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FIGHTING FOR ISIS – THE CASE OF GREAT BRITAIN

Abstract:
The purpose of this research paper is to examine the online recruitment processes and socio-economic factors that allow for the radicalisation of people in Great Britain. The paper will address the following questions: 1) what are ISIS recruitment methods? 2) what makes the recruitment successful? 3) is religious motivation the main factor why people decide to fight for the Islamic State? According to the US National Counterterrorism Centre, in the recent years Islamic State (ISIS) recruited an estimate of 3,400 Westerners ready to fight its cause around the globe. Islamic State has a far more successful rate in luring members from the West than Al-Qaeda. In a relatively short time ISIS went from being an unknown terror cell to threatening worldwide security. Great Britain experienced a number of terrorist attacks in the recent years and the responsibility for them had been claimed by ISIS. However, with the arrival of easy access to the internet the radicalisation of young Britons has been on the rise in the recent years. The studies suggest that there are different motivations for joining Islamic State. Foreign fighters are made to believe that the terrorist group offers values that western democracies seem to lack, namely a common purpose, good morals and sense of belonging. These values are attractive for Muslims and for the new converts alike. Additionally, ISIS recruiters run an online propaganda machine. The process of radicalisation moved from the mosques into more effective online chat-rooms and social media forums.

Keywords:
Great Britain, Islamic State, online radicalisation, terrorism

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Introduction

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS; also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant [ISIL], the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS], and Daesh), widely recognised as a terrorist group, began to appear on the news in 2014 when the leaders of the group announced the creation of a jihadist quasi-state and a self-proclaimed Caliphate on the territory of Iraq and Syria[2]. Islamic State follows Sunni Islam principles but stands accused of gross violations of human rights, notably the massacre of Yazidi people on the Sinjar mountain[3]. At the moment ISIS has lost much of the territory it previously occupied, including the capital of the Islamic State, Raqqa[4]. Many political analysts were quick to proclaim victory over the terrorist group. However, ISIS was one of the most powerful, wealthiest, best-equipped jihadi force ever seen. In a relatively short time, ISIS went from being an unknown terror cell to threatening worldwide security. The organization such as this is likely to regroup and return in one way or another.

One of the most characteristic features of Islamic States was its use of the internet, social media, in particular, to recruit new members and supporters for its cause. One of the states that suffered terrorist attacks directed by IS and had numerous citizens recruited by the organisation was Great Britain. This paper intends to take a closer look at ISIS involvement in the online recruitment process in Great Britain. The analyses are focus on the methods used by the recruiters and the motivation behind joining the Islamic State.

The bold presence of the terrorist group on Facebook and Twitter came as a shock to many Brits. Even more shocking was the news that online recruitment is in some cases successful. Between the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the end of 2016, approximately 30000 foreigners from around 85 countries had travelled to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State[5]. However, different sources give numbers as high as 40000. The majority came from the

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[2] *Scenariusze rozwoju kryzysu w Iraku*, "Biuletyn" 24.06.2014, No 81 (1193).

[3] L. Dearden, *Almost 10,000 Yazidis 'killed or kidnapped in Isis genocide but true scale of horror may never be known'*, independent.co.uk, 09.05.2017 <https://www.inde-pendent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-islamic-state-yazidi-sex-slaves-genocide-sinjar-death-toll-number-kidnapped-study-un-lse-a7726991.html> (28.06.2018).

[4] J. Burke, *Rise and fall of Isis: its dream of a caliphate is over, so what now?* Theguardian.com, 21.10.2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/21/isis-caliphate-islamic-state-raqqa-iraq-islamist> (12.06.2018).

[5] *Foreign Fighter: an updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq*, soufangroup.com, 12.2015, <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_Fo-reignFightersUpdate3.pdf> (14.05.2018).

Middle East, North Africa and Europe. As the intellectual think tank *New America* estimates about 4500 of them came from West[6]. Although the data varies, it is estimated that approximately 850 people from the UK have travelled to support or fight for jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq[7]. The FBI estimates that only 300 American citizens left the US to join the terrorist group[8]. The vast majority of the recruits come from the Middle East and North Africa, particularly Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia[9]. Approximately 600 from Malesia.

When we examine the case of Great Britain the number of recruits is not huge. They seem almost inadequate. Only 850 people in a country with a population of over 65 million. To put that into perspective that's only 0.0013% of the population. However, the importance of this issue does not lie in the number of people recruited. The phenomenon of ISIS is not how many people they convinced to join them but how they managed to do it. No other terrorist organization had such success in recruiting new members from the West. Something in the West must have shifted to allow for this to happen.

Who are British jihadists

We have to consider the fact that the decision of joining a terrorist organization would not come easily to most rational individuals. For the vast majority it would be unthinkable to do such a thing. However, many of those who went to Syria to fight for Islamic State were once ordinary people. They were not radicalised previously and came from moderately religious families or were new converts. However, they began to support the ideology of the Islamic State enough to leave the safety of their home country and travel to Syria. The British public started to wonder who the British jihadists were only to find out that they come from many different backgrounds. For example, 17-year-old Kadiza Sultana who, along with two of her school friends, disappeared from her

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[6] D. Kreisberg, *These are the westerners joining ISIS*, newamerica.org, 12.2015 <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/101/these-are-the-westerners-joining-isis/> (12.05.2018).

[7] *Tally of Britons joining ISIS and similar groups abroad grow to 850*, theguardian.com, 14.08.2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/11/britons-joining-isis-grown-to-850-100-killed-syria-khadiza-sultana> (14.05.2018).

[8] A. Meleagrou-Hitchens, S. Hughes, B. Cliffort, *American jihadists in Syria and Iraq,* extremism.gwu.edu, 2018, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/TravelersAmericanJihadistsinSyriaandIraq.pdf> (11.05.2018).

[9] I. Bremmer, *The top 5 countries where ISIS gets its foreign recruits,* time.com, 14.04.2017 <http://time.com/4739488/isis-iraq-syria-tunisia-saudi-arabia-russia/> (11.05.2018).

home in East London in February 2015. It was later discovered that they flew to Istanbul, were smuggled across the border to Syria and married off to jihadi fighters. Kadiza kept in touch with her sister over the phone. It was revealed that she wanted to come back to Great Britain but didn't think it would be possible. The police declared that all three girls could come back home without fearing prosecution providing there was no evidence of them being involved in violence. However, it is believed that Kadiza died in a Russian air strike in May 2016[10]. Kadiza was one of many women and girls contacted online by a female recruiter working for IS. The school she went to was under observation after another girl had gone to Syria. However, Kadiza and her friends were not identified as being at risk[11]. After the news of the schoolgirls appeared in the press the researchers began to ask questions regarding modern radicalisation. In the digital age the radicalisation does not have to occur face to face. According to *Global Institute* recent study the access to extremist materials, including propaganda leaflets, videos of extreme violence or recruiters operating in chat rooms is easy and does not require advanced computer skills[12]. Some of the materials were found via simple Google search.

Another example of online radicalisation comes from a family of 12 from Luton in the UK. They went missing in July 2015 on a trip to Bangladesh[13]. They later contacted their relatives confirming they were in Syria and had joined ISIS and encouraged others to do the same. It is believed the family stopped in Turkey on their way home before entering the war-torn country[14]. The youngest child was one year old. Again, the news came as a shock to many. Why would a quiet and respected family take such extreme decision risking their lives and the lives of their children going to the same place so many refugees are trying to escape? Were these cases just examples of extreme

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[10] *Kadiza Sultana: London schoolgirl who joined Isis believed killed in Syria airstrike*, theguardian.com, 16.08.2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/aug/11/london-schoolgirl-kadiza-sultana-who-joined-isis-believed-killed-in-syria-airstrike> (10.05.2018).

[11] *The school had no evidence the girls were at risk*, news.sky.com, 23.02.2015 <https://news.sky.com/story/school-had-no-evidence-girls-were-at-risk-10370401> (11.05.2018).

[12] *Extremism available online,* institute.global.co.uk, 12.11.2016 <https://institute.global/insight/co-existence> (10.05.2018).

[13] J. Akbar, *All 12 of us are in the Islamic State: Luton family confirmed they are in Syria and encourage Britons to join in*, dailymail.co.uk, 4.07.2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3149190/All-12-Islamic-State-Luton-family-release-statement-confirming-Syria.html> (05.07.2015).

[14] T. Brooks-Pollock, *Yes we have joined Isis' say missing British family of 12 who fled to Syria*, independent.co.uk, 04.07.2015,<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/yes-we-have-joined-isis-say-missing-british-family-of-12-who-fled-to-syria-luton-islamic-state-isis-10365915.html> (10.05.2018).

naivety? The people recruited by ISIS truly came from all walks of life. Their decisions could not simply be explained by young age, misleading information or naivety. There was a variety of factors at play.

In the case of Issam Abuanza, a 36 years old doctor from Sheffield, it was a genuine hatred for the Western world. The BBC revealed that the British doctor abandoned his wife and two children to join Islamic State in July 2014 after spending seven years working in NHS hospitals [15]. Islamic State registration papers, according to the *BBC News*, show that Dr I. Abuanza not only worked as a medic within the Islamic State but also volunteered to fight. He had been very active on social media as well. In one post on Facebook he commented on the broadcasted killing by Islamic State of a Jordanian pilot whom they set on fire in a cage. Dr I. Abuanza wrote: "I would've liked for them to burn him extremely slowly and I could have treated him again so we could have torched him once more".[16]

These examples show that the nature of radicalisation has changed greatly. It is no longer just lonely mosque-radicalised men joining ISIS but also people with families, well respected in their communities, those who would not even have been suspected of joining a terrorist group. The methods of recruitment have changed dramatically as well.

The methods used by ISIS to lure all people to Syria

The research into the reasons and motivations of people joining Islamic State and other similar groups is still in the early stages but there is a number of factors that can be considered. There has been a lot of research on the topic of male radicalisation mainly because female radicalisation used to be rather rare. Women involved in terrorist activities were nearly impossible to reach and therefore made for a difficult research group. The emergence of the Islamic State terrorist group has changed that. Although there is no precise data, it is estimated that hundreds of women have joined ISIS. The female radicalisation is still a much-understudied issue. As many scholars point out the term 'jihadi bride' is very general and in no way reflects the reasons why women go to Syria to marry ISIS fighters. The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) was one of the first to have done research into female radicalisation in the context of Islamic State. The notion of naive

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[15] S. Swan, D. Sanford, *Islamic State recruited practicing NHS doctor*, bbc.co.uk, 24.05.2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36362957> (10.05.2018).
[16] *Ibidem*.

brainwashed women is too reductive and disentangled to be representative of the issue. Female radicalisation is often perceived as passive. Emily Winterbotham, RUSI research fellow, summarised the factors: "...a rejection of Western feminism, online contact with recruiters who offer marriage and adventure, peer or family influence, adherence to ISIS ideology, naivety and romantic optimism, and the chance to be part of something new, exciting and illicit"[17].

According to the research findings, some women and girls fell into the trap of false promises of Muslim version of female empowerment[18]. Women get lured by ISIS online recruitment because they often feel alienated and misunderstood. They find it hard to live similar lives to their mothers and grandmothers because they have been raised in the West. However, simultaneously they don't want to live in the same way as their Western counterparts.

Second generation Muslim women often reject Western feminism laden with the 'white saviour complex', a notion that perceives Muslim women as perpetually oppressed and in need of liberation. White feminism is often guilty of cultural misinterpretations and trying to make everyone 'like us'. However, even though oppression exists in Muslim communities, many women dress and behave according to their own values out of choice rather than coercion. Women who joined ISIS were "deliberately seeking to challenge both traditional and Western-imposed gender norms, by seeking a new identity for themselves"[19].

Some British and other European Muslim women who support ISIS see it as an opportunity to reject both the traditional female roles as well as the Western roles. The idea of the new Caliphate was perceived as a chance to express their religious and political views. These expectations, however, cannot be fulfilled because in reality the role of a woman, her movement and decisions are under very strict control in the Islamic State.

Interestingly, British women are among the most active and engaged online recruiters and radicalizers. It was reported that the online female recruiters were giving advice to young girls on what to bring to Syria, for

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[17] E. Pearson, E. Winterbotham, *Women, Gender and Daesh Radicalisation*, "The RUSI Journal", 2017 vol. 162 no3, pp. 60-72.
[18] L. Deardent, *How Isis attracts women and girls from Europe with false offer of empowerment*, independent.co.uk, 05.08.2017 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/isis-jihadi-brides-islamic-state-women-girls-europe-british-radicalisation-recruitment-report-a7878681.html> (12.05.2018).
[19] *Ibidem.*

instance makeup, perfumes, personal care products, worm clothes as it was unavailable once they crossed the border [20]. One of the most prominent recruiters was Khadijah Dare Aqsa Mahmood, a former student from Scotland. She was known for her blog glorifying life in the Islamic States while recruiting young women and girls across Great Britain. She wrote online:

"We are created to be mothers and wives - as much as the western society has warped your views on this with a hidden feminist mentality"[21].

The propaganda spread by ISIS allows women to believe that they are valued members of the organisation, that they can play an important part in the reestablishment of a true Muslim state. The role women play in Muslim communities is rarely public, therefore it sometimes goes unappreciated and unnoticed. Women are often confined to the private space. Although women have been present in terrorist organization, such as Tamil Tiger in Sri Lanka or Black Widows in Chechnya, in most instances they were excluded from jihad until ISIS emergence. As wives and mothers they are necessary for establishing the Caliphate. Lastly, that they can gain glory through their husbands' actions.

The *modus operandi* of ISIS

Due to the technological advancement of the current days, ISIS is very capable of spreading videos and images of extreme violence, while at the same time recruit new members for its cause, effectively turning social media platforms into a terrorist tool. The use of cyber technology gives them an advantage that other groups such as Al-Qaeda did not have, for example in 2001. To put that into perspective, Al-Qaeda had 400 members in September 2001 when the attack on World Trade Center happened in New York. A little over ten years later Islamic State managed to recruit around 40 thousand members from around the world as a result of the social media rising popularity. Al-Qaeda's activities were hidden while ISIS is out in the open using encryption tools that help them to stay unidentifiable.

The Islamic State has worked out a very successful strategy to use social media for their recruitment activity. The organization is able to create hundreds

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[20] M. Saltman, M. Dow, *Islamic State: How foreigners are helped to reach Syria and Iraq*, bbc.co.uk, 24.02.2015 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31607728> (12.05.2018).
[21] A. Mah-Rukh, *ISIS and Propaganda: How ISIS Exploits Women*, reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk, University of Oxford 2015, <http://reutersinstitu-te.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Isis%2520and%2520Propaganda-%2520How%2520Isis%2520Exploits%2520Women.pdf> (12.06.2018).

of fake online accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Youtube and post thousands of propaganda messages. The Willson Center estimates that from September through to December 2014 at least 46,000 Twitter accounts were used by ISIS supporters, although not all of them were active at the same time [22]. The enormous success in posting this much online content is mostly attributed to the small number of Twitter users, from 500 to 2000, that become hyperactive in short spans of time. This way there is no need for the one user - one account obstacle [23]. The average IS supporting account had around 1000 followers, which is higher than a regular Twitter user.

The main goal of the online activity is to generate hate towards all that the non-Muslim represents: the West, non-believers, shia Muslims or simply anyone who opposes Islamic State ideology. ISIS propaganda is a multi-level structure that often shows the fighters as invincible and fierce but also as 'moral and just'. The videos often depict the fighters helping and protecting vulnerable people in order to balance out the images of violence. The online activities are not limited to Facebook updates and tweets. The UK Government removed 15,000 items of jihadist propaganda in 2014 alone[24]. This included an online video clip, entitled: "There's No Life Without Jihad' which showcased young British fighters glamorising the terrorist life and encouraging people to come and fight for ISIS. Despite being removed, the ISIS found a way to repost it and kept it available on Youtube to be seen by 4, 289 users by 2016[25].

In addition, ISIS released an app called "The Dawn of Glad Tidings" in June 2014, which was available for download on Google Play for a while before it was deleted**.** The purpose of the app was to keep its users informed on what had been happening in the Islamic State and beyond by following hashtags, links, updates and tweets[26]. The content of the app was controlled by senior members of the terrorist organisation.

The various research supports the thesis that the internet accelerates the process of radicalisation. However, it is not just social media that aid it. ISIS is also present in the chat rooms and messengers. Their tactics are to create a

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[22] *Report: ISIS has at least 46,000 Twitter followers*, brookings.edu, 06.05.2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper_JM-Berger_Final_WEB.pdf> (06.06.2018).

[23] *Ibidem*.

[24] I. Awan, *Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media*,"Society" April 2017, Volume 54(2), pp. 138–149.

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 141.

[26] J. M. Berger, *How ISIS Games Twitter,* theatlantic.com, 16.06.2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/> (06.06.2018).

phenomenon called the echo chamber. The echo chamber in psychology is metaphorically defined as a situation in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system [27]. By visiting an online echo chamber, people are able to seek out confirmation which reinforces their already existing views. ISIS supporters are using that to their advantage by spreading propaganda and gaining more supporters. For instance, if someone talked to an online group about the lack of morality in the society and increased fading of the religious values they would have had these opinions repeated back to them to make the point stronger and their opinion more owned[28]. Echo chambers can be a dangerous phenomenon in an online situation because it pursues only one side of the story without any counter-arguments. It does not promote discussions but instead channels only one way of thinking.

The online success

The rate of success of ISIS online recruitment can be attributed to many factors. One of the most important is the use of social media and the internet in general**.** Many terrorist groups are now using social media as a platform to radicalise, recruit and even fundraise online. Social media has a huge global reach. As of June 2018 Facebook, one of the biggest platforms has had 307 million active users in Europe alone and there have been 2.20 billion monthly active users worldwide[29]**.** There is no better way to connect to such a big audience and get the message across. Some researchers conclude that digital media play an important role in the modern asymmetric conflicts. A role that has not yet been fully understood. The rising online activities of terrorist groups are part of that issue. Social-media monitor Recorded Future conducted research into the methods used by ISIS online. The terrorist group managed to create a cluster of over 700,000 accounts discussing the topic of Islamic State and creation of Caliphate[30]. The videos and images produced by members of the Islamic State are uploaded to the internet on daily basis. They are then

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[27] K. O'Hara, D. Stevens, *Echo Chambers and Online Radicalism: Assessing the Internet's Complicity in Violent Extremism,* "Policy & Internet", no 7, pp. 401-422.

[28] I. Von Behr et al., *Radicalisation in the digital era,* "Limited Electronic Distribution Rights Europe" 2014. p. 32.

[29] See: <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/> (18.06.2018).

[30] *How terrorists are using social media*, thetelegraph.co.uk*,* 15.06.2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11207681/How-terrorists-are-using-social-media.html> (19.06.2018).

shared by the designated fake accounts, ordinary users and the mass media[31]. The content produced is directed to the specific groups: men, women, families etc, showing and telling twisted versions of facts. There is very little coincidence in what is being shared online. Isis tactics of using social media to publish violent images and spread propaganda allow them to have direct communication with a wider global audience. Reaching so many people would be impossible otherwise.

One of the most successful tools that terrorist groups, such as IS, are using online is propaganda. ISIS build on years of jihadists propaganda. The word *jihad* appears frequently in the Quran (or Koran) both with and without military context. The most common use of the word is in the idiomatic expression "striving in the path of God (al-jihad fi sabil Allah)"[32]. In the literal meaning, the word jihad means struggle to or effort. In this context the notion of jihad is a much more profound concept than holy war. Muslim scholars traditionally derive seventeen meanings of the concept[33]. Jihad for a Muslim can mean a number of different things, such as an internal struggle to lead good, religious life. It can also refer to the struggle of building a good and moral Muslim society or a struggle to convert non-believers. Spiritual and moral jihad was the main context for centuries with rare references to the jihad of the sword. However, in the 20th century jihad started to be associated with war and aggression. Extremist groups began to use it as justification for their violent actions. One of the first Islamist groups to emphasises jihad as the holy war against the non-believers was the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. They called for a start of jihad against the British. The holy war was the method to reach their objectives:

"God is our objective; the Quran is our constitution; the Prophet is our leader; struggle (jihad) is our way; and death for the sake of God is the highest of our aspirations[34]"

The rise of Muslim fundamentalism has brought a new interpretation of the Quran, which often justifies violence. The definition of who it is morally permitted to kill broaden allowing for much more aggressive approach. Jihad of the sword soon became a very successful propaganda tool for Hamas, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. ISIS is using the same propaganda to validate its

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[31]*Ibidem.*

[32] D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad.* Oakland, California- University of California Press 2015, p.260.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 189.

[34] B. Winter, *Hijab & the Republic: Uncovering the French Headscarf Debate*. Syracuse, N.Y-Syracuse University Press 2008, p. 39.

actions and violence towards anyone who dares to criticise them. While building on the already existing notion of holy war Islamic State is able to convince the potential new members that what they do is not only religiously allowed but also necessary. In order to build the Caliphate those who oppose it must be eliminated.

Another strong allurement used by ISIS is the promise to reestablishment the Caliphate. The word *Caliphate* traditional translation means 'govern by a caliph', a religious leader. In the case of ISIS the Caliphate was meant to be an Islamic superstate based on the religious laws of Shariah. For many jihadists following the man-made secular law is criminal in itself. The laws should come from God. For many Muslims living in the West, including Great Britain, the secular laws do not fulfil the expectations of justice, especially in the area of family disputes. Although Sharia courts exist in Great Britain, their rulings are not legally binding. In other words, the courts are set up as councils and advisory bodies to deal with purely religious matters [35]. In addition, their presence is highly controversial for the non-Muslim part of society. Sharia courts are often used in political discussions where more conservative parties generate fears the rulings of Sharia courts. Some charities and activists groups raise concerns that women might be disadvantage in religious councils. Sharia court does not overrule the regular courts and are often used to mediate before going to the court of law, however many Muslims in Great Britain believe that they should. Therefore, an idea of a Caliphate where Muslims could live according to their own version of justice appeals to many.

A lot of 'second generation' Muslims in the UK do not feel settled despite being born there. Second generation migrants are children of those who came to the UK directly either by seeking asylum or through more commercial routes. Because second generation migrants were born in the West they don't fully belong to their parents culture as they cannot identify with their memories of the past. They don't understand the difference coming to the UK made for their parents who in many cases were fleeing wars, poverty or persecution. Although the young people were born in the UK they can't identify with the UK culture either. They feel the lack of belonging and become disillusioned with the West. In consequence they start to search for their own identity. The recent terror attacks only emphasised the problem. There was a significant rise in the islamophobia, acts of discrimination and even violence towards Muslims. While people blame the whole of Islam for the attacks they directed their anger

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[35] *UK's Sharia 'Courts'*, fullfact.org, 2016 <https://fullfact.org/law/uks-sharia-courts/> (12.06.2018).

towards Muslim minority creating even wider gaps between communities. The researchers agree that there is a clear link between islamophobia and radicalisation[36]. When islamophobia is on the rise so is radicalization and *vice versa.* The idea of a Caliphate where one is free to practice their religion freely among likeminded other Muslims is a strong incentive to join terrorist groups.

Governmental and corporate actions to stop online terrorist propaganda

All these factors combined create a dangerous mix that helps ISIS convince people to support their cause. They base their activities on online recruitment of potential new members while using propaganda and images of violence. As it has been proven in the last few years that tactic is very successful. The recruitment is not limited to men but includes women and whole families as well. The online radicalisation forced the government agencies to take action beyond military remit. The responsibility, before the appearance of Islamic State, was heavenly pinned on mosques. The shift in the methods of radicalising British people shifted the responsibility towards the government. There is also a debatable issue on how to deal with those returning to their home countries after serving the terrorist organizations. They are either criminalised and in some cases have their nationality revoked or are reintegrated into society. The problem with the integration back into community is how to determine the level of thread a person may pose to a country, especially immediately after their return. In the case of criminal proceedings against the returnee, it is very difficult to collect evidence proving the person was involved in violence.

United Kingdom is considering ISIS to be a terrorist group. The UK is part of the Global Coalition that aims to defeat ISIS, and plays a major role in the organization. 75 partners represented by the foreign ministers from around the world met in Kuwait City to come up with a strategy to fight against ISIS, that celebrates cruelty, systematically violates international laws and is guilty of gross abuses of human rights. The strategy has not only military approach but also seeks to repair Iraqi society after the terrorist group is removed.

The efforts of the coalition are focused on multiple fronts. One of the activities is counter-messaging that aims at exposing misconceptions and deception of online narratives spread by the Islamic State. The counter-messages posted by the coalition describe the true nature of the terrorist group and the conditions of life in the war-torn Syria, including witness stories[37].

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[36] T. Abbas*, The symbiotic relationship between Islamophobia and radicalisation*, "Critical Studies on Terrorism", 2012 vol 5:3, p. 347.
[37] See: <http://theglobalcoalition.org/en/home/> (20.06.2018).

United Kingdom government is also working on developing an algorithm to recognise and remove Islamist propaganda. According to the developers, the algorithm can detect 94 per cent of ISIS propaganda with 99.99 per cent accuracy[38]. Only around 0.005 per cent of videos scanned by the algorithm is identified incorrectly. This means that out of 5 million videos uploaded each day 250 would be flag up incorrectly and passed onto a human moderator.

The governments are not the only agencies that have the responsibility to fight against online extremist propaganda. The corporations that facilitate the opportunities for ISIS to spread their violent messages and recruitment activities, such as Facebook or Twitter, also share that responsibility now.

Facebook, like Twitter Inc. and Google's YouTube, recognise terrorist propaganda as content specifically referencing ISIS, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. The social media corporations have previously seen flagging the content that its moderators need to look at as burden. After pressure from governments to recognize its immense power over the spread of terrorist propaganda, social media facilitators started to take more direct responsibility.

Summary

The online recruitment for terrorist groups came as a shock to many. Even more shocking was the news of people willingly travelling to war zones to support Islamic State. Although the numbers of those recruited by ISIS are small there, the propaganda did reach some people who made a choice to join them. For many, however, it was a sign of two things. Firstly, there is something missing in the lives of Muslim people in the UK, especially the second generation migrants, a proof that their integration into society needs re-evaluation. Secondly, that use of social media by terrorist groups for recruiting new members will become a global trend. Counter-messaging has proven not to be enough. More direct approach and international cooperation are needed to adequately respond to these new challenges. As the nature of social media changes so will our understanding of that phenomenon.

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[38] J. Vincent, *UK creates machine learning algorithm for small video sites to detect ISIS propaganda,* "The Verge", 13.02.2018 <https://www.theverge.com/2018/2/13/1700713-6/uk-government-machine-learning-algorithm-isis-propaganda> (20.05.2018).

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