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Jihadism in Kosovo: Islamized Radicalism or Radical Islam?

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Abstract

No other war in the Muslim world has mobilized as many jihadists so quickly as the Syrian Civil War. In France, the European country that exhibited the largest contingent of fighters, the shockwaves of jihadist terrorist attacks have led to a heated debate among scholars whether the jihadist movement was fueled by the “radicalization of Islam” or by the “Islamization of radicalism”. This study operationalizes the two concepts to examine the jihadist movement in Kosovo, the European country that saw the largest number of jihadist fighters per capita leaving for the armed conflict. The analysis through a three-element radicalization model (ideology, grievances, recruitment) confirms “radical Islam” over “Islamized radicalism” and produces three key findings: (1) The ideology of Salafist jihadism provides a crucial explanation for the Kosovar jihadist movement, because many youngsters left for Syria considering it a holy Muslim duty to wage jihad. (2) Socioeconomic deprivation and the perception of Islamophobia have played an important role in making Kosovar jihadists receptive to propaganda that presented the Islamic State as both a wealthy state and a perfect Muslim society. (3) Recruitment is a social process within the greater Kosovar Salafist movement that is facilitated by a recruitment effort of the Islamic State (ISIS). Nevertheless, the paper concludes that additional theories are necessary to further explain radicalization in Kosovo, and elsewhere.

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1.0 Introduction

In the last three decades armed conflicts in the Muslim world have attracted thousands of volunteer combatants who took up arms in the defense of Islam. This mobile task force of unpaid foreign fighters has been regularly on the spot to wage jihad wherever there was a Sunni Muslim party involved in war (Hegghammer, 2010b). In the 1980s, over 20.000 foreign fighters served alongside the local resistance in the Soviet-Afghan War (Randal, 2007). In the 1990s, up to 4.000 of them battled in the Balkans to support the Bosniaks in the Bosnian War (Shrader, 2003). And in the 2000s, up to 5000 jihadist volunteers got involved in Iraq in the aftermath of the US-led invasion (Hegghammer, 2010b). But no other war in the Muslim world has mobilized as many foreign fighters so quickly as the Syrian Civil War. By 2015, after four years of fighting already over 20.000 volunteers from all over the world had made their way to the Arab country in the effort to join the conflict as foreign fighters for the Islamic State (ISIS) and other militant Muslim groups (Neumann, 2016).

This is troublesome, because most members of jihadist terrorist networks have started out as war volunteers (Hegghammer, 2010b). Although the majority of the foreign fighters returns to its home country without seeking a career in Muslim militancy (Byman, 2015), some of them take the next step and put their combat experience to further use. Hegghammer estimates that up to 10 per cent of the returning Syrian foreign fighters will eventually try to commit a terrorist attack (Hegghammer, 2014b, p. 6). In doing so, jihadist terrorist attacks involving former volunteers of war produce statistically seen more victims than those that are committed by perpetrators without war experience (Neumann, 2015a). As over 1.500 foreign fighters have returned from the Syrian Civil War to their European home country (Barrett, 2017, p. 12-13), even a considerably lower blowback rate than the estimated 10 per cent would generate a drastic number of attempted terrorist plots.

And indeed, over the course of the Syrian Civil War, Europe has been hit by a wave of jihadist terrorism. In 2015 and 2016, there were multiple attacks in the European Union that caused close to 300 victims (Europol, 2016; & 2017). France which is the European country that has seen the

highest number of foreign fighters leaving for the Syrian Civil War (Neumann, 2016), also suffered the highest number of casualties with over 200 killed in multiple plots over the last three years (Kepel, 2016). Although not all attacks of the terrorism wave involved former foreign fighters, their movement is nevertheless “key to understanding transnational Islamist militancy” (Hegghammer, 2010b, p. 1). Volunteering for war and jihadist terrorism are an expression of the same phenomenon which is global jihadism (Kepel & Jardin, 2017; & Roy, 2017a).

The effort to explain global jihadism has led to different types of explanations. Some researchers have pointed to social dynamics and clandestine networks, others have considered that personal inclination and individual motivation were the reason behind the phenomenon (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). However, as a consequence of the terrorist wave that hit Europe over the course of the Syrian Civil War, the urgency to determine why thousands of European youngsters have volunteered for war and terrorism has grown. In 2013, Neumann claimed that “radicalization was one of the great buzzwords of our time” referring to a Google search on the term that generated 1.5 million matches (Neumann & Kleinmann, 2013, p. 1). Now, four years later, the same search returns over 2.2 million hits.

In fact, in the European country that has been hit hardest by jihadist terrorism, the shockwaves of the atrocities have led to a heated debate between two of the world’s most established scholars on the subject (Nossitter, 2016). The two French sociologists and former friends, Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy, have fallen out with each other over the question whether jihadist terrorism was fueled by the “radicalization of Islam” or by the “Islamization of radicalism” (Worth, 2017).

The former concept, the one that Kepel advocates, suggests that the key to understanding the European jihadist movement lies in the growing followership and the growing social impact of an increasingly fundamentalist Islam that clashes with secularized mainstream society (Kepel, 2016). Roy however considers, that religion only plays a marginal role when individuals join the jihadist ranks (Roy, 2016b). Much more, the jihadist movement is driven and maintained by globalized rebellious youngsters that all too often have no political agenda, but a criminal background, a

troubled emotional condition, and an issue with their parents (Roy, 2017a). Consequently, Roy argues, that they are “rebels without a cause” who Islamized their personal hate campaign (Roy, 2010, p. 3).

While the state of emergency that France has been under for almost two years was recently concluded with the introduction of new security laws (Hartmann, 2017), the European jihadist movement is far from being over. Surely, the exodus of foreign fighters has run dry (Witte, Sudarsan, & McAuley, 2016), but violent Islamist radicalization keeps pushing the limits of European authorities. In 2017, the German federal prosecution has initiated over 900 new preliminary terrorism investigations which is an over threefold increase from 2016, and an over tenfold increase from 2013 (Siemens & Diehl, 2017). In the face of the thousands of radicalized Islamists in his country, the French Prime Minister considers that there will be further jihadist terrorist attacks (Nikolaeva, 2016).

As the jihadist movement has not lost its momentum, the need to understand why it is has been so appealing to European youngster remains urgent. Because without understanding the underlying causes of militant Islamist radicalism, adapting strategies and shaping policies to overcome the threat is hardly possible. In this respect it is puzzling that the controversy between two of the world’s most established scholars on the subject has still not been resolved. On the contrary, Kepel and Roy keep defending their diverging positions in their latest books “The Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State” (Roy, 2017a) and “Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West” (Kepel & Jardin, 2017).

Kepel (radical Islam) and Roy (Islamized radicalism) have both built their theories on fieldwork that was conducted mainly in France (Kepel & Jardin, 2017, XI; Roy, 2017a, p. 20), the European country that exhibited the largest contingent of foreign fighters in the Syrian Civil War (Neumann, 2016). This study however examines the jihadist movement in the European country that saw the largest number of foreign fighters per capita leaving to the armed conflict: Kosovo.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to determine whether the jihadist movement in Kosovo is an expression of “Islamized radicalism” or “radical Islam”.

The Balkan country Kosovo, which has a population of 1.8 million, had by 2015 experienced an exodus of 230 to 300 foreign fighters (Hajdari, 2015; Kursani, 2015). The quota of at least 125 jihadist per million residents was the highest in Europe (Kursani, 2015). To compare, at that time, France had 18 foreign fighters per million residents, and Belgium, which exhibited the highest quota in the European Union, 40 per million residents (Neumann, 2015b).

In the effort to shed light on the question whether “radical Islam” or “Islamized radicalism” provides a more valid explanation for the exodus of jihadist Kosovars, this research project aims at answering the following research question: “Is the Kosovar jihadist movement an expression of “radical Islam”, or “Islamized radicalism?” This research question will be analyzed through the following three sub-questions: (1) Do fundamentalist brands of Islam that clash with the principles of the secularized country have a growing impact in Kosovo? (2) Are Kosovar jihadists followers of such fundamentalist forms of Islam? (3) Are Kosovar jihadists globalized rebellious youngster without a political agenda who “Islamized” their personal hate campaign?

1.2 Layout of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters that contain various sub-sections. The first chapter provides the context for Kepel versus Roy debate, and identifies the objectives of the research project. The second chapter involves a brief literature review to situate Kepel’s and Roy’s positions with regard to other scholars and their understanding of radicalization. In the third chapter the differences between Kepel’s and Roy’s positions are identified in order to operationalize them. In the last section of the chapter the explicit differences are specified in a three-element radicalization model. The fourth chapter presents the research methods that were used to acquire data in Kosovo, and the sampling process. It particularly addresses the validity, and reliability of the study, and finishes by identifying its limitations and ethical considerations. The fifth chapter involves an analysis and

discussion of the findings on basis of the radicalization model that is operationalized in chapter three. The study concludes by assessing how the research question is answered, and suggests ways forward.

2.0 Situating Kepel & Roy

Dalgaard-Nielsen considers that there are three types of explanation for violent Islamist radicalization in Europe (2010): (1) Social movement, network, framing theory that involve social interaction and group dynamics; (2) Empiricist and case study based approaches that point to individual motivations and circumstances; (3) French sociology which points to the disruption of traditional communities and identities in the face of globalization. While Kepel and Roy both belong to the third type of explanation (ibid), this section positions the two theories within the general debate on Islamist radicalization in Europe via the use of the three explanations mentioned above.

Social movement theory involves that violence appears when the activists realize that their cause will not lead to political change (Della Porta, 2008; Wieviorka, 2004). In doing so, radicalization is the outcome of a protest cycle in which both the state and the movement construct frames in order to mobilize support for their actions (Della Porta, 2008). For instance, while the secular French government determined in 2004 that religious symbols were a danger to its democratic values and banned them from public schools, the Islamist activists claimed that Muslims are subject to discrimination by their own government (Henley, 2004). For them, the government disrespected the personal right of female pupils to wear a headscarf (ibid). Not the issue itself is the problem (no religious symbols at school), but the way it is framed (secularism versus discrimination). Social movement theory estimates that it is the clashing of frames that leads to violence. It highlights the role of group dynamics, involving bonding and peer pressure, as it estimates that radicalization happens in small communities where the activists “create shared worlds of meaning that shape identity, perceptions, and preferences” (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p. 6).

Similarly, network theory emphasizes the role of small autonomous cells for violent radicalization. Jihadists belong to the wider radical Islamist movement, but the individual activists decide on their own how involved they want to become and if they want to engage in violent activism (Sageman, 2011b). Network theory involves self-recruitment and the concept of “leaderless” or “autonomous jihad” (Sageman, 2011b). According to this concept, the international terrorist organizations

inspire small groups to carry out terrorist attacks without coordination from above (ibid). While the “leaderless jihad” lacks an overall strategy, the international terrorist organizations “still have an agenda set by general guidelines found on the internet, which is the virtual glue maintaining a weak appearance of unity”(ibid, p. 144).

Also, framing theory projects the trajectory of individuals into terrorism as a dynamic process that involves socialization in peer groups. The theory suggests that individuals go through four stages making them conceptualize themselves as part of a radical collective (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Over the four stages, new meaning is produced and internalized (ibid). The stages are: (1) *Cognitive Opening* – The individual becomes receptive to ideology. Due to a personal crisis, as for instance a depression due to a personal loss; (2) *Seeking* – The individual seeks meaning and purpose to overcome the crisis; (3) *Frame Alignment* – The ideology presented by the movement resonates with the individual, and seems to ease the crisis; (4) *Socialization* – The individual takes part in activities with peer groups that facilitate indoctrination and lead to violent action. (Ibid, p. 1)

By focusing on the social side of radicalization social movement, network, and framing theory seem to suggest that by the power of peer pressure and group dynamics anybody can be turned into a global jihadist. In fact, the three theories estimate that violent radicalization takes place rather randomly, when individuals “hang out with the wrong people” at the wrong place during the wrong time in their life (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p. 10). Also, the role of ideology in the process of radicalization remains ambiguous. Do ideologies have distinct qualities that make them more or less attractive? And how can ideologies exist independently, without socialization and the process of sense making? In addition, the three theories (social movement, network, and framing theory) do not provide explanations on whether some individuals can be more prone to become violent activists than others.

The last aspect, the individual inclination, is where the empiricist and case study based approaches unfold. These approaches include individual motivations and circumstances in explaining violent radicalization. For instance, Neumann presented three personality types that were prone to joining the jihadist movement on the basis of a dataset containing the Facebook profiles and twitter accounts of 700 foreign fighters that had injected themselves into the Syrian Civil War (Neumann,

2015a). Neumann's three types of personality are: (1) *Defender* – Individuals who feel the duty to support their fellow believers in the fight against the Assad regime. (2) *Seeker* – Individuals who are not particularly religious or politically interested, but are attracted by the booming jihadist counterculture in their search for identity, friends, and adventure. (3) *Follower* – Individuals who are not particularly religious or politically interested, but enter jihad, because their peer group decided to do so. (Ibid, chapter 2)

Similarly, Nesser explained radicalization in European jihadist terrorist cells by individual-level motivation, and suggested four personality types (Nesser, 2012): (1) *Entrepreneur* – Charismatic religious idealist who wants to change the world; (2) *Protégé* – Young admirer of the leader who shares the leader's activist mindset; (3) *Misfit* – Troubled person that seeks a new start in life; (4) *Drifter* – Individual who is part of the cell, because the cell members are the drifter's friends and because he/she admires the entrepreneur.

Also, Botha has taken an empiricist approach in explaining violent radicalization in Africa. For instance, in her study of Kenyan youngsters who had joined al-Shabaab, she focused on the personal background of the radicalized individuals to determine when, why and how they had become part of the militant organization (Botha, 2014). In doing so, she examined among other categories their family ties, religious identity, and the economic, and educational background (ibid). Likewise, she proposed a human security approach to understanding terrorism in Africa, because such an approach highlighted the individual situation of people who resorted to militancy (Botha, 2008, p. 32).

The limitation of the empiricist approach to explaining violent radicalization involves a high level of uncertainty, because of the low number of available cases (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p. 14). This is a natural barrier, since the sample population, the violent extremists, are few and difficult to reach (Silke, 2001). For instance, Nesser built his theory of the four personality types on a sample that contained 15 jihadist plots (Schmid, 2013). The case study based research is also limited by the difficulty to discern between individuals who are truly violent and those who are not violent, but have radical ideas, and vice versa (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p. 14). Regarding Neumann's sample this would imply that some foreign fighters in the sample might just have posted shocking

images and statements without committing acts of violence themselves. While other foreign fighters who have committed atrocities probably never went on social media.

By analyzing Kepel's and Roy's explanations in reference to the two presented approaches, we find that some questions are not addressed in-depth by the sociologists. While the social and the empiricist approaches highlight the role of social, respectively individual factors in the radicalization process, Kepel and Roy estimate that violent radicalism happens against the backdrop of a global context. And this context involves the erosion of traditional cultures, communities, and identities by the power of globalization. For the French sociologists, the disintegrating fabric of society makes individuals look for ways to reconstruct their lost identity. But, in contrast to the social approach, both theorists focus little on the actual mechanics that turn lost individuals into violent activists. Why does only a small number of people respond to the global disruption of societies with violence, while it concerns so many more? In contrast to the empiricists approach, Kepel pays little attention to individual factors to explain radicalization whereas Roy's position stresses mental problems and the inclination to violent behavior while leaving not much room for other personal factors.

Hence, this study is subject to an explanatory limitation by the concepts used. By applying Kepel's and Roy's approaches, the social and individualistic dimension of the Kosovar jihadist movement might be underestimated. Nevertheless, the study aims at determining whether "radical Islam" or "Islamized radicalism" provides a more valid explanation for the exodus of jihadist Kosovars and takes this limitation into account in its in-depth analysis of Kepel's and Roy's positions.

3.0 Theory: “Islamized Radicalism” versus “Radical Islam”

Kepel and Roy, reject the idea that there could be a single profile of radicals or single reason for violent extremism (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Much more they both point at globalization, and the dissolution of traditional communities and identities as an explanation of violent extremism (ibid). While the two Frenchmen analyze militant Muslim extremism from a multidimensional perspective, for this study their concepts are operationalized on the basis of a three-element radicalization model that includes the dimensions of ideology, grievances, and recruitment. This will allow the analysis of where and how the theories differ.

Most radicalization models contain the three elements ideology, grievances, and recruitment (Neumann, 2012). When an individual radicalizes, ideology is what pulls the individual’s anger in a certain direction. Without ideology, the individual would rather end up engaging in acts of crime. Grievances (real or perceived) are the reasons why the individual is receptive for the ideology in the first place. People who are happy and satisfied with their life would most have little incentive to break with their past and head down the path of extremism. Recruitment is the stage when the individual’s frustration turns into group action, it is the “bridge between personal belief and violent activism” (Taarnby, 2005, p. 6). To determine how “Islamized radicalism”, and “radical Islam” differ, the two concepts are examined with regard to ideology, grievances and recruitment in the following sections. The explicit differences are then specified in the last section of this chapter.

3.1 Ideology

Ideology is what pulls the individual’s anger in a certain direction, when an individual commits to political violence. Without ideology, the individual would rather end up engaging in acts of crime (Neumann, 2012). However, since Roy’s Islamized radicals are “rebels without a cause” (Roy, 2010, p. 3), we apply in this study a broader definition of ideology, and refer to it as the factors that make the jihadist movement appealing to youngsters. The analysis firstly examines the two explanatory concepts of ideology that Roy advocates, globalized religion (3.1.1), and nihilism (3.1.2). It then considers Salafist jihadism (3.1.3) and martyrdom (3.1.4), which are the explanatory concepts that Kepel promotes.

3.1.1 Globalized Religion

“When we kill the kuffar, this is because we know Allah hates the kuffar.”¹

Since the time of Enlightenment leading Western thinkers assumed that society’s progress along the lines of rationalism and empiricism would make religion disappear and lead to secular societies (Neumann, 2009, p. 84-85). The more educated people were, the more they understood how nature worked, the less they would refer to tradition and religious dogma to inform their decisions. This Enlightenment hypothesis seemed to have been valid until the 1970s, when church attendance rates in Europe were ever lower and the upper classes around the world followed a secular lifestyle (Neumann, 2009; Pollack, 2008). Then, marked by the Iranian revolution in 1979, sociologists and anthropologists changed their mind and came to the conclusion that the vision of globalized secularism was false: Religion experienced a widespread revival (Berger, 1999; Huntington, 1997; Kepel, 1994).

According to Roy this claim is, however, not valid. He argues that the so called “comeback of religion” was rather a reformulation than an actual revival (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). In his eyes, the forces of secularization and globalization have led to a decline of cultural religions, while empowering fundamental and conservative forms of religiosity (Roy, 2013). In secular societies religion is left to the private sphere, because the state needs to retain its neutral appearance (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). While the state has no power to shape and maintain religion as a common cultural heritage, closed communities and self-taught persons make sense of it. They practice their own religion, their individual form of religiosity.

Before the age of globalization, everybody was born into the religion belonging to their respective cultural background. Today, people chose their religion, they are “born again” (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). By being able to choose their own religion, becoming religious became like joining a certain club. Secularization has separated religion from culture. But by resting on an individual choice, (rather than on what is recommended by society as a whole) religion became autonomous and is

¹ Quote by Jawad Akbar, UK jihadist. (Cowan, 2006)

no longer disciplined by political institutions (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). Therefore there is a growing detachment between the religious establishment, (e.g.: the Roman Catholic Church) and the believers who consider their faith a “personal choice and a personal experience” (Roy, 2011, p. 11).

Secularization creates a situation in which society loses its collective (cultural) creed and becomes divided into (individual) believers and (anonymous) non-believers. At the same time globalization has led to the deterritorialization of religion. As globalization has removed the geographic affiliation of fashion, information, and people to specific regions, religions have likewise lost their ties to a certain homeland and become “deterritorialized”. Religions are now floating free on the global religious market to be consumed by faithful individuals in all corners of the world (Roy & Schwartz, 2014, p. 162).

The religious market is part of the global market (Silverburg, 2007), and on this market products that neither belong to a specific culture nor a specific region sell better than similar products that are bound by these attributes. This is why “pure” religions, or in other words, fundamentalist religions are the fastest growing religions in the world (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). Fundamentalist religions interpret the (ancient) Holy Scriptures literally. They claim that they are purified from the (century long) influence of culture, and therefore offer a more direct link to God. Because fundamentalist religions do not belong to a certain culture or a certain region, they can spread without boundaries. They are ready-made products that can be consumed by anybody anywhere.

The jihadist youngsters are followers of globalized religion. And their product of choice is the second fastest growing brand on the worldwide market of faiths: Salafism (Roy, 2017a; Roy & Schwartz, 2014). The jihadist youngsters are “born again” believers that often had no religious background before they became religious (Roy, 2017a), or that have converted to Salafism from a different religion, or from a different brand of Islam (Roy, 2016b, p. 3; 2017a).

But in fact, while they claim to be the vanguard of Islam (Roy, 2017b), they – as “born again” believers – do not belong to any religious community. They are autodidacts in faith practicing their own form of religiosity which is an act of rebellion disregarding the core principles of Islam (Roy, 2017a). For instance, the jihadists praise suicide operations, although taking one's own life is against the ideals of Muslim religion (ibid). By labeling themselves as Salafist believers, the jihadist youth expresses its personal rebellion and makes a political statement in an environment which regards the display of religious behavior as bizarre, if not as repugnant (Roy, 2017a).

3.1.2 Nihilism

*“We are the nobodies; Wanna be somebodies; When we're dead; They'll know just who we are.”*²

In Roy's concept of Islamized radicalism nihilism and violence play a crucial role (Roy, 2016a, 2017a). In fact, Roy has labelled the jihadist phenomenon as “generational nihilism” and linked it to killing sprees at US schools (Roy, 2016a; 2016b, p. 2). The school shooters and the jihadist youth were driven by the same reasons to commit mass murder. Both groups are outsiders that are not interested in being part of society, in contributing to the community, or in building a better future, because they are suicidal. Thus, jihadists are not leaving for Syria to fight for something they believe in, or to help creating their ideal society. They join the global jihad, because they want to die (Roy, 2017a). There is no political agenda, but a movement of nobodies who engage in “death tourism” (Roy, 2016b, p. 3).

According to this apolitical, nihilistic stance, Roy considers that the jihadist are infected with the “Columbine Syndrome” (Roy, 2016a, 2017a). Their desire to die is the driving force behind the atrocities they commit, just as the Columbine High School killers were seeking death (Klebold & Solomon, 2016). In fact, Roy puts the Germanwings pilot who deliberately crashed an international passenger flight into the same category of suicidal mass murderers (Roy, 2017a). Therefore, studying the Koran might not provide any answer to the question why someone becomes a jihadist

² Marilyn Manson, “The Nobodies”, 2000

terrorist (Roy, 2016b). Much more, ISIS might provide euthanasia to depressed individuals while boosting their passing with global meaning (Roy, 2017a).

With its caliphate ISIS has created a strong symbol that resonates with the depressed and psychotic, because of its perishable disposition (Roy, 2017a). The caliphate defines itself as an ever growing state without borders that will conquer the world and bring it to an end (Reuter, 2015). Roy considers this claim as obviously maniac. He concludes that that the caliphate is a construction that is inherently meant to fail (Roy, 2017a). In doing so, its inability to survive resembles the fragile nature of the jihadist youth and therefore attracts it.

By joining ISIS the jihadists want to end their lives in style, while making their phantasies of violence come true. And these phantasies of violence are not fed by radical religious dogma, but by global pop-culture (Roy, 2016a, 2017a). In the 1970s Stanley Kubrick created an aesthetic portrayal of a cruel youth gang in his highly acclaimed film “A Clockwork Orange”³. To the sound of Beethoven’s 9th symphony Alex and his gang members celebrated “ultra-violence”. They assaulted their victims at random, smashed skulls, raped women while making their partners watch. Since then Hollywood has put countless depictions of brutality on screen to entertain their audience. Most of them, of course, have not reached the same high acclaim as Kubrick’s work. Nevertheless, consuming violence on screen, be it in the form of splatter films or first-person shooter computer games, are part of global popular youth culture.

And because violence appeals to youngsters, ISIS propaganda has staged acts of extreme violence in Hollywood manner (Roy, 2017a). The jihadist youth is not interested in building a better, more religious world, but they are interested in blood and tears. In fact, when they join ISIS, revolution and chaos are what they are after (Roy, 2017a). And violence is not the means by which they strive to reach some kind of goal, but the end and purpose of their actions. By joining the global jihadist movement they want to make their sadistic fantasies come true (Roy, 2015).

³ http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066921/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

In doing so, the jihadist youth represents the continuation of the history of radicalism in the 21st century (Roy, 2017a). Being radical is appealing, and it always has been appealing. However, some years back, youngsters with a hunger for rebellion and chaos joined the Red Brigades or the Red Army Fraction. Today the same clientele joins the jihadist movement. The motivation has not changed, but the market of extremist ideology has, and at the moment the most popular product on this market is militant Islamism (Roy, 2010; Roy, 2016a).

3.1.3 Salafist Jihadism

Kepel regards jihadist violence as a radical expression of the Islamist movement (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). There is a historic continuity from the anti-colonial struggle in the Middle East and the foundation of political Muslim organizations during the first half of the 20th century to the current wave of terrorist attacks committed by Islamic State (Kepel, 2016). Jihadist violence is connected to the broader social and political development and has the goal to increase the influence and dominion of Islam (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). Militant Muslim terrorist attacks do not occur in isolation, but they are strategic acts and an expression of a real ideological current that is rooted at the margins of political Islam.

At the fringes of the Islamist movement we find the ideological current of Salafist jihadism (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). Salafist jihadism is a combination of violent revolution theory and Wahhabi religious doctrine (Neumann, 2016). Wahhabism is a particularly conservative version of Salafism that does not only idealize a supposedly pure, ancient form of Islam, but also strictly rejects all other forms of belief, non-believe and religious innovation. It considers the prophet Mohammed as the sole role model, and the era of him as a paradigm for all times (Kepel, 2003). Consequently, the revolutionary element in Salafist jihadism involves the idea that the rule of God must be established by force in a holy war (Neumann, 2016). As the prophet Mohammed overthrew the ignorant societies of the ancient pre-Islamic world the contemporary true believers of Islam – which are the Salafist jihadists – are obliged to (re-)conquer the just as ignorant societies of our modern world.

The mastermind behind the expansionist doctrine of Salafist jihadism was the Palestinian Abdullah Azzam. Azzam established foreign fighter training camps during the Soviet-Afghan War, and ran an office in Pakistan that supported the incoming jihadists, among them Osama bin Laden (Kepel, Milelli, & Ghazaleh, 2008). Due to his propaganda effort, that involved several journeys through the Arab world and the United States (Neumann, 2016), the duty to wage holy war became for some Muslims the essence of Islam (Kepel, 2003). For them, committing to global jihadism was the individual obligation of all believers, just like the holy pilgrimage to Mecca (Kepel et al., 2008). So, over the course of the Afghan-Soviet War, more than 20.000 people followed the call of jihad (Randal, 2007).

And by the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the ideology of Salafist jihadism, only gained power, because Azzam created the myth that his army of foreign fighters had crushed the superpower (Kepel et al., 2008). When the zealous Palestinian was assassinated in 1989, he had not only recruited several thousand jihadists, but also organized them in a network of experienced combatants (Kepel, 2003). This network became known as Al Qaida (Neumann, 2016), and represents, for Kepel, the second generation of Salafist jihadists.

Kepel sees the Soviet-Afghan War as the first phase in the development of Salafist jihadism (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). In this era the ideology and the myth of the mujahedeen were born. Moreover, the victorious jihad campaign that was backed by Saudi Arabian money strengthened the legitimacy of the Wahhabi brand of Islam, and thus held revolutionary Iran from gaining global leadership of political Islam (Kepel, 2006). The second phase in the development of Salafist jihadism involves the era of Al Qaida dominance within militant Islamism. In the 1990s and early 2000s Osama bin Laden and his close circle of men directed global international jihad. They ran foreign fighter campaigns during the wars in Bosnia and Algeria, and organized large-scale terrorist attacks in Eastern Africa, and in USA (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). As a result of the US-led War on Terror, central leadership of Salafist jihadism became, however, impossible. So, in 2005, the development of Salafist jihadism entered, its third phase when the Syrian Al Qaida member Abu Musab Al-Suri published “The Global Islamic Resistance Call” on the internet (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). In this 1600-page book Al-Suri prompts the true believers to execute small-scale

terrorist attacks against Westerners. Jihadist cells should take action on their own without depending on central leadership. Al Qaida was not meant to be an organization, but a system that was connected to the jihadist movement only by “a common aim, a common doctrinal program and a ... self-educational program” (Neumann, 2009, p. 40).

Kepel explains that the recent attacks in Nice, Paris, Brussels and other European cities are the result of Al Suri’s call to arms (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). The Muslim militant movement has changed its tactic of combat, however its ideology and mission have remained the same: Salafist jihadism. The third generation of jihadists are committed to the same war as Azzam’s mujahedeen. But nowadays it is a global war, and the battlefield is no longer limited to Afghanistan, but spans around the whole world.

3.1.4 Martyrdom

“We love this kind of death for Allah's cause as much as you like to live.”⁴

Although suicide is considered a sin in Islam (Roy, 2017a), Azzam glorified martyrdom, since self-sacrifice for the sake of Islam guaranteed a special place in paradise (Kepel et al., 2008). Being a busy traveler and avid writer, the Palestinian scholar was able to infect believers around the world with his meme of eternal bliss (Hegghammer, 2010a). In his book “Lovers of the Paradise” Azzam romanticized the live and death of 150 mujahedeen who had fought in the Soviet-Afghan war (Moghadam, 2011). His collection of alleged eyewitness accounts, “The Signs of The Merciful in the Jihad of the Afghan”, which presented miracles by Allah preformed to bless and protect the mujahedeen was a bestseller in the Arab world (Hegghammer, 2010a, p. 41). With regard to the actual rewards of being a martyr (“Shaheed”), Azzam claimed the following:

The Shaheed is granted seven special favors from Allah. He is forgiven (his sins) at the first drop of his blood. He sees his place in Paradise. He is dressed in the clothes of Iman. He is married to the Hoor al-‘Ain⁵. He is saved from the punishment of the grave. He will be

⁴ Osama Bin Laden in his interview with Peter Arnett (1997)

⁵ Servant lady.

protected from the great fear of the day of Judgement. A crown of honor will be placed on his head, one jewel of which is better than the whole world and what it contains. He is married to seventy-two of the Hoor al-'Ain, and he will be able to intercede for seventy members of his family. (Moghadam, 2011, p. 79)

In doing so, Azzam's voice had particular authority when it came to questions concerning the theological justification and ethos of the jihadist movement, because he held a doctorate from Al Azhar University in Islamic Law, and worked as a professor in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan (Neumann, 2016). As a scholar of religion, his re-interpretation of the concept of "jihad" as an individual military duty that concerned every true believer became the fuel of international mobilization (Kepel et al., 2008). And likewise, his emphasis on the benefits of martyrdom made suicide operations like 9/11 the trademark of Al Qaeda style terrorism (Moghadam, 2011).

Azzam's glorification of martyrdom had a great effect on the mujahedeen, the "free ticket" to paradise that it granted became a recruitment magnet (Hegghammer, 2010a). Accounts from the battlefield of the Soviet-Afghan War suggest that the jihadists cried in envy of their fallen brothers, because it was not them who had been redeemed (Wright, 2006). This behavior stunned the local Afghan fighters. They fought to liberate their country from the Soviet forces, while the jihadists seemed to have joined the war on behalf of an imaginary holy community in the hope of getting to paradise (Wright, 2006).

For Kepel, the current wave of jihadism is a continuation of a movement that started in the Afghan-Soviet War. Also, the jihadists of the third generation want to become martyrs, and quit their sinful life by entering paradise (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). They are motivated by the belief of spending eternity in heavenly bliss, while making sure that their families are redeemed as well. This is in stark contrast to Roy's approach that considers jihadist suicide operations as killing sprees by depressed psychopaths who do not wish for anything, but death and destruction (Roy, 2017a).

3.2 Grievances

Grievances are the reasons why individuals are receptive for extremist ideology (Neumann, 2012). People who are happy and satisfied with their life have little incentive to break with their past and head down the path of extremism. In this section, the grievances of Roy's Islamized youngsters first are examined, by looking into the clash with their parents (3.2.1), and their desire to be famous (3.2.2). The socioeconomic difficulties and the perceived discrimination that Kepel's third generation of jihadists struggle with are then analyzed (3.2.3).

3.2.1 Generational Conflict

*"Father, yes son, I want to kill you."*⁶

The generational conflict in the trajectory to terrorism is often referred to as an issue that particularly concerns immigrant populations in Western societies (Neumann, 2012, 2016). Second (and third) generation immigrants face the problem that they no longer share the cultural identity of their ancestors, while they are at the same time not fully accepted citizens in their homeland. They are strangers in both worlds. This feeling of double non-belonging that might be fueled by real discrimination makes them look for a new, supranational identity that gives their life meaning and dignity (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010).

In their grievance, second generation immigrants are receptive for the propaganda of terrorist organizations that present Western societies as corrupt and degenerated. While the feeling of being an outsiders is replaced by the pride of non-belonging (to the corrupt West), moving to the Islamic State might become an attractive option (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). The caliphate serves the doubly estranged immigrant jihadist youth as a new homeland. This is one explanation to why the jihadist youth burns their passports upon arrival in the territory held by the Islamic State (Neumann, 2016).

⁶ The Doors, "The End", 1969.

Roy however, goes one step further, and detaches the generational conflict from the immigration dimension. For him, the generational conflict concerns the global population as a whole (Roy, 2017b). The jihadist youth regards their parents and what they represent⁷ as despicable. They claim that their parents had no ideals, because they gave in to the dictatorship of mainstream society (ibid). And since their parents were losers who failed to lead a meaning full life, it is now up to the jihadist youngsters to stand up and write history from scratch. The following quote by a British jihadi who wrote a guidebook for immigrants to the Islamic State exemplifies this hatred:

When we descend on the streets of London, Paris and Washington ... not only will we spill your blood, but we will also demolish your statues, erase your history and, most painfully, convert your children who will then go on to champion our name and curse their forefathers.
(Scaife, 2017, p. 55).

The over-representation of converts, siblings and youngsters in the jihadist movement stresses the generational dimension in the trajectory to terrorism (Roy, 2017a). Jihadists' will to not only kill their parents, but also to erase their culture is the continuation of former youth rebellions. Just like the soldiers of the caliphate, the Red Guards and Khmer Rouge tried to make a clean sweep when they destroyed the statues, temples, and books that their ancestors had held so high in regard (Roy, 2017a).

3.2.2 Nobodies on Social Media

“On every street in every city, there's a nobody who dreams of being a somebody. He's a lonely forgotten man desperate to prove that he's alive.”⁸

The above quote was the tagline of the Hollywood classic “Taxi Driver” (1976) written by Paul Schrader and directed by Martin Scorsese. The plot of the movie is about Travis Bickle, an ex-marine who suffers of insomnia and solitude. Driving taxi on the streets of New York the main

⁷ Orphans are overrepresented among jihadists (Roy, 2017b).

⁸ Tagline from the Hollywood classic “Taxi Driver”, 1976.

character's disgust for urban nightlife and his general hatred for society grow. When his affection for a woman who works for the campaign of a presidential candidate is not returned, Bickle estimates that he is not appreciated by anybody. In his grievance, he turns to violence and tries to assassinate the politician. But when his attempt fails, Bickle changes his plan and runs amok in the effort to kill the pimp and the clients of a teenage prostitute he knows. The film ends with the protagonist – who survives the suicide mission only by chance – being celebrated as a hero for liberating the young girl.

Since 1994 “Taxi Driver” is part of the National Film Registry⁹. The character of Travis Bickle can be regarded as the pop-cultural archetype of the sociopath who turns to violence. In fact, the fictional character played a big role in a real assassination attempt of an American president: John Hinckley was deeply inspired by “Taxi Driver” when he shot Ronald Reagan in 1981 (Taylor, 1982). Hinckley tried to kill the US president to prove his love to Jodie Forster, the actress who had played the teenage prostitute in the film. Reagan survived the attack, and Hinckley was arrested and trialed. However, the trial ended with the controversial verdict that Hinckley was not guilty for reasons of insanity (Harris, 2016). The jury estimated that his psychotic mindset could not distinguish between the fictional world of Hollywood and reality.

Likewise, mentally disturbed persons join jihadist terrorist organizations, because in doing so their desperation suddenly has a meaning. The Islamic State provides a narrative that boosts personal crisis with global significance. (Roy, 2017a). The real-life “taxi drivers” who are trapped in the daily grind of solitude and meaninglessness can become someone and even make some headlines by blowing themselves up in a suicide terrorist attack. Just like Hinckley acted on behalf of a Hollywood production, they connect with the fictional reality of jihadist propaganda (that is dispensed over social media), and battle on an imaginary political field, while regarding themselves as the elite of the (imagined) Ummah (Roy, 2017a).

⁹ National Film Registry: <https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/>.

The jihadists consider themselves as part of a global elite, although their agenda is personal and they do not belong to any society (Roy, 2017b). The idea of being important, of being part of an avant-garde movement is a strong motivation for them. They are mentally unstable loners, but narcissism, megalomania and self-pity allow them to glorify solitude (Roy, 2017b). By converting to jihadism they fill their inner void with meaning and suddenly become great personalities who are on a very important mission. As jihad gives new meaning to life and death, their insecurity disappears (Klausen, 2015).

Social media is not only the tool that allows the disturbed youngsters to connect to global jihad, it is also the means to convey their delusion of the new-found greatness to the outside world. The jihadist youth takes good care of their social media profiles, because their self-image is crucial (Klausen, 2015). What happens on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube is no longer virtual for them, but defines reality and thus their identity (Carter, Maher, & Neumann, 2014). By entering the jihad universe, the nobodies become part of a mashup world where virtuality and reality are one. Being part of this virtual world is better than the daily grind, because here they can actually become heroes.

This leads Roy to conclude that jihadists have the same psychological profile as the Columbine High School killers, Breivik, and the Germanwings pilot who deliberately crashed a passenger plane. They belong to a generation of nobodies who want to be somebodies (Roy, 2016b, 2017a). The jihadist youngsters are self-loving people who seek recognition and fame. Breivik underwent plastic surgery to change his face according to his Aryan self-image, before he set out to commit mass murder as the self-appointed spokesman of the new, mono-cultural Europe (Pidd, 2012). Similarly, the Kouachi brothers celebrated themselves on the streets outside the editorial office of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo – where they had massacred 12 person –, proclaiming that they had finally avenged the prophet (Roy, 2017a).

3.2.3 Lack of Perspective & Islamophobia (Narrative)

When it comes to the social and economic situation of the jihadists, the two French sociologists have quite different standpoints. Roy argues that there is no correlation between poverty and radicalization (Roy, 2010). Jihadist youngsters are not victims, they are not poor, and they are often from the top of society (Roy, 2017a). For instance, the six perpetrators of the Dhaka terrorist attack who took the guests of a restaurant as hostages and killed 20 of them were from rich families and attended elite schools (Manik & Anand, 2016). And the married couple that committed the San Bernadino attack amassed weapons and built pipe bombs in their comfortable middle-class home where they lived with their 6-month old daughter (Nagourney, Lovett, Turkewitz, & Muellerdec, 2015). In both attacks the jihadists chose death over life, although – with regard to their social and economic situation – they had little to worry about.

Kepel however, argues that the jihadist movement is rooted in socioeconomic deprivation, because it makes the deprived receptive for radical religious indoctrination (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). The third generation of jihadists has grown up in troubled neighborhoods, where unemployed and crime rates are high, where people are poor and often have a migration background (Kepel, 2016). In such insecure environments – that can be found in suburbs of the European capitals as well as in the congested mega-cities of the developing world – inhabitants are prone to suffer from an identity crisis (Neumann, 2009- p. 90-91). Since they experience a lack of orientation and status, they (re-)turn to religion which subsequently establishes certainty and structure in the community (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). By devoting themselves to faith the deprived are able to create a dignified (self-)image, and increase their social status.

However, where religion rises as the guarantor of security and order, the state is at best despised, and at worst hated. For Kepel, the French suburbs, *the banlieues*, are a case in point. In the banlieues a high percentage of the residents are from the former French colonies in Northern and Western Africa (Kepel, 1991). Although they have lived in France for several generations there is little opportunity for them to escape the ghetto life which involves poverty, crime, and violence (Kepel, 2016). As a consequence to the dire situation, many have (re-)turned to religion and joined their local mosque. The French mosques started to get established in the 1950s by foreign investment, often from Saudi Arabia (Kepel, 1991). Since then their impact on the social fabric

has become ever more apparent. Already in the 1980s, after striking workers had prostrated themselves in the direction of Mecca, Kepel determined that a new form of Islam was born in the French suburbs (Worth, 2017). Subsequently, the French sociologist saw the multi-week riots which took place in 2005 as – at least partly – motivated by religious rage (Kepel, 2016). And today, as several banlieue residents have committed terrorist attacks (Kepel & Jardin, 2017), while hundreds of them have left their country to join ISIS (Neumann, 2016), Kepel regards that the radical Islamist movement of the French suburbs has grown so powerful that it poses a real security threat to the nation (Kepel & Jardin, 2017).

At the same time various researchers, decision-makers, and journalists have claimed that French Muslims are the victims of widespread discrimination (Worth, 2017). They argue that there is a resentment against the religion, to which they refer to as “Islamophobia” (ibid). Unsurprisingly, the French Muslims themselves feel that their personal rights are not respected. For instance, the French Muslim population has regarded the ban of the Islamic veil (and other religious signs) at public schools as an attack of the government on their identity in the attempt to forcefully assimilate and control them (Croucher, 2008).

Kepel however, dismisses this notion. He regards islamophobia as a narrative that the radical Islamist movement propagates to ignite and fuel diversionist tendencies in the Muslim population (Kepel, 2016). For him the ban ensures that the principle of secularism lives on. In France, pupils of all faiths are meant not only to acquire shared knowledge, but to develop a shared future and freedom as citizens of one country (Kepel, 2004). Painting the ban as anti-Muslim is false, because it concerned all religious symbols, among them Christian crosses and Jewish kippahs, just like the Islamic veil.

In fact, Kepel considers dangerous that parts of mainstream society accept the narrative of Islamophobia which presents secularism as anti-Muslim (Worth, 2017). He argues that the jihadist movement itself uses the meme of victimhood to justify terrorism, and to recruit its followers (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). It is part of their militant strategy to delegitimize Western governments

by presenting them as the aggressors. The following statement that was released by the Islamic State on social media exemplifies this:

A real war is heating up in the heart of Europe. Many Muslims are putting a lot of effort into showing the world that we are peaceful citizens, we're spending thousands of Euros to do Daw'wah (invitation to Islam) campaigns to show how good we are in society, but we are miserably failing. The leaders of disbelief repeatedly lie in the media and say that we Muslims are all terrorists, while we denied it and wanted to be peaceful citizens. But they have cornered us and forced us into becoming radicalized. (Kepel & Jardin, 2017, p. XIX)

Nevertheless, according to Neumann, on the trajectory to terrorism it is irrelevant whether grievances are real or perceived (Neumann, 2012, p. 7). For radicalization not the issue itself is the problem, but the way it is framed (Wiktorowicz, 2004). So, with regard to Kepel's concept of radical Islam we conclude that there is the grievance of Islamophobia. Muslims feel systematically discriminated against due to their belief. They perceive that the government and mainstream society exclude them, because of their resentment against Islam.

3.3 Recruitment

Recruitment is the stage when the individual's frustration turns into group action. It is the "bridge between personal belief and violent activism" (Taarnby, 2005, p. 6). As examined in chapter 2, Kepel and Roy provide, however, little insight on the actual mechanics of mobilization which are addressed in this section. The question why only a minority of the grieving youngsters becomes jihadists, is not addressed in-depth by the two sociologists. The general suggestions they make indicate nevertheless, that their understanding of recruitment prioritizes different aspects. While Roy points to personal inclination and proactivity on the side of the jihadist youngsters, Kepel considers a socialization process and indoctrination as key.

In the effort to structure their insights on recruitment and to fill the gaps in their explanations, this section needs to rely on the work of three other theorists. With regard to Roy's concept of personal

inclination, Neumann's insight on the situation in prisons puts the sociologist's claims into context. And in the case of Kepel, the research by Della Porta and Wiktorowicz on the social factors of recruitment provides the structural framework for the Frenchman's position. This utilization of other theorists does not hamper the operational validity of this research, as they are not applied for their explanatory power regarding radicalization, but to shed led light on the explicit differences in the approaches of Kepel and Roy. So, in the following, Roy's position will be first examined (3.3.1) and then Kepel's approach will be addressed (3.3.2 & 3.3.3), before the concluding section (3.3.4).

3.3.1 Self-Recruitment & Ultimate Defiance

*"Live for nothing or die for something."*¹⁰

Roy argues that the jihadist youth recruits itself over the internet where they find people who have similar ideas like them (Roy, 2016a, 2017a). In jihadist online forums their extreme views and behavior are re-confirmed and fueled by the likeminded community. There are no recruiters involved in the process. It is the radical youth that volunteers to join the Islamic State, seeking violence and a grateful death (Roy, 2017b). And after entering the dangerous game of jihad, they simply follow guidelines and execute some relevant job (Roy, 2017a, chapter 3).

But while the French sociologist underlines the proactive role on the side of the individual jihadist youngsters, he still considers that recruitment has a social element, because it happens in small groups of friends, siblings and families (husband and wife) (Roy, 2017a). He suggests that there is one (charismatic) leader who leads the way, while the others follow in the effort to create a new micro-society in the Islamic State (ibid).

Nevertheless, also the recruitment of such groups follows a bottom-up principle with no active recruitment effort on part of the Islamic State. There are no recruiters, but dispatchers who integrate them into global jihad (Roy, 2017a). It is the radical groups themselves who deliberately

¹⁰ Rambo IV, 2008.

reach out to the terrorist organization in the hope of taking their violent daydreams to an international playing field.

In fact, the dominant role of personal inclination to defiance over socialization into radicalism is confirmed by Roy's stance on the mobilization of criminals. He considers that criminals become jihadists in prison, because being considered as a dangerous outlaw is appealing to them (Roy, 2017a). With 50 per cent of the jihadists having a criminal background, Roy argues that, for the Islamized radicals religious, devotion and political knowledge are irrelevant (Roy, 2017a) The jihadist youth does not congregate at mosques or universities, but at martial art clubs (Roy, 2017a). It does not engage in social work or volunteering, but belongs to biker gangs (ibid) and is involved in street races (Roy, 2016a). Hence, a great proportion of the jihadists has been recruited in prison, because by joining jihad they commit to a movement of ultimate defiance (Roy, 2017a).

In European prisons the most powerful and feared gangs are often militant Muslim extremists (Neumann, 2012). When inmates join them they do not only get better security and contacts, they also make a powerful statement: They openly break with their past through a new, allegedly uncorrupt, identity while still – and even more so – rejecting the rules and the laws of society (ibid). Also, militant Muslim extremism is the most popular product on the market of extremist ideologies (Roy, 2010). By joining the jihadist movement in prison, the radical youngsters are not only following the trend, they also boost their powerless situation to a larger than life mission (Roy, 2017a). As Islamized radicals they are respected and feared by the other inmates and guards, and even have a perspective once they are released (Neumann, 2012).

Joining the jihadist movement empowers the imprisoned radicals by giving them access to a global network while they are still in jail. The French-Iranian sociologists Khosrokhavar considers that “Islam is becoming in Europe, especially in France, the religion of the repressed, what Marxism was in Europe at one time.” (Neumann, 2012, p. 26). Roy sees the former leftist terrorist Carlos the Jackal as a case in point (Roy, 2016a, 2017a): Carlos the Jackal was one of the world's most wanted terrorists during the 1970s and 1980s (Jeffries, 2000). In the 1990s he converted to Islam

in prison, and subsequently praised Osama bin Laden as his successor (ibid). Roy considers that Carlos switched from anti-imperialism to jihadism, because nowadays militant Muslims are the greatest outlaws (Roy, 2017a).

3.3.2 Socialization into Violence

Kepel sees jihadist terrorism as the expression of a failing political movement. Militant Muslim acts of terrorism do not happen in isolation, but they are the violent expression of Islamism in general, and Salafism in particular (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). By the end of the 1990s when political Islam had failed to seize power, the jihadist fraction took to violence in a desperate attempt to mobilize the Muslim masses (Kepel, 2006). Under the banner of Al Qaida the second generation of jihadists plotted international large scale attacks, like 9/11 in the United States (Kepel, 2003). When the War on Terror by the United States and its allies dispersed the movement, the third generation of jihadists turned to neighborhood terrorism, attacking soft targets, like the editorial office of the satirical Newspaper Charlie Hebdo (Kepel & Jardin, 2017)

Kepel's portrayal of Salafist jihadism as part of a much wider political movement corresponds with social movement theory. As research on various social movements has shown, violence appears when activists realize that their cause will not lead to political change (Della Porta, 2008; Wieviorka, 2004). Radicalization is thereby the outcome of a protest cycle in which both the state and the movement construct frames in order to mobilize support for their actions (Della Porta, 2008). While the French government determines that religious symbols are a danger to its democratic values, the Islamist activists claim Muslims are subject to discrimination by their own government (Kepel, 2004, 2016). It is the clashing of frames that leads to violence.

In doing so, framing theory might give us an understanding how the third generation of jihadists becomes violent activists. The theory suggests that individuals go through three stages, before they enter the critical fourth stage in which they become part of the movement and get ready to take violent action (Wiktorowicz, 2004). The stages are: (1) *Cognitive opening* – The individual becomes receptive to ideology. Due to a personal crisis; (2) *Seeking* – The individual seeks

meaning and purpose; (3) *Frame alignment* – The ideology presented by the movement resonates with the individual; (4) *Socialization* – The individual takes part in group activities that facilitate indoctrination and lead to action.

By applying framing theory to Kepel's portrayal of the third generation of jihadists we can confirm that Kepel regards recruitment as a social process: In stage one they are receptive to radical ideology, because they struggle with unemployment and an identity crisis as residents of troubled neighborhoods (Kepel, 2016). In stage two, they seek answers from religion, because they feel estranged from the government and mainstream society which hail hedonism and allow gay marriages (Kepel & Jardin, 2017, p. 144). In stage three, the Salafist jihadist ideology resonates, because the struggling, seeking individuals realize that they are the victim, that it is Islamophobia and the corrupted society that "have cornered" them (ibid, p. XIX). In stage four, the "cornered" individuals normalize violence in peer groups by killing avatars in video games (ibid, p. 25). – Interesting enough, Kepel has claimed that the extreme cruel propaganda videos by the Islamic State have alienated potential recruits (Kepel, 2015). This is in accordance with framing theory that requires three preliminary stages before violence is normalized (Wiktorowicz, 2004), but in contrast to Roy whose jihadist youth is determined by its sadistic nature (Roy, 2017a).

Finally, much of the recruitment process happens online. Kepel estimates that the virtual world plays such a crucial role in it, because recruiters keep away from traditional recruitment hubs (like radical mosques and bookshops), suspecting that they are under constant police surveillance (Kepel, 2015). It is on the internet, on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, that recruiters connect with seekers and interact, before connections in real-life are made. Kepel has referred to this recruitment strategy as "religious phishing" (Kepel, 2015, p. 3).

To conclude, in contrast to Roy, Kepel considers that there is a process of socialization into terrorism. His third generation of terrorists are not rebels without a cause, but they are the violent offspring of the Salafist movement. Their trajectory into terrorism is an interactive process which

involves different phases and is facilitated by the recruiters to Salafist jihadism. They are not violent by nature, but socialized in to violence.

3.3.3 Prisons as Breeding Grounds of Jihadism

With over 50 per cent of the jihadists having a criminal background, Kepel regards prisons as the breeding grounds for terrorism (Roy, 2017a). In prison, radical Islamists get connected and pool their resources with other extremists and criminals (Kepel, 2016). Also, established radicals inspire religious seekers and ordinary criminals to restart their trouble lives as Salafist jihadists, while providing them with a strategy for future violent action (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). For instance, the double attack against the editorial office of a satirical newspaper and a kosher supermarket, that took place in Paris in January 2015, originated in jail where the perpetrators befriended each other and met their jihadist mentor (Kepel, 2016, p. 24-26). Ten years after the time in prison the two friends – joined by the brother of one of them – committed the terrorist attack.

Also, bad supervision has allowed radical imams to target fragile inmates and turn them from ordinary thieves into terrorists (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). Although the connection of petty criminals to the jihadist movement might be weak and limited to instructions that they receive, they are nevertheless acting as disciples of Salafist jihadist ideology. In fact, Kepel defines perpetrators of militant Muslim violence as part of the jihadist movement, even if the affiliation is only self-proclaimed. Accordingly, he determines that there are no “lone wolf” terrorists whose attacks happen in isolation from the Salafist narrative (Kepel & Jardin, 2017).

In contrast to Roy’s views on criminals who seek ultimate defiance by joining jihad in prison, Kepel’s convicts want to restart their troubled life in the hope for redemption. Kepel argues that criminals are under the influence of radical imams and established jihadists who indoctrinate them with Salafist jihadist propaganda.

3.4 Roundup: “Islamized Radicalism” versus “Radical Islam”

This chapter assessed where and how Kepel’s and Roy’s positions differ based on a three-element radicalization model (ideology, grievance and recruitment). The explicit differences between Kepel’s and Roy’s concepts are specified in the table below.

	Islamized Radicalism	Radical Islam
Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • globalized religion • suicidal violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salafist jihadism • martyrdom
Grievances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generational conflict • lack of recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of perspective • Islamophobia
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-recruitment • defiance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • socialization into violence • redemption

Table 1

As the table shows, “Islamized Radicalism” and “Radical Islam” are both operationalized in six variables. These variables will be used in the analytical part (chapter 5), to answer the research question which is to determine whether the Kosovar jihadist movement is an expression of “radical Islam”, or “Islamized radicalism”. The properties of the six variables are defined below:

Islamized radicalism

Globalized religion: For jihadists, becoming religious is an act of personal choice and rebellion.

Suicidal violence: Youngsters want to thrive in violence and kill themselves when they join ISIS.

Generational conflict: The jihadist youth despises its parents.

Lack of recognition: Youngster who join ISIS suffer of being nobodies.

Self-recruitment: Radical youngsters themselves reach out to ISIS online. They are not recruited, but dispatched by the terror organization.

Defiance: Convicts become jihadists, because they want to appear as dangerous as possible.

Radical Islam

Salafist jihadism: The youngsters who join jihad are part of a greater Salafist movement.

Martyrdom: The youngsters who join jihad believe in the after-live benefits of martyrdom.

Lack of perspective: Youngsters turn to religion, because they are left alone by the government.

Islamophobia: Muslim community perceives that it is discriminated against.

Socialization: Recruitment of jihadists is a social process within the greater Salafist movement that normalizes violence due to the effort of recruiters.

Redemption: Convicts seek redemption by joining jihad.

4.0 Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methods that were used to acquire data, and the sampling process. Then it addresses the validity, and reliability of the study, and concludes by identifying its limitations and ethical considerations.

4.1 Data Collection Methods

Primary and Secondary Data

To study the case of Kosovo with regard to radicalization, primary and secondary data sources are used. Primary data is collected by the researcher first-hand in the field, while secondary data is collected from second hand sources such as journal articles, databases, government archives, reports, etc. (Bryman, Bell, Bell, & Teevan, 2012). Primary sources increase the academic standard of radicalization research and are a token of stronger methodology (Neumann & Kleinmann, 2013). The primary data source of this thesis are in-depth face to face interviews and one focus group. Interviews are suitable data collection methods for this case study, because they allow for detailed and broad information from the respondents. The secondary data sources include, but are not limited to, peer reviewed articles, scholarly literature, and media articles.

Using two data sources allowed for triangulation which involves cross-checking the findings and validating them (Bryman et al., 2012). To find out whether the Kosovar jihadist are Islamized radicals or radical Islamists, using primary and secondary data sources form a more accurate model of reality. The two data sources both validate and complement each other, leading to a better understanding of the study object (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). In addition, due to the small sample size of the primary data, using secondary data sources was necessary to form a representative picture of Kosovar jihadism.

Stratified purposive sampling

In the effort to add credibility to this thesis stratified purposive sampling was chosen. This method can be described as accessing a sample within a sample in order to reach persons of interest who

can be expected to have a certain expertise of the phenomenon (Patton, 2014). It differs from stratified random sampling in that the sample sizes are too small for generalization (ibid). At the same time, semi- structured face to face interviews were selected as the main data collection method. In-depth interviews allow the respondents to provide broad and rich information according to what they consider relevant (Bryman et al., 2012). While actively listening, the researcher follows the dynamic of the dialogue, probing and following up for details that he/she considers interesting and relevant (ibid). Also, one focus group discussion was conducted. Although group interviews lack the depth and richness of individual face to face interviews, they are a valuable data source. Focus groups lead to spontaneous and uninspected revelations, because when the respondents discuss and interact with each other, the social context involved makes them respond more in character (Bryman et al., 2012). Therefore, a group interview can give a researcher access not only to conscious, but also to semiconscious and unconscious attributes and processes that are at work within a culture (Grudens-Schuck, Allen, & Larson, 2004). However, for this study the focus group was chosen ad hoc and for practical reasons, because three further relevant respondents happened to be available and willing to participate when I had my interview appointment at the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo. I therefore, made use of the opportunity and conducted a group interview.

4.2 Respondents

The sample consisted of 13 persons that were selected by stratified purposive sampling. I drew them from three categories: (1) law enforcement officials and government advisers who were involved in countering the Kosovar jihadist movement; (2) community leaders such as imams and social workers who dealt with radical, formerly radical, and non-radical believers; (3) and returned foreign fighters who had inside experience of the jihadist movement, and who approved of or had approved of violent extremism.

Based on this multi-dimensional sampling approach, I hoped to shed light on Kosovar jihadism from different perspectives. Law enforcement officials and government advisers offered a macro-level perspective on the issue and its manifestation in Kosovo as a whole. Community leaders and

social workers provided a micro-level perspective on how radicalized groups or individuals affected the community. And returned foreign fighters shared their subjective experience of joining and being a part of the global jihadist movement.

In selecting and reaching potential respondents, the Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) was enormously helpful. After I had contacted a former researcher at KCSS and presented my study project, I got in touch with the director of the center. He granted my support request and gave me access to KCSS research network in Kosovo. I was provided with a list of potential interviewees who fit the three categories. While I took contact with the potential interviewees who spoke English in good time before my planned departure to Kosovo, KCSS scheduled an interview with a local imam who did not speak English, and with two returned foreign fighters. The selected interviewees are described in the table below:

Interview #	Name	Description
1	A.*	Returned foreign fighter
2	L.*	Returned foreign fighter
3	Besa Ismaili	Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Pristina
4	Sabri Bajgora	Grand Imam of Kosovo
5	Enis Rama	Imam in Mitrovica
6	Shqipe Mjekiqi	Senior Political Advisor / Ministry of Internal Affairs
7 FG	Merita Syla	Head of Correctional Service / Ministry of Justice
7 FG	Mohamed Fazliu	Social Worker in High Security Prison
7 FG	Shpendim Sadiku	Social Worker in High Security Prison
7 FG	Jeton Kaboshi	Public Communication Officer / Ministry of Justice
8	Kujtim Bytqi	Senior Security Policy Analyst at the Kosovo Security Council Secretariat
9	Reshat Millaku	Chief Prosecutor of the Special Prosecution of Kosovo
10	Blerim Rama	Captain at the Department of Counter-Terrorism Kosovo Police

* The foreign fighters were granted anonymity to protect their identity. / FG: Focus Group

Table 2

4.3 Data Collection

The interviews took place over the course of eighteen days. The first interview was with the returned foreign fighter A., on 31.10.2016, the last with Blerim Rama on 17.11.2016. Most

interviews were conducted at the workplace of the interviewees. The focus group was held in a conference room at the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo. The two foreign fighters, Enis Rama and Kujtim Bytyqi were interviewed in a café. Enis Rama and the returned foreign fighter L. were the only respondents who did not speak any English. In these two interviews all questions and answers were translated from English into Albanian and vice versa. Also, in four other interviews a translator was present, because the respondents preferred to conduct the interview in Albanian. On five occasions the translator was provided by KCSS, and on one occasion from Strategy and Development Consulting Kosovo (S&D). During the focus group the respondents helped each other out if they encountered language difficulties. All respondents gave informed consent before the start of the interview. Most interviews were voice recorded. In some interviews I had to rely on note-taking, because the respondents did not want to be voice recorded. In the first interview the voice recorder failed. So, although A. had approved of being voice recorded I had to rely on notes. The following table presents an overview over the data collection during my fieldwork stay in Kosovo.

Date	Name	Language / Translator	Data secured by
31.10.2016	A.*	Mostly Albanian / KCSS	Note-taking
02.11.2016	L.*	Albanian / KCSS	Voice-recording
04.11.2016	Besa Ismaili	English	Voice-recording
08.11.2016	Sabri Bajgora	Mostly Albanian / KCSS	Voice-recording
09.11.2016	Enis Rama	Albanian / KCSS	Voice-recording
09.11.2016	Shqipe Mjekiqi	English	Voice-recording
10.11.2016 FG	Merita Syla	English	Note-taking
10.11.2016 FG	Mohamed Fazliu	English	Note-taking
10.11.2016 FG	Shpendim Sadiku	English	Note-taking
10.11.2016 FG	Jeton Kaboshi	English	Note-taking
14.11.2016	Kujtim Bytqi	English	Voice-recording
16.11.2016	Reshat Millaku	Mostly Albanian / KCSS	Note-taking
16.11.2016	Blerim Rama	Mostly Albanian / S&D	Note-taking

* The foreign fighters were granted anonymity to protect their identity. / FG: Focus Group

Table 3

4.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are evaluation criteria of qualitative projects. In order for the research data to be relevant, it must be reliable and valid (Mason, 2002). The concept of reliability involves that the research project would generate the same findings if it was repeated. This means that a reliable

study yields the same result if it is conducted by a different researcher. For instance, an IQ test should give the same result if the same individual takes it twice, or if it is conducted by a different researcher. If it does not do so, the test is not a reliable method to measure the IQ.

The concept of validity evaluates if the research project is genuine (Bryman et al., 2012). It involves that the methods and the concepts applied measure what they are supposed to measure. For instance, Albert Einstein's above average IQ is confirmed by an IQ test, because an IQ test is a valid method to measure a person's IQ. However, besides having an above average IQ Albert Einstein also had a moustache. Nevertheless, concluding that men with an above average IQ have a moustache is false, because there is no relationship between having an above average IQ and having a moustache. Therefore, a research project that would use an IQ test to predict if men had moustaches would not be valid.

While valid research concepts are always reliable, unreliable concepts are always invalid. For instance, an IQ test that generates random results is not reliable. And since it generates random results, it cannot be a valid tool to measure IQ. However, reliable concepts are not necessarily valid. For instance, a test measuring if men have a moustache or not would be reliable. Still, one could not conclude that men who passed the moustache test have an above average IQ. Reliability is a necessary, but not sufficient quality of a study project in order to be valid.

With regard to this study project reliability and validity involve for instance that the respondents understand the questions in the interview as intended. On the one hand, there is a language barrier. None of the respondents' mother tongue is English. Meaning can get lost in translation. On the other hand, the very terms used in this study involve ambiguity. Terms like "jihad", "terrorism", or "radicalization" are loaded with meaning, they are understood differently by different persons. For the officer at the Kosovar Counter Terrorism Department "jihad" might refer to a national security concern, a war that militant Muslims have declared to the secular state of Kosovo. However, for the Islamic community of Kosovo the same term might rather involve a spiritual struggle that leads to self-improvement. By using in-depth interviews such misunderstandings can

be avoided, because the researcher receives broad and rich information, and probes to verify meaning (Bryman et al., 2012).

But in fact, reliability and validity concern the entire process of qualitative research (Patton, 2014). Starting with the design, we need to verify if Kosovo is a valid case to test the study's underlying concepts in. Is it valid to apply the concepts of "Islamized radicalism" and "radical Islam" to the reality of Kosovo, or do they involve some inherent geographic or other form of limitation? "Islamized radicalism" is part of a global youth culture that concerns Bangladeshi elitist youngsters just as much as French ghetto kids (Roy, 2017a). And "radical Islam" manifests itself in all Europe, because the third generation of jihadists wages war on its foundations, in the attempt to replace democracy, gender equality, and secularism, with the caliphate (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). – These answers indicate that Kosovo, a secular, democratic European country with a population including youngsters, is a valid case to test the concepts.

Furthermore, reliability and validity concern the data analysis and the quality of the data (Patton, 2014). With regard to the former the conceptualization of "Islamized radicalism" and "radical Islam" need to be valid. Is the three-element radicalization model a proper representation of the theories? Regarding the quality of the data, we must ensure that the information given is representative of reality. In doing so, triangulation is an important tool to improve reliability and validity (Golafshani, 2003). By using two data sources findings can be cross-checked in order to validate them (Bryman et al., 2012). To find out whether the Kosovar jihadist are Islamized radicals or radical Islamists, using primary and secondary data sources allow for a refined model of reality. This is because, the two data sources both validate and complement each other, leading to a better understanding of the study object (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012).

4.5 Limitations

Research that looks into a clandestine phenomenon like violent extremism, faces the problem that the sample population, the violent extremists, is small and difficult to reach (Silke, 2001). As an outsider to Kosovo I was lucky that KCSS gave me access to two returned foreign fighters.

However, they can obviously not be regarded as representative of the movement. In the attempt to create a representative picture of the movement, this study gathered data from a population that was selected by stratified purposive sample. To improve reliability and validity, it combined different methods and included secondary sources as an additional source of empirical evidence. Nevertheless, using a mix of methods and sources was also due to the circumstance not only by choice.

Although all participants gave informed consent to participate in the research, some seemed to be biased about it and did not consider it trustworthy. They took a defensive stand during the interview, possibly because they regarded me as an outsider who came to “blame” them. On the one hand, they made an effort to prove that Kosovo was a “good” country by referring to “bad” countries where radicalization was a real problem. Likewise, they were eager to confirm that Kosovar culture and Muslim religion were against radicalization. So, in some interviews discussing the potential religious background of the jihadists was challenging. Terms like “radical Islam”, “Salafism”, “jihad”, and “militant Muslim extremism” had to be carefully used in order to avoid misunderstanding, and possibly provocation. On the other hand, the two returned foreign fighters waited on appeal court judgment concerning their membership in a terrorist organization. Although, they were granted anonymity they seemed to have an interest in painting their own actions in the best way by being vague and withholding information on certain issues.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

To protect the rights of the informants, interviews were conducted with informed consent. Also, I always asked for permission to voice-record. Some respondents did not want to be voice-recorded and preferred me to take notes. The two returned foreign fighters were granted anonymity. They were contacted by KCSS staff who also set up the meeting in a café. In addition, this paper does not divulgate their identities.

As the research project concerns controversial issues, misunderstandings with the informants had to be avoided. In Kosovo the main religion is Islam. Some of the informants were devoted believers. As the research project concerns militant Muslim extremism with regard to activities of

an organization that commits mass murder in the name of Islam, I tried to clarify that my role as a researcher was to collect information, and not to blame, or seek apologies. For instance, the differentiation between Salafist jihadist ideology and mainstream Muslim belief was taken into account in the design and wording of the interview guide. Nevertheless, I observed that some respondents took a defensive stance regarding religion and nationalism. This led to statements such as “Not all Salafists are terrorists!”, “Why does nobody care what the Serbs do? – Their people fight in Ukraine!”, “Kosovo is just a small country. Look at China. It is much worse what is happening there.”

5.0 Jihadism in Kosovo: “Islamized Radicalism” or “Radical Islam?”

In this chapter, the responses of the interviews are analyzed and discussed in the effort to assess whether the Kosovar jihadist movement is an expression of “radical Islam”, or “Islamized radicalism”. The empirical findings are examined against the backdrop of three three-element radicalization model that was operationalized in chapter three:

	Islamized Radicalism	Radical Islam
Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • globalized religion • suicidal violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salafist jihadism • martyrdom
Grievances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generational conflict • lack of recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of perspective • Islamophobia
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-recruitment • defiance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • socialization into violence • redemption

Table 4

This section addresses firstly the ideology of Kosovar jihadists: Are they religious autodidacts with an inclination to suicidal violence, or are they part of a Salafist movement and belief in the benefits of martyrdom? Then, we move to the grievances of Kosovar jihadists: Do they clash with their parents, because they do not want to end up as “nobodies”, or do they suffer of a lack of perspective and face discrimination due to their belief? And, finally we look into the recruitment of Kosovar jihadists: Do they recruit themselves in an effort to commit the ultimate defiance, or are they socialized into violence, because they seek redemption?

5.1 Ideology

This section addresses the factors that direct the anger and frustration of Kosovar youngsters in the direction of jihadism. While Roy points to *globalized religion* and the inclination of *suicidal violence*, Kepel considers the *Salafist jihadism* and belief in *martyrdom* as key. The following table provides a quick overview over the findings for the four variables:

Level of Relevance¹¹	Low relevance	Mixed relevance	High relevance
Globalized religion		X	
Suicidal violence	X		
Salafist jihadism			X
Martyrdom		X	

Table 5

While there was little data indicating that the Kosovar youngsters sought *suicidal violence* by joining jihad, the findings for *globalized religion* and *belief in martyrdom* were mixed. The impact of *Salafist jihadism* was of high relevance with findings in all interviews. In the following we discuss the findings, starting with the two variables that belong to “Islamized radicalism”, *globalized religion*, and *suicidal violence*, then we move to the representatives of “radical Islam”, *Salafist jihadism* and *martyrdom*.

Globalized religion

The concept of “globalized religion” religion involves a chosen faith and stands in contrast to the concept of cultural religion in which people are born into (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). In Kosovo, over 90 per cent of the Albanian population consider themselves as Muslims (Kolstø & Kværne, 2011, p. 66). But while close to one third of them only attends service on major holidays, 30 per cent never do so (ibid, p. 67). This discrepancy suggests that Islam is the cultural religion of Kosovo Albanians: One does not need to practice the religion or follow religious rules to be considered a Muslim. Shqipe Mjekiqi (interview #6) describes the relation of Kosovars to religion accordingly: “Islam is something we have inherited over the centuries. ... You should not be surprised to see that the majority of the people drinks wine, beer, and does not fast during Ramadan. But everybody has a religious background.”

¹¹ The level of relevance refers to their explanatory value with regard to Kosovar jihadist radicalization on the basis of the 10 interviews that were conducted.

However, Islamized radicals are converts to the globalized religion Salafism that does not belong to any culture (Roy, 2017a). For them religious markers (specific religious look) and rituals (fasting, praying) fill the lack of cultural belonging (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). With regard to Kosovo all respondents considered that most of the Kosovar foreign fighters were “takfiri” which is a violent outgrowth of Salafism (Oliveti, 2002) (interviews #1-10). While they – in contrast to the cultural believers – practice their religion, and show the religious markers, respondents label them as “new to religion” and “without religious knowledge” (interviews #3, 4, 5, 7, 9, & 10). They are regarded as religious newcomers, because the jihadists follow a faith that has been imported to Kosovo.

In fact, Salafism arrived Kosovo after the end of the war in 1999, when NGOs from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries started to build and restore mosques all over the secular nation in the effort to reconnect the population with Islam (Kursani, 2015). At the same time, over 30 Koranic schools in the rural parts of Kosovo were built (ibid, p. 36). In doing so, the NGOs educated Kosovar imams at no charge in Saudi Arabia, and promoted their mosques by offering free English and IT courses, free accommodation and free outdoor activities (interview #8). These offers targeted particularly children of poor families, and orphans (interview #10). But Kosovo’s youngsters in general made use of them as there were no other options for extracurricular activities (Kursani, 2015, p. 10).

The strategy of promoting religion by worldly enticements, suggests that the spread of Salafism in Kosovo has been directly linked to the difficult socioeconomic situation of vast parts of the population. The NGOs have been engaged in social work and community building, in the chaotic post-war environment, “when neither the UN-MIK interim administration nor the temporary governments had control” (interview #4). Consequently, youngsters in Kosovo might have become Salafists, because this was the religion their imams preached to them, and the belief system they were socialized in at school and in their free-time.

The consumers of globalized religions however, buy their product on the global market of faiths, and practice it on an individual basis (Roy & Schwartz, 2014). For the jihadist youth religiosity is

an expression of rebellion, not a matter of socialization (Roy, 2017a). With regard to the situation in Kosovo, we therefore have to conclude that Salafism has played a considerably broader role in the nation's religious and social fabric than Roy's concept of globalized religion suggests. It seems that the new religion has spread widely due to a strategic promotion effort that was steered from outside of Kosovo.

Suicidal violence

While globalized religion is a cover up for their nihilist nature, Roy's jihadist youngsters wish that the world will come to an end (Roy, 2017a). By joining jihad, they want both to thrive in violence, killing others and to commit suicide (ibid). With regard to the jihadist movement in Kosovo, there is little proof for this theory. Although, several respondents stated that depression was a main reason why individuals left to fight in Syria, they do not see the jihadists as suicidal, let alone nihilistic (interview #1, 2, 3). On the contrary, two interviewees consider that many even have strong principles which they labeled as "idealistic" and "humanitarian" (interview #4, & 7). Accordingly, the returned jihadist A. stated: "People leave for Syria, because they want to end depression by doing something good." (Interview #1)

In fact, the two returned foreign fighters that I interviewed are both far from nihilistic. As almost one third of Kosovo's jihadists, they joined the conflict during 2012, before ISIS was even consolidated (Kursani, 2015). Both were soon disillusioned when they realized that the frontlines in the civil war were unclear: There was no united opposition against the Assad regime as they had imagined, but fights between various rebel groups. Consequently, they returned home as soon as they were allowed to leave. A. left after nine days, L. got back after three months. When I met them, they were involved in community work to prevent youngsters from doing the same mistake they did.

Some of the foreign fighters that went to Syria have an altruistic motivation and can be regarded as idealists (Hegghammer, 2014a). But of course, not all Kosovar jihadists belong to that category.

Nevertheless, the closest hint of nihilistic motivation I found referred to criminals who wanted to benefit of the war. According to Reshat Millaku, Special Prosecutor of Kosovo, several of the individuals that went to Syria did so in the hope that they could loot and live in a villa, while dogging criminal charges at home (interview #9). Although this behavior is immoral, it does not resemble the suicidal nihilism that Roy's Islamized radicals show.

Regarding the ultra-violent propaganda videos that the Islamic State has staged, all respondents believe that they had a negative impact on recruitment in Kosovo (interview #1-10). This is interesting, since Kosovar jihadists have been involved in the production of such content (Kursani, 2015). Nevertheless, only three respondents considered that ultra-violence could be attractive, but at the same time they were certain that it repelled many more potential recruits than it allured (interview #1, 6, & 10). This is an observation in line with Kepel's anticipations (Kepel, 2015).

Kosovar jihadists are, therefore, neither nihilistic nor ultra-violent as the theory of Islamized radicalism suggests. Although, some individuals have been motivated by criminal intentions, while others were involved in the production of extremely cruel propaganda material, there is no evidence showing that Kosovar jihadists are characterized by being either sadistic or nihilistic.

Salafist jihadism and martyrdom

As described in the section on globalized religion, all respondents identified the majority of the Kosovar jihadists as "takfiri" (interviews #1-10). Takfiri consider themselves as the only true believers who need to forcefully "overthrow infidel rulers, unite the Ummah (Islamic Community), restore the Caliphate, guarantee the freedom of da'wa (Islamic State), liberate occupied Muslim territories and establish Sharia rule in the world." (Kursani, 2015, p. 50). Likewise, respondents specified the motivation of the takfiri Kosovars as "to kill all kuffar" (interview #4), "to receive a gift from Allah" (#5), "to fulfill the Muslim duty" (#6), and "to go to paradise" (#10).

Both, these specifications, and the definition of takfiri ideology given by Kursani match Kepel's concept of Salafist jihadism (Kepel, 2006). And although not all Kosovar foreign fighters have been driven by extremist religious dogma (for instance ordinary criminals, interview #9), the crucial role it played in the mobilization of Kosovar youngsters cannot be dismissed. Most Kosovar youngsters went to war, because they considered it their holy duty. A recruitment video by the Islamic State highlights the tight connection between violence and religion. In this video one of Kosovo's most notorious jihadists demands his countrymen to join him in Syria with the following words: *Muslims cannot achieve the implementation of the Sharia without spilling their blood, and that the ship of a Muslim does not sail on water; it sails on sea, on a bloody sea, and by spilling our Muslim blood the victory can be close.* (Kursani, 2015, p. 54)

However, as this recruitment appeal shows, Salafist jihadist ideology involves the meme of martyrdom (Kepel, 2006): Muslims need to spill their blood to be true believers. And although Kosovar recruiters have applied the meme in private conversations and in YouTube videos that reached over 100.000 views (Kursani, 2015, p. 75, & 85), over half of the respondents consider that Kosovar jihadists are not committed to martyrdom (interview #1, 2, 3, 6, 7, & 8). One of the returned foreign fighters claimed that "everybody wants to live, also a suicide bomber wants to live" (interview #1). Others suggested that the jihadists took their families to Syria, because they wanted a better life here on earth (interview #3, 6, 7). Also, several respondents considered that most of the jihadists had returned, although they would face prosecution in Kosovo, and let alone, although leaving from the Islamic State was much more difficult than getting there (interview #7, 8).

On the other hand, during the Soviet-Afghan war the martyrdom meme was the topic of bestselling books and served as a recruitment magnet for jihad campaign (Hegghammer, 2010b, p. 41). But by 1989, of the 20.000 foreign fighters less than 250 had been killed (Randal, 2007, p. 76). The death rate of the local Afghan fighters was much higher¹² which made some label the volunteers

¹² From 1980-1992 half of the local mujahedeen – between 150.000-180000 individuals – were killed Giustozzi (2000, p. 115)p. 115

as “jihad tourists” (Hegghammer, 2010b, p. 63). Nevertheless the meme of martyrdom lived on and made suicide missions the trademark of Al Qaeda terrorism (Moghadam, 2011).

Regarding the Kosovar jihadists, the respondents’ answers suggest that many of them are “jihad tourists”. Nevertheless, their commitment to martyrdom seems to be considerably higher than it was during the Afghanistan jihad campaign. By April 2014 already 34 of a total of 210 fighters had been killed (Kursani, 2015, p. 27). And, by November 2016, when I conducted the interviews, there were still around 70 Kosovar jihadists fighting for the Islamic State who would never return, because they were part of the hardcore of the movement (interview #8).

Salafist jihadism has been the main ideological driving force behind radicalization in Kosovo. Although some individuals had other reasons for leaving to war-torn Syria, the majority of the foreign fighters considered it a holy duty to engage in jihad. While most jihadists have not sought martyrdom, it nevertheless seems to have been an important meme for mobilization, and for the fighting spirit of the remaining militants.

5.2 Grievances

In this section we examine why Kosovar youngsters are receptive to extremist ideology. While Roy points to a *generational conflict* and the youngster’s *lack of recognition*, Kepel considers that there is a *lack of perspective* and the perception of *Islamophobia*. The table below provides a quick overview over the findings for the four variables:

Level of Relevance¹³	Low relevance	Mixed relevance	High relevance
Generational conflict	X		
Lack of recognition		X	
Lack of perspective			X
Islamophobia			X

¹³ The level of relevance refers to their explanatory value with regard to Kosovar jihadist radicalization on the basis of the 10 interviews that were conducted.

There was little evidence showing that Kosovar jihadists are involved in a *generational conflict*. Findings for a *lack of recognition* were mixed. However, the impact of a *lack of perspective* and *Islamophobia* were identified as crucial. The following section discusses, the findings for the four variables, starting with the two variables that belong to “Islamized radicalism”, *generational conflict*, and *lack of recognition*, and then the representatives of “radical Islam”, *lack of perspective* and *Islamophobia* are addressed.

Generational conflict

Roy suggests that Islamized radicalism is the expression of a youth rebellion (Roy, 2017a). Just like the Red Guards in 1960s China attacked the “four olds”, the jihadist youth wants to eradicate their parents’ generation and everything it appreciates by a campaign of terrorism (Roy, 2017b). However, regarding Kosovo’s jihadists, there is no proof for a generational conflict. None of the respondents thought that the foreign fighters held specific hatred for their parents or their parents’ generation (interviews #1-10).

Still, Kosovar jihadists are young and they radicalize without their families knowing it (Kursani, 2015). There are cases when parents have found out about their children’s extreme ideas and informed the police (interviews #6, 10). Also, Kosovar jihadists have broken with their parents and called them “kaffir”, “non-believer” (interview #4). In Roy’s eyes this disconnection and helplessness of the parents’ embodies a generational rupture (Roy, 2015). The jihadist youth is not part of any traditional community and does not share the same values as their families (ibid).

Nevertheless, respondents consider that generational tensions only have a limited impact on Kosovar jihadist mobilization. The very living situation of youngsters might contribute to this, since extended families often live together in the same household (interview #3). When one family member radicalizes in this setting, there is nowhere to go (ibid). Other interviewees confirmed that family relations remain important even in the face of radicalization. While the foreign fighter L. was in Syria, the only persons at home he had regular contact with was his family via Skype

(interview #2). Some jihadists have send money to their families while they fought for the Islamic State (interview # 6). Also, the imprisoned jihadists receive regular visits from their parents with whom they have good relations (interview #7).

Lack of recognition

Also, regarding Roy's claim that the jihadist youth sought recognition and wanted to be regarded as heroic – particularly on social media – by joining jihad (Roy, 2017b), the interviews produced only little evidence. This could be, because the use of social media by ISIS fighters is restricted (Klausen, 2015). Only trusted members of the militia are allowed to use social media (ibid). The information given by Blerim Rama, Captain at the Counter-Terrorism Department, confirmed this. He suggested that there were no spontaneous social media posts by Kosovar foreign fighters, only the higher-ranking jihadists were active on social media (interview #10). Therefore, he regarded all posts by Kosovar members of the militia as organized PR (ibid).

In fact, the two foreign fighters interviewed, were not active on social media during their stay in Syria. L. only used Skype to call his family, and A. did not use social media at all (interview #1, 2). Also, after their return they have not appeared to seek recognition, let alone heroism. After all, they labelled their decision to leave for Syria a mistake. Most other respondents considered that the craving for recognition and fame was not relevant for mobilization (interviews #3, 4 5, & 10).

But one respondent considered that recognition played an important role. In Syria, Kosovar jihadists could become someone, for instance, “a commander” and escape their boring life at home (interview #8). The leaders of the movement furthermore sought media attention, and enjoyed being regarded as terrorists (ibid). Also, Kursani claims that the need for recognition plays a role in Kosovar radicalization. He referred to the most notorious Kosovar ISIS member, Lavdrim Muhaxheri who – according to the observation of a former comrade – was so thrilled about getting attention on social media that it stimulated him to commit “radical actions” (Kursani, 2015, p. 84).

In all, there is little evidence for the grievances that Roy's theory of "Islamized radicalism" proposes. Regarding the generational, good family relations seem to remain important for the jihadists, although they radicalize without their families knowing it. And regarding Roy's claim that the jihadists seek recognition and heroism the evidence is unclear. While the leading Kosovar jihadists sought attention by the traditional media, and on social media platforms, most jihadists have not shown such behavior.

Lack of Perspective & Islamophobia

Kepel argues that the jihadist movement is rooted in socioeconomic deprivation, because it makes the deprived receptive for radical religious indoctrination (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). The third generation of jihadists has grown up in troubled neighborhoods, where unemployed and crime rates are high, where people are poor and often have a migration background (Kepel, 2016). In this setting religion rises by providing orientation, dignity, and status.

However, while Kepel's "troubled neighborhoods" are the home of marginalized groups within the general population, in Kosovo, deprivation concerns mainstream society. In Kosovo, almost 30 per cent of the country's population lives under the poverty line, and the youth unemployment rate (age 15 – 24) is over 55 per cent (UNDP, 2017). Furthermore, Kosovo is among the countries with the highest level of corruption worldwide (TIK, 2012). The dire situation has led to a mass exodus from Kosovo. Since 2014 tens of thousands of Kosovars have fled their country in the hope for a better life in the European Union (Launey, 2015). In 2015 alone, over 30.000 of them applied for asylum in Germany, although there is almost no chance that their applications are granted, since Kosovo is considered as safe country of origin by the EU (Mülherr, 2015).

Unsurprisingly, all respondents consider, that the general lack of perspective has been a strong reason for Kosovar jihadists to leave for Syria (interview #1 – 10). In doing so, the sheer need for work seems to have had an enormous impact: Over half of the respondents suggest that the youngsters hoped to improve their economic situation in the Islamic State (interview #4, 5, 6, 8,

9, & 10). In the face of unemployment at home, Kosovar youngsters imagined that they could earn good money in the Islamic State, even their women were said to get jobs (interview #8).

In fact, many Kosovar jihadists seem to have been attracted by the prospect of a better future in the Islamic State. Propaganda videos which presented the caliphate as perfect were highly popular (interview #6). The productions “portrayed the beautiful life, with villas, swimming pools, bazars, and children playing in the garden.” (Interview #4). A YouTube video that showed an Albanian speaking jihadist enjoying the swimming pool of a captured villa reached almost 100.000 views in six months (Kursani, 2015, p. 84)

But, although economic factors have mattered greatly regarding the mobilization of Kosovar youngsters, they alone cannot explain why the foreign fighters left for Syria. If economic factors alone had driven Kosovar youngsters, they would have joined the thousands who went to Germany (interview #1, & 10). In fact, by looking for a future in the Islamic State the foreign fighters made a conscious choice on behalf of their ideological convictions. This becomes clear when we address the second grievance of Kepel’s concept of radical Islam: Islamophobia.

Although over 90 per cent of Kosovo’s population define themselves as Muslims (Kolstø & Kværne, 2011, p. 66), more than half of the respondents consider that their country was somewhat islamophobic (interview # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10). They suggest for instance that “there is no religious freedom ... Muslims are stigmatized” (interview #1), “one is not treated well as a Muslim” (#2), “there are no jobs for believers” (#3), “the media is aggressive against Muslims” (#4, & 7), “the media scares parents when their children become Muslims” (#5), and “men with religious beards are falsely presented as dangerous” (#10).

At the same time, the remaining respondents reject that believers are discriminated against in Kosovo (interviews #6, 8, & 9). They consider that Islamophobia is a narrative that has been propagated by those who want to establish a new religion in Kosovo (ibid). For them it is not

society that has changed its attitude towards religion, but it is the representative of the new religion that make demands. They suggest for instance that “before religion never was an issue” (interview #6), “before no one needed prayer rooms ... although everybody considered himself a Muslim”, (#8), and “there is an interest in establishing this new Islam here, and people are paid to follow it” (#9).

Regardless whether Islamophobia is real or perceived, or whether religion in Kosovo has changed or not, the answers of the respondents show that practicing Muslims in the secular society of Kosovo feel discriminated due to their faith. And just like Kepel suggests, extremists have fueled this notion in their effort to recruit them to jihad. For instance, they have claimed that “Europe does not want Kosovars, because they are Muslims ... but in the Islamic State girls were free to wear the headscarf at school” (Interview #5). Also, ISIS propaganda videos have advertised the caliphate in Kosovo as the perfect Muslim society where “you do not have to live under the government of non-believers, and can be your true self.” (Interview #4). Therefore, in the perception of Kosovar youngsters the Islamic State “is a place which is both comfy and wealthy. ... Comfortable with relation to the discrimination against Muslims in Kosovo.” (Interview #3).

To conclude, the grievances of socioeconomic deprivation and (perceived) religious discrimination made Kosovar youngsters receptive for ISIS propaganda. While in Kepel’s concept Islamist radicalization happens within the disenfranchised neighborhoods of Muslim minorities (Kepel, 2016), youth unemployment and poverty are mainstream problems in the Muslim majority country Kosovo. Nevertheless, Kosovar jihadism evolved on the grounds of an alleged oppression of Islam. In doing so, the recruitment effort of ISIS in Kosovo has been tailored to meet these grievances, and addressed both the economic need and the religious struggle of the young population.

5.3 Recruitment

In this section we examine how Kosovar youngster are recruited to jihad. While Roy assess that the jihadists youth is *self-recruited* and seeks *ultimate defiance* in the effort to appear as dangerous as possible, Kepel sees recruitment as a process of *socialization* that is facilitated by recruiters.

Also, he estimates that convicts seek *redemption* by joining jihad. In the table below a quick overview over the findings for the four variables is provided:

Level of Relevance¹⁴	Low relevance	Mixed relevance	High relevance	No data
Self-recruitment	X			
Defiance	X			
Socialization			X	
Redemption				X

While the findings refuted the concept of *self-recruitment* and *defiance*, they strongly backed *socialization*. With regard to recruitment in Kosovo’s prison, respondents could not provide information, because jihadism was a too new phenomenon to the country, and no research has been done on this issue yet. In the following, the findings for the four variables are discussed, starting with the two variables that belong to “Islamized radicalism”, *self-recruitment* and *defiance*, before the representative of “radical Islam”, *socialization* is examined. The chapter ends with a short discussion on *redemption*.

Self-recruitment & defiance

According to Oliver Roy recruitment follows a bottom-up principle with no active recruitment effort on part of the international terrorist organizations (Roy, 2017a). There are no recruiters, but dispatchers who integrate the radical youth into jihad (ibid). It is the radicals themselves who gang up on their object of hatred, before they deliberately reach out to the terrorist organization in the hope of boosting their violent fantasies to global meaning. Much of the recruitment process happens on the internet where the radicals transform themselves into jihadists.

¹⁴ The level of relevance refers to their explanatory value with regard to Kosovar jihadist radicalization on the basis of the 10 interviews that were conducted.

With regard to Kosovar jihadists, there is no evidence that they are extremist youngsters who recruit themselves online in the effort of giving their personal vendetta global meaning. On the contrary, they are seen as victims of strategic manipulation and brainwashing (interviews #3 – 10). For instance, when asked about the significance of online self-radicalization in Kosovo respondent #8 answered:

Again, the majority of those who went to Syria were indoctrinated by local imams who were arrested and sentenced. Besides giving lectures in the mosque, they also tried to organize some outside events. In nature, talking about religion, like camps, you know study camps, reading and so on... They are using a specific strategy. They are trained to do that.
(Interview #8)

Nevertheless, the internet has played a significant role in the mobilization of foreign fighters in Kosovo, because it has served as a “free PR machine for ISIS and pushes people to extremism” (interview #10). While Kursani is unsure about the scope of internet led recruitment, he suggests that it might have been a “more effective recruitment tool than the physical contact such as mosques, imams, and private spaces.” (Kursani, 2015p. 81). In doing so, victim videos were identified by several respondents as particularly influential (interview #1, 2, .4, & 9). Those videos which usually involve atrocities committed by Assad’s forces were shared over social media, and created outrage among Kosovar youngsters (Kursani, 2015, p. 83). In some cases, this outrage has made youngsters leave for Syria (Kursani, 2015, p. 13).

Internet has also made the conflict in Syria easily accessible, by providing all the practical information on how to get to Syria (interview #1). But in contrast to Roy’s claim that the jihadist youth fulfills its cruel fantasies by entering the conflict, respondents consider that even the highest-ranking Kosovar jihadists have become accustomed to violence while in Syria (interview #5). They were not vicious by nature, but have turned into “monsters” as a result of the war (ibid).

Likewise, in Kosovo there is no proof for Roy's claim that jihadist youngsters declare ultimate defiance by joining ISIS. Although some foreign fighters want to be known as terrorists, most regret their decision to leave for Syria (interview # 3, & 8). Respondents consider them to be confused, misinformed individuals who wanted to do the right thing (interview #4, & 5). The two returned foreign fighters interviewed, both consider their decision to leave for Syria a mistake (interview #2). They returned, because the situation in Syria was not as they had imagined (interview #1). Since their return they have been engaged in community work to prevent radicalization. This is the very opposite of defiance.

Furthermore, although recruitment to jihad has happened in Kosovo's prisons (interviews #3, 5, & 8), it does not seem to be an epicenter of jihadist defiance as Roy's concept proposes. While 37 per cent of the jihadists who went to Syria have a previous criminal record (Kursani, 2015, 73.), the returnees in Kosovo's high security prisons are described as generally cooperative and respectful (interview #7). In fact, some of those who received shorter prison terms are afraid to be released, because they expect that society will not receive them well (ibid). Others are afraid of restarting their life, because they fear that members of the jihadist network might punish them for exiting the movement (ibid).

In conclusion, internet has played a significant role in the recruitment process of Kosovar jihadists. However, Roy's concept of self-recruitment to global jihad as an act of free will by cruel individuals seems invalid in the context of Kosovo. Much more, Kosovar jihadists have been the subject of a strategic recruitment effort that involved manipulation and brainwashing both online and in the real world. Also, Kosovar jihadists do not seem to have sought ultimate defiance by joining ISIS. Although individuals have been recruited in prison, returned jihadists generally regard themselves as part of society, and are willing to restart their lives in it.

Socialization

While the discussion in the previous section strongly points to a socialization into violence as Kepel's theory of "radical Islam" suggests, we further explore recruitment of Kosovar jihadists as a phenomenon that happens within a greater movement. Kepel's theory of the jihadist movement involves a process of radicalization in which the ideology of Salafism inspires violent political acts by few (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). Or in other words, "Salafism is not a gateway to violence for the tens of millions of its peaceful adherents around the world, but Sunni jihadist terrorists generally are Salafists (Bergen, 2016, p. 28). With regard to Kosovo, Salafism entered the country in the chaotic aftermath of the Kosovo War (1999), when Arab NGOs restored and built mosques and religious schools across the country in the effort to reconnect the secular society with Islam (Kursani, 2015). According to Besa Ismaili, Vice Dean at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, "from then on the process of radicalization was underway" (interview #4).

NGOs thereby "demonized institutions in Kosovo, first and foremost the Islamic Association of Kosovo" (interview #4). And although they only represented a minority of the Kosovar Muslims, they made use of their access to the media claiming that the Muslim community was discriminated and that Muslim rights were not respected (interview #4). This resembles the diversionist strategy of the French Salafist movement which attempts to be taken as the prime representative of Islam in the public discourse in order make the masses of cultural Muslims pick a side: Either one is a true believer or a secular apostate (Kepel, 2016).

Furthermore, by claiming that believers were discriminated in Kosovo, the NGOs constructed the frame of Islamophobia. However, as shown in the section on *Islamophobia* (5.2) this frame has clashed with the principle that Kosovo is a secular country that grants religious freedom to everyone (interviews #6, 8, 9). While the camp of the Islamophobia demands prayer rooms at the work place and wants their daughters to be allowed to wear the headscarf at school (interview #8), the secular camp regards this as an attack on the secular principle (interview #6). As the two frames clashed the Islamic State rose as a haven of freedom and justice for the radicalized (interview #1, 4, & 5).

The connection between the Salafist movement and violent radicalization seem to become evident in the areas of Kosovo where the imported religion has been particularly strong. For instance, in the town of Gjilan, where already in 2004 an imam who represented the traditional Muslim community was abducted and beaten up by a group of masked men after he had rejected the Salafists' demand to rearrange the mosque (Gall, 2016). One decade later, several respondents describe the region along the border to Macedonia where Gjilan is located as an extremist stronghold and jihadist recruitment hub (interview #3, & 8). In fact, one of Kosovo's highest ranking ISIS members has been radicalized there (Kursani, 2015, p. 54).

While the controversy around Islamophobia demonstrates how Islam in Kosovo radicalized due to a social process that came with the influx of Salafism, the individual trajectory into jihad of Kosovar youngsters can be constructed by the information given during the interviews. To do so, framing theory is used as a framework. Framing theory involves four stages and presents radicalization as a gradual process which ends with the socialization into violent activism (Wiktorowicz, 2004). A typical path into jihadism of Kosovar youngsters would be:

1. Cognitive opening: Youngsters in Kosovo experience depression due to the lack of perspective and are therefore receptive for ideologies. For instance, respondent #1: "If you live in a country like Kosovo with a government and institutions like this, you must become radical in some way if you do not want to go insane." (Interview #1)
2. Seeking: Youngsters in Kosovo seek orientation and purpose due to their depression and make an effort to reconnect with the religion of their grandparents which was Islam (interview #3). But Islam in Kosovo has been affected by the influx of radical preachers who spread the ideology of Salafist jihadism in the country (interview #8).
3. Frame alignment: The seeking Kosovar youngsters perceive that the ideology that the radical preachers have presented to them makes sense. For instance, by consuming online victim videos that they find on social media. Such videos were produced by Kosovar ISIS members in the effort to indoctrinate youngsters with their ideology of Salafist jihadism (Kursani, 2015).

4. Socialization: The indoctrinated Kosovar youngsters take part in activities which are organized by a radical preacher like going camping to facilitate manipulation (interview #8). When the preacher has assured himself that the youngsters are ready to die on behalf of the movement (Kursani, 2015, p. 74), he establishes contact to ISIS members in Syria and serves as a reference for his recruits (Kursani, 2015, p. 54).

In conclusion, as Kepel's theory suggests, jihadists youngsters in Kosovo are an offspring of the greater Salafist movement. Their path into jihad is a gradual development which involves a process of radicalization. In this process, Kosovar youngsters are receptive to the radical ideology, because they perceive their situation as hopeless. Their socialization into jihad is the result of a strategic recruitment effort made by the representatives of Salafist jihadist organizations.

Redemption

Kepel regards prisons as breeding grounds for terrorism, because firstly they allow radical Islamists to get connected and pool their resources with other extremists and criminals (Kepel, 2016). Secondly, in prisons established jihadists inspire religious seekers and ordinary criminals to restart their trouble lives as Salafist jihadists (Kepel & Jardin, 2017). And thirdly, low supervision in prisons has allowed radical imams to target fragile inmates and turn them from ordinary thieves into Salafist jihadist terrorists (Kepel & Jardin, 2017).

With regard to Kosovo, there is no proof that prison terms have allowed radicalized individuals to network with and radicalize other inmates. Also, there is no proof that imams have spread radical ideas in prisoners. This is foremost because respondents had only little information on the issues. They considered that Salafist jihadism was a new phenomenon in Kosovo in general, and in the country's prisons in particular. Therefore, there was no insight yet on how jihadist prisoners affect other inmates, and on what role the radical ideology played in prisons (interviews #3, 5, & 10). Therefore, we cannot assess whether Kosovar inmates join jihad, because they seek redemption.

6.0 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to shed light on the question whether “radical Islam” or “Islamized radicalism” provides an explanation for the involvement of Kosovar foreign fighters in the Syrian Civil War. This research question was analyzed through the application of a three-element radicalization model (ideology, grievances, and recruitment) that operationalized the explicit differences between Kepel’s and Roy’s explanations of the jihadist movement.

The evidence exposed by the analysis through the three-element radicalization model confirmed Kepel’s “radical Islam” over Roy’s “Islamized radicalism”:

- For ideology, there was no proof for that Kosovar jihadists are suicidal nihilists who become religious as an act of rebellion as Roy’s concept suggests. Much more, Kepel’s Salafist jihadism provides an explanation, because many youngsters left for Syria considering it a holy Muslim duty to wage jihad in the defense of fellow believers.
- For grievances, there were only limited findings confirming Roy’s theory which involves a generational conflict and a perceived lack of recognition. While many Kosovar jihadists have kept good relations with their parents, only a minority joined jihad hoping to gain recognition. However, the grievances that Kepel identifies, socioeconomic deprivation and the perception of Islamophobia, seemed to have played a crucial role in making Kosovar jihadists receptive to propaganda that presented the Islamic State as both a wealthy state and a perfect Muslim society.
- For recruitment, there was little evidence for Roy’s concept proposing that jihadists are self-recruited rebels who joined ISIS, because they sought the ultimate defiance. Much more, the findings reinforced Kepel’s position that explains recruitment as a social process within the greater Salafist movement that is facilitated by an ISIS recruitment effort.

By analyzing the research question through Kepel’s and Roy’s theory the present study could only partly explain Kosovar jihadist radicalization. This appears as a limitation as it could not address in-depth social and individual factors as an explanation of the phenomenon. These other factors are however significant components to take into consideration when attempting to shed light on

this contemporary issue. Additional theories and further research will therefore need to be involved to further explain this phenomenon in Kosovo, and at the global level.

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Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview / Radicalization Kosovo

1. Religion

- 1.1 Do foreign fighters have a religious background?
 - 1.1.1 What is their religious background?
 - 1.1.2 Are foreign fighters from religious families?
- 1.2 Are the Kosovo foreign fighters part of a religious movement or of a religious community?

2. Before the Radicalization / Prisons

- 2.1 How do the individuals who become foreign fighters act in society before they join the militant movement?
 - 2.1.1. Do foreign fighters show any sort of abnormal / extreme behavior before they first come in contact the militant movement?
- 2.2 What is the family background of foreign fighters?
 - 2.2.1 Do they tell their families about the conversion to radical Islam?
 - 2.2.2 How does the conversion to radicalism affect the relation with their family?
 - 2.2.3 With whom (else) do they talk about their conversion?
 - 2.2.4 The families of those who die fighting in Syria and Iraq, how do they respond to their loss?
- 2.3 How is the militant movement regarded by Kosovo prison inmates?
 - 2.3.1 How are the militant Islamists treated by the other inmates?

3. Socioeconomics / Outlook

- 3.1 How is the social and economic background of Kosovo youths who radicalize like, what is their perspective?
- 3.2 How do Kosovo youths who radicalize regard Kosovo state and society?
- 3.3 How do Kosovo foreign fighters refer to the myths of the militant movement (for instance IS Dabiq)?
- 3.4 How is religious freedom and islamophobia involved in the radicalization process?

4. Recruitment

- 4.1 How are individuals attracted to the militant movement?

- 4.2 How do individuals first consider joining the militant movement?
 - 4.2.1 How do individuals first get in touch with the militant movement?
 - 4.2.2 What role do friends play in the recruitment process?
- 4.3 How do individuals justify the use of violence? Is the justification of violence a difficult step for them?

5. Internet & Social Media

- 5.1 What is the role of the internet in the militant movement in Kosovo?
 - 4.1.1 Do individuals recruitment themselves online, or is it human contact that makes them join the militant movement in Kosovo?
- 5.2 What is the role of the social media in the Kosovo militant movement?
 - 5.2.1 How do Kosovar foreign fighters make use of social media?

6. Violence

- 6.1 How does IS propaganda that involves extreme acts of violence (as for instance the acts of Lavrdrim Muhaxheri) affect the recruitment to militant Islamism in Kosovo?
- 6.2 What is the attitude of Kosovo militant Islamists towards violence?
- 6.3 Do you think that militant Islamists enjoy committing violent acts?
- 6.4 Do individuals who join the militant movement have a longing for death?
- 6.5 Is there a female side to the Kosovo militant movement?
 - 6.5.1 How do the female militants respond to the acts of violence and the deaths of their male comrades?



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