the Italian media.

Radicalization Theories

The authors presented in the first chapter are: *Fathali M. Moghdam*, that tried to conceptualize the radicalization process through the “Staircase model” which focused on the reason why in a large number of people in society, only a very small minority end up committing acts of terrorism; *Quintan Wiktorowicz*, with his book “Radical Islam Rising” (2005) where the author explained, through its reach empirical detail, the spread of radical Islam in Western Societies; *John Horgan*, with his book “Psychology of Terrorism” (2005) he presents a critical analysis of existing knowledge on terrorist psychology, he highlights the

substantial shortcomings and limitation of the current research and he presents the “IED Cycle Model” in order to trace the cycle of terrorism from involvement to engagement to disengagement; *Marc Sageman*, a former CIA case officer working with the Afghan resistance during the Soviet invasion, attempts to explain terrorism from a scientific approach using tools as statistics, survey techniques and data-driven analysis and with his books “Understanding Terror networks” (2004) and “Leaderless Jihad” (2008). The author focuses on the assumption that terror networks are built through kinship and friendship; *M. D. Silber* and *A. Bhatt*, with their “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat” (2007), drawing on five case studies of arrests and prosecution, the Report argues that there is a remarkable consistency in the behaviors and trajectory of each of the plots across stages and that this consistency provides a remarkable tool for predictability; *Lawrence Kuznar* and colleagues, in “Protecting the Homeland From International and Domestic Terrorism Threats” (2010) they argue that the main key point of this work is to understand the complexity of the interaction that produce terrorist violence, in fact, the main argument of the authors is that terrorism is inherently dynamic; *C. McCauley* and *S. Moskalenko*, with “Friction” (2011) explaining an amazing contribution to the study of radicalization, in fact, they identify twelve mechanism of radicalization which they divide into three sections, individual radicalization, group radicalization and mass radicalization; *Donatella Della Porta*, with a comparative study of his book *Clandestine Political Violence* (2013) in which she describes common mechanism of radicalization to violence in four types of underground groups like Italian and German leftist, Italian rights, Basque ethno-nationalists and al Qaeda jihadists.

Case Studies

All of the radicalization theories explained in the first chapter of this work served as a general framework to analyze the process of radicalization of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the mastermind of the November 2015 Paris attack, and Younes Abouyaaqoub, the terrorist of the Barcelona attack in August 2017.

The study of the early life, the process of radicalization, and the trajectory that led Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub to perform violent acts suggests that the process of radicalization is a multiple mechanism that includes different elements and the construction of one's own path toward terrorism.

Abaaoud's trajectory to terrorism shows remarkable consistency with the mechanisms explained by the authors Mc Cauley and Moskalenko such as; personal grievance, based on perceived injustices; group grievance, based on self-identification with a larger group like KAM and ISIS; slippery slope, based on repeated actions that increase commitments like bringing new members like Salah Abdeslam gradually to violence and desensitization. Therefore, when he makes a video that shows Abdeslam playing with a decapitated head; and risk and status, that young and marginalized people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors to reach status and approval.

Even the case study of Younes Abouyaaqoub and the Ripoll cell shows remarkable consistence with Sageman's "Bunch of Guys" theory in which he explains that family and friendship links are the key to understanding individual trajectories to terrorist action. In fact, he argued that the major terrorist threat was no longer al Qaeda but small self-radicalized groups of Muslims in Western societies. These informal local groups, like the Ripoll cell, trying to emulate al Qaeda, are homegrown terrorists from a scattered global network. This is why Sageman called them Leaderless Jihad. In fact, to sustain the argument of Sageman, the chapter 3.3 analyses that there is no evidence that the Ripoll cell was in direct contact with the Islamic State in Syria or Iraq.

This suggests that not always individual motivations may be helpful in explaining why the person gets involved with terrorism because the motivation may not reside with the individual actor itself, rather in the small extremist milieu from which they hail.

The comparison of the two processes of radicalization highlights that in order to become involved in terror activities it is essential to have personal grievance or a feeling of deprivation that leads an individual to engage in small activities that bring the individual to find other fellows in order to share goals, feelings and thoughts and finally, to the legitimation of a terror organization, rigid categorical thinking and to the dehumanization of victims.

This process can be defined in different ways, with different words but all the main theories of radicalization share the same argument. In order to deeply understand why an individual engages in terror activity, it is essential to combine the complex linkages of the levels between population dynamics (macro level), group dynamics (meso level) and individual dynamic (micro level).

Comparative Analysis of Case Studies and Radicalization Theories

After having analyzed the milestones of the radicalization theories, in order to understand in depth the process of radicalization, it was necessary to choose a theory that could relate with the two case studies proposed in chapters two and three. The selection of the DRIA model is based on a chronological methodology. As a matter of fact, all of the authors explained in the first chapter are represented by Moghaddam (2005) with the Staircase to Terrorism Model up to the DRIA Model (2016) chronologically, in order to highlight the development of the most recent theories based on the contribution of past theories. For this reason, the DRIA model is the most recent model and it is chosen for the comparison between theory and case studies in this work.

The DRIA model is a more in-depth understanding of the situational condition that an individual experienced in the process of radicalization. The four phases; disintegration of social identity, reconstruction of social identity, integration in a revolutionary sect and alienation from the surrounding world, represent the phases in which a radicalized individual needs to face in order to become a vocational terrorist.

The DRIA model compared with the two case studies of Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub, completely reflect the entire path towards terrorism embraced by these two individuals. Even if in different ways, they all engage in the five phases of the DRIA model in order to become terrorists. However, while Abaaoud matches completely in each phase, the case of Abouyaaqoub presents some specifics.

According to the first phase, Abaaoud's disintegration of social identity may be traced back when he was departed from the Saint-Pierre College for his mediocre

grades and disciplinary problems. The perception of different options and opportunities with other peers and the sense of frustration noted also by his friends and teachers, led him to embrace the path towards criminality. His existential crisis is evident also by the petty crimes he engaged in with his friend Salah Abdeslam.

On the contrary, in the case of Younes Abouyaaqoub, we are in presence of a brilliant young man with good grades, good job but a very bad influence from the local Imam which, had connections to the terrorist groups, his friendship and kinship networks. Younes Abouyaaqoub, collectively with the other cell members, cousins and friends, goes through radicalization with other family members, his youngest brother Houssaine (19 years old) and his two cousins Mohamed (24 years old) and Omar (21 years old). In Abouyaaqoub' life there is no evidence of trauma or experiences of failure. Younes seemed to be completely integrated into the local community. He played football with the town team and went to university like others. Suggesting that in the case of Younes' radicalization, the central role was played by the Local Imam, his friends and kin networks.

According to the second phase of the radicalization process, Abaaoud, probably faced the reconstruction of social identity, during the time spent in prison where he approached to jihadist ideology. In fact, when he left the penitentiary of Forest in 2012 he completely changed his behaviors.

On the contrary, Abouyaaqoub's reconstruction of social identity was always referred to the networks of the Ripoll cell. One year before the attack, his cousin noticed his change of behavior when he refused to shake hands to women during his trip to Morocco. Furthermore, the father of Younes states that the Imam was a bad influence for his children because of its interpretation of Islam being too strict. Younes, differently from Abaaoud, underwent a very rapid radicalization thanks to friendship and kinship.

According to the third phase, the Integration into a Revolutionary sect, while Abaaoud physically joined the KAM group in Syria, Younes grew up already in a revolutionary sect. The transformation from a normal group of friends to a revolutionary sect, or a "bunch of guys" as Sageman named in his theory, was due to the influence of the jihadist ideology promoted by Es Satty. In this phase the

Imam plays a crucial role for the radicalization of the youngster. The Jihadist ideology allows them to reconstruct their social identity and to find new existential points of reference for all members of the group.

According to the fourth phase, the alienation from the surrounding world, Abaaoud faced his anthropological transformation favored by extreme forms of social isolation when he was in Syria. Thanks to the video and photos that showed Abaaoud loading bloody corpses into a truck or playing with a decapitated head, we can suppose that Abaaoud completely accepted the idea of killing. He prevented any contact with the Western world that he considered morally corrupted, considering himself morally superior. He stopped his “negative feedback” from the society because he became completely integrated to the group which he recognized; ISIS.

On the contrary, according to the information we have, Younes did not engage completely into this phase. He was alienated by the surrounding world but not completely. The difference between Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub, is that Abaaoud was trained in Syria to fight his Inhibitory mechanism, as Moghaddam suggests, whilst Abouyaaqoub was not trained. He radicalized but not completely. He had no capabilities in making explosives, as we saw with the explosion of the Alcanar House, and he was not trained to use machine weapons. Furthermore, the difference between the strategy of the Paris attack, in which Abaaoud engaged in the restaurant shooting, and the strategy of the Barcelona attack, in which Abouyaaqoub drove into pedestrians, explains its differences. Most people know how to drive, not every person knows how to use a machine gun.

As we will further note in the next chapter, the difference between Abaaoud and Abouyaaqoub is reflected also through the organization of the Paris attack and the Barcelona attack. In the Paris attack, the cell was sophisticated and trained to kill in different ways, places and with different weapons, whilst the Ripoll cell was completely unprepared, disorganized and failed to perpetrate a terrorist attack like the one in Paris, despite the fact that they had 10 “militants of the Islamic State”.

Comparative Analysis of the main terror attack in Western Europe from 2015 to 2017

After having clarified radicalization theories and having compared the radicalization process of the two terrorists, it is important to mention also the findings of the research about the difference between the Paris and Barcelona attack in order to analyze future trends of terrorist attacks in Europe.

The main finding of this research is that the Barcelona terror attacks are quite different from the November Paris attacks for two basic elements:

1. The Paris attacks were orchestrated by an organized Belgian cell in direct contact with the broader terrorist network. On the other hand, the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks were planned by a less structured Ripoll cell without a direct contact with the Islamic State.
2. The Paris attack was a sophisticated plan which involved commitment, preparation and trained fighters, while the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks were uncoordinated, unplanned and the fighters were less trained and armed.

If five terrorists, as happened in Cambrils on August 28th 2017, killed only one person after being locked up in a car, this can be view as good news in the perspective of the analysis of jihadist attack in Europe. The five terrorists would have been much more lethal if they had hit the city at five different points with machine guns. The contrast is evident with the terrorists of the Paris massacre of November 13th 2015, who received military training in Syria and caused 132 deaths.

Europe is now at the end of a wave of jihadist violence that began on the 13th of November 2015 in Paris. In 2015, 150 people were killed by jihadist terrorist attacks, followed by 135 in 2016, 62 in 2017 and 2018 ended with only around 20

fatalities from terrorist attacks in Europe.¹²⁹ This represented a major decline from the previous three years.

The last attack occurred while writing this research, on December 11th, 2018, when a lone attacker, Cherif Chekatt, armed with a handgun and a knife, killed five people and injured a dozen in the Christmas market in front of the Strasbourg Cathedral. The Islamic State issued a press release praising Chekatt as a “soldier”, but the role ISIS had in the attack remains uncertain.

As we learned by the recent trend of European Islamic terrorism, ISIS is facing a decline. After years of high-profile, Islamic State inspired terrorist attacks in Europe, the 2018 was relatively tame. About a dozen jihadist attacks took place this year. Thereby, many of these incidents were amateurish, with perpetrators who professed their allegiance to the Islamic State but seemed to be merely inspired by the group rather than having any real connection with it.

The decline in violence is partly the result of the Islamic State’s collapse in the Middle East, which has made it more difficult for the group to recruit and organize attacks in Europe. However, it is also the product of improvements in European counterterrorism. In fact, according to the Europol, in 2016 only three attacks were foiled while 13 were carried out to completion; in 2017, 11 were foiled while only ten were completed. In 2018 it is almost certain that more attacks were prevented than completed.

Due to the scientific research method developed by Alessandro Orsini, it is possible to argue that ISIS was not able to enhance the military capabilities of its terrorist cells in Western Europe. In fact, the Barcelona attack of 2017 confirms what emerges from the comparison of the ISIS massacres from 2015 to 2017.

The Ripoll cell, which carried out the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils was composed by 12 members. However, of those twelve members of the Barcelona cell only one, Younes Abouyaaqoub, was able to carry out a massacre by launching a van on the Rambla, without having any machine guns.

¹²⁹ Klausen, Jytte. “Why Jihadist Attacks Have Declined in Europe.” *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 4 Jan. 2019, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2018-12-19/why-jihadist-attacks-have-declined-europe.

The unprofessionalism of the Ripoll cell is evident. There are three main indicators that shows that the Ripoll cell was not similar to the Paris one:

1. The explosion of the Alcanar house, the day before the Barcelona attack, is the first element that suggests that the Ripoll cell was not well-trained and had no confidence with weapons, explosives and terror techniques;
2. The second indicator, which leads to believe that the Ripoll cell was completely unprepared, is represented by the strategy used for the Cambrils attack. In fact, the Cambrils attack can be defined as one of the greatest failures in the history of jihadist terrorism. Despite the significant number of cell members, the outcome of the attack was only one dead. The five terrorists were unprepared, disorganized and disarmed and they all were killed by one single policeman;
3. Third, none of the Ripoll cell members had technical skills to make explosive belts.

In conclusion, the comparison between the massacres of ISIS shows that, ISIS's penetration capabilities in Western European democracies have proved to be inferior to the fears spread by ISIS propaganda and amplified by the Italian media. At the moment, Europe can be seen as safer from terrorism than it has been in years. However, terrorism has its own cyclical fluctuations. The pattern is usually that terrorist networks use new tactics to surprise unprepared governments. Terrorists then regroup, change tactics, and prepare to initiate a new campaign.

What is essential to understand, in light of this research is that in order to study terrorism and radicalization it is necessary to analyze both the attractive power of the terrorist organizations that lead individuals to become terrorists and also to analyze the military capability of these new types of individuals. I hope that this work may be used as a contribution to the study of radicalization theories and can

foster further studies with the aim to analyze the link between radicalization and military capabilities of a new wave and new type of radicalized individuals.