Analyses of Government Responses to Stem the Flow of Foreign Fighters

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Abstract
The dramatic increase in the number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war has caused great concern when individuals join extremist terrorist organisations, such as ISIS. These foreign fighters can later return to their country of residence to commit a terrorist attack, or recruit other individuals to join ISIS. Some governments, particularly within Europe, have amended their laws to criminalise foreign fighters and recruiting for terrorist groups. However, if these new laws themselves become a way of framing the West as opposed to Islam is yet to be systematically analysed. This thesis argues that through framing theory, by creating frames that show the legislation as a problem that needs to be solved by ISIS, frame alignment will take place so individuals will shift their views and beliefs to agree with the problem stated by ISIS. Through a comparative case study of four European Union countries, firstly by examining the conditions of the legislation and secondly by studying statements by ISIS, this thesis finds no support for the theory in those four cases, as the predicted outcome did not happen in each case.
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## List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>AQAP</td>
<td>al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
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<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State of the Levant</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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Introduction

Foreign fighters are not a new phenomenon: they were present in conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War and the Afghanistan War. However, the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in 2011 has resulted in an influx of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq from many regions around the world. One of the biggest threats from the Syrian conflict is the number of foreign fighters joining violent extremist Islamic groups – such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. For the purposes of this thesis, extremist groups are defined as those that have extreme values or beliefs that oppose a country’s ideologies and values.

The Islamic State of the Levant, the Islamic State, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and Daesh are the different names used to refer to the jihadi group that has seized territory in Syria and Iraq. For the purposes of this thesis, the group will be referred to as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

ISIS poses a major threat to not only the countries in the Middle East where it operates but also Western countries, whose ideologies are in direct opposition with ISIS. Figure 1 shows the spread of ISIS terror attacks, from those carried out by ISIS or inspired by ISIS. The majority of attacks have taken place in countries within the Middle East but Western countries are challenged by attacks from ISIS foreign fighters and those inspired by ISIS ideologies, such as the shootings in November 2015 in Paris. Foreign fighter returnees have caused numerous incidents and threats around Europe. In March 2015, there was a plot to conduct a mass public shooting in the UK by a suspected MI5 agent who been to Syria. In May 2014 a radical Islamist who spent over a year in Syria killed 3 people at a Jewish museum in Belgium.

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There is also cause for concern as 42 militant groups have pledged their allegiance to ISIS, including Boko Haram in Nigeria. This is one of the reasons for global terrorism reaching its highest level and continually increasing. Aside from terrorist attacks from ISIS supporters, a major threat for Western countries are its own citizens who travel abroad to train and fight with ISIS.

This study will be an analysis of government responses to stem the flow of foreign fighters to, and if these responses themselves become a source of radicalisation. The focus is particularly on government legislation that criminalises foreign fighters, that is they can be prosecuted for travelling abroad or receiving training for terrorism purposes. The findings could be highly beneficial for governments and what policies they should be implementing. The focus will be on foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, to join violent extremist Islamic groups – mainly to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

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5 Ibid.
This thesis will examine the process of becoming a foreign fighter for these extremist groups, which can also be classed as a person becoming ‘radicalised’. Radicalisation has various definitions but for the purposes of this thesis radicalisation shall be defined as a “growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to, the existing order”. Therefore, radicalisation can be a part of the process to become a foreign fighter, as a person would abandon the views shared among the society they originate from for extreme ideas that are in opposition to that society.

While The Law Library of Congress, the Center for Security Studies, and the Radicalisation Awareness Network have given brief analyses, there has been no systematic study of the effects of legislation against foreign fighters and if the laws are successful, which is high-risk as the real world implications are highly significant. If these measures have a counterproductive effect then governments would need to find alternative solutions for the flow of foreign fighters, even if the population sees these as too soft.

To address this research gap, this thesis will explore the question: Do criminalisation methods by the state affect the flow of foreign fighters? This thesis will evaluate the theory of radicalisation, framing theory, to explain any increases in foreign fighters as a result of government policies to criminalise fighting for a terrorist group. To test the validity of the theory, a qualitative analysis will be conducted using most similar case studies: where they share many of the same characteristics, except the independent and dependent variables.

The theory that I argue that would explain this is framing theory, whereby a group will create images that motivate anger among group members. In the case of these extremist groups, images against the West and the need to safeguard Islam are created in order to muster support and recruits.

By focusing on the period March 2011 to March 2016, this thesis argues that policies by governments of a certain kind, those that criminalise foreign fighters, will actually motivate people to become foreign fighters. This is because these policies have an effect on the potential pool of recruiters. When a policy of this kind is taken then recruiters can frame it to show the West as the enemy of Islam. If the theory is

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true them this means the laws, which are meant to stop potential foreign fighters, actually serve as the basis for the framing and lead to further radicalisation.

The study, however, found no support for the theory in the selected cases from the limited data and evidence publicly available. Therefore, the hypothesis may indeed be true but it is near impossible to measure without interviews with recruits and recruiters. The hypothesis could also be true in other EU countries if future research was conducted.
Previous Literature

Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen examines the theories to explain the process of radicalisation, significantly focusing on framing theory and network theory, but states: “the extent to which antiterrorism laws and strong counterterrorism measures deter potential extremists or rather contributes to further radicalisation has not been studied in depth”. Dalgaard-Nielsen discusses the findings of Marieke Slootman and Jean Tillie, where one of their interviewees stated that arresting people because of their ideologies was cause for their violence against Dutch society. Another interviewee, however, did not want to be associated with a radical group through fear of being under surveillance of the Dutch intelligence service. Dalgaard-Nielsen believes that the research of Slootman and Tillie finds that the occurrence of further radicalisation from counterterrorism policies varies. Dalgaard-Nielsen uses the empirical studies of other authors, such as Quintan Wiktorowicz and the Change Institute; to argue government policies can become sources of violent radicalisation by using them for frame alignment. From Dalgaard-Nielsen’s arguments, there is reason to believe that criminalisation policies could lead to increased foreign fighter flows.

Recruitment literature also offers little to answer this puzzle. Thomas Hegghammer applies signalling theory to show terrorist recruitment consists of trust manoeuvres between the recruiter and recruit. Terrorist recruiters will be more likely to trust recruits who show signs that are too costly to fake. Hegghammer looks into the recruitment tactics of al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AOAP), and found no proof of recruitment through the Internet and they would not accept offers to join over the Internet, instead encouraging individuals to create independent cells. However, the Internet did serve a motivational purpose for individuals to follow the group’s objectives, as jihadi Internet propaganda was the main motivation for

7 Ibid., 800.
8 Ibid., 808.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 804.
13 Ibid., 6.
14 Ibid., 7.
individuals to contact those jihadi terrorist organisations. 15 Hegghammer finds the AOAP initially tried to recruit in mosques. 16 The first contact between recruiters and recruits was found to be in two situations: social events in private homes, and private lectures by radical religious figures. 17 Interestingly, Hegghammer mentions foreign fighters, who are not jihadists associated with terrorism against the West but concentrated on Islamic conventional efforts of national liberation. 18 While Hegghammer’s arguments state the process of how a person is allowed into a terrorist organisation, it doesn’t give a thorough analysis on how these groups are successful at recruiting, and how a person shifts their beliefs to agree with the terrorist group.

Within recruitment literature there is a theory that by providing selective incentives, groups can solve collective action problems, which was discussed by Mark Lichbach. 19 Lichbach states that anything that can motivate an individual can be said to be a selective incentive. 20 This can be material or non-material goods. In the case of ISIS, however, material selective incentives are unlikely to motivate foreign fighters, as their average pay is the equivalent of $400 a month, and it was reported in early 2016 that fighters’ salaries would be halved. 21 Therefore, non-material incentives could be a more plausible pull factor for foreign fighters but the question is what these non-material incentives from ISIS would be. Nevertheless, the selective incentives argument provides little to explain why individuals become so violently radicalised that they commit acts of terrorism and appear in propaganda videos supporting ISIS.

Radicalisation literature, however, can bring more insight into how an individual becomes a foreign fighter. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen conducted one of the most in-depth analyses on radicalisation in Europe. Dalgaard-Nielsen discussed previous studies, and the validity of radicalisation theories in those studies. 22 The two

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15 Ibid., 7–8.
16 Ibid., 8.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 417.
22 Dalgaard-Nielsen, ‘Violent Radicalization in Europe’.
most prominent theories in Dalgaard-Nielsen’s analysis are framing theory and network theory. She referred to Quintan Wiktorowicz’s study of the UK subdivision of the faction group al-Muhajiroun. By investigating member participation during lectures and recruitment sessions, and interviews with group members, Wiktorowicz found that the first step to joining is for the individual to have a personal crisis to the extent that they would question their previous beliefs and views. Once the new member accepts the main messages of the movement they more closely relate to other members and consider them “brothers” and “sisters” and they need to actively support the group.

There can be comparisons to Wiktorowicz’s study and the trend of foreign fighters to ISIS. In the first issue of Dabiq magazine, ISIS’s main propaganda publication, the group calls upon Muslims around the world to join them to defend the religion against the “camp of kufr” (nonbelievers).

The second theory in Dalgaard-Nielsen’s study, network theory, argues that individuals become radicalised through their social networks, and violent radicalisation is more likely to take place in small groups with high amounts of peer pressure and bonding. Marc Sageman used network theory to explain those who join al-Qaeda and become violently radicalised do so through tight personal bonds and socialisation within small peer groups. This theory could be applied to foreign fighters who join ISIS, as it is believed over three-quarters of foreign fighters were persuaded to do so by friends and peers. However, network theory does not explain the relationship between the ISIS as a whole and the individuals who join it, as its concentration is on the small peer groups within the social movement.

Some studies have given a basis for a thorough analysis into the impact of legislation on foreign fighter flows but these have failed to provide theoretical and empirical evidence to support the hypothesis. The Center for Security Studies in Zurich published a report on the policies and measures taken by selected countries in

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23 Ibid., 802.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 804.
response to foreign fighters. The report discussed the distinction between repressive and “soft” measures. Repressive measures are those that put limitations on an individual’s freedom. “Soft” measures have the objective of preventing individuals from becoming a foreign fighter, as well as reintegrating foreign fighters who have returned. For the eleven countries analysed in the report, an outline was given for a country’s criminal and non-criminal measures, before foreign fighters depart and once they return. The study stated that some countries believe their current legislation to prosecute foreign fighters is enough and further legislation is unrequired. However, obviously not all countries share this view as many countries, especially within Europe, have amended their terrorism laws to include foreign fighters, terrorism training, and terrorism recruitment.

Another report, which was published in January 2014 by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (founded by the EU Commission), concluded that solely relying on repressive methods to deter foreign fighters would not counter the problem. The paper stated that prevention programmes to deter potential foreign fighters from violent extremism are an essential addition to repressive measures. This would appear to give some support to this study, as countries that are focused on adding further criminalisation measures could fail to realise these would make potential foreign fighters more disconnected by seeing these as ways to prosecute Muslims.

Legal organisations have also provided an insight but unlike the analyses of policy reports and academic studies, these are more descriptive. The Law Library of Congress published an analysis of state-level responses to foreign fighters around the world in 2014. This gave a brief outline for each country on the major arrests and legislation involving foreign fighters. However, as descriptions of each country’s legislation were very short, it didn’t provide a thorough analysis of the implications of these laws and if they were successful.

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30 Lorenzo Vidino, ‘Foreign Fighters: An Overview of Responses in Eleven Countries’ (Center for Security Studies, March 2014).
31 Ibid., 5–6.
32 Ibid., 6.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Finally, Christophe Paulussen and Eva Entenmann analysed the international and national legal methods for countering the problems of foreign fighters. Paulussen and Entenmann found that foreign fighters could be prosecuted under international law if they are found to be committing war crimes, such as crimes against humanity, and genocide. However, at the national level the laws used to prosecute foreign fighters in countries investigated (Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK) are uneven, and they call for a universal approach by the EU to counter the problem.

As is evident here, these studies exist but are not sufficient enough to answer the research question: Do criminalisation methods by the state affect the flow of foreign fighters? While these studies from research organisations provide a good outline of legal and government responses, they do not give an in-depth analysis as to the reasons for these laws having an influence over foreign fighter flows, and why people will go to fight for extremist groups regardless. This is a surprising find because these criminalisation measures, which the state’s population might believe are effective, could have an adverse effect, and require countries to find alternative ways of deterring potential foreign fighters.

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38 Ibid., 90.
39 Ibid., 118.
Theory

Framing Theory

In order to answer the research question “Do criminalisation methods by the state affect the flow of foreign fighters?” this thesis argues that framing theory can describe and explain the effect of criminalisation policies on foreign fighters.

Framing theory is a part of the social movement theory umbrella, and it “focuses on how movements and social collectives construct, produce, and disseminate meaning”. Social movements are defined as a collection of views in a population that have the objective of changing some parts of the societal structure of a society. It is these social movements that create frames and re-frame ideas to gather support, and potentially motivate collective action. A social movement creates frames, first by identifying the problem then creating motivational frames that will encourage potential members to join their cause. With regards to radicalisation, framing theory describes the process of violent groups framing problems as injustices and creating their justification to use violence to counter these problems. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen discussed social movement theories and their validity in explaining radicalisation, which she defines as a:

\[
\text{growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to, the existing order.}
\]

This describes the process of an individual’s views changing to those that will actively support (even through action) movements that are against those of the state. With regards to this study, radicalisation is a process of moving to Islamic extremist views, and actively supporting or promoting those views, which oppose Western countries. A further progression is performing acts of violent radicalisation, which are the combination of radical ideas and an inclination to support or take part in violent

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41 Ibid., 17.
44 Ibid., 798.
acts.\textsuperscript{45} This definition is true of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq, such as ISIS, which are opposed to Western ideologies and frequently organise attacks against Western countries.

Although framing theory is used to explain the process of radicalisation, one can see a link between radicalisation and an individual becoming a foreign fighter. In the case of foreign fighters originating from the UK, some have made statements that would imply a sense of radicalisation. While these statements are not representative of all foreign fighters, they can be used to show that foreign fighters have become radicalised. For example, British foreign fighter Abu Dujanah stated:

\begin{quote}
If there is absolutely no other way and I’m speaking from an Islamic perspective in terms of suicide attacks it is only permissible to blow yourself up if there is no other way to overcome the enemy.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

Another British foreign fighter, Aqsa Mahmood, declared: “Your countries will be destroyed [and] blood will spilled”.\textsuperscript{47} A third, and final, statement was made by Sally Jones, who said: “You Christians all need beheading with a nice blunt knife and stuck on the railings at Raqqa...Come here I’ll do it for you”.\textsuperscript{48} These three British foreign fighters have made statements that are against the UK and Western countries, which show their willingness to take action against these countries. Thus, radicalisation theories can be used to provide an explanation for the increases in foreign fighters.

Framing theory is more promising than theories that simply account for socioeconomic factors as being the cause for radicalisation.\textsuperscript{49} The most prominent are within the field of sociology, such as relative deprivation theory. The theory contends that collective mobilisation, terrorism, or civil war arises when individuals feel culturally or socially disadvantaged compared to others.\textsuperscript{50} This is shown not to be the case with ISIS foreign fighters as those leaving for Syria and Iraq fit a multitude of characteristics and economic backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, ‘Studying Violent Radicalisation in Europe: The Potential Contribution of Socio-Psychological and Psychological Approaches’ (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008), 4.
A frame is defined as “an individual’s worldview, consisting of values and beliefs”. In the case of radicalisation recruiters will create frames and images that elicit feelings of anger. David Snow and Robert Benford explain the framing process as three steps:

1. Movements identify a condition as a problem that needs to be redressed
2. Movements provide possible solutions to the problem
3. Movements provide a basis to gather support and collective action

Individuals may have shared problems and solutions but it is these social movements that can frame an issue in such a way as to motivate potential members and recruits to be activists.

This is connected to strain theory, which is centred around the external strains on a society that weaken the effectiveness of existing institutions, and mustering mass mobilisation that will create political instability. Large societies can create a mental isolation, and participating in a social movement can provide an outlet for their sense of isolation. This theory was used to explain the frustration felt by those in North African states who had a good education and moved to big cities but were obstructed by low social mobility, and they turned to the militant Islamist ideologies. Those who joined the militant Islamists would see the West as having imperialistic attitudes over the rest of the world, and these combine with the repressive native regimes to create large enough strains that will bring social protest movements. This argument is similar to the beliefs of Kepel, Khosrokhavar, and Roy, where the focus is on the individual trying to recover a lost sense of identity by joining a social movement. Framing theory has its focus on the framers and the messages that these framers send

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54 Ibid., 16.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
to gather recruits for their cause, while strain theory focuses on the external factors themselves as causing psychological grievances.

Randle J. Hart, however, states a different set of tasks needed to mobilise support, first proposed by Snow and Benford: creating diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames.\(^5^9\) A social movement must first develop diagnostic frames, which explain the social problems or injustices and who is responsible for creating these problems.\(^6^0\) Prognostic frames suggest solutions to these social problems, and persuade recruits that the suggested actions are the best solutions to the problems.\(^6^1\) In order for these frames to progress to collective action, a social movement needs to form motivational frames to illustrate the reasons for partaking in collective action.\(^6^2\)

The processes that describe the interactions between framers, their publics, and shared social backgrounds are known as frame alignment and frame resonance.\(^6^3\) Frame alignment is the process where a social movement’s recruits’ understandings of the world become aligned with the movement’s ideologies and views.\(^6^4\) Frame resonance means that the public see the frames as credible and salient, and will be more likely to join the social movement.\(^6^5\) If a frame does not resonate well enough or the public does not align with the frames, then the frames would fail to achieve support and bring new recruits to the social movement.\(^6^6\)

Figure 2 shows the process of successful framing. Here, framing are directions to transform potential opportunities, individual dispositions, and existing social structures into action by the framers.\(^6^7\) In the case of radicalisation and foreign fighter recruitment, violent extremist group leaders and the recruiters create these frames. The framers then use the social mechanisms can motivate solidarity or action

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\(^5^9\) Randle J. Hart, ‘Practicing Birchism: The Assumption and Limits of Idiocultural Coherence in Framing Theory’, *Social Movement Studies* 7, no. 2 (September 2008): 123.
\(^6^0\) Ibid.
\(^6^1\) Ibid.
\(^6^2\) Ibid.
\(^6^4\) Hart, ‘Practicing Birchism: The Assumption and Limits of Idiocultural Coherence in Framing Theory’, 123.
\(^6^5\) Ibid.
\(^6^6\) Desrosiers, ‘Tackling Puzzles of Identity-Based Conflict: The Promise of Framing Theory’, 128.
\(^6^7\) Ibid., 132.
mobilisation. Action mobilisation can lead to ethnocentric fighting, while solidarity mobilisation isn’t used to motivate ethnocentric fighting.

Figure 2: The framing process

Randle J. Hart implemented framing theory to show the rise in support for the John Birch Society, an anti-communist organisation in the US. Hart found that not all joined the society because they agreed with its collective action frames; instead they joined because they wanted an opportunity to be part of a collective action group to solve problems cause by socialism, liberalism, and communism.

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 133.
70 Ibid.
71 Hart, ‘Practicing Birchism: The Assumption and Limits of Idiocultural Coherence in Framing Theory’.
72 Ibid., 140–141.
From framing theory a further psychological analysis is needed to explain why a social movement manages to fulfil frame alignment with some individuals, and not with others.\textsuperscript{73} The theory also does not explain why certain individuals defect and others will remain committed to the movement’s cause and never defect.\textsuperscript{74} The reasons for these limitations are due to framing theory being centred on the social movement and those who create the recruitment frames, rather than assessing causes at the individual level as well.\textsuperscript{75} For example, Gilles Kepel, Farhad Khosrokhavar, and Olivier Roy state that radicalisation happens because individuals are unsure of their identity and they want to reconstruct this lost identity.\textsuperscript{76} Omar Nasiri, a former jihadi who published a book about jihadism, stated that men “reviled in the West because they were not white and Christian, and reviled at home because they no longer dressed and spoke like Muslims”.\textsuperscript{77} This shows that in the case of foreign fighters individuals will want to have a Muslim identity, and the way to do this is to defend Islam against nonbelievers.

\textbf{Frame Types}

Marie-Eve Desrosiers discusses the types of frames that are used to mobilise a group: injustice frames, adversarial frames, and counter frames.\textsuperscript{78} Injustice frames are those that see and frame injustices against the group, for example discrimination.\textsuperscript{79} Adversarial frames are found in identity-based conflicts where the group sees itself as morally superior, while others are seen to be immoral or wrong.\textsuperscript{80} Finally, frames that are designed to discredit challengers to the group are known as counter-frames.\textsuperscript{81}

However, once the group accepts these frames, other frames are created to motivate group members to take violent action, such as gravity frames.\textsuperscript{82} Gravity frames (also known as severity and urgency frames) are those that stress the

\textsuperscript{73} Dalgaard-Nielsen, ‘Studying Violent Radicalisation in Europe I: The Potential Contribution of Social Movement Theory’, 10.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Dalgaard-Nielsen, ‘Violent Radicalization in Europe’, 799.
\textsuperscript{77} Malet, ‘Why Foreign Fighters?’, 109.
\textsuperscript{78} Desrosiers, ‘Tackling Puzzles of Identity-Based Conflict: The Promise of Framing Theory’, 130.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 131.
seriousness of a situation enough to command action. These frames can be found in identity-based conflicts, where the group is seen to already be under threat from the inside, and the response is immediate action by group members, which are called enemy within frames. Existential threat frames are created to show that the group is in severe danger and could be at risk of elimination. These gravity frames act as a stimulus for immediate action, or the group would be eliminated.

Another group of motivational frames are aptness frames, which place emphasis on the group succeeding if it acts. In identity-based conflicts an aptness frame would be comparative advantage framing, which shows the means of the group succeeding. Meanwhile, unity frames are created to demonstrate that the group will succeed if its members are united and all members help achieve the group’s mission. The final aptness frame is legitimacy framing, where violent action is seen to be justified and legitimate in order for the group to succeed.

With regards to Islamic extremist groups in the Middle East, the most likely frames used would be existential threat frames (where an enemy of these extremist groups is framed as posing a severe threat to their Islamic beliefs), and injustice frames (where these extremist groups see themselves and members facing discrimination from external sources), which would be particularly true in regards to laws designed to counter Islamic extremism.

**Argument and Causal Mechanisms**

Legislation by governments that outline terrorism offences is enacted to deter individuals from becoming a foreign fighter. Laws are created and enforced to govern citizens’ behaviour and if they should be found guilty they could be fined or imprisoned. In some countries the previous legislation, or current if it has not been amended, is referred to in its criminal code or terrorism acts. The legislation, however, may not be extensive enough to address the variety of terrorism offences, specifically involving actions of a foreign fighter. For example, in most EU countries

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
it is illegal to finance terrorism but few have criminal laws on receiving training or travelling for terrorist purposes, which is what foreign fighters will do.91

To build upon the thoughts of previous research, that criminalisation policies by governments actually have a counterproductive effect on foreign fighters, this thesis will test the capacity of framing theory to explain criminalisation policies as sources of radicalisation for foreign fighters. The argument is that foreign fighter recruiters will state there is a problem of Islam under attack from nonbelievers, and if this resonates with the potential members, then the extremist group leaders will create motivational frames to encourage individuals to become foreign fighters.

With regards to the analysis of this thesis, the theory would be true if we could see evidence of frames created by the extremist group that identify the problem of the West as against Islam. Re-framing that mentions a state’s foreign fighter legislation to show these injustices would then be used as inspiration to take action against Western countries by becoming a foreign fighter. If frame alignment is successful, those foreign fighters would change their worldviews to agree with the extremist group, in this case that group would be ISIS.

David Malet referred to frames to explain the recruitment of foreign fighters:

...threatening them still further with punitive measures or force is unlikely to deter them from mobilising...On the contrary, doing so would support the frame of threat and might make high risk, high cost behaviour seem even more necessary to forestall greater losses.92

This proposition is a link between framing theory and the increase of foreign fighters in response to strict criminalisation policies of governments, as frames created by the insurgent groups would seem more plausible if there were conditions that supported a threat. Malet has also stated that foreign fighters can be recruited when leaders and recruiters frame a dispute as an existential threat to the community that they belong to.93 Framing the conflict to encourage foreign fighters to join is linked to collective

92 Malet, ‘Why Foreign Fighters?’, 112.
action, prospect theory, and speech acts in securitisation theory.\textsuperscript{94} The reasoning of collective action and prospect theory is that individuals will make a cost-benefit analysis of joining the conflict, as they fear higher losses by not joining.\textsuperscript{95}

Malet suggests preventing initial recruitment by law enforcement would lower foreign fighter numbers and improving the appeal of identification with the state.\textsuperscript{96} In other words, tackling those who could be potential recruiters and recruitments before they actually progress to recruitment. Malet’s hypotheses, however, have not been applied to the foreign fighter recruitment to Syria and Iraq. If Malet’s recommendations were true then this would mean government policies should be less focused on criminalisation measures, instead looking at creating in the field preventative measures: anti-radicalisation programmes, and security measures that would deter potential recruitment (e.g. online monitoring). However, Malet’s proposals don’t help with countries that already have ISIS recruitment networks in place, which is the case for over 100 countries worldwide. This is why it is important to conduct this study to find out if legislation measures are the best approach for countries with foreign fighter recruitment networks already in place.

**Hypothesis:** *Government responses in the form of criminalisation legislation on foreign fighters are ineffective because they radicalise potential foreign fighters more than they deter their decision to such recruitment.*

Figure 3: Causal diagram

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Independent Variable:} Increase in criminalisation policies by the state
\item Recruiters frame the issue of the West against Islam
\item \textbf{Dependent Variable:} Higher rates of foreign fighters from their country of residence
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} Malet, ‘Why Foreign Fighters?’, 112–113.
Research Design

In this section the independent and dependent variables will be explained in detail. This will demonstrate what the indicators will be to show evidence of the variables. The second subsection will introduce the research methodology, and how the data will be analysed. The third will go in-depth into the reasons for choosing the selected time period, March 2011 to March 2016, and what sources will be used to find the data in operationalising the theory. The final subsection will state how the theory will be operationalised, which will use the data sources and research methodology to find support for the theory.

Independent Variable

To test the hypothesis, the independent variable will be government criminalisation policies. These government policies will be assessed based on if they discriminate against certain groups, sentencing severities, and finally, if there is ambiguity in the legislation. The indicator was a state’s own legislation (such as an act or criminal code) that For this indicator, an examination on government legislation was conducted to discover the extent to which an individual can be prosecuted, and under what crimes (e.g. financially supporting a terrorist organisation, being an active member of a terrorist organisation, etc.).

Although a person becoming a foreign fighter may not necessarily equate to being a terrorist under some states’ legislation, some counterterrorism legislation goes so far as to include being a member of a terrorist organisation or training under one. To provide an insight into how extensive states have responded with counterterrorism legislation Graph 1 shows a comparison of how many laws each EU country has on involving terrorism offences.
Dependent Variable

To test the hypothesis, the dependent variable will be foreign fighter flows. In a case of legislation introduced after 2011, the indicator for this will be the change in foreign fighter numbers from before and after the legislation was implemented. While in a case of where there was no legislation before and no legislation introduced, any change in the number of foreign fighters will signal the theory may not be true with regards to the influence of legislation.

Graph 2 illustrates the fact that the numbers of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq from around the world has dramatically increased since 2011. In 2011, it was estimated that there were just 1,000 foreign fighters in violent extremist groups and that number rose exponentially to 25,000 foreign fighter members in Syria and Iraq. The biggest increase occurred between 2013 and 2014, with an increase in 9,500 foreign fighters, while the lowest increase, 2,500, was between 2011 and 2012.

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hypothesis predicts that if a country introduces legislation to prevent individuals becoming foreign fighters, then ISIS can frame this legislation as a problem because it prevents Muslims from the West leaving to defend their religion, which ISIS states its objective as. While this graph shows the overall global trend in increase, within the case studies the change in numbers should dramatically increase if the hypothesis is true.

Graph 2: Number of global foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq

The exact number of fighters for ISIS is unknown but United Nations (UN) and government officials have given estimates. James Clapper, US Director for National Intelligence, stated in February 2015 that ISIS has between 20,000 and 32,000 fighters. According to a UN report in 2015, it was estimated that over 25,000 individuals from 100 countries had become foreign fighters for militant groups, including ISIS and al-Qaeda. This has led to the surge of foreign fighters and ISIS becoming a major issue for world governments.

The large numbers of foreign fighters for ISIS has caused a great deal of concern for EU countries: in June 2014 there was an estimated 12,000 foreign fighters from 81 countries, and over a year later this figure has seen a more than two-fold

99 Ibid.
increase with 27,000 to 31,000 foreigners joining ISIS.\textsuperscript{102} Not only is it a concern for citizens leaving to join violent extremist groups but governments also have to contend with the dangers posed by returnees. Out of all Western jihadi foreign fighters, one in nine were responsible for terrorist attacks when they returned.\textsuperscript{103}

Graph 3 provides a comparison of how many foreign fighters have left countries within the EU in 2014 and 2015. France and Germany saw the largest increase, while Finland, Ireland, and Denmark had the lowest increases.

As there has been no in-depth systematic analysis on the outcomes of criminalisation methods by governments with the objective of decreasing the flow of foreign fighters, this thesis will firstly use a quantitative analysis to determine the link across several cases, then secondly a comparison of selected cases. This qualitative analysis will find how, if at all, legislation can affect the flow of foreign fighters from a country. These cases are chosen on their basis of having differing levels of

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{graph3.png}
\caption{Number of foreign fighters for violent extremist groups in Iraq and Syria\textsuperscript{104}}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Research Method}

\textsuperscript{102} The Soufan Group, ‘Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq’ (The Soufan Group, December 2015), 4.
\textsuperscript{104} The Soufan Group, ‘Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq’.
criminalisation, two with criminalisation of foreign fighters, one with no criminalisation of foreign fighters, and one with criminalisation after 2011.

This thesis will use the additional qualitative case study research design, as there is very little previous research on the causal mechanisms and solely conducting a quantitative analysis using regressions would not give such an in-depth examination of the research question. The second reason is that the wording and conditions in legislation vary from country to country; therefore a textual analysis can provide more details on the legal situations rather than creating a scale to measure the legislation on. The cases are selected using a most similar case study approach (all are EU member countries), where the cases are as similar as possible except for the variables that are analysed. To lessen any confounding factors, the cases are selected from EU countries. This is due to the fact that to become a member of the EU, countries must meet certain criteria, such as having a secure democratic rule, a stable and well-functioning economy, and adhering to human rights laws. Therefore, there could be many confounding factors if countries were selected from different regions, for example comparing the US to Tunisia.

Case Selection

In June 2011 a Eurobarometer survey found Europeans believed economic and financial crises to be the biggest security challenge for the European Union (EU) with terrorism as the second. However, shortly after the January 2015 Paris attacks terrorism was perceived as the most important security threat, replacing economic crises. Eurobarometer surveys also found that there was an increase of 14% from 2011 to 2015 of the EU population feeling worried about religious extremism. These figures show the heightened sense of insecurity felt by EU citizens over counterterrorism and the growth of extremist terrorist groups, and it would be interesting to discover if European governments have managed to stem the flow of foreign fighters to reduce the risk of blowback and these individuals returning to encourage or carry out terrorist acts.

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107 Ibid., 11.
108 Ibid.
Cases have been selected on the explanatory variable *government policies on foreign fighters* to avoid selection bias that could occur by selecting on the dependent variable. If one were to select on the dependent variable then the effects of the government responses themselves could not be judged as clearly. In addition, cases are selected on the availability of information and data on the indicators for the variables.

To discover if there is a link between stricter criminalisation policies by governments and the less likelihood of stemming the flow of foreign fighters, four countries have been selected: the UK, France, Ireland and Sweden.

The EU has 28 member states so there is a variety in what cases could be selected. However, to provide a fair analysis on if government legislation has an impact Sweden was selected to show a country that had no pre-existing legislation and did not implement new legislation between 2011 and March 2016. Ireland was chosen, not only because it added new legislation to deter foreign fighters after 2011, but for its open access to legislation documents, and English as being one of the country’s official languages. The UK and France were selected for their extensive legislation on terrorism. There is limited reporting and research on foreign fighter conditions in Eastern European countries compared to Western Europe, and as this thesis uses mostly secondary sources, the cases will need to be selected from Western Europe to give a sufficient evidentiary analysis.

Sweden was the only EU country found to have no pre-existing legislation to criminalise foreign fighters, and did not create any new criminalisation legislation between March 2011 and March 2016. This type of case was selected to provide a comparison between having no criminalisation to a case that did after 2011, as this will show the independent variable could be affecting the dependent variable.

Before progressing further into the research, what constitutes an individual to be classed a foreign fighter needs to be stated. David Malet defines foreign fighters as “*non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during conflict*” who are not enlisted in a foreign state’s military. Therefore, a foreign fighter shall be an individual who has a nationality of one country and travels to another country to join an insurgent group (such as ISIS).

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The countries that considered or imposed measures on foreign fighters, and those that did not, are illustrated in Figure 4. Most of the countries taking measures against foreign fighters are within the EU. This is an interesting find as most foreign fighters are from the Middle East (8,240 foreign fighters), and the Maghreb (8,000 foreign fighters), while European foreign fighters account for 5,000 of the total number. Therefore, while European countries constitute the third largest number of foreign fighters, they are seen to be a significant security threat to the state.

Figure 4: Countries that have taken or considered measures on foreign fighters

Figure 5 shows countries that have lowered rights to passports for foreign fighters, such as stripping their nationality if they possess dual nationality, and those where these changes are under consideration or have been consideration. Out of 28 EU countries, Austria, the UK, and Ireland are the only ones who have a passport or citizenship change in place for foreign fighters. Outside of Europe, however, some

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countries in Arica and Asia can change passport or citizenship rights if a citizen is found to be a foreign fighter. However, countries are limited to removing the nationality of someone who already is a national in another country as the UN 1961 Convention prevents people from becoming stateless.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Countries that have taken or considered citizenship changes for foreign fighters\textsuperscript{113}}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Time Period and Data Sources}

The Syrian civil war began in 2011, and this is when the growth of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq started. Therefore, the criminalisation policies from 2011 onwards are compared to those before 2011, which establishes a baseline to show the policies that were already in place before the advent of the Syrian civil war. If the analysis didn’t include the policies before 2011, then it could not be clarified if it was these laws that influenced the number of foreign fighters.


This thesis will use foreign fighter number estimates from The Soufan Group and official estimates from governments. The Soufan Group data is:

compiled from official government estimates wherever possible, but also derive from United Nations reports, studies by research bodies, academic sources, and from other sources quoting government officials.\(^{114}\)

This shows the Soufan Group research is the most thorough and likely to be accurate data available to the public. One cannot simply rely on government estimates as governments could have reasons not to reveal the true number of foreign fighters. This is why data that uses more than government sources has been selected to give information on the dependent variable.

Legislation for the independent variable is available to the public through government websites, often appearing in the form of a full legal document rather than descriptions or selected statements. This provides a primary source that can be analysed accurately and thoroughly, without bias of only using selected legislation articles.

The evidence to prove that ISIS has created frames is taken primarily from their publication, Dabiq magazine. The magazine is published in various European languages to give an outline of ISIS’s recent actions, overall objectives, and encouraging Muslims to join the group.\(^{115}\) Due to its open access and publication in many languages, the magazine is a way of communicating information between the group and potential foreign fighters, especially as the author could not conduct interviews with recruits and recruiters for ISIS for safety reasons.

One of the locations for the magazine online is through The Clarion Project, a non-profit organisation that studies Islamic extremism. The magazine is translated into several European languages, showing its wide reach.\(^{116}\) The magazine quotes the Hadith by stating:

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\(^{114}\) The Soufan Group, ‘Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq’, 5.


\(^{116}\) Ibid.
The Hour will not be established until the Romans land at ... Dabiq. Then an army from al-Madinah of the best people on the earth at that time will leave for them...So they will fight them. Then one third of [the Islamic fighters] will flee; Allah will never forgive them. One third will be killed; they will be the best martyrs with Allah. And one third will conquer them; they will never be afflicted with [distress].

Then they will conquer Constantinople.

This large quote that ISIS uses in its first magazine issue refers to the Armageddon, where the great battle between the West and the forces of Islam will happen.117 Already there is evidence that framing theory and securitisation theory can be applied to Dabiq, as it shows the war against ISIS to be a protracted battle of civilisations by portraying Western countries as “Romans”.118 Over two-thirds of the Tunisian population believe this Armageddon will happen in their lifetime.119 This is an interesting find as 3,000 foreign fighters are Tunisian, one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters.120

The data for social media will be searched and taken through secondary sources, such as research organisations and news sources, as these will be the most credible and well researched. This is because the author is not familiar with coding large numbers of social media profiles to look for specific references to legislation. As ISIS is highly active on Twitter, and most Twitter accounts are public this will be the main social media site to find data on. This is more likely than looking for opinions and statements from individuals through Facebook, where the majority of profiles are have their visibility limited to just their Facebook friends.

Operationalisation of Theory

With reference to framing theory, the frames will be the messages and propaganda ISIS sends out, particularly focusing on Dabiq magazine. If the theory is correct for this analysis, the frames ISIS creates will portray the criminalisation

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
policies by governments to stem the flow of foreign fighters as reason to believe the West is against Islam.

Firstly, the research will look for any instances of ISIS directly referring to government legislation in Dabiq magazine. How ISIS describes these laws or policies will be judged to see if ISIS has deemed these laws as a threat to Muslims or the group.

Secondly, if no direct references can be found then statements by ISIS that imply the legislation, or government policies to be a threat to Muslims will be searched for. These implied statements will be referring to the selected countries in this study.

The third step in the research will look for social media statements that support ISIS. If there are any statements quoted then these will be examined to see if there are any references to government legislation. If these exist then it could mean ISIS may be creating the frames through means other than Dabiq magazine or propaganda videos.

Tom Holt, Jodhua D. Freilich, Steven Chermak, and Clark McCauley conducted an in-depth study of the Internet’s role in radicalising groups and individuals. Many terrorist groups have an online presence, as evident from every group classed as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation by the US government has a website. Some terrorist organisations use the Internet for recruitment purposes or broadcast their messages. This is true for ISIS, which has a high Internet presence, particularly on social media and for publishing their propaganda magazine and videos.

According to Marc Sageman the Internet provides a link between individuals and a virtual Muslim community, which is linked to the notion of “imagined communities”. Sageman states two outcomes of Internet usage: helping lone individuals by providing them with access to people who share the same ideas, or the increase in Internet communications leads to a decrease in communicating with their

122 Ibid., 108.
123 Ibid.
physical social surroundings.\textsuperscript{125} In the case of EU countries where there are high amounts of Internet access, this could be applied to framing theory as it provides a link between the framers (ISIS) and their potential recruits. According to the International Telecommunication Union, Europe has the highest amount of Internet access, with 82.1\% of households having access to the Internet, compared to 60\% in the Americas, and 40.3\% in Arab states.\textsuperscript{126} Europe also has the largest percentage of individuals using the Internet, at 77.6\%, while Arab states only have 37\%.\textsuperscript{127} With reference to the cases in this study: Sweden has a high rate of active social media users compared to other European countries and to Ireland. In 2014 57\% of Internet users in Sweden were monthly active social media users.\textsuperscript{128} In Ireland, there were 7\% less monthly active social media users.\textsuperscript{129}

An analysis by the Centre for Middle East Policy at Brookings looked at the demographics of a sample of 20,000 ISIS Twitter supporter accounts.\textsuperscript{130} The research estimated there are 46,000 Twitter supporter accounts, and those that the study examined were found to have an average of just over 1,000 followers on their accounts.\textsuperscript{131} The study looked into the location of the accounts and found 28\%, the biggest collection, was in Iraq and Syria.\textsuperscript{132} However, the data was limited as the study only had access to open source data, when the Twitter user had enabled their location to appear publicly.\textsuperscript{133} With regards to Europe, the study found only 3 ISIS Twitter supporters in France, one in Belgium, and one in the UK.\textsuperscript{134} These low numbers could be the result of ISIS ordering members to disable location sharing on

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} J.M. Berger and Jonathon Morgan, ‘The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter’ (Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, March 2015).
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
their mobile phones. Another reason could be individuals’ fear of being prosecuted under terrorism laws in their country of residence.

From this analysis into social media support for ISIS, there could be potential here to show frames by ISIS are accepted. However, as an individual’s acceptance of a frame is a psychological feeling, and they may not announce in public on social media, therefore it will be difficult to operationalise and provide evidence for this step in framing theory. On the other hand, one could argue that by individuals joining ISIS they will have accepted the main views and frames created by the group.

Further research to find evidence of statements by ISIS members through social media, specifically Twitter, will be conducted. ISIS has made extensive use of the social media site to provide photographs and statements to publicise their armed forces and territorial captures. The group also publishes its promotional videos, which are aimed at recruiting individuals to join the group, on Twitter.

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135 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
Quantitative Analysis

The first research method used to test the hypothesis is a quantitative regression analysis. If the hypothesis were true then countries that do have legislation to prosecute foreign fighters will have higher rates of foreign fighters compared to countries that don’t.

Dataset

The dataset included 12 of the 28 EU member countries, as the data on legislation or foreign fighters was unavailable for the other countries. The countries in the dataset are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

For the independent variable, labeled as govlegislation, a country was classed as having legislation against foreign fighters when its criminal law included participation in a terrorist group, receiving training from a terrorist group, and travelling for terrorism purposes. The data for this variable was taken from a research paper conducted by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.138

The dependent variable, the number of foreign fighters per million of the population, was coded into the dataset as ffpermill. This, rather than total number of foreign fighters, was chosen to give a more representative number where the number of foreign fighters from a country is proportional to its population. The figures for foreign fighters came from Radio Free Europe.139

Regression Analysis

A linear regression was conducted, firstly a bivariate regression with government legislation as the only independent variable, secondly a multivariate regression with two variables: government legislation and the total Muslim population of the country.

An examination of model 1 finds that for a one unit increase in government legislation, the expected increase in foreign fighters is 1.057. At the 95% confidence interval, we can reject the null hypothesis and believe there is a relationship between the two variables.

The scatterplot shows the two variables, foreign fighters per million of the population and government legislation, with each of the points on the graph representing one of the EU countries in the dataset. Initially, it would appear there might not be a strong link between having government legislation to criminalise foreign fighters and an increase in the number of foreign fighters from that country. From the scatterplot we see that those that don’t have legislation in the dataset have
less than 40 foreign fighters per million of the country’s population. Of the five countries in the dataset that did have legislation to prosecute foreign fighters (where its criminal law included participation in a terrorist group, receiving training from a terrorist group, and travelling for terrorism purposes), 4 had less than 20 foreign fighters per million of the country’s population. The outlier of the group was Belgium with 46 foreign fighters per million of the country’s population. Aside from Belgium, however, the countries that did have legislation have less foreign fighters than those that didn’t have legislation but this could be different if the remaining EU countries were added to the dataset.
Case Studies

In addition to a quantitative analysis, case studies will also be selected to see if there is any qualitative evidence of the link between legislation and more foreign fighters. If the hypothesis and theory were true, then there would be statements or videos from ISIS or ISIS recruiters against this legislation.

The United Kingdom and France were selected because of their past history with Islamic terrorism. Ireland was selected for its religious terrorist history also and if this could be an influence for legislation and ISIS recruits. Finally, Sweden was selected, as it does not have legislation that makes it illegal to become a foreign fighter so this could find whether there is a link between legislation that criminalises foreign fighters and increased rates of foreign fighters.

Case I: United Kingdom

Islam in the United Kingdom

The percentage of the UK population that are Muslim is 4.8%, according to the Pew Research Center. In 2009 the Muslim population of the UK was 1,647,000 whereas a 2016 estimate by the Pew Research Center was 2,960,000. It is estimated that there are around 1,750 mosques in the UK, showing the significant presence of the religion.

Legislation

The UK has some of the most extensive and comprehensive laws on terrorism in the EU. The UK’s history with terrorism from Irish republican groups such as the Irish Republican Army and the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and then terrorism from al-Qaeda, has lead to the enactment of several laws on terrorism.

Foreign fighters and potential foreign fighters can be prosecuted under the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Terrorism Act 2006, which criminalises terrorism

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financing, participating or leading a terrorist group, incitement to terrorism, and travelling to join a terrorist group.\textsuperscript{143}

The Serious Crime Act 2015 was passed in March 2015, which included a section that enabled the UK to extend its territorial jurisdiction over the Terrorism Act 2006.\textsuperscript{144} Therefore, individuals who have received terrorism training outside the UK and are linked to the UK or pose a threat to the country’s security can be prosecuted.\textsuperscript{145}

**Foreign Fighters at the National Level**

There have been around 850 people originating from the UK to support or fight for an Islamic extremist group in Iraq or Syria.\textsuperscript{146} In terms of how this was represented in the quantitative analysis, there are 12 foreign fighters from the UK per million of the country’s population.\textsuperscript{147}

**An Analysis of Framing Theory**

The first examination to see if framing theory could explain if there is a link between legislation and foreign fighters is looking at Dabiq magazine. In its seventh issue, ISIS mentioned a British journalist who published an article about how the terrorist group has succeeded in some areas. The seventh issue also criticised two British politicians, stating “the West arrogantly pushes and shoves its principles and beliefs on the rest of the world”.\textsuperscript{148} There were, however, no other mentions of the UK in other issues, and with regards to this research question there were no statements made that would suggest frames against British legislation were being made.

The BBC compiled a list and short description of the known foreign fighters from the UK but none of the statements the individuals made or their reasons for joining ISIS were in response to British laws on foreign fighters.\textsuperscript{149} Searches through other media outlets (The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Independent, and The Times) provided did not contain any statements from current or former foreign fighters on

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} BBC News, ‘Who Are Britain’s Jihadists?’
\textsuperscript{147} Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘Foreign Fighters In Iraq And Syria -- Where Do They Come From?’
\textsuperscript{148} Islamic State, ‘Dabiq: Issue 7’ (Islamic State, 12 February 2015), 77–78.
\textsuperscript{149} BBC News, ‘Who Are Britain’s Jihadists?’
British legislation as being a reasoning for choosing to join ISIS. Secondly, an examination of different research organisations’ (the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, the Institute of Peace, the Centre for Middle East Policy at Brookings and The Soufan Group) documents proposed other reasons for why individuals become radicalised but none believed that British legislation had an adverse effect and was the reason for why individuals become foreign fighters.

Therefore, as there are no publicly visible ISIS documents or statements by foreign fighters that exploit British legislation on the subject, then there is no evidentiary support to show framing theory is true in this case.
Case II: France

Islam in France

The Muslim population of France is significantly higher than that of the UK, at 4,710,000, an estimated 7.5% of the country’s population.

France, however, has introduced some laws that have been considered discriminatory towards Muslims. Full-face Islamic veils were banned in public places in April 2011, and if a woman does she could be fined. From the implementation of the ban and September 2012, 425 women were fined. Muslim headscarves are also under a ban: since 2004 they cannot be worn in state schools but are allowed in French universities.

Legislation

Individuals can be prosecuted for terrorism offences under France’s Criminal Code but a new law in 2014 made it illegal to incite terrorism and publicly justify terrorism. Previous legislation addressed preparing to commit a terrorist act in relation to a group but the new law criminalised an individual’s preparation to commit a terrorist act. The law also made it illegal to receive training for terrorism purposes, including learning how to use weapons and manufacturing explosives.

Foreign Fighters at the National Level

According to a Soufan Group update in May 2015 the number of foreign fighters leaving from France was 1,700. The previous year’s estimate was around 700, meaning the number had more than doubled.

An Analysis of Framing Theory

As was the same with the UK, an analysis of the current 14 issues of Dabiq magazine found no mention of French legislation that deters potential foreign fighters. This was followed by a search of media outlets and research organisations that had

151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
any statements from French foreign fighters. The search was limited to English language articles and documents, and again similar to the case of the UK there was no evidence to support or disprove frames being created using state legislation as reason for becoming a foreign fighter.

The Brookings Institute, however, believed that countries with French as the national language will have more Islamic radicalisation.158 Their belief is not laws criminalising foreign fighters but hard approaches to secularism in these countries.159 This will include the laws previously mentioned on banning full-face veils and headscarves in state schools.

To conclude the case of France, no statements by French foreign fighters that gave reasons for them leaving were found. Therefore, while there is no evidentiary support for framing theory in this case, it does not mean the theory is false as there is no evidence to disprove it either.

159 Ibid.
Case III: Ireland

Islam in Ireland

Ireland can be viewed as having a generally religious population, with only 5.9% of the population claiming to not be religious in the 2011 census. With reference to Islam, however, Ireland has a relatively low Muslim population compared to other EU countries, at approximately 43,000. This means that just 1% of the 4.8 million population is Muslim. However, Islam is a fast growing religion in Ireland, with Islam predicted to become the second largest religion in the country by 2043.

Freedom of religion is promised under the constitution of Ireland, as well as religious discrimination being prohibited. Overall, Ireland can be seen as a country that is accepting of those from different backgrounds. The percentage share of people who think that where they live is a good place for immigrants from other countries to live was 86%. However, between 2007 and 2012 there was an observable percentage point decrease of 2.

Religious discrimination directed at Muslims, however, is present in Ireland as with many European countries. Dr James Carr, from the Department of Sociology at the University of Limerick, found that of 14 towns and cities in Ireland, 44% of Muslim women and 28% of Muslim men had experienced religiously motivated abuse.

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161 Greene and Torre, ‘Syria’s Foreign Jihadis: Where Are They From?’
166 Ibid.
Legislation

The Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005 of Ireland was the most significant piece of legislation on terrorism before 2011. The act outlined the punishments for those found to be committing terrorist acts. The act referred to the Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism by the Council of the EU in 2002, to define “terrorist-linked activity”\(^\text{168}\). The law, however, did not explicitly refer to joining a terrorist organisation, receiving or giving training under a terrorist organisation, or recruiting for a terrorist organisation.

In order to update and add to the law of 2005, Ireland signed into law the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment Act) 2015. The act added three new offences under the subject of terrorism: public provocation to commit a terrorist offence, recruitment for terrorism, and training for terrorism\(^\text{169}\). Public provocation to commit a terrorist offence is defined as purposefully distributing, with the intention of encouraging, the instruction of a terrorist activity\(^\text{170}\). If a person is found guilty under this section, they could be imprisoned for a maximum of one year, or pay a fine of €5,000\(^\text{171}\). Under the amended act recruitment for terrorism is the purposeful recruitment of a person to commit a terrorist activity, committing an act of directing an unlawful organisation in or outside the state\(^\text{172}\). A person found guilty of committing an act in this section could be fined or imprisoned for a maximum of ten years\(^\text{173}\). Lastly, training for terrorism is the deliberate training in skills that will contribute to a terrorist activity\(^\text{174}\). The maximum sentence for a person convicted under this section is also ten years imprisonment or a fine\(^\text{175}\).

The introduction of the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment Act) 2015 means that in the case of Ireland there was a new criminalisation policy


\(^{171}\) Collins, ‘New Legislation to Create Three Extra Terrorist Offences’.

\(^{172}\) Government of Ireland, Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment) Act 2015, 5.

\(^{173}\) Collins, ‘New Legislation to Create Three Extra Terrorist Offences’.

\(^{174}\) Government of Ireland, Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment) Act 2015, 6.

\(^{175}\) Collins, ‘New Legislation to Create Three Extra Terrorist Offences’.
after 2011 to stem the flow of foreign fighters, and enable prosecutors more grounds to charge a suspect. Before the enactment of this law, an individual could not be charged for recruiting or training for terrorist purposes, which is what ISIS recruiters would be doing.

**Foreign Fighters at the National Level**

As the *Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment Act) 2015* was signed into law on 1st June 2015, this means the number of foreign fighters should rise to a level dramatically higher than the rising trend that is present in all countries. In November 2015, the estimated number of foreign fighters coming from Ireland was 30, compared to approximately 25-30 in 2014.\(^{176}\) This can also be seen as 7 foreign fighters per million population in Ireland.\(^ {177}\) Therefore, there was either no change in the number of foreign fighters within that year or the change would have been very small (around 5 more).

**An Analysis of Framing Theory**

The passage in Dabiq magazine mentioned previously that quotes the Hadith is evidence that ISIS has already identified the West as the problem for Islam, which is the first step in the process of framing according to Snow and Benford. However, an assessment of all current issues of Dabiq magazine found no mention of Ireland except to list the country as part of the coalition against ISIS in issue 11.\(^ {178}\) This also means that there were no references to the new legislation established in 2015 that made it illegal to train or recruit for terrorist purposes, as well as public provocation to commit a terrorist offence.

Therefore, if there were no statements made against Ireland’s new legislation in 2015, then framing theory is not supported when using evidence of Dabiq magazine. While ISIS has identified the West as a problem to Islam and called for Muslims to join to defend Islam\(^ {179}\) there were no frames created specifically referring to the country’s new law as anti-Islamic, or as an injustice against Muslims. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that from a social media analysis 35.7% of those

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\(^{177}\) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘Foreign Fighters In Iraq And Syria -- Where Do They Come From?’

\(^{178}\) Islamic State, ‘Dabiq: Issue 11’ (Islamic State, 9 August 2015).

\(^{179}\) Islamic State, ‘Dabiq: Issue 1’, 10.
who presented a positive sentiment for ISIS said the reason was to defend Islam, while only 8.3% were positive to ISIS because of the faults of Western countries.\textsuperscript{180}

As no direct mentions of the legislation, which would support framing theory, then a second examination into Dabiq magazine was conducted to see if there were any statements that made reference to foreign fighter legislation in general. While Dabiq magazine did not explicitly mention the new legislation in Ireland in 2015, it could be argued that there are frames against the West that could provide an indirect link to the anti-Muslim conditions of the West (where anti-Muslim legislation could be implied) and how potential foreign fighters become radicalised. In the third issue of Dabiq magazine, which refers to Western societies as a “\textit{modern day slavery of employment, work hours, wages, etc.}” and that this makes Muslims feel they are under the control of a “\textit{kāfir master}”.\textsuperscript{181} This could be argued to be an adversarial frame, where the group believes its way of life to be morally superior to that of the Western world.

The third element to testing the support for framing theory as the causal explanation for increased legislation on the flow of foreign fighters is social media support for ISIS. This yielded no support to show that residents in Ireland had referred to the country’s new legislation as discriminatory against Muslims, and this was reason to join ISIS. A study of the perceptions of ISIS in the news and social media between July and October 2014 did not provide data for either of the countries in this study.\textsuperscript{182} This shows the limited availability of data for operationalising the theory.

In November 2015, independent cyber security analysts found active Twitter accounts that supported ISIS who were residing in Ireland.\textsuperscript{183} The analysts found 20 accounts that had links to ISIS but further research could find as many as 50.\textsuperscript{184} The users were found to reside in Dublin, Galway, Donegal and the midlands.\textsuperscript{185} The

\textsuperscript{180} Voices from the Blogs, ‘ISIS: Perception on News on-Line and Social Media Considering Only Posts and Articles Written in Arabic Language’ (Voices from the Blogs, 27 October 2014), 6.
\textsuperscript{181} Islamic State, ‘Dabiq: Issue 3’ (Islamic State, 10 September 2014), 29.
\textsuperscript{182} Voices from the Blogs, ‘ISIS: Perception on News on-Line and Social Media Considering Only Posts and Articles Written in Arabic Language’, 8.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
research also found that the supporters were isolated, having little or no connections to their local communities, but many connections in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{186} The users were discovered as their locations were set as public on Twitter and as many will have made their location private, the actual number could potentially be much higher.\textsuperscript{187} However, there was no information on the exact dates for these entries so detecting a change in feelings before and after the legislation was implemented was not possible.

To conclude, there was no evidence found to support framing theory in the first operationalisation method. There were no specific mentions in Dabiq magazine of Ireland’s new legislation in 2015 as discriminatory or seeing the West as the enemy of those who would fight to defend Islam. From the second way of operationalising the theory, a statement in Dabiq magazine referred to the “modern-day slavery” of the West, which they said was bad for Muslims. While this could be seen as an adversarial frame, it doesn’t specifically refer to Ireland. The final operationalisation method also found no support for the theory, with no data on Twitter support in Ireland from news sources or research organisations.

The fact that there was legislation introduced in Ireland in 2015, the expectation was that there would a dramatic increase in foreign fighters after the legislation was signed into law. On the contrary, the increase was very small compared to the global rising trend, with just an estimated 5 more foreign fighters in year by November 2014.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
Case IV: Sweden

Islam in Sweden

In general, Sweden is largely secular, with only 29% of Swedish people stating they are religious.188 Sweden has a Muslim population of 451,000, which is ten times higher than Ireland.189 Muslims constitute approximately 6% of the 9.7 million population of Sweden.190

With regards to religious discrimination, the Swedish constitution ensures freedom of worship and demands public institutions combat religious discrimination.191

Sweden, like Ireland, is seen to be a country that is generally accepting towards those from different backgrounds. While 86% of people in Ireland think that where they live is a good place for immigrants from other countries to live, in Sweden the results were slightly higher, with 89% of people.192 Unlike Ireland, Sweden experienced a percentage point increase of around 1 between 2007 and 2012.193

Legislation

While financing terrorism is illegal in Sweden, there is no legislation that makes it illegal to fight for a terrorist group abroad.194 It is also not illegal to be a member of a terrorist organisation in Sweden.195 Measures to make it a criminal offence to become a foreign fighter have been voted against twice in the Swedish Parliament.196 However, Sweden did have laws in place to forbid citizens from

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189 Greene and Torre, ‘Syria’s Foreign Jihadis: Where Are They From?’
191 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
leaving to fight in the Spanish Civil War.\textsuperscript{197} The legislation made it illegal to fight, recruit, and travel to Spain.\textsuperscript{198}

The Swedish Government has instead used alternative means to combat terrorism and foreign fighters. The government introduced its counterterrorism policy in 2012, which aimed at preventing radicalisation through improving dialogue with impacted communities.\textsuperscript{199} In 2014, however, the Social Democrats wanted to introduce criminalisation policies, where it would be illegal to fight for a foreign government or group, unless the citizen had permission from the government.\textsuperscript{200}

In 2015 the Swedish Minister for Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson, stated methods of counterterrorism in a speech to the 13\textsuperscript{th} United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2015. These methods included using mechanisms that would prevent foreign fighters travelling and improving communications with religious communities.\textsuperscript{201} It could be said that, from the lack of criminalisation legislation and a focus on developing relations with religious communities, that Sweden has a more communicative approach to handling religious extremism.

However, while Sweden does not have laws criminalising foreign fighters the government can prosecute for other crimes. In 2015 a court in Gothenburg sentenced two men to life imprisonment over murders committed by ISIS militants in Syria in 2013.\textsuperscript{202} While the men did not hold the knife that killed the victims, they were found to have actively taken part in the killings by giving directions on how to kill the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
victims. The two men were convicted under a terror crime charge, which means they committed a crime that had the intention of causing fear among other people.

**Foreign Fighters at the National Level**

The theory and hypothesis predicts that Sweden would only see a slight increase that is in line with the global trend. Compared to Ireland, Sweden had a much higher increase in foreign fighters in the same time period. In October 2015, it the number of foreign fighters from Sweden was approximately 300, compared to around 30 in 2014. The number of foreign fighters per million population by 2015 was also higher than Ireland, with 32 foreign fighters per million of the Swedish population.

This means that even though Sweden did not have any prior legislation and did not introduce new laws after 2011, there was still a tenfold increase in the number of foreign fighters within a year, so there is no support for the hypothesis.

This is an interesting find for the study. If the change in the number of foreign fighters in Ireland were found in Sweden, then this would mean the theory could be supported, and the legislation and other causal mechanisms could be the reason for this.

**An Analysis of Framing Theory**

Similar to the analysis conducted in the case study of Ireland, an examination of the fourteen issues of Dabiq magazine so far found only one mention of Sweden, and was referring to the members of coalition against ISIS in issue 11. As Sweden had no prior legislation before 2011 to criminalise foreign fighters, and did not create new legislation between March 2011 and March 2016, the magazine could not make any statements against Sweden specifically on preventing those potential foreign fighters from joining ISIS.

For the second aspect of the theory operationalisation, Sweden can be included when ISIS refers to the West but, as Sweden had no foreign fighter legislation, Sweden cannot be included here. The eleventh issue of Dabiq magazine

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203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
206 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘Foreign Fighters In Iraq And Syria -- Where Do They Come From?’
207 Islamic State, ‘Dabiq: Issue 11’.
named Sweden in the coalition against ISIS; however, Sweden is not militarily involved with the US-led coalition against ISIS.

Another similarity with Ireland was that there were no secondary sources that found references by ISIS supporters to the legislation situation in Sweden. The same study mentioned in the previous chapter, on news and social media perceptions on ISIS, did not provide any data for Sweden.

To conclude, there were no mentions of Sweden in the first or second methods of operationalising the theory. This is to be expected, however, as Sweden had no legislation to prosecute foreign fighters before 2011, and it did not introduce new legislation between March 2011 and March 2016. Therefore, there should be no references, indirectly or directly, to Sweden’s criminalisation of foreign fighters as there was none in place before March 2016.

Contradictory to the hypothesis, while Sweden did not introduce legislation to prosecute foreign fighters between March 2011 and March 2016, and had none before 2011, the number of foreign fighters from Sweden increased tenfold between 2014 and 2015. This means the hypothesis and the theory were not supported in the case of Sweden, and other reasons could have been causing the rise in foreign fighters.
Alternative Explanations

Foreign fighters for ISIS come from over 100 countries. By the end of 2015, over 5,000 foreign fighters came from Western European countries. The countries that were selected for this analysis only constitute a very small number of those foreign fighters. Therefore, other cases that have seen higher numbers of foreign fighters (such as France and the UK) could yield different results as these countries already had extensive terrorism legislation in place before 2011. In addition, those countries also amended their laws after 2011 to bring further criminalisation methods to foreign fighters and foreign fighter recruiters.

While this study looked at criminalisation legislation by governments as the independent variable, and found no support for the theory, there was evidence of the theory being supported if foreign policies were framed as reason to join ISIS. Although Dabiq magazine did not make reference to specific legislation, its third issue did create an existential threat frame when it made the statement:

the crusader, apostate Barack Obama announced to the world the continuation of the American crusade against Islam and the Muslims of Iraq

This can be categorised as an existential threat frame as the statement has been made to frame the issue of Muslims being in severe danger from the US and its foreign policies with regards to Syria and Iraq.

This thesis was focused solely on policies by countries that criminalised foreign fighters, however, the number of foreign fighters a country has may be dependent on its success with soft measures. Some countries have chosen to counter the foreign fighter threat by focusing more on rehabilitation methods, rather than introducing new counter-terrorism laws. One example would be that of Aarhus, Denmark, where there is both a prevention and exit programme in place to lower the risk of radicalisation in potential individuals and those who are already radicalised.

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209 Ibid.
With reference to Ireland and Sweden, however, there appears to be little in terms of national anti-radicalisation programmes. Instead, there are measures in place in Ireland to deter individuals spreading radical ideas, such as a declaration that states visiting Islamic speakers must abide by peaceful discussion.212

Scott Atran, co-founder of the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at Oxford University, addressed the ISIS recruitment conditions at a panel hearing at the UN.213 Atran stated that 75% of foreign fighters recruited to ISIS are recruited through friends, while 25% are recruited through their family, and only 5% are recruited in mosques.214 This is contradictory to framing theory, where it is the frames given by a social movement that are responsible for bringing in recruits to a group, if they accept these frames, rather than encouragement from peers. In the case of Ireland, Dr Ali al-Saleh, imam at a Shia mosque in Dublin, stated that ISIS members are in Ireland, and active within small groups to give lectures and talk to young people.215

The failures of national security services could be another possible explanation as to why the number of foreign fighters leaving for Iraq and Syria is rising. Intelligence agencies and the police are tasked with investigating foreign fighter recruiters, returning foreign fighters, and those who train for terrorist purposes. Ireland uses a mixture of military and police intelligence agencies. The main security service fighting terrorism is Counter Terrorism International, which serves under the Special Detective Unit. The Special Detective Unit has approximately 300 members but these are not official numbers, while Counter Terrorism International employs around 40 people.216 The Special Detective Unit is one of five sections under

214 Ibid.
the Crime and Security Branch, an area of An Garda Síochána, Ireland’s national police service.\textsuperscript{217}

Sweden, like Ireland, has both military and police intelligence agencies. The Military Intelligence and Security Directorate (Must) is responsible for countering threats of terrorism.\textsuperscript{218} The Security Service of Sweden (Säkerhetspolisen) also has a counterterrorism mandate, which covers terrorism threats within Sweden and acts of terrorism against Swedish interests abroad.\textsuperscript{219} The Security Service has 1,000 staff members, with more than half of those having police training.\textsuperscript{220}

Belgium has the highest per capita number of foreign fighters in Europe.\textsuperscript{221} As such, it is useful to note the security services environment of a country that is diplomatically vital, and also popular for foreign fighters. However, its security services and government have been unsuccessful at lowering this number. Brussels has a large diplomatic presence, especially with the institutions of the EU and NATO, but its state security only has around 600 employees while the military equivalent, Adiv, has the same number.\textsuperscript{222} This means the country only has between 1,000 and 2,000 intelligence officers to provide security for a country that has institutions such as the EU, NATO, the World Customs Organisation, the European Economic Area, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, 2,500 international agencies, and 2,000 international companies.\textsuperscript{223}

Structural problems within societies could be a further alternative explanation. One issue is the problem of youths feeling disconnected with a society due to unemployment or gaining a university education but not having a professional job.

\textsuperscript{221} Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘Foreign Fighters In Iraq And Syria -- Where Do They Come From?’
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
Belgium, Sweden, and Denmark have the highest numbers of foreign fighters per capita.\textsuperscript{224} However, France, the UK, and Germany have the highest total number of foreign fighters leaving for Syria and Iraq.\textsuperscript{225} In comparison, data taken from the OECD found that France had the highest youth unemployment rate in 2015 of the total youth labour force out of those six countries mentioned.\textsuperscript{226} Belgium is positioned after France, then Sweden, the UK, Denmark, and Germany.\textsuperscript{227} While France has a considerable 24.7% youth unemployment, Germany had only 7.3%.\textsuperscript{228} Edwin Bakker contends that socioeconomic factors do not account for radicalisation.\textsuperscript{229} However, while this sample of figures may not necessarily prove a direct correlation between youth unemployment and the number of foreign fighters from a country, it could be something to investigate, even if it only accounts for the reason for a minority of individuals becoming foreign fighters. There is also further evidence to support this as leaked ISIS documents found that of the 4,173 foreign fighters who joined ISIS between 2013 and 2014 the highest level of education most obtained was high school, while only 36 had a graduate degree.\textsuperscript{230}

\textbf{Limitations and Biases}

Before addressing the limitations and biases it is important to note that while this analysis did not find support for framing theory and legislation from the cases, framing theory may still be true but we cannot access the situations where framing would occur. For example, a recruiter may create frames that recruits will accept but without interviews to these recruits it is difficult to find empirical evidence for this.

The biggest limitation to finding evidence for this thesis is the availability of data and research. Information on laws, arrest records, and foreign fighter numbers

\textsuperscript{224} Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘Foreign Fighters In Iraq And Syria -- Where Do They Come From?’
\textsuperscript{225} The Soufan Group, ‘Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq’, 8–10.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{229} Dalgaard-Nielsen, ‘Violent Radicalization in Europe’, 805.
come from open source government data and news websites. As the conflict in Syria is ongoing, governments and security services will not disclose certain information if it could affect an investigation of a suspected foreign fighter or military actions in the region. A release of information could mean recruitment networks would alert fellow ISIS members to move their networks elsewhere in the country. Another reason government numbers may not actually know who out of their citizens is a recruit or recruiter for ISIS.

As mentioned previously, the numbers of foreign fighters used in this thesis will not be fully accurate. Governments will have various reasons to not provide the correct numbers, due to national security, revealing their investigative techniques or they may not be aware of all those who have become foreign fighters. For this reason, data on foreign fighters was taken from reports by The Soufan Group, which combines research from government sources, the UN, research organisations, and academic sources. The report also recognised the potential for inaccuracy with its estimates on foreign fighter numbers, as governments may not announce their official estimates or they might give a false number.231

The numbers used by The Soufan Group are those that have left to fight for violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq, however, there is the possibility that some of the individuals may not be involved with violent extremist groups, and instead are fighting for rebel groups opposed to Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria.

References to social media users, from primary and secondary sources, use open source data. This means that information on the user, user’s location, and user’s posts are in reports and analyses only if the user has made their profile and location settings public.

As well as open source data being used for foreign fighter numbers and social media analyses, it has also been used to find arrest numbers and convictions of foreign fighters. Again, this data may not be accurate, as governments might not disclose information on some arrests and convictions if they are linked to ongoing investigations, or would reveal investigation methods that could be used in future cases.

The first recognisable bias would be that as this thesis solely focuses on state measures by EU member countries. In response to this, this thesis is Eurocentric.

because it had the most countries in a region taking measures against foreign fighters, as seen in Figure 4. EU countries were also chosen, as much data is publicly available and more open source. The Global Open Data Index analyses the openness of government data, such as national statistics, government budget, legislation, and election results.\textsuperscript{232} Countries with the highest scores were majority Western countries, while those with the lowest were in Africa and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{233} For this reason, Western countries were selected, as the data is publicly available and reliable. However, future studies could focus on foreign fighters leaving from North African countries or countries in the Middle East.

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid.
Conclusions

Research Conclusions

The largest reason for conducting this study is that the issue of foreign fighters leaving for Syria and Iraq is a concern for countries worldwide: these foreign fighters contribute to the conflict in the region, and can return to their home countries to commit acts of terrorism. Foreign fighters have existed in various conflicts, even dated back to the Spanish Civil War, but the cause for concern is the recruitment of foreign fighters to violent extremist groups, such as ISIS. These foreign fighters add to the growth of ISIS fighters.

The purpose of this study was to test the link between government criminalisation policies against foreign fighters and the number of foreign fighters from the country. Anja-Dalgaard Nielsen, who noted that there has been no in-depth study into if antiterrorism laws deter or contribute further radicalisation, stated this research gap. Governments enact these laws to deter potential radicalisation, and with the onset of the Syrian civil war foreign fighters are joining terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. The hypothesis stated that these government policies would actually become sources of radicalisation themselves, and heighten the number of foreign fighters. The independent and dependent variables were thus selected to be government criminalisation policies and foreign fighter flows respectively. To test the hypothesis a theory that has been used to explain the process of radicalisation was selected. Framing theory was chosen to explain the process of a group firstly identifying a problem that poses a threat to the group, and framing this problem in such a way as to gather support and new members.

For the research design a quantitative and qualitative analysis was conducted. The quantitative analysis used two linear regressions, one bivariate and one multivariate. The regressions were not fully conclusive, as the null hypothesis was rejected but a view of the points on the scatterplot found of those selected countries those that did have legislation had less foreign fighters per million of the population. The qualitative methodology used a most-similar case study approach, as this would provide a more textual focus than would be present in a quantitative analysis that used a regression. As the focus is on foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria, the time period

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would be between March 2011 (the beginning of the Syrian Civil War) and March 2016. However, legislation before 2011 was taken into account for choosing the cases, otherwise it could be argued that previous legislation could be deterring foreign fighters. The four cases were the UK, France, Ireland and Sweden, all of which are EU countries, and lessen confounding factors of political, or economic structures.

Ireland was selected because it was the only EU country found to have had no legislation against foreign fighters before 2011, and enacted a law after 2011 to criminalise and deter foreign fighters. The law, *The Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2015*, established three new terrorist offences: public provocation to commit a terrorist offence, recruitment for terrorism, and training for terrorism.\(^\text{235}\)

These offences are aimed at deterring recruitment and training of Irish citizens for ISIS. Even though Ireland introduced legislation, this did not support the hypothesis, as there was no dramatic increase in the number of foreign fighters, with only 5 more who joined between 2014 and 2015, after the legislation was introduced.

In the case of Sweden, however, there was no legislation before 2011 that criminalised foreign fighters, and the country did not produce new legislation between March 2011 and March 2016. An analysis of foreign fighters from Sweden provided a baseline that would establish, if framing theory could be supported in Ireland and not found in Sweden, ISIS could frame the legislation in order to portray the issue of the West to recruit individuals. In contrast to Ireland, Sweden saw a tenfold increase in the number of foreign fighters between 2014 and 2015, which means the hypothesis was also not true in this case.

**Future Research**

While this study has found no support for the theory in the selected cases, a study looking into other cases could yield different results. For example, Belgium and the UK have higher levels of legislation before 2011, and they have brought new legislation to deter foreign fighters since the rapid growth of ISIS. This additional research would also be beneficial as the two cases selected here may not be representative for all EU countries.

Another way of research would be to use a social media search to code and geo-tag Twitter users to find hashtags and statements that support ISIS from users located in Ireland and Sweden. The data to find support for the theory in this thesis

\(^{235}\) Collins, ‘New Legislation to Create Three Extra Terrorist Offences’.
from social media was taken from secondary sources, such as news sources, research organisations, and previous academic journals, as I do not know how to search, code, and geo-tag profiles on social media sites. Therefore, this is a very limited approach and one who can do this accurately can yield more valid results.
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