BALOGH, PÉTER PHD

baloghp@socio.u-szeged.hu
lecturer (University of Szeged, Department of Sociology)

Jihadist war
or a challenge of disintegration?[1]

Empirical contributions to the understanding
of the effective European export of terrorism by ISIS

ABSTRACT

In this paper we introduce some relevant research results about the role of social embeddedness and social resources in the sphere of social conflicts and violence. In accordance with the actual state of the investigation process the outcomes presented in this analysis are focusing on the activities of the so called 'Islamic State' or ISIS – considered to be a rather effective terrorism exporter recently. After briefly outlining the broader – global – context of terrorist organizations, the particular characteristics of the activities of ISIS and some elements of the conceptual frame, the study highlights empirically two potential explaining factors of the success of the terrorist organization. On the one hand the influencing network – primarily linked to the cyber sphere – of the Islamic State is explored, demonstrating a notable focus on the developed countries of Europe. On the other hand the paper summarizes the main conclusions from a case study on the recruitment base of the militants in Brussels of the terrorist organization investigating the relationship between the territorial distribution of the ISIS foreign fighters in city and the extent of segregation of the Islamic population in the different districts, including also certain socio-demographic factors to shed light on the significance of the broader – unfavourable – social context.

KEYWORDS

social embeddedness, terrorism, marginalisation, disintegration, segregation

INTRODUCTION[2]

By now it is perhaps no exaggeration that the Islamic State has revolutionized the operation
of the global terrorism market[3]. It is not necessarily the case that it has simply introduced new
processes[4] in using this kind of violence; however, a remarkable part of its activities has received
significant, widespread public attention, and the operations which it has carried out or which have
been linked to it have been highly visible indeed. The paper briefly outlines the main findings
of research on a global cooperation network among terrorist organisations and the related results
on Islamic State activities. It also covers preliminary results from a new phase of ongoing research,
based on the foregoing, in which – potential – factors behind the exceptional success of ISIS
are examined more closely. Focus is placed on the operation of two mechanisms in particular:
(1) the – considered to be – key element of *influence,* or propaganda, in which the organisation
engages consciously, as well as a *personal network,* which facilitates the process of persuasion
and plays an *intermediary* role between the Islamic State and its sympathisers, actually its potential
"soldiers", who tend to be distant geographically; and (2) the significance of *marginalisation*
stemming from the deprived socio-economic conditions in *segregated communities* and the role
of the processes of *disintegration* behind the effective mobilizing potential of ISIS. The paper
closes with a review and interpretation of findings from the analysis and a suggestion of possible
further directions in the research.

---

[2] This paper is a written, extended version of conference contributions presented recently at numerous scientific events.
I am grateful for the comments and critical remarks of several conference participants.

[3] See TÁLAS (2006. 8) and BENMELECH–KLOR (2016. 2–3) on terrorism interpreted as a global market operating on the basis
of a type of principle of *demand* and *supply* with its own actors.

[4] See BESENYŐ 2015.

1. THE ISLAMIC STATE'S HYBRID COOPERATION NETWORK

In an earlier phase of our research – which primarily examined cooperation networks between terrorist organisations[5] – our attention was drawn to the outstanding position of the Islamic State. With attacks carried out through cooperation between terrorist groups within a developing global network, ISIS has occupied a leading position, particularly in the light of the fact that as a new organisation it has not been on the terrorism market for long *(Graph 1):* indeed, it falls within the elite group with the highest number of ties to other terrorist groups. Based on the data, from among the 14 terrorist groups in this top category, the Islamic State occupies the end of the mid-range, surpassing al-Qaida, for example, and following close behind Hamas *(Figure 1).* In the light of this, in the next part of the analysis, we focussed on ISIS activity with particular interest and drew new empirical conclusions on the features of operations conducted by the organisation[6].

Regarding the extraordinarily widespread and diverse activities – which have occurred in the most visible form in Western European attacks[7] – we argue that a *unique organisational pattern* may lie behind these activities, although the pattern is not entirely new. In terms of the social dimension, we interpret this phenomenon as a terrorist operation built on a kind of *tertiary group membership* (BALOGH 2017a. 61–62); the point of which is to be capable of indirectly winning over and
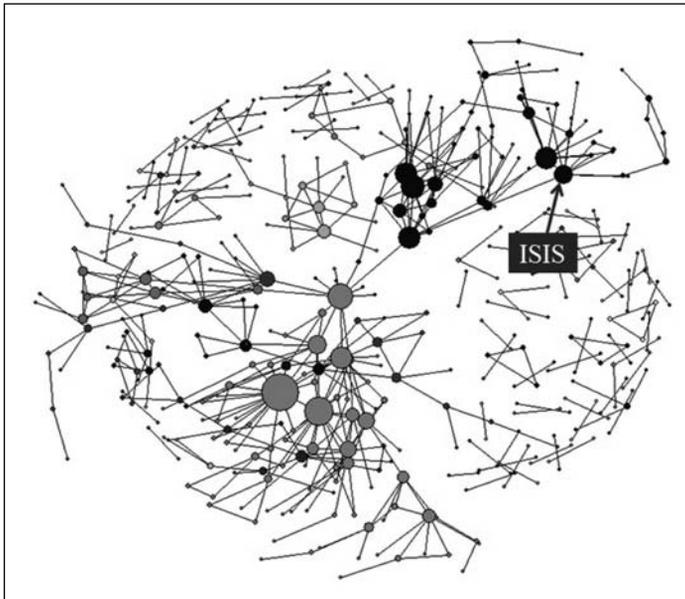
GRAPH 1 *Islamic State within the global operative cooperation network of terrorist organisations* (Source: BALOGH 2017a. 57)

---

[5] For more details, see BALOGH 2017b.

[6] For more details, see BALOGH 2017a.

[7] However, this is by no means the only region in which this presents a significant problem (MARONE 2018).
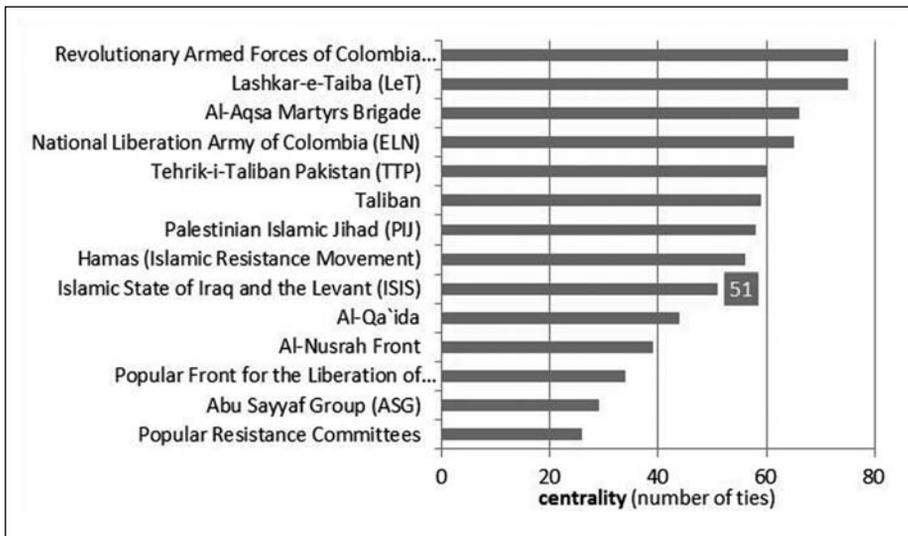
FIGURE 1 *Islamic State and other cooperative terrorist organisations with high number of ties* (Source: BALOGH 2017b. 651)

mobilizing particular perpetrators in a manner characteristic of the operation of tertiary groups[8] – typically through the perception of symbolic solidarity or ties, not through the development of actual, direct social embeddedness.

Another development of the research is that the Islamic State has used the means discussed above to develop or expand its cooperation network with extraordinary success, thus forming a unique and considerably complex pattern *(Graph 2)*. The network structure taking shape around ISIS might be considered uniquely *complex* in the sense that it is tied to numerous other terrorist groups with which it has conducted joint operations. These ties have been multiple in more than one case; that is, they have led to repeated joint operations. Further, we interpret the ISIS cooperation network as *mixed* or *hybrid,* since it involves formal organisations, terrorist groups and individual perpetrators as well as informal players and other individuals outside any official terrorist group (BALOGH 2019).

Based on the results from calculations conducted as part of the data analysis, it is clear that this particular cooperative form of carrying out terrorist operations, i.e. this particular organisational pattern, lends the Islamic State extraordinary efficacy – a relatively high rate of success and a relatively high average number of casualties in attacks (BALOGH 2017a. 63–64).

In the continuation of the research, we aim to ascertain – empirically, to the extent possible – the factors behind the export of terrorism on the part of ISIS, which has proved to be so extraordinarily effective. In what follows, we outline the preliminary results of this new phase of the research.

---

[8] See PUTNAM (2000. 156.).
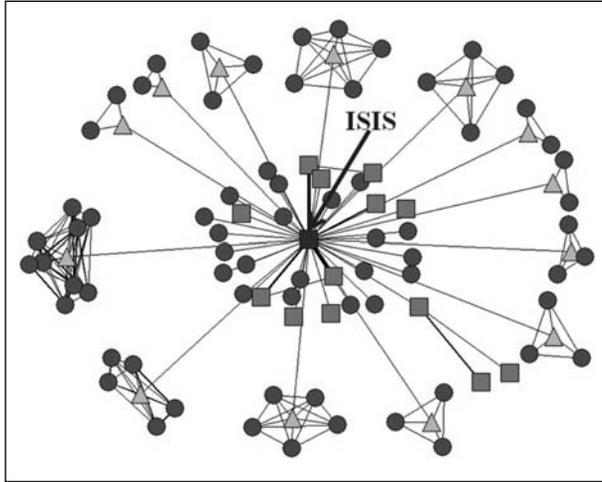
GRAPH 2 *Hybrid cooperation network of the Islamic State* (Source: BALOGH 2017a. 63)

We focus on two mechanisms which might be assumed to play a decisive role: (1) the conscious and targeted influence on the part of the Islamic State, more specifically, the diffuse network of supportive individuals, which is related and – to a significant extent – complementary; and (2) the broader social background to the ISIS recruitment of foreign fighters with its clear large-scale mobilizing capacity. This broader social background is investigated as a particular consequence of *social exclusion* and *disintegration,* or territorial *segregation*.

2. DATA ANALYSES

2.1. "Developed Europe" in the crossfire of radicalization – influence and propaganda

Radicalization can be seen as the central element behind the European activities effectively undertaken by the Islamic State. A number of analyses are in relative agreement that with the conscious (combined) use of its many channels of communication and persuasion, the organisation is capable of producing and transmitting propaganda[9] suited to spreading its ideological influence – solely by virtual means as well[10] – to areas not under direct ISIS control.

This analysis shows that radicalization is likewise a key element. We assume that from among the factors behind the "success" of ISIS, the strong *social embeddedness*[11] – which conveys

---

[9] See WEISS–HASSAN 2015. 202–207, BESENYŐ–PRANTNER–SPEIDL–VOGEL 2016. 156–169, and PRANTNER 2016. 104–107.

[10] One research finding represents an excellent illustration of the problem: an overwhelming majority of those convicted or suspected of criminal activity in the United States who can be tied to the Islamic State watch ISIS propaganda videos ('THE EGLYPH' 2018. 2).

[11] See GRANOVETTER 1991, 2006 on the matter of social embeddedness.

the aims and world view represented by the organisation to interested parties and potentially the means by which they may be achieved – is of particular significance. We would add that this process of persuasion and mobilization does not only take place exclusively – or perhaps even primarily – in virtual space, although the options provided by the Internet may doubtless have proved to be an outstandingly effective tool. However, it is important to stress the *human factor* – the intermediaries – behind these processes that *create* a live *connection* – in the strict sense of the word as well – between the extremist groups physically operating in distant locations and the terrorist organisations or their sympathisers. The brief analysis below[12] aims, among other things, to illustrate the Islamic State's capacity to influence and – in a broader sense – that of the related world of ideas organised around a Muslim religious background[13] within the context of developed European countries.
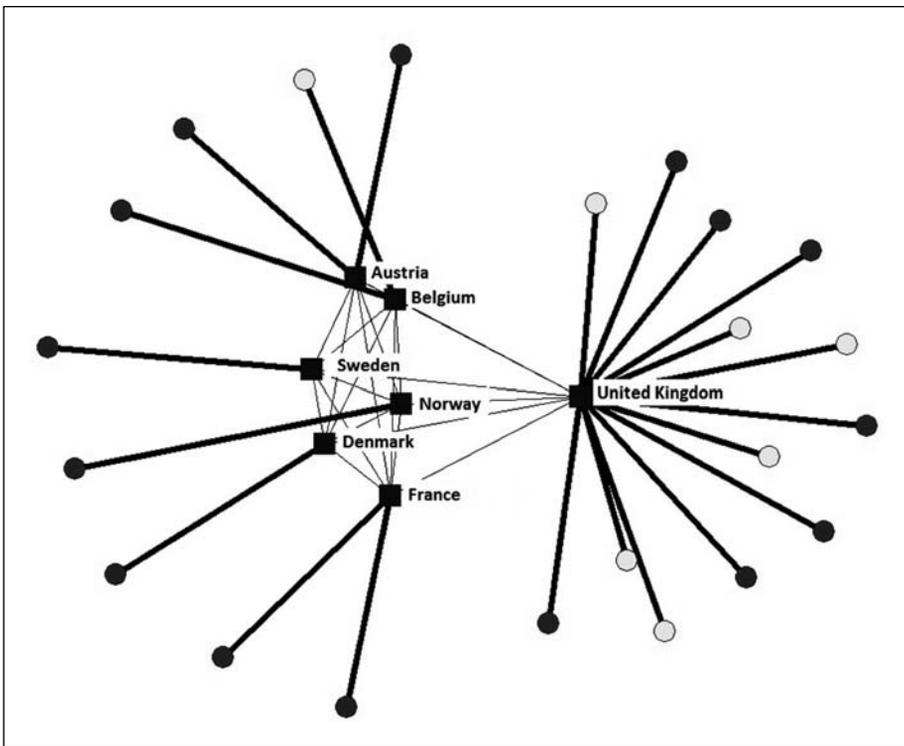
GRAPH 3 *European network of extremist Islamist communicators* (Source: Author's compilation)[14]

---

[12] We have gleaned the data for the analysis presented in this paper from the dataset collected and made available on the Counter Extremism Project website (https://www.counterextremism.com/), and we have organised them within a unified database. In developing the database, we took into account individuals engaged in activities in Western Europe. Further, we did not restrict the selection to individuals tied to the Islamic State. Therefore, the database covers seven countries and a total of 22 propagandists, recruiters, instigators and influencers (reflecting the state of affairs on 31 October 2018).

[13] More precisely, the world of ideas that features – often selectively – a Muslim religious background primarily in line with the ideological aims of a particular organisation (BESENYŐ–PRANTNER–SPEIDL–VOGEL 2016. 99–108, 120–133).

[14] The propagandists, recruiters, instigators and influencers tied directly to ISIS are marked with red nodes.

Based on the data collected, a picture begins to form of a group of extremists basically in the Western region of Europe *(Graph 3)*. We found a total of seven countries in Europe which were affected by this form of persuasion; that is, at least one person was identified whose activities were somehow tied to expressions of this world of extreme ideas. Based on the data, most of the propagandists, recruiters, instigators and influencers (a total of 13) were located in the United Kingdom, where the number of extremists not tied to the Islamic State is relatively high *(Table 1)*. Considerably fewer could be found in Belgium and France, countries geographically close to the United Kingdom, and in Austria: a total of two people each in the records for the research project; in those places, the role of the Islamic State is nearly an exclusive one. The Scandinavian nations are among the least affected countries, with the presence of no more than one individual identified as facilitating radicalization each; here all three extremists operate under ISIS authority.

	number of extremist communicators (p.)	number of ISIS-linked extremist communicators (p.)
United Kingdom	13	7
Belgium	2	1
Austria	2	2
France	2	2
Norway	1	1
Sweden	1	1
Denmark	1	1
Total	22	15

TABLE 1 *Number of extremist Islamist communicators by country and their ISIS ties* (Source: Author's compilation)

2.2. Jihadist nests in Brussels: segregation and marginalization

We conducted a secondary analysis using the data on ISIS foreign fighters broken down by Brussels districts to carry out an empirical study of the role of the presumed factors of segregation and disintegration behind the effective mobilizing capacity on the part of the Islamic State.

In analysing the differences between districts in the recruitment base for ISIS foreign fighters the original statistical values[15] were converted to percentages so that like units would make the demonstrated results easier to interpret. Regarding the basic distribution of the data obtained in this manner *(Table 2),* the highest rate of volunteers travelling to Islamic State-controlled regions is 23%, and there are naturally districts in which there is not even one foreign fighter on record. The average rate of foreign fighters in all 19 districts is 5.3%, and the differences

---

[15] The data analysed here is derived partly from sources published in other studies (VLIERDEN 2016. 60, KIS-BENEDEK 2017. 109), which were supplemented with own data collection using official Brussels statistics (http://statistics.brussels/en?set_language=en).

in the values are considerably large – the second largest among the factors under examination – reflected by a standard deviation of 7.5. The differences are less marked for each district as regards the proportion of the Muslim population, which might be seen as the primary explanatory factor for ISIS fighters from Brussels. This is clear in the standard deviation (6.05) for the average, which is 5.3 per cent as well. However, it is also important to note that the lowest proportion of Muslims stands around 0.36% and that the district with the largest Muslim population fails to reach a value of one-fifth (19.26%).

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Distribution of ISIS foreign fighters (%)	5,263	7,554	0,00	23,86
Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)	5,263	6,051	0,36	19,26
Rate of registered unemployment (%)	5,263	4,391	1,34	16,04
Share of higher education graduates (%)	36,200	11,224	20,07	55,86
Number of districts (N =)	19	19	19	19

TABLE 2 *Main indicators for districts under examination calculated on basis of relative values* (Source: Author's calculations and compilation)

In terms of the aims of the analysis, a particularly important indicator of the composition of the city's population is the rate of job seekers in individual districts. The average value is also in agreement with those for the previous two variables. However, importantly, the smallest difference for this key labour market indicator has been observed in the area under examination: the rate of registered job seekers is 1.34% in the district with the most favourable conditions, but it is 16% in the district characterised by the highest rate of job seekers. This is clearly expressed in the low value for the standard deviation (4.39). Another type of data on the composition of the city's population which we will deal with is the rate of higher education (university) graduates. In terms of the fundamental indicators obtained, there is a considerable difference: an average of somewhat more than a third (36.2%; SD = 11.22) of the entire city population is university-educated. Even in the district in which the rate of university graduates is the lowest, it is one-fifth of the population (20.07%), while there is also a district where the majority of the population (55.86%) has graduated from university.

In what follows, we use the data above to ascertain (1) the extent to which we find empirical confirmation for the assumption that the territorial distribution of foreign fighters follows that of the Muslim population and (2) the role played by the socio-economic context in the spatial pattern of the recruitment base. With regard to the first aim here, a clearly marked pattern emerges: a correlation between the proportions of fighters from Brussels travelling to Islamic State-controlled regions and the estimated proportions of the Muslim population in the city *(Figure 2)*. The connection is positive; that is, in terms of the pattern, the higher the estimated proportion of the Muslim population in a particular district, the higher the proportion of ISIS foreign fighters. However,

it should be stressed that in the majority of the districts the proportion of foreign fighters and the estimated proportion of Muslims are typically low – both being below 5 per cent[16] – with only a few areas with higher values for both factors. This pattern may suggest the presence of a sort of *segregation process.* All in all, with a correlational coefficient of 0.936, it is clear that there is a strong, positive, even statistically significant connection (p = 0.000) between the distribution of ISIS fighters from Brussels and the areas of residence of the Muslim population within that city *(Table 3).*
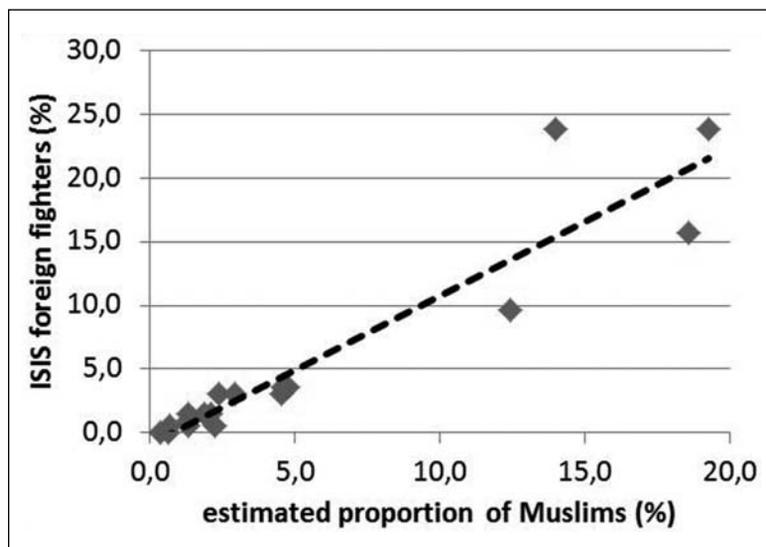

FIGURE 2 *Positive connection between estimated proportion of Muslims and proportion of ISIS foreign fighters* (Source: Author's compilation)

However, another correlation that must be stressed is one that – by its very nature – points to the presence of the pattern of segregation. It is the connection between the proportion by district of Brussels residents travelling to Islamic State-controlled regions and territorial features of the labour market *(Figure 3):* based on the data, it seems that the less favourable the employment situation in a particular district, the higher the proportion of fighters for the terrorist organisation. The connection is statistically significant in this case as well; with a value of 0.901, it is characterised by a significant correlational coefficient (p = 0.000) *(Table 3).*

A connection similar to the previous one points to the decisive role of the broader socio-economic composition with regard to the rate of university graduates *(Figure 4).* Based on the data, it appears that the presence of ISIS foreign fighters is smaller in districts characterised by relatively favourable educational attainment. Specifically, there are certain districts in which the low rate of university graduates is associated with a high proportion of foreign fighters; however, almost as many districts

---

[16] However, a positive correlation between the two variables appears to be taking shape in this segment of the observation
 units as well.

Correlation coefficients (c.c.)		Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)	Rate of registered unemployed (%)	Share of higher education graduates (%)
Share of ISIS foreign fighters (%)	c.c.	0,936	0,901	−0,492
	p	0,000	0,000	0,032
	N	19	19	19
Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)	c.c.		0,975	−0,491
	p		0,000	0,033
	N		19	19
Rate of registered unemployed (%)	c.c.			−0,393
	p			0,096
	N			19

TABLE 3 *Correlational coefficients between distribution of Islamic State foreign fighters and other socio-economic indicators on basis of data on Brussels districts* (Source: Author's calculations and compilation)
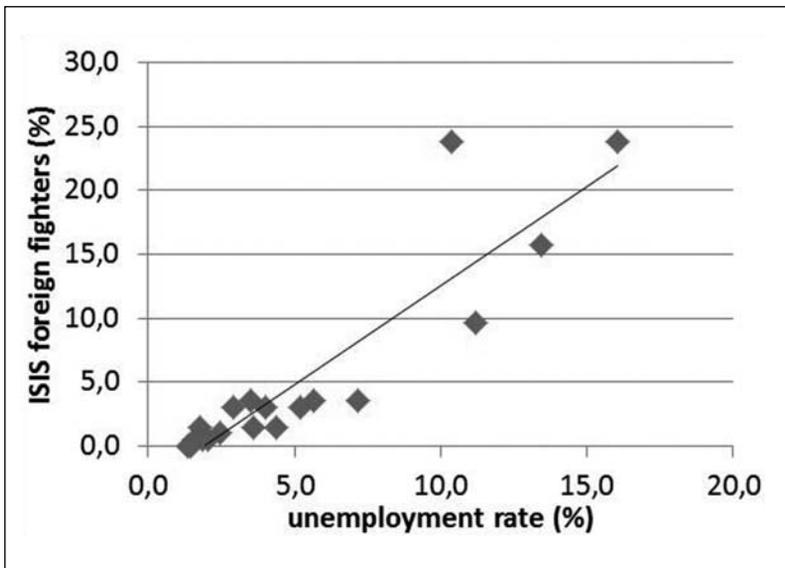

FIGURE 3 *Positive correlation between the rate of registered unemployed and the proportion of ISIS foreign fighters* (Source: Author's compilation)

can be pointed to in which the values of both variables are low. This less marked, less clear pattern is also manifested inasmuch as the present indicator for educational attainment shows a much lower statistical connection to the proportion of Belgian fighters travelling to Islamic State-controlled regions: the value of the correlational coefficient between the variables under examination is –0.492, which is far lower than in the case of the previous two factors. However, it might be considered an inverse connection insofar as the link is statistically significant (p = 0.032) in this case as well *(Table 3)*.
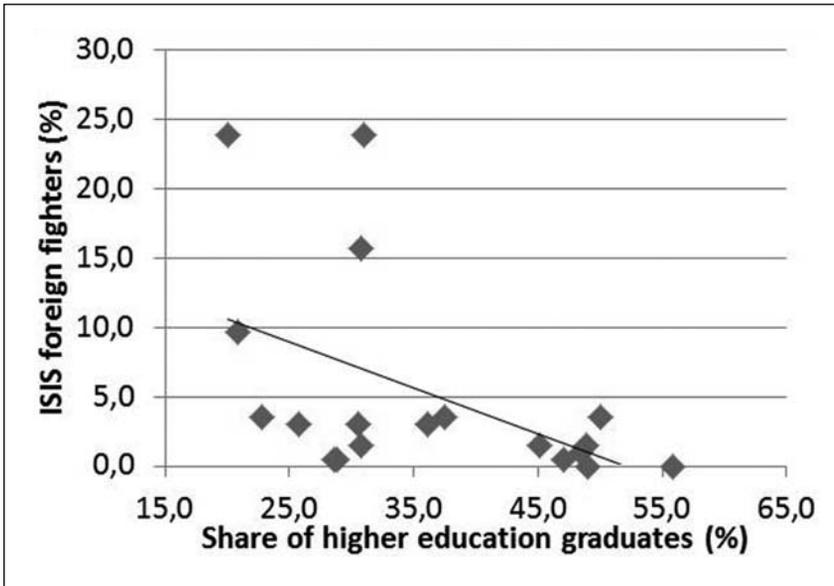

FIGURE 4 *Negative correlation between rate of university graduates and proportion of ISIS foreign fighters* (Source: Author's compilation)

Based on the results from data on the districts of Brussels, the proportion of ISIS foreign fighters shows a strong, positive correlation with the estimated proportion of Muslims and the relative frequency of registered unemployment. Further, a significant negative connection exists with the rate of university graduates. In other words, we see the clear emergence of a basic relation involving areas populated in high proportions by Muslims proving to be relatively significant recruitment bases for foreign fighters for the Islamic State. At the same time, results obtained with regard to indicators on the socio-economic environment point to the fact that socio-economic background should not be considered negligible either: areas characterised by more favourable labour market options and educational attainment are less likely to produce foreign fighters. This means that behind the differences between areas in terms of proportions of residents headed for Islamic State-controlled regions lie additional, significant factors tied to broader dimensions of the social context and certain segregation processes along with Muslim ancestry; thus the phenomenon is not exclusively – and perhaps not even primarily – a matter of ancestry. It is in light

of this that we examine the relation between the presence of a Muslim population and a deprived socio-economic environment, that is, the phenomenon of areal marginalization and segregation.

An extraordinarily strong relationship can be demonstrated between the estimated proportion of the Muslim population and features of the labour market, which can be characterised as follows: the higher the proportion of registered job seekers, the higher the share of residents of Muslim ancestry in a particular district *(Figure 5)*. There is a positive correlation of 0.975 between the variables, which is statistically significant as well (p = 0.000). In the light of this, it seems therefore that unfavourable labour market trends tied to the presence of a higher proportion of Muslims in the population are present.

A similar situation becomes clear in educational attainment insofar as university graduates are less common in districts where the estimated proportion of Muslims is relatively high *(Figure 5)*. In other words, the higher the proportion of Muslims in the population of a particular district, the smaller the layer of university-educated people there. The direction of the relation of these variables is therefore negative; however, the strength of the relation is less than that for the previous indicator: the correlational coefficient is –0.491, indicating a statistically significant (p = 0.033) linear relationship *(Table 3)*. This also means that the relationship between this dimension of the socio-economic background and the ancestry group is not incidental or random: the lack of high educational attainment is characteristic of the high proportion of Muslims among the population[17].
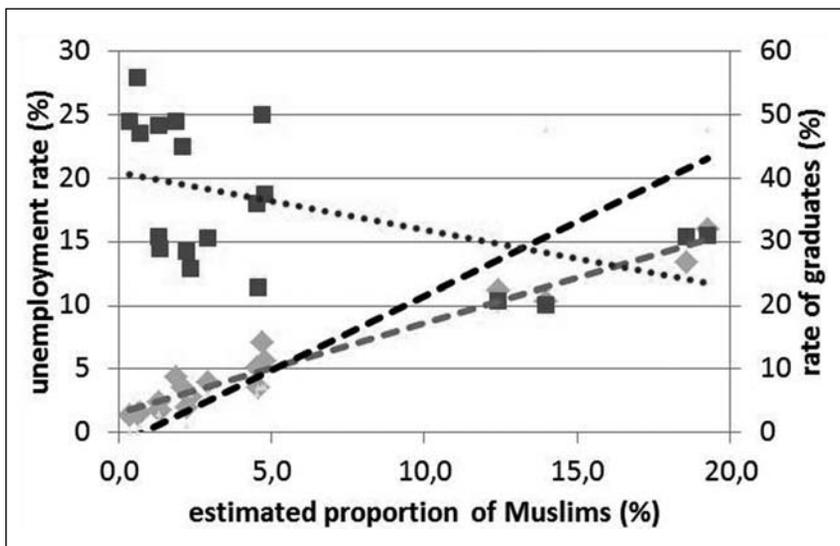
Figure 5 *Correlation between estimated proportion of Muslim population and other socio-economic indicators* (Source: Author's compilation)

---

[17] It might be added here that a connection appears in the trend between the criteria for the socio-economic dimensions (with a correlational coefficient of –0.393); however, this negative trend cannot be seen as significant (p = 0.096) in the present analysis – or in statistical analyses in sociology generally – taking into account the decision-making level applied (α = 0.05).

It therefore seems that socio-economic conditions are tied to the composition of the districts by ancestry and that a picture emerges that suggests a link between deprived socio-economic conditions and the presence of a Muslim population. The question then arises whether the high proportion of foreign ISIS fighters produced stems exclusively from the proportion of the Muslim population within that of particular districts or whether the phenomenon can be traced back to a broader, more complex combination of factors: the presence of segregated communities whose members' ancestry and deprived socio-economic status emerge jointly.

In what follows, we apply two approaches to investigate this assumption statistically. First, we make further use of the correlation calculation method to investigate how the originally strong link between the proportion of those leaving the city for Islamic State-controlled regions and the estimated share of the Muslim population changes with the inclusion of variables that arise from the broader social context. Beyond a study of the partial correlational coefficients as part of the other approach based on the values of socio-economic variables, we separate those districts which are collectively characterised by deprived socio-economic conditions and thus we use this grouping – of actual segregated districts[18] – to conduct an examination, district by district, of the original correlation between the capacity to produce foreign fighters and the estimated proportion of the Muslim population.

The strong, positive and statistically significant correlation coefficient (= 0.936; p = 0.000) between estimates for the proportion of Muslims in the population calculated at the level of the Brussels districts and the distribution of foreign ISIS fighters decreases significantly once data for registered unemployment is included as a controlled variable in the relation. The partial correlational coefficient – i.e. that which is also considered as playing the role of controlled variable in the connection and essentially eliminates it – continues to be positive (0.594) and statistically significant (p = 0.009), although low in value *(Table 4)*. In other words, it seems that if we take into account the labour market differences between the districts, the correlation between the proportion of the Muslim population and that of foreign fighters travelling to Islamic State-controlled regions is demonstrably less marked: the strength of the relation between the two criteria drops by over 0.3. This dimension of the deprived socio-economic environment therefore causes the result for the original calculation on ancestry to drop by that much – it does not place it in brackets and it does not eliminate the correlation between the estimated proportion of Muslims and the proportion of outbound ISIS fighters. However, it reflects the likely role of this unique phenomenon of the socio-economic background.

Educational attainment plays less of a marked role: it does not alter the original correlation substantially as a controlled variable in any respect. Only a slight reduction can be measured in the case of the partial correlational coefficient (0.916), and the significance of this estimate (p = 0.000) produces no change *(Table 4)*. The differences shown in educational attainment

---

[18] Segregated districts were determined by separating the districts with below- or above-average values both with regard to registered unemployment and rate of university graduates. Of those districts, we considered areas marked by the least favourable values for both variables – above-average registered unemployment and below-average rate of university graduates. Then we applied this categorization, which involved a total of four districts distinguished on the basis of the criteria above, to the data in the form of binary variables.

by city district therefore do not prove decisive as a background factor; the correlation between the distribution of the Muslim population and the capacity to produce ISIS foreign fighters does not alter this dimension of the social context.

If we consider both socio-economic factors as factors in the totality of the broader social context of the phenomenon under examination and do the calculations accordingly, we arrive at a fundamentally similar result. The statistical correlation between the estimated proportion of Muslims within each district and the proportion of the population successfully mobilized by the Islamic State is still demonstrable ($p = 0.034$). However, it shows a considerably weaker relationship, with a partial correlational coefficient of 0.516, if the marked link between composition by ancestry and proportion of foreign fighters is reduced by 0.42 within the totality of factors tied to social composition and the labour market environment *(Table 4)*.

(Partial) correlation coefficients ([p.]c.c.)		Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)	Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)	Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)
Share of ISIS foreign fighters (%)	c.c.	0,936	0,936	0,936
	p	0,000	0,000	0,000
	N	19	19	19
Share of ISIS foreign fighters (%)	p.c.c.	0,594	0,916	0,516
	p	0,000	0,000	0,034
	N	19	19	19
Control variables				
Rate of registered unemployed (%)		+	–	+
Share of higher education graduates (%)		–	+	+

TABLE 4 *Control variable calculation of connection between estimated proportion of Muslims and proportion of foreign ISIS fighters* (Source: Author's calculations)

The findings here therefore at least partly appear to support the assumption that deprived socio-economic conditions play a likewise significant role in the developing pattern of fighter recruitment. That is, the proportion of the Muslim population as an explanatory factor behind that of foreign ISIS fighters per district proves to be less decisive if we consider the potential socio-economic difficulties characteristic of a particular district, i.e. a segregated locality. These difficulties clearly contribute to the development of the proportion of foreign fighters under examination inasmuch as they reduce the demonstrable relationship with the composition by ancestry.

We can assume from the foregoing that districts characterised by deprived socio-economic conditions serve as bases for targeted recruitment of ISIS foreign fighters. Based on the concurrent

presence of deprived conditions in the segregated districts[19], a particular link indeed forms in the distribution between Muslims and residents who travel to Islamic State-controlled regions *(Table 5)*. While the correlation coefficient reflects an extraordinarily strong, positive and statistically significant relationship based on the entire database for all the Brussels districts, as has become clear from a number of perspectives, no correlation can be measured between the composition of the population within the internal islands under the most disadvantageous conditions and the distribution of foreign ISIS fighters. The correlational coefficient essentially drops by half with regard to the segregated communities (= 0.446), and this can no longer be considered significant even statistically (p = 0.554). In other words, if we examine the mobilizing potential of the Islamic State at the level of the most deprived districts, we find no substantial link to a composition based on ancestry among the residents there[20].

Correlation coefficients (c.c.)		Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)	Estimated proportion of Muslims (%)
Share of ISIS foreign fighters (%)	c.c.	0,936	0,446
	p	0,000	0,554
	N	19	4
basis of calculation		all districts	segregated districts

TABLE 5 *Correlation between estimated proportion of Muslims and proportion of ISIS foreign fighters in segregated districts* (Source: Author's calculations)

CLOSING REMARKS

This empirical study of certain factors which might play a significant role in Islamic State activity at the export of terrorism and recruitment of foreign fighters, which have clearly proved effective, particularly in Europe. In continuing our investigation with the goal of identifying a pattern of operative cooperation manifested in jointly implemented operations among terrorist organisations, we have placed two potential mechanisms at the centre of the analysis: we have broadly illustrated a personal network which plays an *intermediary* role, a network whose members are tied to one

---

[19] These segregated localities can truly be characterised as extremely deprived districts inasmuch as registered unemployment is significantly higher (t = –8.813; p = 0.000) (12.76% on average compared to 3.26% in non-segregated communities) and the rate of university graduates is significantly lower (t = 2.370; p = 0.030) (25.66% compared to 39.01% in other districts). Obviously, this can be explained by the exclusion experienced in these districts; however, it is important to bear in mind that the estimated proportion of Muslims and the proportion of foreign fighters are also significantly higher (t = –7.883; p = 0.003 and t = –4.745; p = 0.017, respectively) (at 16.06% and 2.38%, respectively, compared to 18.27% and 1.79%, respectively). In other words, districts identified and delimited as segregated communities are indeed characterised by the most deprived socio-economic context and by the highest divisions based on ancestry as well as the proportion of foreign ISIS fighters.

[20] It should be stressed that the estimated proportion of the Muslim population is typically high in each of these districts distinguished as segregated localities and that the number of cases is extraordinarily low, thus making the results uncertain.

another by ISIS and its potential sympathisers, who are formed by targeted influence operations and disseminated propaganda. We believe that in this case we are seeing a unique case of *social embeddedness* in the meeting of Islamic State objectives – that is, in its extraordinarily conscious, multi-layered and purposefully developed efforts. This social embeddedness is of central importance with respect to the actual, successful mobilization of members of society who have the potential for radicalization. The other issue under examination was approached through results tied to *marginalization* and *challenges of integration* and with greater coverage than the foregoing. Using data on the Brussels districts, we have illustrated the extent of the role of deprived socio-economic conditions in the relation between the proportion of the Muslim population and the distribution of foreign fighters for the Islamic State. Based on the data analysis, it is clear that deprived socio-economic conditions show a positive correlation with the territorial proportion of foreign ISIS fighters. This appears to confirm the assertion – which can be said to be conventional[21] – that social inequality is of outstanding importance in the operation of this unique form of violence. At the same time, this contradicts the – considerably persuasive and empirically strong – argument as regards the Islamic State of there actually being a greater capacity to recruit foreign fighters in the case of a high level of socio-economic development and relatively insignificant inequality (BENMELECH–KLOR 2016). In our view, however, this is only a seeming contradiction, with both patterns offering an explanation for the process of radicalization. All in all, a distinction could be made with the fact that empirical research on a deep level of social processes will provide a clear picture. By collecting, ordering and systematically examining country data, the analysis conducted by the researchers noted previously (BENMELECH–KLOR 2016. 3–4) argues that the recruitment base and output rates of Islamic State foreign fighters are higher in societies characterised by greater prosperity. In other words, in this case, on the macro level of society, the relations observed can be considered valid with respect to countries. The empirical observations of the analytical part of this research focus on society at a lower organisational level: deprived socio-economic conditions relate to both the estimated proportion of Muslims and the distribution of foreign fighters by district. In fact, the positive statistical relationship between the proportions of the Muslim population and the presence of foreign ISIS fighters in districts with small populations, or *segregated districts,* which are characterised by unfavourable socio-economic indicators also disappears. This can thus be interpreted as a kind of *dual pattern* of the radicalization processes analysed here: the same factors show a relationship in a direction which is different from – or opposite – the mobilization process of potential extremists depending on whether we consider the phenomenon on a large scale within relatively broad frameworks of society or within a local, narrower social context, in which the processes of marginalization and segregation and the challenges of integration are more visible.

In the light of this, a possible next step in the research might be to conduct a more thorough study of the unique duality of the radicalization process. With supplementary data collection and an expansion to other research areas involving case studies, it may be worthwhile and necessary to examine whether the findings here can be considered valid, particularly considering the fact that the calculations made for this analysis apply to a single well-defined context with a small sample.

---

[21] See BENMELECH–KLOR 2016. 6.

REFERENCES

BALOGH, PÉTER (2017a): Cooperation: Multiplying the Destructive Potential of Asymmetric Threats. In KISS, ÁLMOS PÉTER (ed.): *Asymmetric Warfare: Conflict of the Past, the Present, and the Future.* Budapest, Dialóg Campus Kiadó. 51–64.

BALOGH, PÉTER (2017b): Új évezred, újabb kihívás? A globális terrorizmus operatív együttműködési hálózatának empirikus vizsgálata. In FINSZTER GÉZA – SABJANICS ISTVÁN (szerk.): *Biztonsági kihívások a 21. században.* Budapest, Dialóg Campus Kiadó. 645–653.

BALOGH, PÉTER (2019): Új évezred, újabb kihívás? A globális terrorizmus operatív együttműködési hálózatának empirikus vizsgálata. In FINSZTER GÉZA – SABJANICS ISTVÁN (szerk.): *Biztonsági kihívások a 21. században – E-KÖNYV.* Budapest, Belügyi Tudományos Tanács – Dialóg Campus Kiadó (kézirat, megjelenés alatt).

BENMELECH, EFRAIM – KLOR, ESTEBAN F. (2016): What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS? *NBER Working Paper* No. 22190. https://www.nber.org/papers/w22190.pdf (downloaded: 2018. 11. 21.).

BESENYŐ JÁNOS (2015): Nem az ISIS találmánya – terroristák a migránsok között. *Felderítő Szemle* vol. 14. no. 1. 17–43.

BESENYŐ JÁNOS – PRANTNER ZOLTÁN – SPEIDL BIANKA – VOGEL DÁVID (2016): *Az Iszlám Állam, Terrorizmus 2.0 – Történet, ideológia, propaganda.* Budapest, Honvéd Vezérkar Tudományos Kutatóhely.

GRANOVETTER, MARK (1991): A gyenge kötések ereje. A hálózatelmélet felülvizsgálata. In ANGELUSZ, RÓBERT – TARDOS, RÓBERT (szerk.): *Társadalmak rejtett hálózata.* Budapest, MKI. 371–400.

GRANOVETTER, MARK (2006): A gazdasági intézmények társadalmi megformálása: a beágyazottság problémája. In LENGYEL, GYÖRGY – SZÁNTÓ, ZOLTÁN (szerk.): *Gazdaságszociológia.* Budapest, Aula Kiadó. 32–45.

KIS-BENEDEK, JÓZSEF (2017): Dzsihadista fészkek, mint a terrorizmus lehetséges kiindulópontjai. *Hadtudomány* vol. 27. no. 1–2. 96–113.

MARONE, FRANCESCO (2018): *Foreign Fighters: A Problem for Asian Countries, Too.* https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/foreign-fighters-problem-asian-countries-too-21723 (downloaded: 2019. 01. 15.).

PRANTNER, ZOLTÁN (2016): *Iszlám Állam. A világ legvéresebb terrorszervezete.* Budapest, Pannon-Literatúra Kft.

PUTNAM, ROBERT D. (2000): *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York, Simon and Schuster.

TÁLAS, PÉTER (2006): Kelet-Közép-Európa és az új típusú terrorizmus. In TÁLAS, PÉTER (szerk.): *A terrorizmus anatómiája. Tanulmányok.* Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó. 10–15.

The eGLYPH Web Crawler: ISIS Content on YouTube, 2018. https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/eGLYPH_web_crawler_white_paper_July_2018.pdf (downloaded: 2019. 03. 12.).

VLIERDEN, GUY VAN (2016): Molenbeek and Beyond. The Brussels-Antwerp Axis as Hotbed of Belgian Jihad. In VARVELLI, ARTURO (ed.): *Jihadist Hotbeds. Understanding Local Radicalization Processes.* https://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/Rapporto_Hotbeds_2016/JIHADIST.HOTBEDS_EBOOK.pdf (downloaded: 2018. 08. 25.).

WEISS, MICHAEL – HASSAN, HASSAN (2015): *Az Iszlám Állam. A terror hadserege belülről.* Budapest, HVG Kiadó Zrt.