JIHADIST TERRORIST ORGANIZATION USAGE OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS SURROUNDING THE RECRUITMENT,

MOTIVATION, AND USAGE OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS

By

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is an important issue in foreign affairs, and the recruitment methods of terrorist organizations have been of central focus. More so, how does this recruitment play a role in not only Middle Eastern countries but in the Western countries as well? This paper examines how jihadist terrorist organizations have recruited people from western civilizations to join their organizations and the commonalities of these foreign fighters. Centrally, what rational and meta-rational factors lead to the successful recruitment of foreign fighters?

This paper steps into the shoes of three foreign fighters to provide an case study analysis and a deeper understanding of how and why these people join jihadist terrorist organizations. It examines the situation and factors that surround these foreign fighters, from their country of origin to their personal lives. There is no one reason that people choose to become foreign fighters, but there are common themes that can be analyzed. The most common factors explained in this paper include existing Jihadist connection, personal social exclusion, pursuit of Islam, disillusionment with the West, and sense of community. This grouping of factors is by no means exhaustive or mutually exclusive, but provides a guideline for identifying commonality.

This topic is essential to counterterrorism efforts in Western countries. Preventing a flow of dedicated foreign insurgents to terrorist organizations can help reduce their impact and help increase international security. The more that can be understood about the reasons of this phenomenon, from both the perspective of the foreign fighters and jihadist terrorist organizations, the easier it will be to eliminate this international security concern. The ability to proactively identify threats can help eliminate domestic terror and cut off the supply of support to organizations centered in the Middle East.

Introduction

A mother of four from Indiana, heavily involved in her Baptist faith. A Bosnian immigrant working to make a life in the United States. A college student from the East Coast. An engineering student from Belgium. An introverted hacker from the UK. And a teenager from a small village in France. What could this diverse group of people have in common? All three were involved as foreign fighters with jihadist terror organizations in the Middle East (Wright 2019). All have varying life experiences, ages, and geographical locations. So why do people from Europe and the United States join terrorist organizations based in the Middle East, and what common factors surround these individual decisions?

Terrorism is an important issue in foreign affairs, and the recruitment methods of terrorist organizations have been of central focus. More so, how does this recruitment play a role in not only Middle Eastern countries but in the Western countries as well? This paper examines how jihadist terrorist organizations have recruited people from western civilizations to join their organizations and the commonalities of these foreign fighters. What rational and meta-rational factors lead to the successful recruitment of foreign fighters?

The term "foreign terrorist fighter" or "foreign fighter" is relatively new but describes a long standing phenomenon. A foreign fighter is widely accepted as, "an individual who leaves his or her country of origin of habitual residence to join a non-State armed group in an armed conflict abroad and who is primarily motivated by ideology, religion, and/or kinship (UNODC 2017)." This paper uses case studies of six foreign fighters to provide a deeper understanding of how and why these people join jihadist terrorist organizations. It examines the situation and factors that surround these foreign fighters, from their country of origin to their personal lives. There is no one reason that people choose to become foreign fighters, but there are common

themes that can be analyzed. The most common factors explained in this paper include existing Jihadist connection, personal social exclusion, pursuit of Islam, disillusionment with the West, and sense of community. This grouping of factors is by no means exhaustive or mutually exclusive, but provides a guideline for identifying commonality.

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Understanding Terrorism

Currently, the largest amount of research that exists is focused on terror organizations and their public leaders. Terrorism is difficult to study because of the nature of the phenomenon. It is difficult to have exact numbers and specific intelligence on terrorists because their main objective is to avoid identification from Western authorities. Most research and legislation in the United States is geared toward a perspective that solely poverty catalyzes terrorism. This view was adopted after 9/11, however research today suggests this is not true. New research is emerging about current causes of terror and the demographics of those that join and support Jihadist organizations (Mauslein). At present, there are few specialized studies on the phenomenon of foreign fighters and their recruitment. This lack of information stems from the

fact that governments of Western countries have no way of knowing exactly how many of their citizens become foreign fighters and no way to track them once they radicalize.

What is Terrorism?

Terrorism is not something that can be definitively categorized. It is a concept that is constantly evolving and changing. Terrorism now is not what it was before 9/11. Rather, it is a term that provides a frame of reference to define certain activities, with fluid boundaries. This saliency makes it more important to study and identify the different types and boundaries of terrorism (Walter 2003). To respond to terrorism, we must be able to define it. Title 22 of the U.S. Code defines terrorism as "politically motivated violence perpetrated in a clandestine manner against noncombatants" (Ruby 2003). Another important point that has been made by researchers in the area is that terrorism is also done to instate fear in the audience and victims. There has been a significant amount of research done in the field of terrorism, by organizations such as START and the Rand institute.

Organizations that provide large databases on terrorism have impact on the study of this phenomenon and the prevention of it. START and the Rand Corporation are just a few of these that provide databases of information compiled on terrorism. START is an organization supported by the Department of Homeland Security in the United States as a center of excellence. It has a thorough collection of data evidence on almost any topic on terrorism imaginable. Their categories are terrorism and violent extremism, counterterrorism and countering violent extremism, radicalization and deradicalization, risk communication and resilience, and unconventional weapons and technology. This paper draws heavily on the categories terrorism and violent extremism and radicalization and deradicalization.

The Rand Corporation is financed partly by the U.S. Government and partly by private enterprise. They have many other categories that include all topics in public policy. This paper draws on the national security and terrorism category the most. This includes helpful information on defining terrorism and also the causes and consequences of terrorism. These sources also provide some of the limited information on foreign fighters. They have reports and analytical findings that were used in this paper. It is important to remember that the study of terrorism is not exclusive to Middle Eastern terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. There are other forms of terrorism that are studied. Research in the area of terrorism truly began in 1978 with research on sky jacking, however the field grew rapidly following the September 11 attacks.

Currently, research on terrorism works on differentiating between the study of domestic and international terror. Other main topics that are studied are the phenomenon of networked terrorists (covered in this paper), foreign counterterrorism aid, and economic impacts. Analytical research on terrorism relies heavily on the compilation of event data (Sandler 2014). One such data compilation is the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE) dataset coding information on various aspects of transnational terrorism (Mickolus et al. 2016). In addition, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) which is part of the START Institute records both transnational and domestic terrorism events (START 2018). These are helpful for other analytical reports on terrorism (Sandler 2014).

Terrorism has been studied extensively, especially since 2001. Along with many studies that prescribe solutions and responses, efforts to understand and explain terrorism have tended to focus on its consequences and its causes. Studies focusing on its consequences say that terrorist attacks have low probabilities, but extreme consequences when they do occur. The main

consequences of terrorism are seen through the amount of casualties, election results, damage to attack site, and effect on the economy growing and tourism (Arce 2019, p. 371-396). Terrorism, especially when casualties are involved in an attack, tends to increase the odds of cabinet turnover in the following election. Transnational terrorism in particular disrupts incumbents standings (Park & Bali 2017, p. 1343–1370).

Consequences of terrorism can also be adverse effects on the economy of a nation (Arce 2019, p. 371-396). There can be macroeconomic effects on the GDP of the country and the growth of the economy. Countries that experience terrorist action also can lose foreign and local investment due to the perception of more risk within the country (Blomberg, Hess & Orphanides 2004). Additionally there are the microeconomic effects of terrorism to consider in the immediate areas of terrorist attacks.

Generally, economic consequences of terrorism are not felt as strongly by wealthy and diverse countries. However, smaller governments that experience a lot of terrorism will face extreme loss of GDP - up to 10% during any given terrorist campaign. Small developing countries will also show extreme adverse effects of terrorism. Many terrorist groups occupy failed states, the terror scares off investment, and thus prevents any growth. Primary effects of terrorism are localized to the immediate area and most nationwide effects subside quickly (Sandler 2014). For example, after 9/11, the stock market crashed but had recovered its lost value within 30-40 days (Chen & Siems, 2004).

Current studies of the causes of terrorism tend to focus on one or more of three categories: identity, political causes, and economic grievances (Sandler 2014). Identity comes up when the terror is rooted in religion or clash of societal norms. There are certain norms and traditions that are wildly different in parts of the world. Anger at the freedom and liberation of

the West is seen as a main cause, but it goes beyond that. The existence of this culture is seen as an attack on the morals and norms of others. Additionally, clash of religious beliefs plays a large part in the identity category cause of terrorism (Badey 2002). However, the focus on religion as a root of terrorism causes people to overlook other causes that may be more directly linked, like economic causation. Many world religions face controversy and hate, and it is easy for some to place blame on a different religion simply because it is not their own and they are uneducated on the fundamental aspects (Tarlow n.d.).

Of course, political tension causes terror as well. It is an alternative to fully fledged war and certainly makes an impact on the government of the receiving country. Notably, the U.S. involvement in Iraq catalyzed certain terrorist organizations and helped to fuel their existing displeasure for the West. Two main political factors are political transformation and instability. The main concept between these two areas is that if either exists in a country's government, it makes it easier for terrorist organizations to push their own ideas. In turn, unstable and weak governments can't prevent terrorist organizations from doing this, and can't fend off terror attacks (Krieger 2010). Additionally, political grievances from repressive governments can provide a factor for terror. If a government is actively oppressing a population, the citizens may turn to terrorism as a form of autonomy and to make their opinions known (Krieger 2010, p. 20-25).

Similarly, economic grievances can be an additional cause of terrorism. Economic inequality and disproportionate economic growth result in frustration, that can be expressed through terror (Skjølberg 2001). Additionally, socio-economic inequality, even only perceived inequality, leads to conflict. This social unrest can escalate into terror (Diez-Nicolas 2003). There have been significant studies linking socio-economic and political development to the

development of terrorism. Due to this, policy on counterterrorism aims to address these concerns and help solve political and economic insecurity issues. While immediate impacts of terrorism on the economy may not appear to be large, the long term impacts are indeed substantial and one of the worst consequences of terrorism, because it is a cause and consequence simultaneously (Krieger & Meierrieks 2010, p. 3-4).

While the root cause of terrorism is far more complicated than poverty alone, literature on terrorism is still overwhelmingly focused on the impacts of poverty and economic instability (Krueger 2018, p. 5). One of the solutions to helping to eradicate jihadist terrorist organizations is solving the worldwide crisis of poverty. While this won't eradicate every problem, improving quality of life by stabilizing the economies of the Middle East, where most jihadist terror organizations are located, will help stabilize the community and decrease the rage that fuels terror and participation. So much of this participation can be explained by an economic factor, people that don't have stability participate in terrorism because they are unsatisfied, and even people that are stable will participate on behalf of seeing the instability around them (Krueger 2018, p. 6). Of course, instability of an economy only exacerbates social issues like lack of education and healthcare. However, this applies to terrorism in general. Economic factors haven't been linked to where foreign insurgents come from before joining jihadist terror organizations. Furthermore, terrorist activity impacts the community where it occurs, so the cause becomes the consequence and creates an unending cycle of economic instability and terrorist activity (Krueger 2018, p. 1-10.).

There is no sole cause of terror, domestic or transnational. However there are certainly factors that contribute to its occurrence, including identity, economic, and political factors. The groups affected by these factors may turn to terror if their concerns are not addressed. The

groups that go down this route tend to be very extreme in their beliefs and militant by nature. It is believed that poverty is a contributing cause of terrorism, however this has been proven otherwise. It is more accurate to say that a deprivation of rights and liberties that can be a result of poverty, can in turn cause terrorism. It was also ultimately found that a middle ground economy experienced more terrorism than the very poor or very wealthy (Enders & Hoover 2012). This is because people in the poorest countries must be focused on their daily life and basic needs. Conversely, people in the wealthiest countries tend to have adequate rights and resources, therefore less to fuel the factors causing terrorism (Sandler 2014).

Current Status of Global Terrorism

ISIS and other terror organizations are viewed with passionate aggression by most U.S. citizens. Following 9/11, the country was united in a mutual hatred for the terrorists that were responsible. Terror is a bipartisan issue, and while different people may have different ideas on how to approach its elimination, people around the world want to see these organizations fall. This holds true for European countries as well (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

In 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi rallied jihadist Muslims internationally with his declaration of a caliphate and restoration of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIS), a terror organization that originated from insurgency in Iraq following the American invasion of Iraq. Anti-government uprising in particularly Syria, but all over North Africa and the Middle East, began in 2011 and was met with harsh action from the Syrian government. However this just attracted foreign volunteers to the Islamic State, which garnered tens of thousands of recruited "soldiers," far more than seen even with al-Qaeda (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018). ISIS' power and reach has been greatly reduced since losing territory. However, this could potentially lead to greater threats

because members are dispersed throughout the world, and may be in a better position to act themselves (Mauslein 2019).

There has been an increase since 2014 in attacks that Europol categorized as "jihadist" and "religious." Additionally, terrorism experts assess the organizations that pose the largest terror threat are ISIS, Al Qaeda and affiliates, and anti-Israel groups like Hezbollah. The most lethal form of terrorism is attacks by violent Islamic extremists, which account for almost all fatalities and casualties. European authorities also report an increase in arrests linked to jihadist terrorism. In Europe, policymakers are concerned with Islamic State connections to EU citizens and widespread influence within Europe (Archick 2014).

The Islamic State now tells supporters in the Western world to carry out attacks from their home location. They instruct followers to kill "disbelievers," and give them directions to carry out attacks. The Islamic State will claim those responsible for attacks are "soldiers," but often there is little to suggest individuals are acting on order or assistance from the organization (Archick 2014). However, while it is difficult to destroy guerrillas and terrorists, their military power simply cannot rival that of developed nations. In 2015, Syrian and Iranian government forces created militias, along with Russian air power, began closing in on the Islamic State in western Syria (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018). By 2017, the expansion of ISIS had been practically eliminated, but most analysts believe an armed struggle will continue.

This provides a context in which to view the following case studies that are analyzed. It is important to view these case studies within the current status, as many may associate the status of terror as pre- 9/11 and post 9/11. The reality is that the status of terror is constantly evolving and all research must be viewed from the lens of the current status.

What are Foreign Fighters?

There is no one specific characteristic that foreign fighters have. In fact, the few foreign fighters with available information are extremely different, with no common theme tying them together except leaving their country to fight for a terrorist organization. While outwardly foreign fighters seem completely different, there are certain characteristics that influence one's decision to become a foreign fighter. The phrase "foreign fighter" is defined by David Malet as "non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts" (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

Foreign fighters are expendable and passionate, a combination that usually designates them to be assigned to suicide missions. Thus, many foreign fighters died in cities and towns that were held by the Islamic State. Others leave the Islamic State for different jihadist fronts or return to their home countries. Many of these foreign fighters that return have been disillusioned with the Islamic State, however some wish to return to further their commitment to the jihad (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

While there is no single identity of a foreign fighter, there are trends that can be used to categorize the overall population of jihadist sympathizers in the U.S. and Europe. The demographic of these people is typically male with an average age of 27. They affiliate most commonly with the Islamic State when they go to Iraq or Syria. States that have the highest recruitment rates proportionally to Jihadist organizations are Minnesota, Ohio, and Virginia. For foreign fighters coming from Europe, there is not an abundance of demographic data. However, there is a correlation of foreign fighters living in cities in Europe with high concentrations of impoverished areas. For example, most foreign fighters seen coming from Belgium come from Brussels, Antwerp, or Vilvoorde (Verwimp 2016). Additionally, European countries with low

labor market participation and fewer educational opportunities and success among immigrants tend to have a higher number of foreign fighters travel to Syria (Verwimp 2016). While these profiles can summarize a broad population of foreign fighters, there are different circumstances surrounding each individual's situation and different roles and motivations for pursuing a career in terror. (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

Where are Foreign Fighters From?

There are currently 9,000 captured ISIS fighters in Syria that have not been dealt with by any country. These fighters come from over 80 different countries. In February 2019, Donald Trump made a public statement asking the world to take back their foreign fighters (Wright 2019). The U.S. has not published information on how many Americans joined ISIS. However, the number is small in comparison to other countries like Russia, China, European allies, and surprisingly, nations with drastically smaller populations. Tunisia has a population of eleven million but over 3,000 of its citizens were radicalized. In comparison, only 300 Americans have tried to travel to the Islamic state but many were arrested before leaving U.S. shores (Wright 2019). Thus far, the U.S. has allowed back a third of American foreign fighters who were members of the caliphate.

Around 5,000 EU citizens have become foreign fighters in Syria or Iraq for the Islamic State and other groups since 2011. Around 30% of these foreign fighters have tried to return to Europe (Archick 2014). Only this small fraction of Islamic State fighters will end up returning, and of this small amount only a couple have been involved in terror attacks upon return. Many die before they can return, or are not allowed to return by their country of origin. The largest threat is the union of returning ISIS members and local radicals. An example of this combination wreaking havoc was the terror experienced in France and Belgium from 2014 - 2016. Unlike

Europe, the United States does not have the same large population of isolated immigrant groups. These diasporas in Europe provide easy access to those sympathetic to the returning foreign fighters and provide a secretive place to stay. Important counterterrorism measures in the U.S. focus on avoiding establishing this environment in the United States. However, suspicion among locals that returning fighters may actually be police informants may help to keep these people isolated from one another. Additionally, evidence shows that jail sentences can't solve the problem. Homegrown terrorists in addition to those that go abroad were first radicalized at home, and the focus must be to stop recruitment at its source (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

People who have staged attacks on Europe - including those that are responsible for the major terror attacks in Paris and Brussels - were originally European citizens (Archick 2014). They then trained and fought with ISIS. It is believed these two attacks in particular were engineered by the Islamic State from Syria (Archick 2014).

Motivations of Foreign Fighters

Even with the threat of prosecution for betraying their country, people will join jihadist terrorist organizations. Americans and other Western citizens are involved with underground cells of ISIS that still exist in Syria and Iraq (Wright 2019). Prosecution of those in the U.S. that pledge allegiance to ISIS are swift - "[The U.S. has] prosecuted over 100 cases against individuals who tried to travel to support ISIS and have brought up charges against several who have returned, including as recently as earlier this year," said Marc Raimondi, the Justice Department spokesman. However, there is no real way of knowing how many foreign fighters join ISIS, and how many end up dying for ISIS (Wright 2019).

There are varied reasons that people from a foreign country would choose to leave and live the lifestyle a terrorist organization provides. Some choose to leave because they see themselves as oppressed in their home countries, and would prefer to live with similar minded believers and build the network of jihadist-Muslims. Others are drawn to fight in ISIS forces, to fight the non-believers and spread their warped ideology through violence. Others still come to learn and gain experience to launch new organizations in their home countries to bring jihadist fronts to the Western world (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018). Data since 2011 has been able to establish trends of motivations for foreign fighters on a macro level (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

Recruitment of Foreign Fighters

While the Islamic State does recruiting through the Internet and social media, in person meetings also are a significant method for recruitment of foreign fighters and play a role in coordinating travel from the United States to Syria. There is not a clear and organized underground jihadist network that exists in the U.S., but there are numbered connections to be made which leads U.S. intelligence to believe there is only a small fraction of critical individuals that coordinate all new mobilization.

The main priority of counterterrorism efforts is to prevent this network from growing, and eliminate the method of recruitment from within these Western countries. Furthermore, there is always a threat with the foreign fighters that wish to return to their home countries. Some experts anticipate Islamic State leaders looking to stage terror attacks in Western countries to get revenge for the destruction of the caliphate, however it is much more common for jihadist terror attacks to be conducted by radicals that have not been abroad rather than returning fighters. Now,

propaganda and recruitment is geared towards war because ISIS can no longer focus on building a physical empire after losing territory. It is a concern that with no physical location for these people to congregate we will see an immediate increase in homegrown terror attacks and they will wage war domestically (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

Travelling to jihadist terror organization territory in either Syria or Iraq is the most common form of terrorism for U.S. native jihadists. Cases of this kind of mobilization to Syria or Iraq have actually decreased regularly since 2015 (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

Analytical Framework / How to Categorize Foreign Fighters

In the study of causes, some scholars have focused on mobilization and recruitment with special attention to why people join and/or support terrorist groups. Many people that join jihadist militant organizations are centrally located to the main areas in Syria and the Middle East. While a wide variety of citizens in these areas may be recruited by organizations there are rational and also meta rational reasons that they will end up joining (Tinsley 2019). People join for individual reasons locally, and these reasons can be multifaceted. Some categorical reasons include sociocultural, economic, psychological, spiritual, and other causes. But the reasons people join even on a more specific level than this can relate to their role within the organization once they have joined. Militants in the lower level of organizations join for the idolization of the group or cause, promises of wealth, sex, and/or property, religion, or just if they have no other options. At the higher level of jihadist terrorist organizations people join for these reasons as well - no one reason will exist in a vacuum and they are not mutually exclusive. However, higher ranking members may also join because they are "professionalized" and their job is now to perform a high level task for terrorist organizations (Tinsley 2019).

One aspect of recruitment and mobilization that is increasingly important but less studied is the recruitment of foreign nationals and the factors that surround this phenomenon. The first category of foreign fighters is known as networked travelers. These people use their individual contacts with Jihadist sympathizers in their country of origin to coordinate their journey. These people have connections to each other and groups of individuals and can form into a network and travel to Syria or Iraq together. Or, they may travel as individuals and contact others that are involved in jihadist groups. In the study on American Jihadists in Syria and Iraq done by the George Washington University School on Extremism, it was found that 87% of foreign fighters have connections to other foreign fighters and travel with other jihadists. (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 39).

Some of the first people to arrive in Syria and Iraq were classified as pioneers, the second category of foreign fighters (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 23). They will have typically gained a level of leadership in their organizations and are distinguished from other foreign fighters because of skills they possess from prior experiences upon arrival in Syria or Iraq. These skills may include military experience, previous relations to jihadist organizations, religious or ideological knowledge, or practical skills like computer coding or assembling of bombs. These skills allow them to attain higher positions in terror groups, and they are often used to recruit other individuals in their home country network and to garner foreign support for jihadist groups. In a sample study of 64 foreign fighters done by the George Washington University's Program on Extremism, only 4 foreign fighters were classified as pioneers totaling as 6.3% of the sample. While this category of foreign fighter may make up a small portion in a representative sample, it has an enormous impact on recruitment and terror (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018).

Loners are the final category of foreign fighters. These foreign fighters are in contrast to the other two groups and defy the significance of the network in connecting individuals to terror in Syria and Iraq. They travel without the help of those that they have links to. For these loners, the most important resource is the internet. They make connections online and receive advice through these online advisors. In the sample from the George Washington University School on Extremism study 6 cases were loners, composing 9.4% of the sample. Loners are the most difficult to identify and prevent from traveling abroad because they all have extremely varied lives and reasons to mobilize. They don't have logical connections to terrorism and could truly be anyone (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55).

In addition to these three categories, there are five central factors contributing to the foreign fighters' recruitment - regardless of if they are networked travelers, pioneers, or loners - that will be analyzed in this paper. These factors are having an existing Jihadist connection, personal social exclusion, pursuit of Islam, disillusionment with the West, and sense of community. It was found that those typically used by jihadist terror organizations to recruit foreign fighters are actually former foreign fighters themselves. Anyone connected to these jihadists would have a higher chance of being recruited and would be more likely to become a foreign fighter themselves (Watts 2008, p. 5). An fMRI study of brain scans of a test group of European Muslim men showed evidence that push toward radicalization or pro-extremism group ideology increased after social exclusion (Pretus 2018, p. 1-3). Additionally, one main way of recruitment is appealing to those that wish to pursue a pure form of Islam. This recruitment is less war-like, and focuses on the reality that the Islamic State was essentially a semi-functioning governing body that certainly grounded their actions in religion, even though this was a twisted version of religion (Mauslein 2019). In terms of foreign fighters, the Islamic State is the largest

hub of foreign fighters. This has a lot of do with disillusionment with the West. People may not like the society or capitalism, but whatever their personal reason, they determine it necessary to go spread their message with a jihadist terror organization (Mauslein 2019). Finally, people do find a community of those that have similar mindsets within jihadist terror organizations. This community can begin with online social media groups and end up with a physical community in the area that the organization occupies (Benmelech and Klor 2016, p. 2-4). These five factors will provide deeper understanding of the motivations and recruitment of the fighters within the three categories.

Research Design

This paper analyzes six cases of foreign fighters. It draws from the three outlined categories of foreign fighter - the networked traveler, the pioneer, and the loner. There are two sets of these three outlined categories: one using individuals from the United States, and one using individuals from Europe. The cases are controlled with 3 being US citizens and 3 being European citizens that had no direct contacts with terror prior to their decision to travel to the Middle East. All six went to Syria, and all six joined the Islamic State. From the United States there are two men and one woman. The three case studies from Europe are all men. These cases will be organized around the five factors that guide the paper, in a hypothesis generating format.

These cases were selected for the fact that three come from the United States and three from Europe, and all end up in Syria working for the Islamic State. They all have different motivations for going, which exhibits the wide array of situational factors individual to each foreign fighter. They draw from the main motivations of foreign fighters found throughout the research: jihadist connection, social exclusion, pursuit of Islam, disillusionment with the West, and sense of community.

The main source of information for these cases comes from a study done by George Washington University's Program on Extremism. It is an in depth account of the phenomenon of foreign fighters and studies 64 American Jihadist foreign fighters, or travelers as they are referred to. The study draws from court documents, in person interviews, and social media. Evidence for these cases also comes from reputable news sources that published articles about these foreign fighters upon return, when they were sentenced, or about the phenomenon of foreign fighters in general.

This paper uses an inductive approach. It includes six case studies and information to put them in context. By analyzing and studying these cases we will be able to pull out the common factors that link the cases together. These factors will provide a deeper understanding in an area that has relatively little research. The five factors group these cases together but the cases are easily divided into categories of what type of foreign fighter is being analyzed. This provides another level of confirmation of the five factors, showing that they are central to fighters from all backgrounds discussed.

U.S Case Studies

Samantha Marie Elhassani - The Networked Traveler

Why would a Baptist mother from a small town in Indiana uproot her family of two children and move to Syria to join ISIS? Why would anyone uproot to this drastically different life? Even more complicating - why would someone that was a previous F.B.I. informant turn on her country like this? These questions may never have definite answers, but this case of a U.S. foreign fighter joining ISIS provides new insight into the phenomenon of foreign fighters.

Samantha Marie Elhassani, also known as Samantha Sally, is 32 years old today. A Baptist mother from Elkhart, Indiana, whom not many would peg for an active terrorist. She married her second husband in 2012 and raised a family in Elkhart where she ran the shipping company Viabox with her husband (Peterson 2018). During this time, she was a paid FBI informant, supplying information about serial numbers of cell phones being shipped overseas (Peterson 2018). Her husband Moussa, a Muslim-American, introduced her to a new view on life.

In 2015, Moussa, Samantha's husband, crossed the Syrian border and joined the Islamic State (Peterson 2018). She went with him to Syria along with their two children. They proceeded to have two additional children in Raqqa, the capital of the Islamic State. In 2017, Moussa was killed in a drone strike and Samantha took her four children and left Raqqa while it fell. In that year they were detained by U.S. militia and she was questioned by the F.B.I., where she asked to be repatriated. Upon return to the United States, she was charged and put in jail, while her children went to the care of Indiana social services (Wright 2019).

Elhassani was charged on August 22, 2018 with a two count indictment with conspiring to provide material support to ISIS and aiding and abetting individuals providing material support to ISIS. According to the indictment, from the fall of 2014 to the summer of 2015, Elhassani provided support and resources to ISIS, well aware that the organization was a functioning terrorist organization. Additionally, the charges included aiding and abetting two different individuals who were ISIS personnel by procuring tactical gear and funds for them. In July of 2018, Elhassani was transferred to the custody of U.S. law enforcement from the custody of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). She was charged with making false statements to the FBI. The charges for her prison sentence are up to forty years; Elhassani pled not guilty.

The ISIS personnel she provided "support and resources" for were her husband and his brother. She transferred money out of the U.S. and bought them rifle scopes and binoculars. During her trial, it was argued that Samantha only supported her husband's plans before he joined ISIS, and that he was the true terrorist (Peterson 2018).

One very incriminating factor in the case is her use of her children to further ISIS propaganda. Elhassani shot a video of one talking about a suicide belt with a voice off camera inquiring what fuse would be used if he encountered "American pigs" (Peterson 2018). In this video, ten-year-old Matthew (renamed to Yusef in the caliphate) says, "My message to President Trump, the puppet of the Jews: Allah has promised us victory and he's promised you defeat. It's not going to end in Raqqa or Mosul. It's going to end in your lands. So get ready. The fighting has just begun." After this, the child loads a rifle and looks through the scope (Wright 2019).

It was alleged that Elhassani suffered from PTSD upon return to the United States, but Judge Philip P. Simon decided against letting her out of jail to treat potential mental health issues (Peterson 2018). During the trial, the defense claimed she was simply manipulated and controlled by her husband. The prosecution said Elhassani is a liar who voluntarily went to the war zone, helped her husband, bought three Yazidi slaves, and claimed to repent after. Returning to the three types of foreign fighters, Samantha would be categorized as a networked traveler. She had connection to the jihadist world through her husband and his brother, and went abroad to Syria with a group happening to be her family (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018). While there is no certain reason she decided to radicalize along with her husband, we can theorize reasons based on her demographic. Primarily, being married to a Muslim man with jihadist connections and living in rural Indiana, she may have felt the social exclusion that many foreign fighters feel. She could feel like her choice was between being with her husband and being an

American citizen.

Abdullah Ramo Pazara - The Pioneer

Abdullah Ramo Pazara, originally from Bosnia, was an immigrant to the U.S. who became a naturalized citizen. He lived in St. Louis, MO for years before becoming involved with the Islamic State and going abroad to Syria in May 2013. Pazara was one of the first foreign fighters who went abroad to Syria that the U.S. government acknowledged. He drew a lot of attention from the media, the government, and terrorism experts. With this attention, the media quickly discovered that Pazara had a history of military engagement, fighting in the Bosnian Civil War years before joining ISIS. He had connections to the multiple Bosnian nationals that were already in Syria when he arrived there and used this network to insert himself into the command of ISIS. He rose through ranks in Syrian jihadist organizations to finally become a commander of an Islamic State tank battalion. He also was able to use his connections back in the U.S. to supply himself in Syria with tactical military equipment and more. Ultimately, 6 of his Bosnian immigrant connections in the U.S. were indicted for this.

Pazara is a pioneer when grouped into the three groups of foreign fighters. He made his own network, quickly set himself apart with value once he arrived in Syria, and kept contact with the U.S. to expand Jihadist influence (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Born Ramo Pazara, he later adopted the name Abdullah. He was born in 1976 in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia which was a part of communist Yugoslavia at the time. The area he grew up in was religiously diverse, populated by mostly Orthodox Serbians but also Bosnian Muslims and Catholic Croats. A formative event in his adolescence was the Bosnian Civil War. His hometown, Teslic, was subject to the ethnic cleansing during the war. The town experienced

liquidation of Bosnian Muslim political leadership, bombings, and the establishment of concentration camps. The Bosnian Serb force fighting against the Bosnian Muslims was Vesak Republike Srpske (VRS). Pazara started a career as a sniper for VRS at age 17 despite being a Bosnian Muslim himself (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

It is thought that Bosnian Muslim jihadists established ties to jihadist brigades in Bosnia at the time of the civil war. However, Pazara is an exception. In the VRS forces, it is unlikely he fought against jihadists. So he did not meet jihadist connections during this time, but it was essential to his later experiences. After he finished fighting and the war ended, the Pazara family could not return home due to the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims and were forced to go to the diaspora (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Pazara came to the U.S. in the late 1990s and didn't disclose his participation in VRS because he feared prosecution for war crimes. He didn't apply for formal citizenship until he had been living in the U.S. for 15 years. He first lived in Warren, Michigan and founded a commercial truck company with his wife at the time in 2004. The company struggled and went into enormous debt in its three active years. Pazara and his wife divorced in 2007 and his wife got custody of the trucking company. Pazara filed for bankruptcy in Michigan and had to forfeit much of his property, he spent much of his time with relatives in Utica, New York (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30). In Utica, Pazara met one of the people he would contact once he moved to Syria: Nihad Rosic, a fellow Bosnian immigrant with a long history of domestic abuse (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Pazara later moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 2011 to search for work and with the outward appearance of a devoted Salafi believer at the time. The greater St. Louis area is actually the largest Bosnian community outside of Europe with over 70,000 Bosnians living there and is

marked as one of the most well-adjusted diaspora communities. Even in this close community, Pazara was an outsider, with a local leader saying that "nobody" knew him. And even with his outward appearance of conservative Islam, no local imams in St. Louis report to know him (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Around the time Pazara moved to St. Louis, the Syrian conflict began to escalate. This concerned many of the people living in the Bosnian diaspora, many who had personal experience with similar events in Bosnia. Salafi-jihadist groups took advantage of this atmosphere to recruit online and with social media, telling the diaspora to act on the persecution of Muslims in Syria and join their militant groups (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Pazara became a U.S. citizen in May 2013 and left quickly after to travel to Syria to fight. At this point, he adopted Abdullah as his first name and traveled to Syria eleven days later. He made the journey with Harris Harcevic and remained in contact with Nihad Rosic who also hoped to travel to Syria after serving time for domestic violence charges. After Pazara arrived in Syria, he contacted his friends from St. Louis, Ramiz and Sedina Hozdic, who began to reach out on their network to raise money and supplies to send to Pazara (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Pazara adopted a high level role once in Syria. He commanded a mid-level tank and vehicle battalion for the Islamic State, with a unit of 60 to 70 men. When he first arrived in 2013, ISIS was not as well known or well organized as it is today. He originally fought for a smaller jihadist organization, Jaish al Muhajijreen w'al Ansar, which eventually meshed with other organizations to form the Islamic State. Most information we have on Pazara's days in ISIS is through his social media accounts, where he recorded his contacts, news, pictures, and more.

Much of his account was direct propaganda as well, recruiting others for combat and proving his devotion to the cause (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

September 22, 2014 Pazara died in a battle at Kobani, aged 38. Pazara is one of the only Americans to achieve such a high rank within ISIS. Combat experience from the Bosnian Civil War helped him succeed in Syrian combat in ways that other Americans couldn't compete with. He also played an essential role in capitalizing on the network he had remaining in the U.S. and gaining financial and material support from them. He is a perfect example of a pioneer traveler, distinguishing himself from other Americans because of his extensive experience and utilization of a support network (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 22-30).

Mo - The Loner

The final category of foreign fighter is the loner. This traveler is not as common, and makes his or her trip in solitude without face-to-face recruitment. One loner traveler turned himself into the U.S. consulate in Turkey after joining the Islamic State. George Washington University's Program on Extremism gained an exclusive interview with this individual, who is identified in the literature as "Mo" (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

He was one of the first U.S. citizens that made the journey to Syria. He left his life on the east coast in 2014. As a young Muslim American, Mo traveled to Syria "to live in a Sharia environment," and joined the Islamic State after (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

Mo cites the root of his choice to a moment he experienced while at university. His class watched a video of the film *Submission,* in which a young woman wore a burqa that was see-through and had Quranic verses as tattoos. "The burqa is the ultimate symbol of virtue and purity, members of my own family wore it. I didn't see it as purely offensive, but a desecration.

This idea of freedom of speech was being used to desecrate," said Mo (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

He saw that his peers watched the film without reaction, which he viewed as an implicit approval of the film and its themes. He wanted to voice his anger at seeing his peers in this different light. He started to do research on how to respond to the themes he saw in the film as a Muslim-American. While it would be simplifying the situation to say this film prompted Mo to join ISIS, it certainly catalyzed a series of events leading to the decision. Interestingly, the woman in the film reminded him of his sister who had died years before while pregnant. Perhaps this personal trauma was part of his push to radicalization (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

Throughout his online research, Mo came to view Anwar al-Awlaki, American-Yemeni al-Aaeda ideologue and recruiter, as particularly influential and as a truthful source on Islam. His conclusion after an amount of research was that no valid Muslim could live in the West. He ruled that the moral and social environment was not right for Muslims to observe their religion. He came across the term *hijrah,* which at its essence means a journey for the purpose of Islam. However, this is one of many terms in Islam that has been twisted to reflect radical ideas. IS recruiting propaganda uses the term to reflect the importance of travel of Muslims in the West to Syria or Iraq to fight for their values (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

Mo originally intended to journey to Saudi Arabia but couldn't matriculate to the University of Medina there and wasn't able to recite enough Quranic verses to gain entrance. While ISIS recruitment propaganda does place emphasis on punishment of enemies and militant aspects of the group, at the time a lot of propaganda also featured the idea of Islamic State territory as an Islamic retreat with proper sharia law where Muslims could thrive. "The effort of

IS as I saw it was Islamic government, and that's what I wanted," said Mo (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 57). Mo's anger at the West and desire to live in a perfect sharia society allowed him to look past the issues of violence and extremism within the Islamic State. He claimed to not know that ISIS was "like al-Qaeda" (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

As he became more interested in the Islamic State, he began to use the social media platform Twitter to follow other members and supporters and get direct news of the group. He decided to travel to Syria, but his internet use sent up signal to the FBI, and he was interviewed by agents from the Joint Terrorism Taskforce in 2014. He told them he didn't have the ability to travel to Syria, but booked his flight just a week after. Before arriving he didn't make connections with current members of the Islamic State to get help crossing the border and joining the group. Upon his arrival, he made contact with an influential ISIS supporter on Twitter who helped put him in contact with local people to help with his travel. He then used the messaging app Kik for communications. In the process of getting to Syria, his group was arrested and beaten by Turkish border guards but quickly released (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

When in Syria, he quickly became disillusioned with the group. He claims to have never had the intention of fighting, but purely joined ISIS in search of a shared sharia environment. He found people to be different in their practice of Islam than he had hoped and did not find a sense of community. He began to fear for his life after suicide bombing became an emphasis and the new members were given a suicide vest to look at. While he had misgivings, "most of the Americans I met during my time in Syria were very ideological and ready for fighting," said Mo (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

Mo and the other recruits were first moved to Camp Farooq for further jihadist indoctrination and then to Camp Abdullah Azzam for military training. Mo's faltering belief in

the organization was obvious and he received threats and was called out by other members. Mo was given choices to become a suicide bomber, fighter, or an *inghimasi* (which is a fighter on the front line that also wears a suicide vest). He offered his services as a researcher instead and was sent to western Syria to work on transport logistics and designing bunkers and underground tunnels (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

By this point, Mo decided to leave the Islamic State. He told the group he wanted to meet a girl from online before he proposed, and got permission to leave. However he ran into ISIS patrol at the border and was forced to go back. This raised red flags among leadership and people quickly were suspicious. He was worried he would be killed, which put more pressure on hastening his escape. He took a risk by buying a SIM card and messaging the FBI who he hoped would be able to pick him up across the border. He was taken out by a local smuggler and made it to Turkey where the FBI had directed him to find the U.S. Consulate (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

He got back to the U.S. where he was charged on two counts for his terrorist actions but willingly provides information about his experiences with investigators. His intent to live in a Sharia society is common among those that become foreign fighters. This is important to consider, many truly believe that the jihadist ideal presented is the best way to practice and live their religion. To others thinking of joining ISIS, Mo says, "don't be impulsive, think and sit still before you do something stupid" (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

Mo's status as a loner is interesting. These kinds of foreign fighters are so rare because it is typical that fighters are recruited in person, which creates an automatic network. The extent of Mo's recruitment was his negative view of the West, the desire to live in a perfect Islam society, and the propaganda he saw on Twitter. He had no contact until his arrival in Syria, and even this

was pulled together with social media. Perhaps this played a part in his claim to "not know" how violent ISIS was and his quick regret at making the journey. He didn't have a realistic view of what he was getting into (Clifford, Hughes, & al. 2018, p. 55-62).

U.S. Case Studies Analysis

When looking at these cases, we can sort them into five main factors that influence the phenomenon of foreign fighters. While not all of these cases fit with each of the five factors, this provides a better overview of the reality of foreign fighters than a cookie cutter model would. The reality is that each foreign fighter is an individual and therefore has their own reasons to choose this life that don't necessarily line up with the choices and factors surrounding other foreign fighters. The five factors in this paper are meant to give general guidelines and areas to look into when considering foreign fighters.

The first and maybe most obvious factor is having a jihadist connection. This is seen mostly in the case of Samantha, whose husband and brother were already connected to jihadist organizations in the Middle East. Pazara also had connections to multiple other Bosnian immigrants that were already in Syria before he arrived. This factor is a constant for everyone in the networked traveler category of foreign fighter, which is also the largest category of foreign fighter.

Another factor to consider is social exclusion. Many of the people that become foreign fighters are not well acclimated and have trouble finding their place within their community. We see this overarching theme with all three case studies here. Elizabeth was married to a Muslim man in a small area of Indiana and also worked as an FBI informant for a period of time, two things drawing a large separation between her and many others in her community. Pazara never

found his place in Saint Louis despite being in the largest Bosnian diaspora in the world. Mo felt alienated from his peers and from Western culture as a whole.

Pursuit of Islam is seen mostly with Mo in the case studies. This factor is closely tied to jihadist propaganda and recruitment methods. Terror groups twist religion to serve their purposes and use this version to attract recruits. Some join groups like the Islamic State because they truly believe it is the most authentic practice of Islam and are shocked at what they find the group to actually be.

In relation to this, disillusionment with the West is another important factor to consider. Mo for instance was upset with the culture that went against Islamic modesty. This and the cavalier attitudes of his classmates led to his disillusionment with the West. Pazara also became disillusioned with the West. In the United States he experienced a failed business and failed marriage and felt failed by the West.

Finally, people may be searching for a community. This is a primal human instinct and while ISIS and al Qaeda may be terrorist organizations they still serve as a community for their jihadist minded members. Pazara, after having no community in the United States and being forced out of his homeland of Bosnia, found a community in Syria and was able to hold a leadership position within it. While Mo didn't find the community he traveled to find, he was motivated to become a foreign fighter by the desire to practice Islam with like-minded people and was encouraged by the community of Islamic State recruiters he found on social media. This desire that every human has becomes more apparent and more twisted when it leads people to become foreign fighters and pursue a jihadist community.

Five Traits v. US Case Studies

Five Traits v. US Case Studies

	SAMANTHA MARIE ELHASSANI	ABDULLAH RAMO PARAZA	MO
JIHADIST CONNECTION	X	X	
SOCIAL EXCLUSION	X	X	X
PURSUIT OF ISLAM			X
DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE WEST		X	X
COMMUNITY	X	X	X

This chart can provide an essential visual to looking at the five factors. It is interesting that the two factors common to all are social exclusion and sense of community. These are two factors that on a base level, all people understand. But when at an extreme, people can use them to justify violence and terror.

European Case Studies

Bilal al-Marchohi – Networked Traveler

Research shows that many European born foreign fighters have motivations to seek justice (Sultan 2020). They see Muslims as being persecuted for their beliefs and victims to foreign intervention in the Middle East. Many harbor feelings of negativity toward Europe and regard the culture as anti-Muslim (Sultan 2020).

"The wear of hijab was forbidden in school, and it's part of our identity," said Bilal al-Marchohi, a Belgian national with Moroccan roots. Born and raised in Antwerp, Belgium, al-Marchohi lived in the Borgershout neighborhood. This area became a conflict zone between migrants and police during the Sharia4Belgium movement in 2010. Al-Marchohi was politicized at a young age by this political climate in his neighborhood and through attending events like pro-Palestine demonstrations and public debates on wearing of the hijab (Sultan 2020). Antwerp, Verviers, Vilvoorde, and Brussels have high rates of foreign fighters departing for Syria. Twenty nine young adults left from these area of Belgium and many that live there say that there is abundant systemic discrimination of Muslims (Sultan 2020).

In his formative years, he studied engineering at the University of Antwerp. He was first radicalized after becoming friends with an individual that read books about radical Islam (BBC 2019). "When the Syrian revolution broke out, I read on the Internet about the actions of the Nusra Front and the Free Syrian Army, their fights against the Syrian armed forces, the liberation of areas and the living conditions of the people there," said al-Marchohi (BBC 2019). The common sentiment of a desire for justice for Muslims is apparent in al-Marchohi's motivations. This sentiment is seen across the board for foreign fighters coming from Europe, and especially those coming from environments discriminatory toward Muslims.

While living in Antwerp, al-Marchohi attended the De Koepel mosque. The imam of this mosque, Youssef, became a foreign fighter before al-Marchohi and moved to Syria, inspiring al-Marchohi's path to becoming a foreign fighter. He found himself in disagreements with his family, but his nephew and some friends helped encourage him to leave for Syria (BBC 2019). At 18, al-Marchohi followed in his footsteps and along with his girlfriend and other acquaintances, left for Syria. They joined the Nusra Front in the beginning, however after

internal and external conflict within the organization, deserted and joined the Islamic State
(Cebrián 2019). Although his position within the Islamic State was as a religious police officer,
al-Marchohi came under the national spotlight in 2017 for his suspected involvement in plotting
a major attack at a Paris train station, Gare du Nord (Cardiff 2017). This caused French police to
issue a manhunt for al-Marchohi and others.

There is not much information publicly available about al-Marchohi's other experiences
while working for the Islamic State. However, he did not spend a relatively long time in Syria.
After the city of Raqqa was under siege for months, al-Marchohi fled the Islamic State at 23
years old and hoped to be repatriated to Belgium (Cebrián 2019). He brought his wife and two
children with him during the escape and sought out a Kurdish check post (Cebrián 2019).
Kurdish militants separated al-Marchohi from his wife and children, sending them to an Islamic
State relatives camp. He was transported to a prison near Tabqa, where he was interrogated on
his Islamic State involvement by United States officials (Cebrián 2019).

U.S. military members took al-Marchohi to Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan. In an interview, al-
Marchohi claimed, "I was alone. I stayed there for two months and I went crazy. It was very
hard...Because of the strong lights I was not able to sleep (Cebrián 2019)." Al-Marchohi was one
of the first jihadis to be brought from Syria to Iraq following the liberation of Raqqa. He said he
met Belgian intelligence agents in Iraq, claiming they told him, "we will take you to the local
government now and you will wait to see the judge and maybe you go back to Belgium, maybe
not (Cebrián 2019)." However, al-Marchohi did not get repatriated, he was brought to Iraqi
counterterrorism forces in Baghdad and put through a harsher interrogation (Cebrián 2019). He is
now at the will of the judicial system of Iraq, and will not be able to return to Belgium. Most
Western governments are hesitant to repatriate any citizens involved with the Islamic State and

leave them to face the judicial system in their country of surrender. In the Iraqi courts, al-Marchohi was sentenced to death for his involvement in the Islamic State but has not been executed yet (Cebrián 2019).

Junaid Hussain - Pioneer

Junaid Hussin was born in 1994, to second generation British nationals. His family roots traced back to the Pakistani section of Kashmir originally (Hamid 2018). He grew up in the Small Heath district of Birmingham and moved to Kings Heath in his adolescence, a desirable area to live in the United Kingdom (Hamid 2018). His father was a respected man in the community and had a business for private hire taxis. Junaid was described as shy and withdrawn by his friends but also as passionate and thoughtful. He was passionate about technology and would be able to talk to others about this subject (Hamid 2018). A friend that knew him since the age of 15 said, "you couldn't really see too much of his emotions, unless he was online ... He was quiet in real life. He was louder online. I'd say he was more himself online than in real life (Hamid 2018)." His online friends, "hacktivists," described him as outgoing and very differently than friends that knew him in person (Hamid 2018).

Hussain began his career in hacking at age 11, when while playing an online game someone hacked into his account. With revenge in mind, he started researching how to hack and gradually started educating himself. He joined online forums and worked his way up to hacking entire websites and servers (Hamid 2018). Hussain also gained an interest in politics. As he got older and learned more, he started joining protests in the streets and gained an interest in the oppression of Muslim people (Hamid 2018). However, he was not very invested in Islam personally and was said by a family friend to have only been to the mosque on a few occasions

but to have, "a bitterness toward the suffering in Kashmir, Palestine, Iraq – those sort of places (Hamid 2018)."

He started getting into "Hacktivism" and assembled a group of 8 like-minded hacktivists to create TeaMpoisoN. Hussain said, "I started using hacking as my form of medium by defacing sites to raise awareness of issues around the world and to 'bully' corrupt organizations and embarrass them via leaks etc., which is how I got into hacktivism (Hamid 2018)." Hussain went by the name TriCk and every other member of TeaMpoisoN had a code name as well. The group was involved in December 2010 hacks of Zionist, right-wing, and anti-Islam Facebook pages and continued to target these pages (Hamid 2018). In February 2011, Hussain hacked EDL's website and left a message saying, ""I am an extremist, I try extremely hard to hack websites to raise awareness of issues, I'm a terrorist, I terrorize websites & servers, But the EDL are extremists too, they try extremely hard to kick Muslims out of the UK, and they are terrorists, they terrorize local Muslim communities & businesses – Myself & the EDL are both extremists & terrorists, but why do they want to kick me out? Because I follow a certain religion? I was born in UK, my skin colour may not be the same as yours but my passport colour is… (Hamid 2018)."

He continued to escalate his cyber-attacks posting personal information of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, hacking Blackberry, Croatia's NATO website, and collaborating with notable hacking group 'Anonymous' and others (Hamid 2018). An important attack occurred in April 2012 when TeaMpoisoN hacked the UK Counter Terrorism Command's (CTC) hotline. In an interview during the same month, Hussain bragged about his ability to avoid the police and the fact that he was not afraid of going to prison. Ironically, he was arrested hours after this interview (Hamid 2018). The barrister assigned to his case, Ben Cooper, described Hussain as, "very reserved, very meek, very softly spoken, ... a very unassuming, even humble young man

(Hamid 2018)." Hussain was arrested under charges for the Tony Blair email hack and CTC hack (Hamid 2018). He did not object to the charges and pleaded guilty in court. After spending 104 days on curfew, the judge sentenced him to two consecutive three month sentences, and was given early home release only a month and a half into his sentence (Hamid 2018).

Before prison, Hussain was a self-proclaimed extremist and cyber terrorist and wanted to combat oppression shown toward Muslims. However, he was not a supporter of political Islam. Prison seemed to be where his shift toward radical Islam occurred, and he was reported by other inmates to have spent most of his time with known radicals (Hamid 2018). After his release from prison, he seemed to turn things around. He created the website "illSecure.com" to provide a legal and supportive online forum for hackers to test their skills lawfully and focused on his work at university (Hamid 2018). He also continued to attend protests and rallies and frequently posted about politics on Facebook. He was actually arrested again at one of these rallies but was released on bail and the charges were dropped (Hamid 2018). "When I heard about what eventually happened with [Hussain], I was concerned that the sentence had been counter-productive. I thought that if I had just kept him out of prison maybe things could have been different," said Ben Cooper (Hamid 2018). When Hussain was on bail after this arrest in 2013, he left for Syria. He made an announcement of this on Facebook once he arrived (Hamid 2018). However, there are few details about Hussain's actual journey and meet up with the Islamic State. He took the name Abu Hussain al-Britani and some friends from home said that he tried to convince them to join him in Syria via social media (Hamid 2018).

Hussain had an online relationship with Sally Jones before making the trip to Syria. She was 25 years older than him and converted to Islam. She made the trip to Syria at the same time as Hussain and met up with him there (Hamid 2018). She claimed in an interview she married

Hussain the day she arrived in Syria and converted the son she brought with her to Islam that day as well (Hamid 2018). Another Islamic State member Hussain knew before and after his move to Syria is Adbel-Majed Adbel Bary, a rap artist from London. They were friends while living in the United Kingdom and also once they both arrived in Syria (Hamid 2018). Through various social media posts, it is possible to put together a timeline of Hussain's locations while in Syria. Along with Jones, he was most likely in the Idlib Province of Syria into August 2014, and went to Raqqa after that. When in Raqqa, Hussan and Jones were identified in the press and gained notoriety in the British tabloids. This was only enhanced by the couple's constant use of social media promoting Islamic State messages and calling for more recruits to migrate to Syria (Hamid 2018).

Hussain worked in online recruitment and propaganda for the Islamic State. He was active in promoting on social media and messaged and called recruits. He was one of the founding member of was dubbed "The Legion." The Legion was an English-language based online recruitment group of twelve members within the Islamic State that reached thousands worldwide with propaganda and online contact (Hamid 2018). Aside from online recruiting, Hussain was involved in countless attempted terror plots in the United Kingdom and United States alike. He helped plan attacks and coordinated directly with attackers located in the West. Additionally, he was the head of the Islamic State Hacking Division (ISHD) but it is unclear how extensive his role was in actual hacking. A combination of his work in recruitment and propaganda, involvement in plotting terror attacks, and work in hacking made him listed at number three on the United States Pentagon's target list. He was taken out on August 24, 2015 in a United States drone strike, at age 21 (Hamid 2018). Other members of the Legion were also

killed around this time and there has been speculation that Jones and her child were killed too, but it has not been confirmed (Hamid 2018).

Maxime Hauchard – Loner

Maxime Hauchard hails from the small town of Bosc-Roger-en-Roumois, France where he was born in 1992 and used to live with his parents and little sister (Penketh 2014). He was a pizza delivery man in the town and was described as "quiet" by a next door neighbor, Rene Bret. A friend described him as "weak and easily influenced (Guardian 2014)." Hauchard's mother and father lived in Bosc-Roger-en-Roumois for 20 years and both had jobs and were respected in the community (Penketh 2014). The town is reported to have few problems with youth. However, neighbors report that the youths do not have a support system, can become very isolated, and that it can be difficult to make friends (Penketh 2014). Despite this, it would seem that Hauchard has little to no reason to become involved in the Islamic State and travel to Syria. In Research done about French foreign fighters it is theorized that, "this is not the revolt of Islam or that of Muslims, but a specific problem concerning two categories of teenagers – mostly immigrants, but also native French citizens. The question is not the radicalization of Islam, but the Islamization of radicalism (Roy 2014)."

At age 17, Hauchard converted to Islam after being born and raised in the Catholic faith (AFP 2018). He decided to do so after watching YouTube videos and was often seen in a djellaba robe with a beard. He attended a mosque regularly (Penketh 2014). Before his radicalization, his only encounter with the authorities was a felony conviction for driving with no insurance (Ing 2014). According to the French police, Hauchard transitioned into a radical mentality after conversing with Islamic State recruiters via Facebook and online jihadi forums (Penketh 2014). Hauchard went to Mauritania in 2012 to study Salafism, the radical branch of

Islam, but did not view the religion there as being strict enough. His move to Syria came in

August 2013, when he posed as a humanitarian worker alone and came into Syria through

Turkey. This is not an uncommon path in France, as there are approximately 1,100 French

nationals in contact with the Islamic State and 400 that have traveled to Syria (Penketh 2014).

"To show allegiance, you must first go to a training camp. The first stage lasts around a month.

We do some training, we go on operations, and after that we return to training," Hauchard said in

an interview in 2014 (AFP 2018).

In Syria, Hauchard was given the name Abu Abdallah el Faransi. In an interview with

BFMTV, a French news station, he said that he wished to help establish an Islamic caliphate and

he was expecting "martyrdom" for his efforts. He also said in this interview that he had been

stationed in the Islamic State controlled town of Mosul, in Iraq, and was expecting to go on a

more "spectacular" mission shortly (Guardian 2014).

Hauchard was identified by French police as an executioner in a 2014 Islamic State video

showing the beheading of American aid worker Peter Kassig and 18 other Syrian military

captives (Penketh 2014). He was unmasked in this video and has never tried to conceal his

affiliations with the Islamic State, posting pictures to social media regularly (AFP 2018). The

identification of the 22 year old sent shockwaves through Bosc-Roger-en-Roumois. "He's a good

kid. He would never do that," said Bret, Hauchard's former neighbor. After the identification

was made, France issues an international warrant for his arrest and the U.S. Department of State

put Hauchard on its list of specially designated global terrorists (AFP 2018). He drew attention

again in 2015, when he tweeted "Brazil, you're our next target" shortly after the Paris terror

attacks of 2015 (AFP 2018). It is speculated he was referencing the Rio de Janeiro Summer

Olympics in this threatening tweet (AFP 2018). It was reported that Hauchard died sometime

during the summer of 2017, however the circumstances and death have not been confirmed (AFP 2018).

European Case Studies Analysis

In a deeper analysis of the European case studies, we have to consider the same nuances applied in the United States case study analysis. Due to the fact that each case is unique, the five framing factors will not provide a comprehensive list of the motivations and circumstances that surround each foreign fighter's decision to travel to Syria. It is important to understand the smaller details of each case study. The five framing factors provide a basis for comparison and show common reasons why these individuals decided to travel abroad.

Both Bilal Al-Marchohi and Junaid Hussian had a jihadist connection before traveling to Syria. For Al-Marchohi, his connections through his mosque played a significant part in his radicalization and gave him a network to travel though when he made the journey. In the case of Hussain, his connections were developed while in prison. He was seen with a group of known jihadis and shortly after leaving prison, made the trip to Syria. This was facilitated and influenced by his jihadist connections.

There is evidence of social exclusion in the cases of Hussain and Hauchard, however due to limited available research it cannot be ruled out as a factor for Hauchard as well. In Hussain's case, he felt social exclusion in his community and country as a whole due to his skin color and religion. He said himself, "I was born in UK, my skin colour may not be the same as yours but my passport colour is… (Hamid 2018)." This social exclusion he felt and observed pushed him deeper into hacktivism and ultimately to the Islamic State. As for Hauchard, his social exclusion comes from living in a small town in France, without many people his own age to interact with. Bosc-Roger-en-Roumois is comprised of a homogenous French citizenry and Hauchard may

have felt that his family did not fit in. Interestingly, Hauchard "contradicts the idea that non-Muslims convert to Islam out of solidarity with those in the same boat as them (Roy 2014)."

The pursuit of Islam is present for all three European case studies. This is an interesting trend to look at, especially considering all three were involved with the radicalized Islam of the Islamic State before they traveled to Syria. Al-Marchohi was radicalized through his connections at his mosque. The Iman there traveled to Syria before him, and was an essential part of his radicalization. Al-Marchohi went in search of strictly radical Islam societies and viewed all others aside from the Islamic State as too lenient. Hussain developed a pursuit for Islam later in life which was emphasized during his stint in prison. He was involved with a group of jihadis in prison that contributed to his radicalization and decision to travel to Syria as a whole. Hauchard converted to Islam at age 17. He found the faith through YouTube videos, however was introduced to radical Islam through Islamic State recruiters. This transition brought about his decision to travel to Syria.

Through quotes and social media postings – it is clear that Al-Marchohi and Hussain felt a strong disillusionment with Western culture. The two were both politically active and were motivated heavily by social issues in their communities and countries. It is clear that both empathized with the hate and oppression felt by Muslims worldwide and pointed blame at Western culture and governments in general.

Interestingly, none of the European case studies show a desire for community as a motivation. This category, like others, is based on evidence found in research and direct quotations from the individuals discussed. Without delving into pure speculation, it could be a possibility that this did contribute to their motivations, however there is no evidence in the research to back that up.

Five Factors v. European Case Studies

	BILAL AL-MARCHOHI	JUNAID HUSSAIN	MAXIME HAUCHARD
JIHADIST CONNECTION	X	X	
SOCIAL EXCLUSION		X	X
PURSUIT OF ISLAM	X	X	X
DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE WEST	X	X	
COMMUNITY			

Analysis of US Case Studies in Comparison with European Case Studies

What first jumps out when comparing the case studies by region and the five framing factors is

the potential for there to be different motivations for foreign fighters that are dependent on the

region they come from. While it would be better to use a wider data pool, the five framing

factors appear to be more correlated to each case based on region than category. There is a low

correlation between the five framing factors and the category of foreign fighter. It is apparent

that there is potential for a correlation between motivations of foreign fighters and country / region of origin.

It comes as no surprise that even when comparing across region, the loners have no jihadist connections and the other categories do. This is simply due to the nature of the categories. Social exclusion seems to be more tied to category than region as well. As for disillusionment with the West, this does not seem to be particularly correlated with either.

Looking at pursuit of Islam, we see that this is present for all European case studies and only one United States case study. Is it possible that there is more religious intent tied to fighters coming from Europe? This would be a hypothesis to analyze on a larger scale of cases.

Finally, looking at the community category, there is a complete split by region. All of the United States foreign fighters fall under this factor while none of the European cases do. Is it possible that fighters are coming from different kinds of communities depending on the region they come from? Further research into the environment and communities that foreign fighters live in prior to traveling to Syria could add insight into this category.

Comprehensive Chart of Case Studies Across Region and Category

	Networked Travelers		Pioneers		Loners	
	SAMANTHA MARIE ELHASSANI	BILAL AL-MARCHOI	ABDULLAH RAMO PARAZA	JUNAID HUSSAIN	MO	MAXIME HAUCHARD
JIHADIST CONNECTION	X	X	X	X		
SOCIAL EXCLUSION	X		X	X	X	X
PURSUIT OF ISLAM		X		X	X	X
DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE WEST		X	X	X	X	
COMMUNITY	X		X		X	

Hypotheses Generated

Jihadist connection has influence on the method of recruitment of foreign fighters and also on the reasoning of the fighters for joining. This connection provides a link for the person to become a networked traveler, giving them access to resources and help to make the journey to the headquarters of the organization. This factor involves a more personal recruitment and ready acceptance. Additionally, this adds a human aspect that may convince people to join despite doubts about the jihadist groups actions because the recruitment process can address these concerns more easily. Jihadist connection influences foreign fighters by giving them personal relations, customized recruitment process, and easy access to a network. The more Jihadist connections any given person has, the more likely is their recruitment to become a foreign fighter.

While many people face social exclusion in their daily lives, the factor of social exclusion can influence someone's decision to become a foreign fighter. This type of social exclusion runs deeper than everyday loneliness. This is social exclusion on a level of not fitting into society. Feeling this type of alienation obviously doesn't push every person to join a jihadist terrorist organization but in the case of those considering radicalization, it can push them over the edge. Social exclusion leads to people that may be already considering radicalization to become a foreign fighter to escape and fight the society that rejects them. The more socially excluded someone feels in their society, the more likely they are to become a foreign fighter.

Interestingly, the factor pursuit of Islam was the least common in these case studies. While the jihadist terrorist organizations market themselves to some as a place of pure Islamic

devotion, that is far from the truth. The type of Islam these organizations use is exploited and solely twists concepts of Islam to fit their agenda and recruitment. It serves their recruitment ideals to promote a pure place to practice Islam, however foreign fighters that join for this factor soon discover the truth. Pursuit of Islam is not a goal of jihadist terror organizations, rather a tool for manipulation and recruitment of foreign fighters. The more a person desires to pursue Islam, the more likely they are to be recruited as a foreign fighter by Jihadist Terror Organization propaganda.

Disillusionment with the West draws off of the other five factors. This is something that ties especially to social exclusion and pursuit of Islam. The Western culture is much more liberated than many countries that have high proportions of practicing Islamic people. The concepts of modestly and gender roles are not executed in the same ways. This can lead to frustration for those in the West that believe the culture makes it impossible for them to live out their lives or values. Additionally, the social and political history of the West, especially of the United States, adds to the disillusionment many foreign fighters have. Disillusionment with the West can influence many foreign fighters decisions to join jihadist terrorist organizations, because the organizations promote a heavily anti-West agenda. The more disillusioned with the West someone is, the more likely they are to become a foreign fighter.

A cohesive factor shared is the desire to be a part of a community. This desire also draws from other aspects. Foreign fighters all join jihadist terrorist organizations to be involved in the community of the organization. If they didn't have this desire for community, they wouldn't make the extreme decision to become a foreign fighter. No matter what a main reason a person decides to become a foreign fighter, these are all driven by the desire to be a part of a community of like-minded people, no matter if they are searching for the practice of Islam or desire to

retaliate against the West. <u>The greater a person's desire to be a part of a community, the more likely is their recruitment to become a foreign fighter.</u>

Conclusion

The factors in this paper from most to least common are social exclusion, sense of community, jihadist connection, disillusionment with the West, and pursuit of Islam. Interestingly, organizations like the Islamic State warp religion to justify their purposes for their followers, and many people in Western countries associate the religion of Islam with terror directly. However, only one of these case studies cited pursuit of Islam as a factor in the recruitment of the foreign national. The problem does not lie in the religion, but rather those that exploit it to convince others to join an organization that does not actually align with their beliefs. The other factors have common themes and clear links between foreign fighters and are shared in multiple case studies.

There can easily be more research done using this inductive approach. While there is not a lot of information available on the subject, other case studies are available and can be cross examined with these five factors. A next step could be selecting more case studies within the categories of pioneer, networked traveler, and loner. It is possible that some of the factors will be more prominent in one category than another. Additionally, one could use the five factors and look at case studies of foreign fighters from other regions and countries aside from the United States and Europe, or look at foreign fighter that joined another jihadist terrorist organization, such as Al-Qaeda. These further tests throughout different categories will solidify the evidence base and help to identify all factors that can be useful in identifying foreign fighters.

Building more evidence to link these factors to foreign fighters can be done with additional case studies. Additionally, other equally important factors may surface when examining a larger base of evidence. With many factors identified, it will be easier to pinpoint risk of a citizen becoming a foreign fighter and a threat to international security.

With the information analyzed in this paper, we can do myriad things. Knowing the potential risk factors for an foreign fighter's involvement in a jihadist terrorist organization can help to identify these cases before any type of voyage or travel to officially join an organization. Additionally, by recognizing recruitment methods we can prevent recruitment of citizens of Western countries by heading it off at the source. By trying cutting the supply of foreign fighters, jihadist terrorist organizations lose an important workforce and lose some of their power over the countries they wish to instill fear in. Ultimately, by eliminating local support of jihadist terrorist organizations, more attacks can be prevented and jihadist terrorist organizations can quickly lose their influence.

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