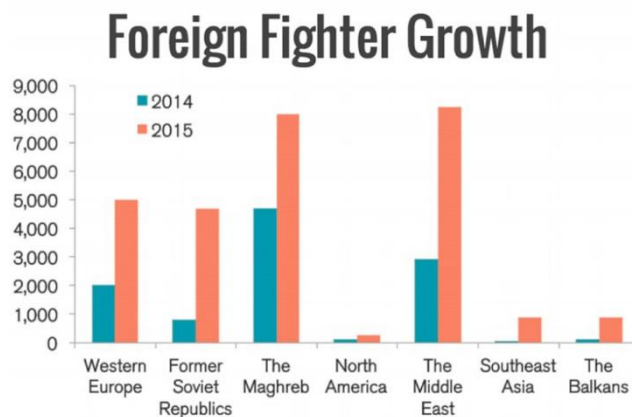# ISLAMIC TERRORISM RECRUITMENT IN EUROPE

Research Paper

INTRODUCTION

Islamic terrorism has been in the center of global threats watch list for two decades now – with now global or meaningful solution on the horizon. Despite number of strategic efforts and initiatives addressing both combating and preventing Islamic terrorism, there is clear and present danger as well as growing perspectives. Having a global outreach, Islamic terrorism has affected all regions of the world, some more than others. The experts' opinion from the 90-ies which blamed the less developed regions of the world with predominant Muslim population as source of this evil has proven wrong. In fact, this strategic mistake from 20 years ago has paved the way for today's dynamics and characteristics of the Islamic terrorism. The majority-accepted thinking that Islamic terrorism will be eradicated just by fighting ISIS, Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab and other similar terrorist organizations in their geographical havens is also negatively impacting the solution. The fact remains that without good recruitment and support that these groups receive from the developed regions and countries, Islamic terrorism would not be what it is today.

TIME article[1] from March 2016 refers to Europe as "Ground Zero for Terrorism" and there is obvious logic behind this analogy. Out of the five stated reasons for this, number two is titled "Recruitment Base in Europe". Considering the fact that by the end of 2015, the number of ISIS fighters coming from Europe reached over 5,000, and the fact that this figure doubled in size since mid-2014, one might ask the question: Why is Europe the third highest contributor of ISIS foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, right after The Middle East and North Africa? Not considering the fact that Europe became the hottest target for Islamic terrorist attacks in the world, it is essential to address the subject of why and how is Europe used as ground for recruitment of Islamic terrorism supporters and members.

Source: Soufan Group

FOREIGN FIGHTERS - An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq (Dec 2015)
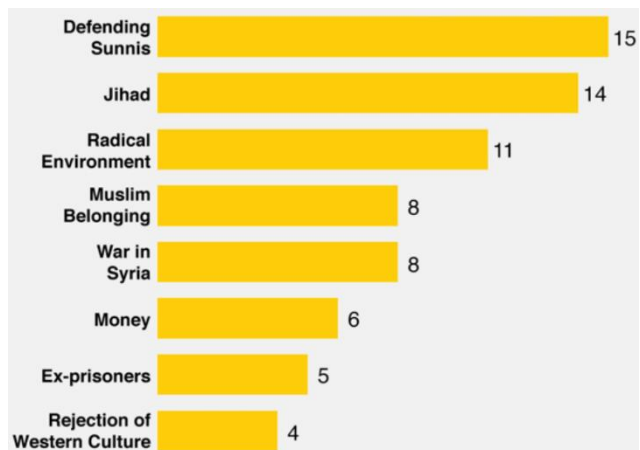
This Research Paper addresses the specific questions of the contributing factors that influence people to support or join the Islamic terrorism and the profile of the population that is targeted by the recruitment efforts.

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[1] http://time.com/4268579/brussels-attacks-islamist-terrorism-isis/

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The contributing factors that influence foreign fighters to joint Islamic terrorism can be divided in three key groups:

1. Motives – the most important according to numerous analysis in the past years. The motivation is the first step in the process and has been subject to research over the years in order to identify the likely motivating factors. To some extent, this question has, and still is, a subject of extensive debate and polarization of expert opinions. Per the first opinion, the key motivating factors are ideological, cultural and religious. This group of motivational factors include several sub factors such as religious extremism and its influence on the population especially the youth, cultural intolerance which to some extent also draws roots from the religious sub factors, rejection from the local culture, fragmentation between the ideologies that are favored by the Islamic terrorists opposed to the ideologies of modern society. The second opinion emphasizes the socioeconomic sub factors such as lack of education, poverty, unemployment and recognition of the person among the environment in which he or she lives. Both opinions have validity. A March 2015 White Paper prepared by the Quantum Communications, Lebanon based advisory firm, obtained interviews with 49 ISIS foreign fighters with questions regarding the motivation for joining ISIS. Out of the total sample, 40 interviewees responded with ideological, cultural and religious motivated answers. This specific example has been chosen due to its relevance in Europe. Most of the analysis on the profiles of Europe-originated foreign fighters show that initial motivation behind the acceptance of Islamic terrorism is either religious or ideological in nature.

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