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## **RETURN OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE: CHALLENGES FOR NATIONAL SECURITY**

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### **Abstract**

From 2011, Europe is facing a problem of a large number of its citizens who were leaving to go on foreign battlefields and are joining terrorist groups who have appeared in the conflict in Syria. Foreign fighters were not something new that occurred but it was new to see that many people from different countries, all wanting to join and participate in foreign conflict. People were starting to join different terrorist groups the most notorious and most famous one was a group called the Islamic state. This organization has attracted a large number of people in a short amount of time. Here roots were in al-Qaida, one of the most famous terrorist organization of all time. Not long after the conflict started, first foreign fighters started coming back to their home countries. And even though politicians were happy when foreign fighters started leaving to join IS, because they expected decrease of small crimes, they were not that happy when those same foreign fighters started coming back. The largest wave of returns started in 2013 and continued for next couple of years. When it become known fact that foreign fighters are returning, all eyes were on the politicians who did not have many solutions for this kind of a problem. What to do with returning foreign fighters became main question. This question was not being asked just for the sake of it, but because people started to be scared of returning fighters. And not only that, it became clear that everyone is asking, are returning foreign fighters someone that we should be afraid of? Many more questions emerged. Are foreign fighters more willing to do a terrorist attack of some sort when they return home? Do they represent a security risk for their homeland? These questions are among the ones who will be researched in this paper.

**Keywords:** foreign fighters, terrorism, national security, Islamic state

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## **Introduction**

Foreign fighters are a phenomenon that has been capturing people's minds for the last couple of years. But even if the mass media and people are talking more about this problem in the last couple of years, it does not mean that foreign fighters did not exist before or that they are a new phenomenon. "Since 1980 between 10,000 and 30,000 such fighters have inserted themselves into contacts from Bosnia in the west to the Philippines in the east." (Hegghammer, 2010, p. 1) In this paper, the main focus will be on the foreign fighters who were a part of a war conflict in Syria and Iraq and were a part of an organization called the Islamic state. But who are foreign fighters? As "David Malet describes foreign fighters as "non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during the civil conflict. I build on this formulation and describe a foreign fighter as an agent who (1) has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid." (Hegghammer, p. 57)

"As regards the problem of departures, the biggest concern of intelligence and security services and the police were the process of return of EU citizens to their home countries. There are legitimate fears that the return of radicalized individuals with the knowledge of how to use weapons and with traumas from crisis areas could create a serious security risk related to terrorist threats." (Čaleta, 2016, p. 18)

Many foreign fighters are returning from the Islamic state have been increasing questions about foreign fighters posing a threat to Europe. The problem of returning foreign fighters is in the idea that foreign fighters did not leave their radicalized ideas in the conflict zone but that they are returning and will or plan to develop terrorist activities. Idea is that they are returning brave, after seeing a load of violent situations, with large military knowledge. Other than terrorist activities, the danger of returning foreign fighters is in the idea that they might radicalize others and make them want to join terrorist organizations in the future.

This paper we will try research do foreign fighters pose a real danger to European security knowing that the potential threat is always possible. Is the threat real or is it not was the question asked not only by scholars but also by governments of European countries and their citizens? But the threat posed by returning foreign fighters is not supposed to be underestimated. Terrorist attacks done by returning foreign fighters in different European countries can be proof of that.

### **The research methodology**

In this paper, we will use methods of research to successfully research the subject of readiness of countries of Europe for the return of foreign fighters from the Islamic state and to get optimal results.

The method that we will use first is the historical method. This method takes into account basic facts but also a chronology of events as well as their development, cause, and consequence. Method of proof might be the most important method that we will use in this paper because with this method we will try to confirm (in)accuracy of the desired result. In this method incorporated are all of the other methods that we will need for research, like the deductive method. This method will be used in part of an article that will talk about *Foreign fighters as a security threat and Terrorist attacks done by returning foreign fighters*.

The deductive method is used for proving set thesis and to check the hypothesis or making individual conclusions from general will be used for the explanation of facts and laws. Within the deductive method, we will use methods of analysis and synthesis. Even though in this paper we will use research questions rather than a hypothesis, this method will be of a great help to us. The statistical method will be used to analyse how many foreign fighters had returned to their countries and how many of them had been punished but also how many of them are a part of programs of de-radicalization and re-integration if they even exist in their countries of origin. This method will be used in different parts of paper.

The normative method will be used at conclusions of this article. This method will help us to explain the subject but will be most beneficial towards the end of paper because with this method we will estimate and verify or deny set research questions. With this method, we will be able to show own opinion and make conclusions.

### **Islamic State**

Conflict in Syria in the last years, brought uncommon situation of which one terrorist organization and her conquered territory, or the "state" that was established on that territory, became more known to the rest of the world than some of legitimately recognized countries. We are talking about the Islamic State, IS, Daesh or ISIS. The official title of the organization today is the Islamic State. Name Daesh is Arabic acronym for al Dawla-al Islamiya fl Iraq wa al Sham or in the translation Islamic State of Iraq and Sham. Daesh is the acronym that is used by experts and by most of the Arab world. History of Islamic state goes back to the beginnings of the 90s. To be more precise, in now far 1993 when organization Al-Tawhid was established. On the foundations of that organization, then-leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, established a group

with slightly different name Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad. This group was independent until 2004 when they promised loyalty to Osama bin Laden and become a part of Al-Qaida in Iraq. In that moment group has changed its name to Tandhim al Qaeda fi Bilad Al Rafidayn. Before mentioned Al-Zarqawi, a head person of Al-Tawhid al-Jhad, was killed in 2006, and his place was taken by Abu Ayub al-Masti. After him, the front position was taken by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi. As Al-Zarqawi did, Umar al-Baghdadi was killed in the attack of American military forces. Organization functions for years when in 2010 it's lead position take, maybe the most popular figure of them all, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He has used the moment of big conflicts in the time of Arab spring, combining organizations, and then he started turning his focus on to Syria where large conflicts started to flame up. "In 2013, it changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)." (CISAC, 2017)

It is very crucial to mention the political situation in Iraq to be able to see how conflicts in this part of the world started to be and how did the Islamic state started their rise. Until 2003 Iraq was ruled by Sunni Muslims, to be more precise, Sadam Husein and his Baath party which controlled the whole country. When, after the terrorist attack in New York in 2001, the American government, decided to attack Iraq because of the charges that they have nuclear weapons, or better to say, massive attack weapons. After the attack, they overthrew the Sunni government and replaced them with the Shia government that was more of a use to them. Nevertheless, although the period of government of Sadam Husein was tragic for Iraq with a large number of political assassinations, especially of Shia part of the citizens. The final result of American invasion was "unstable or shredded Iraq and even more unstable Middle East region and terrorism escalated. Occupation and appeared anti-American inside the Muslim world because of the occupation of Iraq conditioned creation second generation of members of Al-Qaida. This situation was used by al-Zarqawi and his supporters that "sectarian violence tried to destabilize Iraq and disable the establishment pro-American government and cooperation of Iraq's Shiias in that government and their influence in Iraq."(Bilandžić, 2014, p. 235) Then prime-minister of Iraq Maliki has been accused that his actions lead to the riots in Iraq and of the awakening of terrorism. His revenge to Suni Muslim and prior government lead to the situation that Baath party after stepping down did not rest but they became lead opponents of the American regime and government in Iraq. Baath party started to connect intensively with Al Qaida beginning with protests and demonstration, rebels in Iraq, who except Al Qaida included many of the groups, were fertile ground to developing terrorism. Development of terrorism has been encouraged by prime-minister Maliki with his

approach where Suni Muslims felt vulnerable and it was ready to support any of the groups. Besides that, many of the countries from the Arabian Peninsula started offering their help to Suni rebels, not thinking about what group will get help. Today's Islamic state, after the separation from Al Qaida, started to become more powerful so that it could, in the end, not only to conquer different parts of Iraq but they succeeded to win the centre of Mosul. "When ISIS came to city of Mosul, capital city of Iraqi province of Niniva, in the middle of June 2014, the world has answered with confusion and shock...By number, only a thousand of them occupied city in the middle of Iraq that was guarded by only about thirty thousand of Iraqi soldiers and police officers which were taught by Americans, who have disappeared, having lost and left to ISIS American Humbeeies and tanks Abrams worth tens of millions of US dollars. (Weiss i Hassan, 2015, p. 7) The fall of the city came in June 2014 after the Islamic state spread into Syria where they used political climate. First, they have proclaimed how they are supporting the opening of organization Al Nusra. Soon after then, IS is crossing the border and its leader, Al Bagdadi announces merging the two organizations, Al Nusra and IS. Leaders of Al Nusra are refusing that merge, Al Bagdadi is not stopped. He continues to work on straightening the Islamic state and starts to fight other rebel groups. "From the 2013 until the summer of 2014 ISIS has run down Iraqi, Syrian and Kurdish military security forces, as well as the other Islamists rivals. He has confirmed military skills with taking over Al-Raqqqa and Deir Al-Zour in Syria in 2014, and a quick breaking of four Iraqi divisions in Mosul and other parts of northern Iraq, indecisive attack of few fighters in summer 2014. Till the end of 2014, ISIS has around third of Syria and Iraq and came close to the borders of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. (Gerges, 2018, p. 19) Leaders of the Islamic state did not hide their goals from the beginning. "ISIS makes no secret of its ultimate ambition: A global caliphate secured through a global war. To that end, it speaks of "remaining and expanding" its existing hold over much of Iraq and Syria. It aims to replace existing, man-made borders, to overcome what it sees as the Shiite "crescent" that has emerged across the Middle East, to take its war -- Islam's war -- to Europe and America, and ultimately to lead Muslims toward an apocalyptic battle against the "disbelievers." (Lister, 2015, e-vir) and winning over the Mosul gave them wind to their back and after just a few days they have proclaimed the caliphate in the area that they won in Syria and Iraq. Not long after proclaiming the caliphate, the end of ISIS has been declared and from now on this organization will be known as an Islamic state. In this period, USA is forming the coalition against the Islamic State, mostly because of the terrorist attacks that Islamic State made around the world. After IS took over the territory control, they took over control over the everyday life of people making life rules inspired by

Sharia law. Some of the “residents of enclave that were ruled by caliphate are saying that when IS fighters came to their villages, their everyday life has become better. IS fighters had fixed the roads on the sides, organized public kitchens for the ones that were left without homes, ensured continuous supply of electrical energy” (Napoleoni, 2014, p. 14) they helped the ones in need, giving them food and medications, and winning their hearts which helped them to turn locals against the government. But, IS quickly started to make rules and laws that were supposed to be followed. Islamic state rules, as time passed, became more and more strict and their lives started to change from the foundations. “Billboards were saying that it is forbidden to smoke and using cameras; to women it was not allowed to travel without the accompany of male relative, they must be covered and they are not supposed to wear pants in the public (Napoleoni, 2014, p. 11) Beside that, women are told they are not allowed to visit male doctor, and not even allowed to talk to any men outside their family. “In the beginning ISIS was dealing with civilians softly, even taking over some civilian administrative obligations that were done by the volunteer and FSA. They fixed damaged roads, planted flowers in the streets, edit gardens and cleaned local schools. But, not long after ISIS has introduces Sharia law, making women to wear something they called “Daish clothes” niqab or total cover for face and body.”(Weiss i Hassan, 2015, p. 278) How far IS went into the controlling their territory and every aspect of it says information that they have been controlling even buying bread which every resident could by only with showing their ID. Alcohol, selling and consuming, was strictly prohibited. “In the Islamic state smoking was forbidden and the music is forbidden.” (Todenhofer, 2016, p. 200-201) The list of forbidden things is long, and for breaking the rules punishment were very strict. IS moral patrol called Hisbah was everywhere, patrolling 24/7 watching law being enforced. Shias, Christians, and other minorities have completely expelled from the territory. The only two ways for Christians to be able to stay in their homes was to convert to Islam or starting to pay so-called non-Muslim tax. Punishment for disrespect one of two conditions was death. However, most of the Christians had left the territory of the Islamic state. Very troublesome fact for the world was that Islamic state used children for different tasks. Recruiting the children in Daesh officially started when children turned 9 years old. Children were expected to completely loyal. That included spying of others, even their parents. Children left camps where they would learn to use weapons and learn to fight. Barret (2017) talks about that “Caliphate decided that all above 15 are grown-ups, but children from 9 are trained to use weapons and trained to killed”. For female children another role was intended, and that being role of a wife. In an Islamic state young girl can become wife even if she



is 9.” (RAN, 2017, p. 22) The world was seeing the footage where the “soldiers” from the Islamic state were killing and beheading their enemies. That footage made them gain a reputation of ruthless enforcers of the rules that they have brought along. Everyday reports of witnesses from IS jails talked about punishments of long prisons, whipping and death. Rules were so hard in IS so you could get those punishments even if you would be late for prayer. Almost every brutality was a guarantee that their organization would put them on the front pages of world papers, and with that propaganda, they would defend their brutality that they would do in the name of religion and to show themselves as “defenders of Islam”. (Neumann, 2017, p. 23) Defenders of Islam who are the only ones who live in true Islamic society. Kidnappings, public killings and other things they did, left world public in disgust and attracted a lot of attention which was great for the organization. Napoleoni (2014, p. 61) thinks that “this was a tactic conceived with the purpose to horrify and to make enemy fear them, intending to neutralize asymmetry war guided against the well-equipped military.”

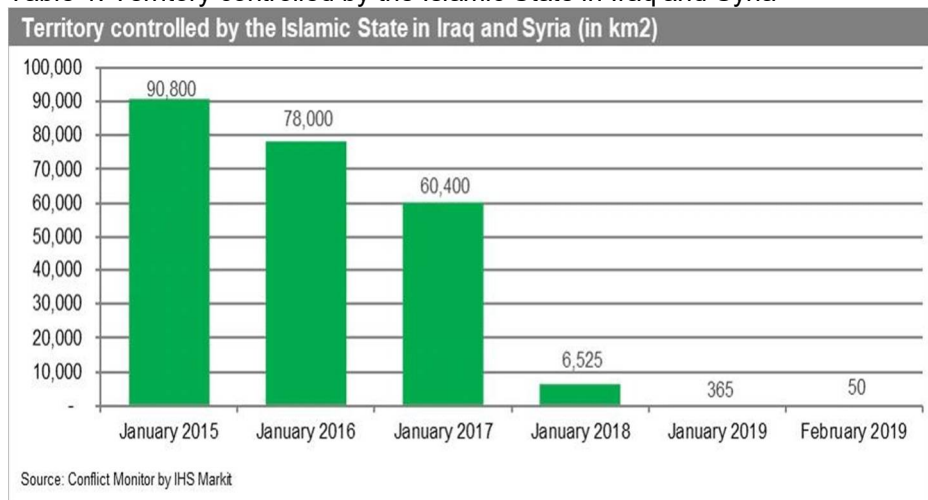
Kidnappings that were mentioned earlier were kidnappings of citizens of western countries and those acts were one of the ways Islamic state got, not only a huge amount of media coverage but, as well, huge amount of money from ransom. Money was needed in leading this organization. “Preconditions for leading terrorist organization are similar to the leading company or NGO. Today’s multi-national terrorist leader is an entrepreneur who unites purpose, money and market share. Hires qualified and unqualified workforce and often pays at market prices. Money is more important for organizations with command and personnel structure that are doing the attacks of large scale rather than virtual networks in which people are expected to finance themselves or to collect resources” (Stern, 2006, p. 166) Besides kidnapping, one of the ways of the financing Islamic State were oil exports and reselling art. Islamic State “according to Wall Street Journal, only exporting the oil is bringing them two millions of dollars daily. (Napoleoni, 2014, p. 22), this is being confirmed by Weiss and Hassan (2015, p. 298) who are saying that “oil was main source of income for ISIS until coalition air strikes began. Before that time, it was thought that ISIS makes millions of dollars every month from the oil in Syria and Iraq-1 to 2 million dollars a day.” Islamic State has earned money in different ways. From collecting money for protection to different taxes that people had to pay. “ISIS is making millions from zakat (different forms of Islamic mandatory charity money that people are paying to the state” (Weiss i Hassan, 2015, p 299) Earlier mentioned media attention that Islamic State got was important for the financial part, as well. IS was getting money from their

like-minded people around the world. This way of collecting money was important for the organization, and this was important to have media attention. “Terrorists have to advertise their missions because of potential sponsors and volunteers so they are using similar techniques. As we saw, they are holding auctions, dinners where they are collecting money and are making press conferences. Publishing posters and newspapers. They are giving their attention to journalists hoping that they will write friendly about them. They are openly looking for donations on places of prayer, at least where countries are allowing that. They are making private meetings between leaders and larger sponsors. The efficiency they are demonstrating through sophisticated web pages, often with photos and video clips of successful operations and crimes committed against them (Stern, 2006, p. 279) One of the reasons why Islamic state became so successful was because nobody has opposed to them when they were becoming economically successful.

**Islamic state right now**

Islamic State has lost all of the won territories and at this moment counts last pieces of the territory. Of the whole large area that they possessed; they have lost piece by piece. Their loss of the territory was going something like this. In December of 2015 Islamic state has lost city of Ramadi which was taken over the Iraqi government. Next year was fateful for Islamic state regarding loss of the territory. In June of 2016 Iraqi military took over the town of Fallujah. At the end of 2016, the Islamic State has lost more than 30 percent of the territory. During 2016 many of the leaders of the Islamic State were killed. Abu Muhammed Al-Adnani was also killed in the air strike of American forces. Their big loss was a town of Mosul, which Iraqi forces won over in the middle of 2017.

Table 1: Territory controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria



Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit (2019)

The current situation in an Islamic state was described by Renad Mansour, a fellow of Chatam House, in the show on Al Jazeera television, called “Is ISIL finished for the good-Inside story.” Mansour said that this is not the end of this organization and that organization will continue to exist but “underground”. He added that this is just cyclic continuing of organization, which means that organization sometimes gets, sometimes loses it’s territory. This is the situation everyone has to be ready for. Even though the Islamic State has disappeared from Syria and Iraq, it does not mean that the Islamic State has disappeared in general and that we will not hear for them anymore. It is hard to believe that in this day of age, the Islamic State will stop existing. If we continue to think in that way, we can just stop and ask ourself where IS and their “caliphate” will rise next. “As Abu Muhammad al-Adnani declared, IS will revert to what it was so successfully before—an insurgent group fighting a guerilla war. Its remaining members will reorganize, rearm and persevere. Some also may find their way into one of an ever-shifting arrays of rebel and jihadist groups currently operative in Syria, whether Hayat Tahrir al Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra), Ahrar al Sham, Nour al-Din al-Zenki, Faylaq sl Sham, or even the Turkistan Islamic Party.” (Dawson, 2018, p. 5) It is easy to assume that their leadership and the ones that are supporting the organization will support their “brotherhood organizations” around the world, like Boko Haram and the others and that they will use their influence in Nigeria, Liberia, and Egypt to strengthen their organization. There is a strong influence of Islamic State in Afghanistan, especially in the part of the country called Nazian, which is hidden in mountain parts of Tora Bora and it is intensifying its terrorist attacks in that area. The main problem is not Islamic State itself, but the situation that even though we lost Islamic state, we can assume that peace and stability will not come any time soon in this area of the world.” Whoever thinks that with the so-called 'defeat' of ISIS in Syria and Iraq stability will return to the Middle East should think again. It will not be difficult for wandering ISIS fighters to find a new battleground shortly.” (Debeuf, K., 2019, e-vir)

### **Return of foreign fighters**

In 2015, Islamic State started losing it’s territory that they were wining in the earlier years. During that period, a lot of FTFs died in the conflict with the opposition, but proportionally with losing the territory, and with organization losing power, fighters decided to leave the organization. Parallel to fighters dying or leaving the organization, waves of arrivals began to decrease. As ISIS has weakened, the jihadist movement has become less attractive to potential foreign recruits. European — and to some degree, American — Muslim youth, once eager to join the budding Caliphate, and willing to leave families behind and risk prison should

they be caught in the attempt, no longer want to be part of what has become the losing team. (Esman, 2016, p. 2)

Reasons for leaving from the Islamic state were more, as RAN mentions (2017, p. 7):

- Disillusioned / remorseful;
- Still driven by ideology, want better living conditions (opportunistic);
- Sent to carry out an attack (or feel they can do more for the cause in Europe than in Syria / Iraq);
- Captured and returned unwillingly.

Other reasons included fear of IS leadership, feeling that the organization does not appreciate them, traumatic events, but also a wish not to be a part of the fighting. Mentioned reasons are just proof that even with leaving the organization, as well as when they were joining the organization, there is no single reason. Some are disillusioned and want to turn away from extremism, while others are traumatized and need psychological treatment. Yet others are dangerous and pose a significant risk, not least because they have taken part in a violent conflict, acquired fighting skills, and have integrated into international terrorist networks. moreover, some women and children have not participated in fighting but may have radicalized to varying degrees (Neumann, 2017, p. 75) When it was discovered that a larger amount of foreign citizens are joining the Islamic State as foreign fighters, nobody was thinking about what will happen to these people in the future. Government of the mentioned countries was thinking the same. Or better to say. Not thinking. The government was watching them with indifference, and some even with satisfaction because there were expectations that local crime rates will be lower now when there is a possibility that those who were committing crimes were among the ones that were leaving to join IS. So, when coalition gathered against Islamic state with Syrian and Iraqi governments started winning back the territory, in the international circles started talking more and more about what will happen with foreign fighters who are returning. In the same time, guessing started about how many people will return. In any event, given the ferocity and scope of the conflict in Syria and Iraq, there is a good reason to believe that fewer FTFs will survive. More of them will be captured, and perhaps executed, by Syrian, Iraqi, Kurdish, and even Western forces. If they do elude death or capture, fewer will be able to find their way home because their passports were confiscated by IS, and neighboring countries are monitoring their borders better.” (Dawson, 2018, p. 4) So, even numbers are talking about a lot of FTFs died on the battlefield, time shows that there is a significant amount of people that managed all the disadvantages so that they can return to their countries.

There are no fully accurate numbers of FTFs, and there is guessing that there will not be one because "At this time the government will not say how many are under prosecution, and how many have "disappeared" into the general population" (Dawson, 2018, p. 4) But, even though there is no exact data and not thinking about the reasons why it is probably impossible to have them, assessments about the number of returning foreign fighters are a lot, but they are more or less the same. There are now at least 5,600 citizens or residents from 33 countries who have returned home (Barrett, 2017, p. 5) If we are talking about Europe to be exact, "Some 5000 men, women, and children have traveled from Europe to Syria and Iraq since 2012. An estimated 1500 of these foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) have returned so far." (Renard, Colsaet et al., 2018, p. 5) Except for people that have managed to return to their countries "Estimates say there are still around 15,000 ISIS fighters, wandering in Syria and Iraq or neighboring countries." (Debeuf, K., 2019, p 2) "In 2015-2016, a significant number of FTFs returned to their home countries, who according to a UN survey were largely "motivated to leave Syria either by their genuine disappointment in and disenfranchisement by the terrorist organization they joined, or were disillusioned by their host's lack of welcome, be it the Syrian people or the terrorist group itself"" (Bos et al, 2018, p. 17) With larger failures of the Islamic state, there was an increasing number of returnees. This number of returnees captures its peak return in 2017. With this situation and with more and more failures of IS, more and more returns were registered. "In July 2017, the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) estimated that about 30% of the approximately 5,000 residents of the European Union thought to have gone to Syria and Iraq had returned home." (Barret, 2017, p. 10) In the same period "As of mid-June 2017, the Turkish authorities, having persuaded other States to help them monitor the increasing flow of foreigners passing through Turkey to Syria, had recorded the names of 53,781 individuals from 146 countries whose State of residence feared they might attempt to join the fight in Syria and Iraq" (Barrett, 2017, p. 16) Islamic state alone, even though it was losing the straight, did not show any satisfaction with the fighters who were left in a larger amount. So, they took some steps to try to decrease this. "As fights about Kobani started to be intensified and ISIS started losing battles, the Islamic State has introduced a state of emergency, taking their passports to all newly arrived foreigners and talked them that they cannot leave caliphate because they have arrived in the perfect society. (Martinović, 2017, e-source) When some of the fighters managed to overcome all technical problems and run from the Islamic state, they would return with the same route they have arrived with. The route leading over Turkey. A lot of fighters have used refugee wave in 2015 and open borders in so-called "Balkan route" to come back

to Europe. These fake migrants are "...fake migrants, that is, terrorists who pose as refugees and use migration routes in order to cross international borders (Neumann, 2017, p. 26) One of those "fake migrants is Ahmad al Mohammad who returned to Europe as a migrant passing the Balkan route and later has been a part of terrorist group that attacked Paris. There is no exact information on how many fake migrants there were. Later, when this route has been closed and other countries have tightened their borders, it was assumed that this route is hard to use. In some cases, FTFs have returned home without anybody noticing them and, in the others, they were escorted by the police. Some FTFs disappear when they arrive and will never be arrested. Some of them turn themselves in, and some of them are turned by a family member or some other person.

When we talk about the return of foreign fighters from the perspective of Governments of the states in which they are returning to, we will not be wrong when we say that there are almost no countries that are willingly letting foreign fighters back. From the countries that have asked the annulment of nationality for FTFs (Canada, Australia), some of the countries have shown more brutal ways of dealing with foreign fighters. "Brett McGurk, the top US envoy for the anti-Isis coalition bombing its territories in Syria and Iraq, said it was "for the best" for jihadis to die. "Our mission is to make sure that any foreign fighter who is here, who joined Isis from a foreign country and came into Syria, they will die here in Syria," he added. (Dearden, 2017, e-source). Noting last direct were others. Britons who have fought for Islamic State abroad should be hunted down and killed to ensure they never return to the UK, the defence secretary, Gavin Williamson, has said. (Elgot, 2017, e-source) The other EU leaders were saying similar things "Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte said that he would rather see FTFs killed in conflict rather than seeing them return to Holland." (Renard, T. i Coolsaet R., 2018, p. 58). One of the most famous examples of a person where one of the EU countries had shown that they do not want people who participated in an Islamic State to return, but also an example of a person who was left without citizenship of one of the EU countries is Shamina Begun. A girl who in her teen years left the United Kingdom and had joined the Islamic state. "Ms. Begum - who left London aged 15 to join Islamic State in 2015 - gave media interviews from a Syrian refugee camp in which she said she wanted to return home. But she was stripped of her British citizenship by the home secretary in an effort to stop her returning to the UK, who said those who left to join IS were "full of hate for our country" (BBC, 2019, e-vir) Except of Shamine Begun, "It also emerged in March that the UK had stripped British citizenship from two more women living in Syrian refugee camps with young children."(BBC, 2019,

e-source) All of this talks about leaders of countries being afraid and not knowing what to do with foreign fighters and their return. "States have not found a way to address the problem of returnees," Mr Barrett added: "Most are imprisoned, or disappear from view. There will be a need for more research and information sharing to develop effective strategies to assess and address the threat." (Barrett:In Dearden, 2017, e-source) When countries talk about the abolition of citizenship, they have to have in mind that this possibility is an option only when a person has double citizenship because international law does not allow any country to leave its citizens without citizenship. But, the abolition of citizenship does not go without problems. Leaving a person without citizenship can leave her to feel vulnerable. "In fact, citizenship stripping is not only moving the problem around like a hot potato but may even make the problem worse. If people from certain (often minority) groups in the population see that only 'their' people are targeted by a specific measure, then there is a risk that these people will feel even more alienated and discriminated against." (Paulussen,C., 2018, e-source) The largest reason for countries not wanting for their foreign fighters to return to the countries is based in fears from this person and their future doings. Fear is based on thinking about what their future actions about terrorism attacks might be, collecting money for terrorist attacks but also radicalizing others... the real question is is their fear based on the truth.

### **Return of foreign fighters and countries of Europe**

The European Union has come together on joined values as are human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity. Democracy and the "rule of law" are one more of the values of the European Union. Any doing that is not in harmony with those values is in the direct dispute with the law of EU. Terrorist activity is one of those acts that violets values on which the EU is based on. This is way one of the most prominent threats to European Union is terrorism. To European Union is very important to have a common position of every member state toward some questions. One of those questions is foreign and security policy. Importance of this question talks about terrorism not knowing boundaries, and this is especially highlighted here, in the EU, where one of the most important values is free movement of the goods and people. Ten years ago, we could have said that "Every member of EU is solving the problem of terrorism on their own way, more or less successful" (Prodan, 2009, p. 11) so, "Italian government introduced extensive additional legal powers to help to fight terrorism in the mid-seventies" (Wilkinson, 2002, p. 113), while German authorities were doing something else, and French authorities had their own system against terrorism. Prodan (2009, p 15) says that there is no complete and effective common security and defense politics. European Union considers that member states are

responsible for all the challenges around the fight against radicalism and recruitment. But the EU can help with a certain framework to coordinate national politics, share pieces of information and be successful in fighting against terrorism. That is the way EU thinks that fighting together can be most successful. That is why they started to react with the common foreign policy so that they can protect European citizens. In 2001 "EU adopted Action Plan to Fight against terrorism. Improvement of cooperation in the segment of arrests and extradition of terrorist has been accomplished with Council Framework Decision 2002/584/JHA with whom EU has adopted European arrest warrant (Prodan, 2009, p. 13) Mentioned act was supposed to represent main document of EU about fighting terrorism. Few years after, in 2004, EU adopts Declaration on combating terrorism and soon after-Action plan for fighting terrorism. As Prodan mentions (2009, p. 13) goals of this plan were "disable terrorist to have access to financial and other economic resources; increase the efficiency of working bodies of EU and member states when looking for terrorist, their prosecution in front of the court and when preventing terrorist attacks; deepen international consensus and strengthen international participation in fighting against terrorism; secure safety of international traffic and effective surveillance system of outer borders, increase the effectiveness of repercussions of terrorist attacks." In 2005 the Council adopted the EU counter-terrorism strategy with four pillars (prevent, protect, pursue, respond). It is mentioned before that terrorism does not know borders, and in the case of the European Union, this is true, because of the desire of the Union to have open borders. But other than mentioned surveillance of external borders, in the maintenance of external borders had been helping Schengen Information System. From 2016 this system has so-called, "terrorism-related activity" information. Other than this, SIS started to use "Stronger and Smarter Information Systems for Borders and Security" technology where there will be photos of the face of people. Because of the last large migration wave, loads of people started to talk about open borders being death to Europe security. Because of all this, some of the Schengen countries have put borders control. But, to preserve border safety, EU has developed Frontex. Frontex is necessary to secure borders of EU and it was of great help during the mentioned migration crisis. Numbers of people who were crossing borders and coming to Europe are changing every year. "Every attempt to quantify the number of migrants can give only a momentary and shaky figure that can be outdated after several days. According to the European FRONTEX agency, there are six main migrant routes: Western African, Western Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Balkan, and Eastern land route." (Kešetović, Ninković, 2016, p. 101) There is also European Border and Coast Guard that has the main



task to oversee borders, and in regulation, no 2016/1624 Frontex will, as part of their tasks will be able to use all the prevention measures and detection of terrorism that are necessary. EU thinks that it is necessary for every information they get to share, but not only with Europol, but with every relevant authority figure in all the member states. EU has approved that kind of doing with article 47 before mentioned EBCG regulation. Following the fact that they have to be involved in European protection of terrorism, Europol has founded the European Counter Terrorism Center (ECTC). Control over the center has the European Council, and the main purpose is that it has to become the main point for fighting's against terrorism. Other than support in investigations and the support if some terrorist attack does occur, ECTC has the approach to Europol bases that can be checked, if necessary, in the purpose of investigations. Before mentioned measures are tied to the exchange of information and can also apply to the base of Europol called EIS (Europol Information System). Information's are exchanged through European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) that is used so that states can share information's related with any event in any criminal activity, to share information's related to suspects but also of convicted persons. Or to keep it short, to any information that can keep the European Union a safer place. This kind of information is coming to Europol through member states. This information's later are published in EIS. Considering that that kind of information is very confidential, to not compromise them in any way, program SIENA (Secure Information Exchange Network Application) is used. When we are talking about the exchange of information, FADO i beneficial. FADO is shortened for False and Authentic Documents Online, this is the web page that is managed by GSC and that in their base has more than 3000 examples of false identities, travel documents, visas, stamps. One more useful component of anti-terrorist work that the EU does is Terrorism Finance Tracking Program (TFTP). With this program, EUROPOL has been trying to detect financing of terrorism. In 2015 the Council and the European Parliament adopted new rules to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing. In 2016 the European Commission released a proposal to amend those rules to strengthen the fight against terrorism financing.

## **Conclusions**

In the last war in Syria, even though international public was not able to agree who is on the "right side" of the conflict and who is not, everyone agreed about the fact that the Islamic state is satisfying all the criteria to be seen as "terrorist organization", Islamic state has, in just a couple of years, shown astonishing level of brutality in reaching their political goals and it succeeded to turn around all the international actors against

herself. Even those who were against each other in every other situation, in the fight and stopping Islamic state they were united. Islamic state was seen as an side player until the organization started to expand their activity beyond borders of Syria and Iraq and her members start doing terrorist attacks all around the world.

Every violation of peace and safety of citizens in purpose of achieving some political goal is a sort of terrorism and it has to be convicted from the simple reason that every state is obliged to protect it's citizens and to give them safety and in that way protect their human rights. In the conflict of Syria and Iraq, for the first time in this amount, foreign fighters were showing. Foreign fighters were not citizens of countries were Islamic state was ruling but were coming from other countries to be a part of this conflict.

Foreign fighters, historically looking, are not a new way of military acting. But, in this conflict, because of the pure number of them, they have brought a lot of unsafety and open questions to the states from which they came. When they first started to join conflict in Syria and Iraq, their states did not see this situation as alarming even if it was analysed a lot and talked about. Especially from newspaper side who saw this "foreign fighters" situation as very interesting from the beginning of strengthening Islamic state. But, the situation of not caring has changed when the first foreign fighters were coming back to their states. But, now with war experience, now with military knowledge, now with doing all kinds of violent things... All of this made Governments to do something. To react to this situation and to start caring and start seeing this situation as alarming to be able to find adequate solution.

Solution, as it will shown, was not a specific solution that brings instant results but it was shown that it consisted from trials and errors. Without necessary required knowledge, without goal, except for the desire to not allow for any terrorist attack to happen and without any knowledge about what will bring results. Because again, this situation, with returning foreign fighters is happening for the first time in this newer times in this amount.

European countries seem not to have any form of clear and consistent politics toward foreign fighters and this is shown to be truth. But, this kind of situation in which it seems that states are not managing this situation very well is not suppose to be wondering to much because this countries are seeing their citizens leave to fight in foreign conflict is something that they are seeing for the first time. And the situation where they are returning is even stranger.

Main problem that was seen in this research, and it was or is a part of the problem why there was so many foreign fighters in the first place is why did countries allow recruitment of citizens and why did they not care about radicalization in the amount they were supposed to for this not to happen. In accordance with this, there is a large number of theoretical experts in the area of terrorism, counter terrorism, radicalization and deradicalization, extremism and violent extremism who were successful in explaining what led to the situation for persons to become foreign fighters and what were mistakes that systems made that led to this many western world citizens to become foreign fighters. But, because of the very unique situation of them returning it should be clear that, even though this experts have enough knowledge to try to assume what can help, their knowledge in the most parts until this time, was mainly theoretical. This means that they were just assuming that some things might be successful. There are some countries that had programs for foreign terrorists in 2000s like Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. This are the countries that can give a good framework what is a good way of behaving towards foreign fighters. Even though the conditions might not be the same, we can see what could be successful and what not to use.

In the end, returning foreign fighters can be of special value to the countries in which they are returning to. Not only because of the fact that they will not do problems, but also because they can give valid information's that only the person who was a member of Islamic State can have and also, in the future, if successfully de-radicalized can have a role of mentor to others. In this paper we have proven that jails can be hot beds for stronger radicalization and that they have to be places of which we have to pay special attention on. We can estimate that problem of foreign fighters was and is a large problem that we have to pay special attention on. But, this is something that has to be dealt with over longer period of time and with valid strategies.

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