

Leiden University – Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs

Institute of Security and Global Affairs / Institute of Public
Administration



Universiteit
Leiden

The Politics of Counter-Terrorism: Convergence of Disengagement Programs in European Union Member States

The cases of France, Germany and the United Kingdom

By

Emilie Schiltz, s1888684

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the Master of Science in Crisis and Security Management*

Supervisor: Dr. G.M. van Buuren

Second Reader: Prof. Dr. E. Bakker

Word count: 23.877

June 2017

“What could governments and other actors do to make this disengagement from terrorism happen – soon rather than later, before they have caused so much violence and suffering?”

(Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 1)

Abstract

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in 2011, an increasing number of individuals who originate from different European Union Member States, have travelled to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq to take up arms with diverse Islamist rebel forces and terrorist groups. It is estimated that nearly a third of those ‘foreign fighters’ have returned to their home countries and many more could follow due to the Islamic State’s current military throwbacks. Hence, the European Union Member States have the responsibility to establish counter-terrorism policies that are in the position to reduce the threat posed by those returnees and at the same time decrease the likelihood of future terrorist attacks on European soil.

This thesis aims to analyse whether European Union Member States show convergence regarding their counter-terrorism policies when addressing the return of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2016 and how we can explain this. More specifically, this research will be conducted by investigating national disengagement programs in terms of ‘hardness’ or ‘softness’. This investigation has the objective to identify possible differences and similarities, which in turn can account for the presence or absence of convergence. Thus, the methodological strategy is a comparative analysis of three case studies: France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The findings of this comparative analysis demonstrate whether France, Germany and the United Kingdom pursue a coherent approach towards their national disengagement programs when dealing with returning foreign fighters. Finally, the outcome of this analysis will be explained by considering the theory of policy transfer, as well as by taking into account the variables of terrorist threat, type of resources, history with terrorism and number of foreign fighters.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
List of Abbreviations	iii
List of Tables	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Research problem and research question.....	1
1.2. Structure of the research	3
2. Theoretical Framework.....	4
2.1. The theory of policy transfer.....	4
2.2. EU efforts to harmonize counter-terrorism policies	6
2.3. Arguments against convergence	7
2.4. Counter-terrorism in the European Union	9
2.5. Concepts.....	13
2.5.1. Disengagement programs.....	13
2.5.1.1. Hard vs. soft approach	15
3. Methodology	17
3.1. Research method: the small comparative case study.....	18
3.1.1. Selection of disengagement programs as a yardstick	19
3.1.2. Case selection.....	20
3.1.2.1. Diverse case selection strategy	20
3.1.3. Operationalization.....	27
3.1.4. The data collection process.....	29
3.1.5. The data analysis.....	31
3.1.6. Limitations	33
4. Patterns of disengagement programs in EU Member States.....	34
4.1. France.....	34
4.2. Germany.....	40
4.3. United Kingdom.....	45
5. Comparative analysis of disengagement programs in EU Member States	51
5.1. Comparison of disengagement programs.....	51
5.2. Convergence? How can we explain the outcome?	57
6. Conclusion	60
Bibliography	62

List of Abbreviations

BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
CNAPR	Centre national d'assistance et de prévention de la radicalisation
CONTEST	Counter-Terrorism Strategy
CTSA	Counter-Terrorism and Security ACT
DWA	Deportation with Assurances
ECTC	European Counter Terrorism Centre
EU	European Union
FIJAIT	Fichier judiciaire national automatisé des auteurs d'infractions terroristes
GCHQ	Government Communications Head Quarters
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KZS	Zentrale Koordinierungsstelle
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
PART	Action Plan against Radicalization and Terrorism
RAF	Rote Armee Fraktion
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
TEO	Temporary exclusion order
TE-SAT	Terrorism Situation and Trend Report
UK	United Kingdom
VPN	Violence Prevention Network

List of Tables

Table 1. Data on the amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims	22
Table 2. Variable ‘terrorist threat’, relevant indicator and how to investigate this indicator .	23
Table 3. Findings of type of resources, history with terrorism & number of foreign fighters	26
Table 4. Indicators: Disengagement programs – hard approach	27
Table 5. Indicators: Disengagement programs – soft approach	28
Table 6. Findings of patterns of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the UK.	51

1. Introduction

1.1. Research problem and research question

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in 2011, a vast number of European citizens have left their home countries to fight alongside the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In a research paper published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague in April 2016, the EU-wide number of ‘foreign fighters’ may be as high as 4294 (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 3). Hence, it is estimated that nearly a third of these foreign fighters have returned to their European home countries and more may follow due to the Islamic State’s current military throwbacks (RAN 2016: 1). The real threat posed by returning foreign fighters is unknown and potentially exaggerated. However, the European Union (EU) Member States have the task to establish counter-terrorism policies that aim to jointly fight terrorism and to provide the best protection to its citizens (European Council 2016). Although the main responsibility lies with its Member States, the EU considers itself to play an important role in supporting them by trying to enhance coherence regarding counter-terrorism strategies and approaches that help to respond to the cross-border nature of terrorism (European Council 2016).

The central research interest and objective of this thesis consists of finding out whether convergence of counter-terrorism policies is present or absent in EU Member States. The research question for this study is thus: “To what extent have the EU Member States France, Germany and the United Kingdom shown convergence with regard to the implementation of disengagement programs while addressing returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2016 and how can we explain this?” The choice for these specific Member States and the focus on disengagement programs is justified later in the methodological chapter of this thesis.

This research is based on the assumption that national counter-terrorism policies converge. According to the theory of policy transfer, convergence of counter-terrorism policies is present in EU Member States, as states face similar problems that can be solved in identical ways (Bennett 1991: 217). In addition, the European Union’s effort to guide and harmonize those policies on a national level, gives rise to the expectation that Member States’ strategies in the field of counter-terrorism have gradually developed towards convergence. The purpose is to identify if this theoretical and empirical assumption is valid, as a Member State’s national counter-terrorism culture can have an impact on the design and rationale of national policies, which in return could hinder a coherent approach. For instance, a state’s experiences regarding

the amount of direct terrorist attacks shapes the threat perception of this given security community regarding another state (Meyer 2005: 527). Thus, a terrorist threat is usually assessed within a national perspective, which requires a national response, leading to the expectation that policy convergence is minimal or absent among EU Member States. In order to conduct the analysis whether policy convergence in the field of counter-terrorism is present or absent in EU Member States, this thesis looks into one specific domain of counter-terrorism policies: disengagement programs. The reason for this choice can be first related to matters of feasibility, meaning that it is impossible to investigate each European counter-terrorism policy in a master thesis, which in return influenced my decision to select the specific domain of disengagement programs in order to measure convergence. Furthermore, disengagement programs have been selected because they are relatively new initiatives, which still comprise many flaws when addressing returning foreign fighters. For this reason, it could be assumed that Member States rely on and follow the EU's guidance in matters of counter-terrorism, which in turn gives rise to the expectation that Member States pursue a coherent approach towards disengagement programs. Consequently, the examination of disengagement programs is especially important to identify differences and similarities regarding their design and rationale, which is established through the assessment whether they pursue a 'hard' or 'soft' approach. In other words, disengagement programs are used as an instrument to measure whether Member States favour a 'hard' or 'soft' approach towards their policies, which explains the presence or absence of convergence. Subsequently, the results of this research are justified by reference to either the theory of policy transfer and the EU's effort to guide and harmonize counter-terrorism policies, or by the perceived terrorist threat of each Member States. In the methodological chapter, the selection of disengagement programs as a yardstick is further elaborated.

The analysis of disengagement programs is not used to address the question whether 'hard' or 'soft' approaches are more effective. Although this is a very relevant question, this research is not possible at this stage, as these programs are relatively new initiatives, remaining under-researched regarding their evaluation and effectiveness (RAN 2016: 4). Due to the absence of evaluation research and data on the subject of disengagement programs and their effectiveness, the gap I want to address through a comparative analysis is to examine if convergence of counter-terrorism policies is present or not in EU Member States and how this outcome can be explained. The findings of this research could be used as a starting point to eventually measure the effectiveness of disengagement programs. For example, it would be interesting to investigate whether there is a linkage between the rationale (hard vs. soft) of those programs and the amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks. This investigation could contribute to the outcome,

whether a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ design of disengagement programs is more effective when it comes to the prevention of Jihadist terrorist attacks, however this research is beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.2. Structure of the research

The structure of this thesis is divided into 6 chapters. In chapter 1, the introduction is outlined, comprising the research problem and research question and giving an overview of the structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 portrays the theoretical framework in which the theory of policy transfer is emphasized with reference to EU efforts to harmonize counter-terrorism policies. Furthermore, a relevant section in this chapter refers to arguments against convergence, includes a review of the EU counter-terrorism architecture and finally addresses the concept of disengagement programs with the focus on the variables of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’. The methodology is presented in chapter 3, which explains the research method, selection of disengagement programs as a yardstick, case selection, operationalization, the data collection process and data analysis and finally the limitations of this research. The aim of Chapter 4 consists of analysing patterns of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Chapter 5 is divided into two important sections: the first part conducts a comparative analysis of the disengagement programs outlined in the previous chapter, while the second part discusses whether the design of those programs is converging and how this outcome can be explained. In chapter 6, the conclusion and the main findings of this research are emphasized.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical chapter is essential, in order to facilitate the analysis of whether EU Member States show convergence or not regarding their counter-terrorism policies, by using the framework of the theory of policy transfer and the concepts of terrorist threat and the amount of terrorist attacks. The theory of policy transfer is in the position to study and explain why and under what conditions European counter-terrorism policies are being transferred from one country to another, based on the assumption that policy transfer leads to policy convergence (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 193). However, national security, such as counter-terrorism policies, remain a central concept of a Member State's national identity and security, reducing the EU's power to enforce policies in that specific domain. This gives rise to the assumption that convergence is absent when it comes to counter-terrorism policies within Member States (Hix and Høyland 2011: 325). For this reason, concepts of national terrorist threat and amount of terrorist attacks are integrated, which enable the understanding why Member States develop national, strategic counter-terrorism policies and how these actions can be justified.

2.1. The theory of policy transfer

The theory of policy transfer does not refer to a new phenomenon, since the transfer of administrative reforms and innovations from one national context to another has always been part of the field of public administration (Martínez n.d.). According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000: 5), policy transfer in political science is defined as “a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting” (Bennett 1991: 217). In this context, policy transfer is about a process of policy convergence, based on the idea that in comparative politics, states face similar problems that can be solved in identical ways (ibid.). Initially, convergence is defined as “the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performances” (Bennett 1991: 215). Furthermore, the term convergence “implies a pattern of development over time” and therefore refers to a process rather than a static phenomenon (Bennett 1991: 219). Policy convergence means the convergence of policy goals, policy content, policy instruments, policy outcomes or policy style, which results in a policy transfer (Bennett 1991: 218). Bennett identifies four processes that lead to policy convergence: emulation, elite networking, harmonization and penetration (Bennett 1991: 220).

Emulation refers to “a collective insecurity under conditions of policy innovation” (Bennett 1991: 229). According to Bennett, states have borrowed and adapted structures and policies from other states, which is a natural tendency to see how others have responded to similar threats (Bennett 1991: 220). In case of emerging threats and policy problems, emulation can have “a salutary effect in an insecure and tentative policy-making climate” and lead to “successive adoptions of a policy innovation” (ibid.). In other words, a main feature of emulation is the use of programs from overseas, which in turn contributes to policy convergence (Bennett 1991: 221). Convergence through elite networking is understood as a transnational group of actors that share “motivation, expertise and information about a common problem” (Bennett 1991: 224). In this context, convergence is achieved by the existence of shared ideas among a coherent network of elites, which interact with similar communities to solve common policy problems at the transnational level (ibid.). Within this process, the network of elites focuses on studying and learning about the problem itself, rather than borrowing and adapting innovations from other societies. Thus, convergence is obtained through “an interaction and consensus amongst an elite that operates above the fray of domestic politics”, while similar responses arise from similar societies due to a shared understanding of a policy problem (Bennett 1991: 225). Harmonization is defined as a process in which convergence results from “a recognition of interdependence”, meaning that the implementation of a successful policy is dependent on others (ibid.). More specifically, harmonization contributes to policy convergence when intergovernmental and supranational institutions facilitate the guidance of a similar response to a similar threat. However, the progress of policy convergence can be “incremental, irregular and uneven” and is dependent on the mutual recognition and willingness of various states, otherwise a continued divergence of policies is assumed (Bennett 1991: 227). A penetrative process means that states “are forced to conform to actions taken elsewhere by external actors” (ibid.). In this context, penetration can be described as an expression of power, including external actors that participate in the domestic policy process, with the result that states may establish similar responses to similar problems (Bennett 1991: 229). With regard to the necessary conditions of these four processes, both emulation and elite networking are dependent on the sharing of information. While convergence is achieved by “the diffusion of knowledge about problems and solutions”, harmonization requires national regimes and penetration the recognition of externalities (Bennett 1991: 229).

To sum up, the model of Bennett is based on the hypothesis that policy transfer results in policy convergence. However other scholars argue that this is not the case as “the adaption of general models to local conditions can produce a very large variety of results” (Martínez n.d.). Thus,

policy transfer can bring both policy success and failure, which bases on the assumption that policy success in one state must not automatically lead to successful outcomes in another state (Martínez n.d.). In this context, three factors can result in a failure during a policy transfer: an uninformed, incomplete or inappropriate transfer (ibid.).

2.2. EU efforts to harmonize counter-terrorism policies

In the EU, a number of “facilitating conditions” exist, which contribute to the expectation of an increase of counterterrorism policy convergence among the EU and its Member States (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 191). First, homogeneity of organizational forms and practices arise with the establishment of an “institutional field”, which comes into existence when four conditions are met: interaction among actors, development of defined interorganizational structures, “increase in the information load, and mutual awareness among participants that they are involved in a common enterprise” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, in Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 191). These conditions took place in the EU in the post 9/11 era and highlighted the need to focus on improved cooperation and coordination among EU Member States. As a result, new institutional forms for interorganizational cooperation have been established, such as an EU counterterrorism coordinator and Eurojust (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 192). In overall, there was a shared understanding that cooperation and coordination was essential in order to deal with international terrorism in the EU (ibid.). Moreover, convergence is linked to the degree of resource dependency, uncertainty and professionalization, meaning that European counter-terrorism is linked to uncertainty, as it is difficult to predict future terrorist attacks and to evaluate if existing efforts are in the position to prevent terrorism (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 192). With regard to terrorism, all EU Member States have agreed on the necessity of close cooperation, a domain that is based on significant interorganizational dependency (ibid.). Furthermore, external forces play an important role for facilitating policy convergence, and there are various ways to achieve this outcome. In this research, the softer forms of harmonization are crucial, as “the EU remains an intergovernmental organization with limited possibilities to influence implementation power at the member state level” (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 192). In other words, EU states are allowed to make their own interpretation, because most tools have adopted the form of soft law (Falkner et al. 2005, in Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 193). While the EU supports the Member States in the matter of dealing with terrorism, the institution also has the capacity to put pressure on them to adopt certain policies (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 193). Thus, it can be argued that the theory of policy transfer “identifies a number of facilitating conditions”, which increase the probability that national policies become more similar. Hence, there is an expectation that EU Member States’ national

policies in the area of counter-terrorism have developed towards convergence (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 193).

According to the Standard Eurobarometer 85 (European Commission 2016: 6), terrorism is among the two leading concerns in every Member State, except for Greece. With regard to the threat perception of terrorism, the Eurobarometer summarizes the following results: France (39%), Germany (40%) and the United Kingdom (38%) (European Commission 2016 :7). While having a look on the percentages, one can assume that these similar numbers regarding the threat posed by terrorism, lead to the condition that these three countries show convergence when it comes to counter-terrorism policies.

2.3. Arguments against convergence

On the other hand, some scholars have the opinion that states respond differently to the same external stimuli (Van de Linde et al. 2002, in Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 194). In this context, policy convergence is absent as a state's specific action is the product of its own political, cultural and societal environment, which leads to the view that they cannot be simply transferred to another setting. Consequently, a state's national counter-terrorism culture can influence the design and rationale of national counter-terrorism policies, leading to the absence of a coherent approach between different EU Member States.

In this context, an occurring threat is usually perceived as a national or global one. When a terrorist threat is perceived as a national one, the affected country assesses the threat within its national perspective, with its national structures and within its national boundaries, which requires a specific national response (Monar 2007: 302). For example, the assessment of a terrorist threat within a country's national context does not "contain any reference to a European dimension of the terrorist threat", as it is essentially presented as a threat to that specific country, its institutions and territory (Monar 2007: 302). In order to respond to a terrorist threat, policy-makers do not start with a blank sheet, but "draw on pre-existing and usually stable schemata, beliefs and ideas about the external world and deeply ingrained norms about appropriate behaviour" (Checkel 2000; Olsen 2000, in Meyer 2005: 527). In this case, a state's counter-terrorism culture can experience changes when the threat perceptions influence the national consciousness over a long-lasting period of time. Thus, strategic thinking is transformed in order to appropriately react to these new fears (Meyer 2005: 533).

For this reason, the response strategy is a purely national one, while the EU only has a restricted role, such as giving support and recommendations to its Member States. While the EU's power remains limited, there is only the hope "that the individual security interests of the member states will gradually converge" (Hix and Høyland 2011: 326). From a realist point of view, this condition is unlikely, because security interests do not change in a short period of time, as states continue to see matters of security through their national lens. Furthermore, based on a constructivist approach, two identities can be observed: "a 'thin' EU identity comprising largely of procedural and substantive norms engendered via the increasing juridical, socio-political mandate of the EU unit, and a 'thick' nation-state identity that has from the beginning been exported to the EU level in the form of national characteristics, negotiating styles and policy preferences" (Hadfield 2005: 62). Hence, the identity of Member States, formed by their cultural experiences, also "actively inform interests, assist the formation of policy, and thereby articulate various facets of the state unit itself" (Hadfield 2005: 63). Following this, there is clearly "a divide between the definition of the common threat that the EU has arrived at and the threat perceptions behind it, which remain largely national in character and vary considerably" (Monar 2007: 302). For instance, a state's amount of direct terrorist attacks shapes the threat perception of this given security community regarding another state (Meyer 2005: 527). A successful terrorist attack is likely to prompt policy-makers to review policies and possibly change them (Lavoix 2016). Consequently, a state that experienced a successful terrorist attack is being pressured to implement new policies that are capable to prevent another attack in the future. In this context, the formulation of new policies can be attributed to changes in public opinion initiated by a terrorist attack. For instance, public opinion can have a strong influence on the political process, as it is difficult for governments to resist its pressure in the wake of a terrorist attack (Waxman 2011). Generally, for policy-makers, "the political costs of under-reacting to a terrorist attack are always higher than the political costs of overreacting" (Waxman 2011). These insights give rise to the assumption, that each successful terrorist attack leads to the condition that new policies are established by the affected country, which in turn hinders policy convergence. In overall, a Member State's national context is important for the design and rationale of counter-terrorism policies.

According to the theory of policy convergence and the EU efforts to harmonize counter-terrorism policies, this research assumes that convergence of disengagement programs is present in EU Member States. On the other hand, there are opinions arguing that states respond differently to the same threat. In this context, one of the strongest arguments refers to the level of terrorist threat, shaped by the amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims. This, in turn

pressures policy-makers to revise or establish new national policies. As a direct terrorist attack also contributes to changes in public opinions and their evolving preference of harsh measures towards terrorism, national governments are forced to react in a tough way, as a failure in the prevention of a future attack “due to inaction can be fatal to a politician’s career” (Waxman 2011). Consequently, it is hypothesized that if convergence of disengagement programs is present in EU Member States, despite their differences in the level of terrorist threat, the proposition regarding the theory of policy transfer is proven to be validated.

2.4. Counter-terrorism in the European Union

In this paragraph, the European counter-terrorism policy architecture is addressed. The background knowledge of the EU policies in the field of terrorism, especially with a focus on Islamist terrorism and the foreign fighters phenomenon, which currently poses a significant security threat to Europe and beyond, is emphasized. This is to find out to what extent the propositions of the theory of policy transfer is taking place in the EU. Subsequently, the insight into the EU counter-terrorism architecture shows if the EU emphasizes the need for a coherent approach towards counter-terrorism and whether it is successful in guiding and harmonizing national policies, which is a proof for policy convergence.

Terrorism is not a new occurrence in Europe, however, it is an “extremely complex set of phenomena, covering a great diversity of groups with different origins and causes” (Bjørge 2005: 1). The concept and perception of terrorism is constantly changing, which causes a lack of consensus regarding what exactly is understood by this phenomenon (Schmid 2005: 224). In this context, it is important to consider how the EU interprets the concept of terrorism to achieve a clear understanding of its counter-terrorism architecture. In the fight against terrorism, the primary responsibility lies with the EU Member States, while the EU should provide a supportive role that improves responses regarding the cross-border nature of this threat (European Council 2016). The EU supporting role consists of formulating, implementing and monitoring counter-terrorism policies, which focus on both internal and external actions (ibid.).

The EU counter-terrorism policy has been driven and influenced by four major shock waves related to Islamic terrorism, which include: “9/11; the Madrid and London bombings; the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the terrorist attacks in France of 2015 and 2016; and the attacks in Brussels and Berlin in 2016” (Wensink et al. 2017: 30). To start with, cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism was “informal and not officially part of the institutional structure” of the EU Community prior to 11 September 2001 (Wensink et al. 2017:

43). In response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the United States, the Belgian Presidency introduced ‘Conclusions and [a] plan of Action’ in which the most developed theme referred to ‘The European policy to combat terrorism’, a first attempt of a European approach to encounter terrorism (Wensink et al. 2017: 45). However, this new approach mainly implemented already existing policies.

The Madrid bombings on 11 March 2004 have led to a ‘Declaration on combating terrorism’, initiated by the European Council, with the aim to implement both existing and new counter-terrorism policies. While this declaration was not persistent, the ‘European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy’ was implemented under the United Kingdom Presidency after the London bombings on 7 July 2005 (Wensink et al. 2017: 45). Within this strategy, the EU emphasizes the importance of ‘countering’ terrorism instead of only ‘combating’ the threat posed by it and focuses on four main pillars: prevent, protect, pursue and respond. In this context, ‘prevent’ refers to the task to combat radicalization and recruitment to terrorism, including a series of guidelines and measures that should be applied by EU Member States. ‘Protect’ involves the protection of citizens and infrastructure, as well as reducing vulnerabilities in order to avoid an attack, while ‘pursue’ as a third priority focuses on hindering “terrorists’ capacity to plan and organise” attacks and on bringing them to justice. The respond pillar of the EU counter-terrorism strategy aims to manage and to minimise the consequences in case of a direct terrorist attacks (European Council 2016). Thus, the EU counter-terrorism strategy “aims to combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights, and to make Europe safer, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice (ibid.). In addition, the Counter-Terrorism Strategy includes a range of sub-strategies, in which the most important one is the ‘Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism’” (Wensink et al. 2017: 46). This strategy mainly focuses on “preventing people from becoming radicalised, being radicalised and being recruited to terrorism and to prevent a new generation of terrorists from emerging” (Wensink et al. 2017: 46).

In 2011, the European Commission established the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), which is an umbrella network connecting experts and practitioners from various EU Member States, involved in preventing radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism (European Commission 2014: 3). Hence, the RAN implemented the “Declaration of Good Practices for Engagement with Foreign Fighters for Prevention, Outreach, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration” (RAN 2013: 1). The establishment of RAN and its new declaration show that the EU emphasizes the need for a ‘balanced approach’, while stressing the importance of preventive

programs, such as outreach, rehabilitation and reintegration when addressing foreign fighters. In this case, the EU conveys the necessity that a preventive strategy is the preferred counter-terrorism approach. Until 2013, the EU counter-terrorism agenda remained unchanged. However, the rise of ISIS and the terrorist attacks in France in 2015 urged the EU to revise its counter-terrorism policies due to the clear threat posed by a significant number of radicalised people returning from conflict areas to Europe (European Council 2011: 2). In response, the ‘European Agenda on Security’ was launched in 2015 with the objective to “bring added value to support the Member States in ensuring security” and to prevent radicalization (Wensink et al. 2017: 48). The European Agenda on Security highlights three priorities for European Security: a strong EU response to terrorism and foreign fighters, organised cross-border crime and cybercrime (European Commission 2015: 12). In this context, the phenomenon of returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq became a priority issue in the EU and its Member States. After the attacks in Brussels in March 2016, the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, introduced the idea of a “Security Union”, aiming to improve the coordination within the “EU’s internal security domain particularly vis-à-vis transnational threat such as terrorism” (Wensink et al. 2017: 34). In addition to that, Europol opened the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) in The Hague in January 2016 (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 20). The new developments within the European counter-terrorism architecture demonstrate indeed that the EU strives to support and guide its Member States, with the aim to achieve a common approach towards counter-terrorism. However, even if the EU and its Member States face a similar threat posed by returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq, the EU counter-terrorism policy remains a complex area. According to Article 67(1) of the Treaty on “the Functioning of the European Union”, the Union must respect the “different legal systems and traditions of the Member States” (Official Journal of the European Union 2012: 73). Thus, the EU should not “affect the exercise of the responsibilities incumbent upon Member States with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security” (Official Journal of the European Union 2012: 74). These statements convey the idea that the EU does not succeed in harmonizing national policies in the area of counter-terrorism. This assumption is reinforced by Article 73 of the Treaty, which highlights that EU Member States “organise between themselves and under their responsibility such forms of cooperation and coordination as they deem appropriate between the competent departments of their administrations responsible for safeguarding national security” (Official Journal of the European Union 2012: 74). In other words, convergence of counter-terrorism policies is dependent on the willingness of EU Member States and their interpretation of the concept “internal security” (Wensink et al. 2017: 50).

The EU counter-terrorism architecture covers a range of different areas. In the context of this study, the prevent pillar of the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the most important, which focuses on preventing and countering radicalisation. Within the prevent pillar, several strategies have been developed, while one of them is the support of disengagement initiatives, a “process through which a radicalised individual can come to renounce violence, leave a group or movement, or even reject a worldview supporting or promoting an extremist ideology to terrorism” (Council of the European Union 2014: 11). However, in terms of warrant, the prevention of radicalisation is the task of EU Member States and falls under their sovereign authority (Wensink et al. 2017: 63). Hence, the EU strategies and programs in this field merely provide inspiration and encourage Member States to establish counter-terrorism policies adapted to their national level (ibid.). According to the ‘Revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism’, Member States should adjust the design of their disengagement programs to their national context and culture (Council of the European Union 2014: 11). The adaptation of disengagement programs to a state’s national context and culture is justified, as a Member State’s success “in preventing radicalisation and reducing its inhabitants’ vulnerability to terrorist recruitment” does not automatically contribute to prevent the threat posed by terrorists in another Member State, “in which social defences are weaker or less-developed” (Wensink et al. 2017: 72). RAN also emphasizes that disengagement programs must be tailor-made to national and local conditions, cultures and legal traditions of a Member State (RAN 2013: 1). To conclude, it can be argued that the EU favours a ‘balanced approach’ towards counter-terrorism, with the focus on preventive programs, such as disengagement programs when addressing foreign fighters. EU Member States are establishing such disengagement programs to deal with foreign fighters, which gives rise to the assumption that the EU is successful in conveying the importance of a preventive approach. However, it remains unclear whether the EU efforts to harmonize national disengagement programs are taking place. According to RAN, these programs must be tailor-made to the national context of a Member State, as a country’s success in preventing- and reducing radicalization does not automatically contribute to positive achievements in another country, due to differences in resources, history with terrorism or level of terrorist threat.

As stated in the introduction, the objective of this thesis consists of assessing the level of convergence of disengagement programs of EU Member States, while analysing them in terms of ‘hardness’ or ‘softness’. In the following section, the concept of disengagement programs is first outlined, before going over to the research design and research method in Chapter 3.

2.5. Concepts

2.5.1. Disengagement programs

The question why individuals move away from terrorism is not the subject of this research. Nevertheless it is important to introduce the concepts of disengagement and de-radicalization as one should have the background knowledge of what disengagement programs are about. Instead of studying these programs as such, the main objective of this thesis is the examination of disengagement programs to classify whether a Member State pursues a hard or soft approach, meaning that these programs are used as an instrument to measure convergence regarding counter-terrorism policies when addressing returning foreign fighters.

Although the phenomenon of ‘foreign fighters’ is not the major focus of this research, it is important to give a clear definition of the term, as the primary objective consists of analysing Member States convergence of disengagement programs when addressing returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq. Moreover, the conceptualization of foreign fighters is crucial when referring to the variable of terrorist threat, as this research only includes Islamic terrorist attacks induced by foreign fighters. In general, Hegghammer, defines foreign fighters as “individuals who join an insurgency abroad and whose primary motivation is ideological or religious rather than financial” (Geneva Academy 2014: 5). In this study, the focus is on Western foreign fighters, which are described as “violent extremists who leave their Western states of residence with the aspiration to train or take up arms against non-Muslims factions in jihadi conflict zones” (Geneva Academy 2014: 5). In the context of the EU, four general aspects are identified when it comes to the threat posed by foreign fighters:

“persons travelling from the EU to Syria/ Iraq to become FF; FF returning from Syria/ Iraq to the EU; the impact of the FF phenomenon and related terrorism on social cohesion within the EU; lone-wolf terrorists who may have been inspired by FF terrorism, as well as the threat posed by would-be FF who, having been prevented from reaching Syria/ Iraq, may carry out attacks within the EU instead” (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 13).

This research proceeds from Hegghammer’s definition and the EU’s four general aspects when referring to the phenomenon of ‘returning foreign fighters’.

While addressing the concepts of disengagement and de-radicalization, I mainly base my definition on Bjørge and Horgan's book *Leaving Terrorism Behind. Individual and collective disengagement* (2009), as they state clear and relevant problems of both terms in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism. In the field of practical counterterrorism, Bjørge and Horgan introduce the concept of "disengagement" from terrorism, which may take multiple forms and expressions (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 19). The concept of disengagement refers to critical cognitive and social changes, such as "leaving behind the shared social norms, values, attitudes, relationships and social networks so carefully forged while the individual was still a member of a terrorist network" (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 20). In this case, a terrorist is seen to have a complete 'split' from the movement. On the other hand, disengagement can be described as a more "discrete role-specific process", by which is meant that a terrorist remains involved in the movement, but disengages from his/her involvement in a specific role (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 20). From this perspective, a terrorist may disengage from its specific role, but has not necessarily left the movement completely. Thus, Bjørge and Horgan introduce two major factors that affect individual disengagement: "psychological" (disillusionment) or "physical" (role change) disengagement (ibid.). In the following part, the concepts of physical disengagement and de-radicalization are outlined, which are not mutually exclusive, but a distinction between both is important.

Psychological disengagement, focusing on religious and psychological interventions, can be labelled as de-radicalization (RAN 2016: 6). More specifically, de-radicalization is an essential tool to address individuals that engaged in terrorism because of ideological reasons. In this context, terms such as "rehabilitation", "de-programming", and "dialogue" are used to refer to de-radicalization programs and they are applied interchangeably with the concept of disengagement (Horgan 2009: 296). However, this tool should not be the only one regarding disengagement programs, as the concept of de-radicalization fails to address the crucial fact that the detachment from a terrorist group goes beyond its ideology (RAN 2016: 5). Furthermore, a primarily focus on de-radicalization also ignores historical examples of terrorists, who have been reintegrated into society without the necessity of being de-radicalized in the first place. For example, former terrorists have been released from prison and are no longer involved in terrorist activities today, which has been achieved without any de-radicalization programs, giving rise to the assumption that de-radicalization "is not prerequisite for reintegration" (RAN 2016: 6). Physical disengagement is defined as "the process whereby an individual experiences a change in role or function that is usually associated with a reduction of violent participation. It may not necessarily involve leaving the movement, but is most

frequently associated with significant temporary or permanent role of change” (RAN 2016: 5). More specifically, while de-radicalization aims to change one’s beliefs (psychological disengagement), the concept of disengagement focuses on behavioural change (RAN 2016: 5). Behavioural change, such as taking a different role or function in a movement, can be characterized as some form of physical disengagement. Examples of most dramatic forms of physical disengagement are arrest and imprisonment, since prison implies the exit from the movement as this environment offers psychological and physical space to disengage on an individual’s own terms (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 25). However, this is not always the case. Imprisonment can lead to the opportunity to continue the involvement and engagement in a movement.

There is no clear evidence that physical disengagement from terrorism leads automatically to de-radicalization, nor is there clear evidence that de-radicalization necessarily supports disengagement (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 28). There is a need of greater conceptual clarity between the two concepts (RAN 2016: 4). However, the EU’s Radicalisation Awareness Network suggests to make use of both disengagement and de-radicalization approaches, since this could contribute to the benefit that disengagement programs have a measure of flexibility and can improve the chances of their success. Guided by the RAN’s suggestion, this study includes the content of both disengagement and de-radicalization approaches which are categorized under the notion of disengagement programs.

2.5.1.1. Hard vs. soft approach

In the broad field of counter-terrorism, it is useful to consider the terms of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power, a direct and indirect approach targeting to encounter terrorism (Rineheart 2010: 38). The direct approach refers to “an enemy-centric doctrine”, which consists of primarily offensive, hard power tactics, such as military- and increasing policing and intelligence operations (ibid.). On the other hand, the indirect, soft approach focuses on “population-centric methods”, including measures such as capacity building, counter-radicalization and de-radicalization, with the objective to address the causes that lead to terrorism (ibid.). Within the hard approach, criticism arises regarding the ethical and legal use of force and the problematic with intelligence operations and the protection of civil rights in a democratic state, while the soft approach is still under debate as it is not proven if its measures are successful and effective in addressing the “ill-defined roots causes of terrorism” (ibid.).

In this research, the hard approach refers to ‘physical disengagement’, which does not necessarily mean that individuals leave terrorism behind, but instead they may migrate from one role to another (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 24). Thus, physical disengagement induces more hard measures, such as punishment, prison and surveillance (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 25). Further components of these hard measures are travel-related measures, such as the withdrawal of citizenship, the temporary withdrawal of the identity card or the refusal to issue passports, but also stopping non-national returnees from re-entering the country, as well as the expulsion or entry ban of individuals linked to terrorist activities (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 26&32). Hard disengagement programs are preventive but remain a security focused solution to address an acute security risk. The soft approach in turn can be considered as ‘psychological disengagement’, a shift in attitude or belief, which includes more soft measures, such as reintegration, community engagement and aftercare. Components of these soft measures are rehabilitation, family inclusion, residence, education and job. All in all, the soft approach focuses more on adaptive and innovative policies, with the main objective to reintegrate former terrorists back into society. In the methodological part, it is explained why disengagement programs are suitable to conduct this analysis and which indicators are selected to explain whether a country adopts either a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ approach.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, I will account for the choices of the research design and research method of this thesis. As clarified above, this research is based on different dimensions. On the one hand, the theory of policy transfer and the EU efforts to harmonize national policies convey the idea that convergence of counter-terrorism policies is taking place. On the other hand, there is the argument that convergence is not present due to EU Member States' differences regarding their level of terrorist threat. With the objective to examine whether the theory of policy convergence can be validated, this study will compare disengagement programs of Member States, while analysing them in terms of 'hardness' and 'softness' to find out whether convergence is taking place. As it is hypothesized, when convergence of disengagement programs is present in EU Member States, despite their differences in the level of terrorist threat, the theory of policy transfer is proven to be validated. In this context, the case study selection is important to make this comparison possible and valid. Therefore, the first dimension of this comparison addresses the choice of a small comparative case study, which explains the choice of relevant variables and accounts for the selection of cases. Following this, the second dimension considers the 'hardness' and 'softness' of disengagement programs, both approaches are outlined in the operationalization while unique indicators are determined to conduct a qualitative assessment and measure convergence of those programs. Finally, the data collection process and analysis, as well as the limitations of this approach are illustrated.

The objective of this research is to examine whether convergence of counter-terrorism policies is present or absent in EU Member States. Thus, an essential part of this research is the comparison of cases, which makes the case selection strategy crucial. For this reason, the cases are selected through a small comparative case study technique, based on two conditions: the selection of cases that are similar on the most relevant aspects, but differ on one specific variable. The benefit of the integration of a small comparative case study analysis consists of its strengths to assess two or more similar cases to identify their differences and similarities on one specific aspect. The outcome of this assessment is a precondition to establish a framework for interpreting the findings. Moreover, to overcome possible flaws, it is important to select cases that show variance on one specific variable. This diverse case selection strategy will be outlined more in detail in section 3.1.2.1. On the other hand, the specific cases are selected because they are similar on the most relevant aspects, which are in this context: type of resources, history with terrorism and the number of foreign fighters. With reference to these chosen variables, the final selection results in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. In

terms of resources, the three countries are comparable as they belong to big size countries, relying on a multitude of resources. Moreover, they are similar based on their historical experiences with terrorism: Islamic-terrorism in France in the nineties, such as the Algerian Armed Group and other Algerian-based Islamic terrorist organizations, Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) in Germany and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the United Kingdom. A last comparable variable is the absolute number of foreign fighters, meaning that a striking majority of foreign fighters comes from France, Germany and the United Kingdom (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 49).

Due to the inclusion of different and comparable variables, the small case study method is applicable as it provides the examination of each case in its specific setting and the comparison between the selected cases (Hantrais 2009: 134). With the aim to identify differences and similarities of France, Germany and the United Kingdom when it comes to their counter-terrorism policies, the chosen instrument to measure the degree of convergence is the specific domain of disengagement programs. In other words, disengagement programs are applied as a yardstick to measure convergence. The examination of these programs provides the findings whether a state favours a 'hard' or 'soft' approach when addressing returning foreign fighters, which in turn is used as evidence for the presence or absence of convergence. The selection of disengagement programs as a yardstick is further elaborated in section 3.1.1.

3.1. Research method: the small comparative case study

The methodology of this research will be a qualitative approach, while the chosen method is a small comparative case study analysis. A comparison analysis is a fundamental tool, as it plays a major role in "concept-formation by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases" and is useful in testing hypotheses (Collier 1993: 105). A major aim of a comparative analysis is the assessment of rival explanations, such as the examination of two or more cases to identify their similarities and differences, and thus, "establishing a framework for interpreting how parallel processes of change are played out in different ways within each context" (Collier 1993: 108).

The benefit of a small comparative case study analysis consists of providing "a detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events" (George and Bennett 2004: 5). In this context, the broad historical episode constitutes the European counter-terrorism policies, while the analysis of Member States convergence is an aspect of this historical episode. According to George and

Bennett, a case is defined as “an instance of a class of events”, while the concept “class of events” refers to a phenomenon of scientific interests, in this case the national implementation or convergence of European counter-terrorism policies (George and Bennett 2004: 17-18). Several cases from the class of events are selected, which enable to identify whether convergence is present or absent in EU Member States. Following this, the chosen cases of the class of events are a Member State’s disengagement programs, while variables such as the amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims of those attacks, type of resources, historical experience with terrorism and the number of foreign fighters are considered, which explain certain strategic decisions (Hantrais 2009: 3). Consequently, the benefit of a small comparative case study analysis is the study of each case in its specific setting (Hantrais 2009: 134), which in turn facilitates the analysis of convergence regarding disengagement programs in France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

3.1.1. Selection of disengagement programs as a yardstick

Generally, to assess policy convergence, it is necessary to analyse the extent to which counter-terrorism policies of EU Member States have become more similar over time (Knill 2005: 768). In this research, the empirical focus is the underlying criteria to assess policy convergence, as the content and characteristics of a specific counter-terrorism policy are examined, namely disengagement programs (Knill 2005: 769).

The choice to focus on preventive measures rather than on security and/ or legislative measures can be justified by the emerging evidence that traditional security and law enforcement policies are insufficient when dealing with the evolving trends in radicalisation and the phenomenon of returning foreign fighters (European Commission 2014: 3). In order to prevent and encounter the radicalisation, Member States have to establish long-term approaches, such as the establishment of disengagement programs to support people to disengage from terrorism (ibid.: 7). In the context of this study, disengagement programs are used as a yardstick to measure policy convergence of counter-terrorism policies in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. While looking into these programs, conclusions can be made whether a state favours a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ approach when dealing with returning foreign fighters, which is used as evidence for the presence or absence of a coherent approach towards disengagement programs. In the operationalization section, clear indicators are highlighted, which give a guideline for measuring the degree of convergence.

3.1.2. Case selection

The population in this research is limited to the EU Member States, as the threat posed by returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq occurs within “a state’s borders and is therefore not an issue of policy-making for the EU” (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 11). Thus, the state has the primary responsibility and remains the most significant actor when developing policies to encounter the threat posed by foreign fighters. Nevertheless, the EU as a whole is included to prove that it still has the objective to guide and harmonize national counter-terrorism policies, contributing to policy convergence. Hence, highlighting its role provides a background knowledge on counter-terrorism policies, based on the assumption that there is a policy transfer from the EU to its Member States, as the perception of a common threat and “the establishment of institutions to deal with it will increase the likelihood for national policies to become more similar over time” (Nohrstedt and Hansén 2010: 190). For instance, the official webpage of the European Council regarding the ‘EU fight against terrorism’ emphasizes the importance of policy convergence and states that a series of guidelines of the revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism should “be implemented by the EU and Member States” to achieve a common response to a similar threat (European Council 2016).

According to these insights, it is expected that national counter-terrorism policies converge. As the primarily responsibility for combating terrorism and establishing counter-terrorism policies rests with the Member States, this thesis chooses France, Germany and the United Kingdom with the aim to identify to what extent these countries show convergence when it comes to disengagement programs. In the following section, the case selection is justified by considering the strategy of a diverse case selection.

3.1.2.1. Diverse case selection strategy

With the aim to conduct a comparative analysis, the cases are chosen through a diverse case selection strategy. The main objective of this strategy consists of achieving a maximum of variance among relevant cases (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 300). In the context, the research is understood as confirmatory (hypothesis testing), as it is focused on a particular relationship between three cases, with the identification of one individual variable that makes diversity readily apparent (*ibid.*). The benefit of this strategy is that variance “is likely to enhance the representativeness of the sample of cases” (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 301). Certainly, this research could also only analyse counter-terrorism policies, conduct a comparison and come to a conclusion. However, there is a flaw in this approach. For instance, there is the possibility that EU Member States have similar counter-terrorism policies, but not as a result of policy

convergence, but rather because they face similar national terrorist threats. With the purpose to achieve a valid answer to the research question of this thesis, cases are deliberately chosen because of their variance regarding terrorist threats. This research is based on the assumption that although France, Germany and the United Kingdom show variance regarding their amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks and number of victims, their disengagement programs converge, as the European Union strives to guide and harmonize national counter-terrorism policies. In this case, the relevant variable for this research that shows variance among the three selected Member States is the terrorist threat with the amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims. There are of course other variables that could be useful to illustrate variance among cases, such as national strategic culture or political signature of governments. However, this research takes more time and does not fit in the time period of this thesis.

In this context, data of the German ‘Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz’ (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) (2017) is used to establish a structured overview of the amount of Islamic terrorist attacks in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The preference of this database instead of the database from ‘Europol’s European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report’ or the ‘Global Terrorism Database’ can be explained by two reasons. First, the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution gives a structured overview on Islamic terrorist attacks, which is helpful as this study only focuses on terrorist attacks with an Islamic background, conducted by returning foreign fighters or lone-wolfs. Secondly, the timeline given by this database is compliant with the timeline of this research, namely the timeframe between 2011-2016. The research period of this study focuses on a timeframe between 2011-2016, as the civil war in Syria emerged in 2011, which resulted in the rise of ISIS that attracted a large number of foreign fighters from Europe and all over the world. Following this, it is only reasonable to start looking into counter-terrorism policies after 2011, as it is by that time, that Member States have been put under pressure to develop measures to encounter the threat posed by returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq. The choice to restrict the research period to 2016 can be related to a matter of feasibility, which assures that the availability of the required sources is given.

The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (2017) outlines the following amount of Islamic terrorist attacks and number of victims between 2011-2016:

Table 1. Data on the amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims

Year/ Country	France	Germany	United Kingdom
2016	4	5	0
2015	5	0	1
2014	0	0	0
2013	1	0	1
2012	3	0	0
2011	0	1	0
Total amount of attacks:	13	6	2
Total number of victims: (fatalities & casualties)	1.378	103	2

(Source: Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2017)

Considering the amount of terrorist attacks and the number of fatalities and casualties is the most simplistic way to measure the impact of the threat posed by terrorism (Waxman 2011). The aftermath of terrorist attacks “often go far beyond the deaths and destruction they cause”, in fact it leads to wide-ranging social and political effects. In literature on terrorism, it is emphasized that a terrorist attack often has political effects and influences the political process. Changes in public opinion are emerging, which governments and policy-makers “tend to take into account when formulating their policies” (Waxman 2011). Thus, the more the public pressures for harsh measures towards terrorism, the more governments are forced to undertake a strong reaction in the wake of a terrorist attack, as a failure in the prevention of a future attack “due to inaction can be fatal to a politician’s career” (Waxman 2011). In other words, it can be expected that governments and policy-makers of EU Member States implement strong measures that are mainly characterized through hard-orientated policies.

According to the findings in Table 1, France experienced the highest amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) with approximately 1.378 victims, while 6 attacks occurred in Germany by which about 103 persons were victimized. On the other hand, the United Kingdom only had two small-scale attacks with 2 victims. Following these numbers, it can be argued that a Member State that has been hit hard by terrorist attacks (France) tends to implement mostly hard approaches, while a Member State that experienced a small amount of terrorist attacks (United Kingdom)

favours a soft approach regarding their disengagement programs when addressing returning foreign fighters. This assumption will be tested during the analysis of disengagement programs of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. To sum up, it is assumed that a higher amount of terrorist attacks and a bigger number of victims gives rise to a higher level of terrorist threat perception, which prompts policy-makers for the preference of harsher measures. A proof for this preference could be reinforced by Europol’s Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2016, which refers to a significant increase in arrests in Jihadist terrorism, reaching from 122 in 2011 to 687 in 2015 (Europol 2016: 23). In other words, this research expects that states that were hit hard by terrorist attacks will implement hard policies no matter how the EU highlights the importance of a ‘balanced approach’ towards terrorism, such as “focusing on preventing, outreach, rehabilitation and reintegration” (European Commission 2014: 5). By analysing disengagement programs in terms of ‘hardness’ and ‘softness’, it is shown whether the hypothesis of this thesis is true, namely: if convergence of disengagement programs is present in EU Member States, even if there are differences in the level of terrorist threat, then the proposition by the theory of policy transfer is validated. Finally, the ‘terrorist threat’ is the relevant variable of this research, combined with the indicator ‘amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks and the number of victims’ between 2011-2016’:

Table 2. Variable ‘terrorist threat’, relevant indicator and how to investigate this indicator

Variables	Indicator	How to investigate this indicator
Terrorist Threat	Amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks and number of victims between 2011-2016	The variable ‘terrorist threat’ will be investigated by looking into the database of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The objective of the variable consists of facilitating the case selection and the main comparison at a later stage.

Based on the diverse case selection strategy, the case selection of France, Germany and the United Kingdom has been justified, a starting point to conduct a comparative analysis of their disengagement programs.

Moreover, this research also selects cases that are comparable on other relevant variables, which is part of the case selection technique. This inclusion of comparable variables is important as the investigation of two or more similar cases allows the researcher to “isolate and analyse the

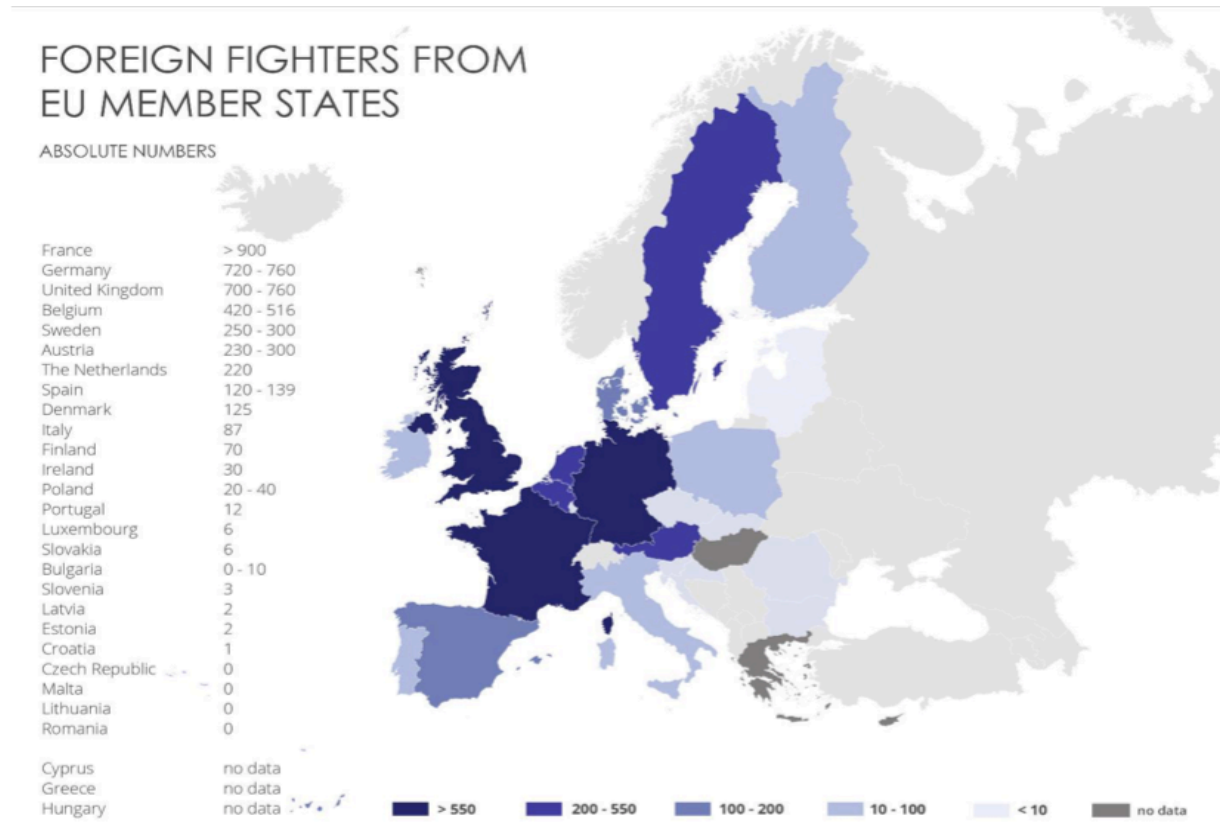
influence of other variables that might account for the differences he wishes to explain” (Lijphart 1975: 164). I argue that France, Germany and the United Kingdom are comparable on three variables: type of resources, history with terrorism and the number of foreign fighters.

Type of resources is a variable that is often used to measure differences among countries, while considering the size of a country and its effect on economic growth and available resources (Alesina et al. 2005: 1501). However, this research selects three countries that belong to the largest EU Member States with the most resources, which fall into a category of their own: France, Germany and the United Kingdom (Lehne 2012). After experiencing several attacks on its soil, France is spending nearly 1 million euros a day on its national security, as terrorism is perceived as a permanent risk (Alderman 2016). This spending is invested in its military equipment arsenal, troops and police while the country has increased surveillance and spending of “hundreds of millions of euros on new programs to counter-radicalization among Muslim youth” (Alderman 2016). The terrorist threats in Europe also thaw Germany’s budgets with regard to hire more police and intelligence officers, and to increase military spending (Alderman 2016). Furthermore, the government provides a budget to better manage the wave of refugees arriving in the country and to survey public places, such as shopping malls, bus stops and train stations (Zeit Online 2016). Following the attacks in Paris, the United Kingdom planned the biggest increase in British security spending since the bombings in 2005 (Wintour 2015). The new spending is designed to be invested in security and intelligence agencies “to provide 1,900 new officers, an increase of 15%, at MI5, MI6 and GCHQ” (Government Communication Headquarters) (ibid.). Additionally, the issue of aviation security will be an important topic on the agenda of the government’s national security, such as the discussion that more “money will be spent on increased research into screening technology”, which aim to hinder terrorists to disrupt traveling (ibid.). According to David Cameron, the former prime minister, “economic security goes hand-in hand with national security” (ibid.). As the United Kingdom has one of the fastest growing developed economy, he states that “we can now invest more in our national security and I am determined to prioritise the resources we need to combat the terrorist threat” (ibid.). France, Germany and the United Kingdom are recruiting thousands of new intelligence officers and are “upgrading surveillance equipment and software for monitoring communications, especially on the so-called darknet of encrypted networks that terrorists use to communicate and recruit” (Alderman 2016). Although France, Germany and the United Kingdom vary across their budgets regarding the fight against terrorism, they can be categorized as the largest EU Member States with the most resources, that can still rely on their own and are less dependent on multilateral institutions (Lehne 2012).

History with terrorism is a further variable that makes France, Germany and the United Kingdom comparable, as all three countries have past experiences with terrorism. In the 1990s, France experienced a hijack of a French plane and a number of bombings, that have been conducted by the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé, GIA), as response to “French support for Algeria’s army-backed government” (Riding 2002). In 1994, four Islamic extremists hijacked a French plane in Algeria with the intention of crashing it over Paris (Riding 1994). In summer 1995, six bombings occurred in Paris, by which eight people were killed and 150 were injured in “an explosion of a gas canister packed with nails and bolts on a Paris regional train at St.-Michel station” (Riding 2002). In fall 1995, a bomb was placed in a trash near the Maison-Blanche Métro and another one was placed in a train at the station Musée d’Orsay (ibid.). These incidents are proof that France already has an experience with terrorism in the past. Germany and the United Kingdom have experienced terrorism mainly through the terrorist groups of the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Both terrorist groups have been active for the same amount of time (began in 1970 and 1969) and “have had a huge impact on their respective societies” (Wright 1991: xii). The German RAF was a communist revolutionary group with the objective to overthrow the West German state while IRA saw itself as a nationalist group “working to free Ireland of English domination” (ibid.). Even if the objectives of both terrorist groups are different, it shows evidence that Germany and the United Kingdom have a historical experience with terrorism.

Finally, France, Germany and the United Kingdom are comparable on the absolute number of foreign fighters, meaning that a striking majority of foreign fighters comes from just three European countries: France, Germany and the United Kingdom (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 49). While Germany and the United Kingdom faced a number ranging from 700 up to 760 foreign fighters’ travels between 2011-2016, France has more than 900 citizens who left to join terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, the highest number of foreign fighters among EU Member States (Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 50).

Figure 1: Foreign Fighters from EU Member States: Absolute Numbers



(Source: Van Ginkel and Entemann 2016: 50)

The findings of the three variables are illustrated in the following table to show how similar they are regarding their type of resources, history with terrorism and the number of foreign fighters:

Table 3. Findings of type of resources, history with terrorism & number of foreign fighters

Variables/ Country	France	Germany	United Kingdom
Type of resources	Big country – capacity sufficient resources	Big country – capacity sufficient resources	Big country – capacity sufficient resources
History with terrorism	GIA	RAF	IRA
Number of foreign fighters	> 900	720-760	700-760

A last selection criterion that justifies the case selection of France, Germany and the United Kingdom refers to a more practical explanation with regard to languages. I have a fluent command in English, German and French, which allows me to analyse the data of official national documents of the selected cases.

3.1.3. Operationalization

In the first part of this methodological chapter, I explained the case selection strategy and justified the choice for the cases. In the operationalization part of this methodological chapter, I will address two other relevant variables, which are essential for this study to measure convergence of disengagement programs. More specifically, I will look into the design in terms of ‘hardness’ or ‘softness’ of those programs of the selected cases. In this research, disengagement programs are the unit of analysis, used as an instrument to measure convergence of counter-terrorism policies. In a first instance, unique indicators are determined in the tables 4 and 5. Based on those indicators, it can be analysed whether France, Germany and the United Kingdom prioritize a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ approach while designing their programs:

Table 4. Indicators: Disengagement programs – hard approach

Dimensions	Indicators for the dimensions	How to investigate these indicators
Punishment	Expulsion, Withdrawal of citizenship, Preventive punishment, such as incitement, revocation of identity card/passport or the refusal to issue passports	Do disengagement programs refer to the defined indicators of the dimension ‘punishment’? This question will be investigated by considering national government documents and reports, such as national Action Plans against Terrorism and Radicalization.
Prison	Isolation	Are foreign fighters isolated straight after they have returned? Is there a special terrorist section in prison? Investigated by analysing national policy documents and reports of the Ministry of Justice.
Surveillance	Supervision, Monitoring	Do returning foreign fighters need to undergo surveillance? The use of official national government documents and reports to investigate indicators.

Table 5. Indicators: Disengagement programs – soft approach

Dimensions	Indicators for the dimensions	How to investigate these indicators
Reintegration	Rehabilitation programs during detention, including job training skills, counselling, religious training	Do disengagement programs focus on the reintegration of former foreign fighters instead of isolating them from society? Examination of national policy documents, civil society-orientated networks' reports and documents of the Ministry of Interior.
Community engagement	Including families, relatives, friends, social networks	Do disengagement programs emphasize the importance of community engagement, such as the inclusion of family, relatives, friends and social networks? Examination of national government documents, civil society-orientated networks' reports and documents of the Ministry of Interior.
Aftercare	After release from prison, help in finding residence, job, school coaching, financial support	Do disengagement programs mention the importance of providing aftercare when release from prison, such as helping to find a residence, job, school coaching etc.? Examination of official national government documents, civil society-orientated networks' reports and documents of the Ministry of Interior.

By using the tables 4 and 5, it can be determined if disengagement programs are designed in terms of ‘hardness’ or ‘softness’, which is a necessary condition for their comparison later. This determination is being done by investigating various national policy documents and reports, published by the national government, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, National Assembly, as well as by national civil-society networks and other governmental organizations. By analysing those policy documents, it can be examined if they mention any indicators and dimensions, which are stated in the tables 4 and 5. For instance, if the term ‘expulsion’ does occur in a policy document, this is an indicator for ‘punishment’, which is part of a hard approach. The part ‘how to investigate the indicators’ is established to support and simplify this analysis. In the data analysis section below, the

importance of the various dimensions and the indicators for those will be further portrayed. Consequently, the findings of this examination explain whether or not disengagement programs of France, Germany and the United Kingdom converge.

In the following paragraphs, the collection and analysis of data, as well as possible limitations are outlined.

3.1.4. The data collection process

The research of this thesis consists of analysing different dimensions and actors, which requires the inclusion of a diverse data collection process. For this reason, the data is collected through the use of a triangulation of methods, meaning the inclusion of multiple methods or data sources (Carter et al. 2014: 545). The advantage of this method can be referred to the confirmation of findings and the involvement of different perspectives, while the reduction of bias is given (Carter et al. 2014: 545). Thus, the triangulation is a strategy for “improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings” and strengthens an analysis by combining multiple methods (Golafshani 2003: 603). As the triangulation does not provide any fixed methods for the data collection and analysis, the chosen methods are a small comparative case study analysis and a qualitative content analysis, relying on primary and secondary sources.

For the research of this thesis, I need data on EU- and national counter-terrorism policies, especially on disengagement programs when dealing with returning foreign fighters, which are collected through the use of official available policy documents. The information on the EU’s approach towards counter-terrorism policies is mainly gathered from documents and communications of the European Commission (*‘Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU’s Response’*), the European Council (*‘EU Action Plan on combating terrorism’*), the Radicalization Awareness Network (*‘Declaration of Good Practices for Engagement with Foreign Fighters for Prevention, Outreach, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration’*), the Official Journal of the European Union and the Policy Department for Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs (*‘Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union’*). Additional data on the EU discourse regarding the need of harmonizing national counter-terrorism approaches is obtained by using academic and policy studies, such as the article by Nohrstedt and Hansén (2010) with the title *‘Converging Under Pressure? Counterterrorism Policy Developments in the European Union Member States’*, and the policy study of Wensink et al. (2017) headed as *‘The European Union’s Policies on Counter-Terrorism. Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness’*.

With regard to the variable ‘terrorist threat’, the data is researched by looking into national threat assessments, published on the official website of the French government (*‘La Lutte contre le terrorisme – menace terroriste’*) and the British Security Service MI5 under the section *‘Threat Levels’*. Although Germany does not have a level of terrorist threat, information on the threat posed by returning foreign fighters can be found on the website of the ‘Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution’. Following this, the data on the indicator of the variable ‘terrorist threat’, namely ‘Amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks and number of victims between 2011-2016’ is collected by using the database of the German ‘Office for the Protection of the Constitution’: *‘Übersicht ausgewählter islamistisch-terroristischer Anschläge. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz’* (2017). Moreover, the information on the variables ‘type of resources’, ‘history with terrorism’ and ‘number of foreign fighters’ is gathered through a diversity of sources: media articles, academic literature and a research paper. The variable ‘type of resources’ is addressed by reading the academic article *‘Trade, Growth and The Size of Countries’* written by Alesina et al. (2005), the media article *‘The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy’* published by Lehne (2012), as well as Alderman’s article *‘Terror Threats Thaw Budgets Across Europe’* (2016) and Wintour’s publication *‘David Cameron to boost security spending after Paris attacks’* (2015). The data of the second variable ‘history with terrorism’ is received by analysing academic literature, such as the article *‘Terrorist Propaganda. The Red Army Faction and the IRA, 1968-86’* written by Wright (1991) and media article of Riding (2002) titled as *‘French Court Sentences 2 for Role in 1995 Bombings That Killed 8’*. Finally, the information on the variable ‘number of foreign fighters’ is taken from the research paper *‘The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles, Threats & Policies’*, published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague (2016).

The data on France, Germany and the United Kingdom’s disengagement programs is mainly collected by analysing each government’s national action plan against terrorism, as de-radicalization and disengagement measures are established by the responsible government and are part of its counter-terrorism strategy. More specifically, to investigate those programs in terms of ‘hardness’, I look into various national policy documents. For instance, to investigate the indicators of the dimension ‘punishment’, I use documents such as the French National Action Plan against Terrorism and Radicalization, the British national counter-terrorism strategy, while using published articles from the German government and the Federal Ministry of Interior. Data on the indicators of the dimension ‘prison’ are collected through analysing documents of the French government, the German State Ministry of Justice, as well as of the civil-society network HAYAT (article: *‘Returning from the ‘IS’- Experiences from the*

counselling service HAYAT-Germany) and the ‘Violence Prevention Network’ (article: *‘Taking Responsibility – Breaking away from Hate and Violence’*), and the British government (‘CONTEST’ and Channel’). The indicators of ‘surveillance’, the last dimension of the ‘hard’ approach, are investigated by making use of national governmental documents of each country. The ‘soft’ approach of disengagement programs is collected in a similar way, by using mainly the same type of documents to examine each indicator of the dimensions ‘reintegration’, ‘community engagement’, and ‘aftercare’. In this context, documents and reports of the French government, the French National Assembly, the Senate (*‘Rapport d’information. «désendoctrinement, désembrigadement et réinsertion des djihadistes en France et en Europe»*), the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BMF), as well as the German civil-society network HAYAT (*‘HAYAT-Germany. Counseling/ De-radicalization/ Network’*), and the British government (‘CONTEST’ and Channel’) are analysed.

Additionally, media articles, academic and policy studies are collected with the objective to include a more current and critical point of view regarding the design of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The data that has been collected in order to achieve this objective refers to an article of the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (*‘Bericht über französische Maßnahmen zur Deradikalisierung: Senatorinnen üben harte Kritik’*), a further article published in The Guardian *‘Guantánamo UK? Durham jail first to have ‘terrorist only’ wing’* (2017), as well as a policy briefing from Lister Charles (2015) with the title *‘Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?’*, and finally an academic article of Gearson and Rosemont (2015), headed as *‘CONTEST as Strategy: Reassessing Britain’s Counterterrorism Approach’*.

The following paragraph explains how the collected data is analysed during this research.

3.1.5. The data analysis

The collected data on the EU- and national counter-terrorism policies, especially on disengagement programs, the EU’s approach towards counter-terrorism policies, as well as on the EU discourse regarding the need of harmonizing national counter-terrorism approaches, is analysed by reading the different types of sources mentioned above, using relevant information and drawing conclusions from those articles.

The data on the variable ‘terrorist threat’ is analysed by looking into national threat assessments, while considering current information on the level of threat posed by terrorism. The data on the indicator of this variable, namely ‘Amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks and number of victims’

between 2011-2016, is investigated by using a database of the 'Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz' (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution). While using this database, I only looked for terrorist attacks and victims in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, and added the amount of attacks and victims for each country during the time period 2011-2016. Finally, I summarized the findings in Table 1 to obtain a structured overview on the variable 'terrorist threat'. Additionally, the information on the variables 'type of resources', 'history with terrorism' and 'number of foreign fighters' is gathered through a diversity of sources outlined above, and is analysed by reading those articles, using the most relevant data and drawing conclusions from those sources.

On the other hand, the information on disengagement programs and their design in terms of 'hardness' or 'softness' requires a more structured data analysis. The selected method is a qualitative content analysis. This method is used as it is suitable for carrying out a structured comparison among different cases, which helps to ease replication. Qualitative content analysis can be defined as a "process of assigning categories to text passages as a qualitative-interpretive act, following content-analytical rules" (Mayring 2014: 10). Understood as a technique of data analysis and of working with categories, the research design in this study is a relational design, meaning that a cross-tabulation of categories (comparison of categories) with variables is used (Mayring 2014: 12). More specifically, the two categories of the cross-tabulation refer to the 'hard' and 'soft' approach regarding disengagement programs. Thus, this research defines specific dimensions and indicators in order to code textual materials and to define the codes with memos, aiming to classify codes in terms of 'hardness' or 'softness' (Mayring 2014: 16). While analysing the relevant national policy document mentioned in section 3.1.4., I looked for dimensions I predefined in the tables 4 and 5. For instance, if the term 'expulsion' is mentioned in a document, it allows me to classify this indicator under the dimension 'punishment', which is part of the 'hard' approach. The same analysis is conducted with all other dimensions, such as 'prison, surveillance' (hard approach) and 'reintegration, family, aftercare' (soft approach). As a result of this data analysis, a well-structured comparison of France, Germany and the United Kingdom regarding their disengagement programs can be conducted.

Although the validity and reliability is given by this method, this research faces some limitations and pitfalls when answering the research question of this analysis.

3.1.6. Limitations

During this research, I came across some limitations and pitfalls, which I address in this section. Due to the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to represent an overall picture of disengagement programs in all 28 EU Member States, which guided my decision to limit the sample to three case studies: France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, I faced difficulties related to the data collection. The collection of policy documents in the field of counter-terrorism is strongly linked to secrecy due to the sensitivity of those policies. In turn, this can lead to constraints, such as the restricted availability of documents, which could hinder an overall picture of national counter-terrorism policies. Moreover, some governments, such as France and the United Kingdom have relatively open and organized databases and provide a well-elaborated Action Plan against Terrorism and Radicalization, while in Germany there is an absence of such an Action Plan and its data in this area is less clear and open. Thus, this has led to some restrictions when collecting data on national disengagement programs.

Moreover, the time period of this thesis has been restricted to 2011-2016, however it would have been interesting to include the current terrorist incidents in Europe, such as the cancellation of the German Festival “Rock am Ring” (02.06.2017) due to a serious terrorist threat and the terrorist attacks in Manchester (22.05.2017) and London (02.06.2017), with the aim to carry out further research on the effects of those incidents on national counter-terrorism policies. Due to the deadline of this thesis, this research was not possible but that does not change the fact that a future research on this topic would contribute to valuable insights and discussions.

4. Patterns of disengagement programs in EU Member States

This chapter provides a structured overview of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. While considering the relevant indicators, previously defined in Table 4 and 5, it is analysed whether these programs are assigned in terms of ‘hardness’ or ‘softness’. This, in turn, is a precondition to conduct a comparison of the three selected cases and to examine whether convergence of their disengagement programs is present or absent. As the literature on disengagement programs as a whole is limited, especially with the focus on Islamic radicalization of returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq, I selected programs that have been established or supported by the governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

4.1. France

France belongs to one of the largest EU Member States with the most sufficient resources. In the fight against terrorism, the country is spending nearly 1 million euros a day on its national security (Alderman 2016), as the perceived terrorist threat has reached the highest level since 2015, namely ‘the state of emergency’ (Gouvernement Français 2017). The ‘state of emergency level’ can be explained by the amount of terrorist attacks, which took place between 2011 and 2016. During this period, France experienced the highest amount of Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) with approximately 1.378 victims (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2017). In this research, it is hypothesized that a country that has been hit hard by terrorist attacks tends to implement mostly hard-orientated measures when addressing returning foreign fighters. After an overview of France’s disengagement programs, it can be tested whether this statement is valid.

Although France has already had experiences with Islamic terrorism in the past, the new threat posed by returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq has pressured the government to develop a **strong** response, including both judicial and preventive policies to protect its nation and its citizens (Gouvernement Français 2016: 17). According to the French Ministry of Interior, on May 26th 2015, 1.704 individuals have left their home country to join terrorist networks in Syria and Iraq. It is estimated that 457 individuals are still in Syria and Iraq, of which 137 are women and 80 minors (Assemblée Nationale 2015b: 20). 320 are considered of passing in transit between France and Syria and 278 individuals returned from the conflict zone, of which 213 individuals returned France (ibid.). France has the highest number of individuals in the EU who have left to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq.

As a response to threat posed by returning foreign fighters, the French government has adopted a new ‘Action Plan against Radicalization and Terrorism’ (Plan d’action contre la radicalisation et le terrorisme, PART) in April 2014, which detail 80 measures while 50 of those are new, including the following seven topics:

- Detection of radicalization and terrorist networks
- Monitoring, hindering and neutralizing terrorist networks
- Fighting terrorism networks internationally
- Increasing tools that aim to prevent radicalization
- Developing the research on counter discourses and integrate the Muslim community in counter radicalization efforts
- Improving the protection of vulnerable websites and communication infrastructure
- Developing knowledge on how to react in case of a terrorist attack and manifesting resilience (Gouvernement Français 2016: 3)

This research primarily focuses on disengagement and de-radicalization efforts to address returning foreign fighters. Therefore, only three out of the seven topics of the new Action Plan are relevant for this analysis: detection of radicalization and terrorist networks, monitoring, hindering and neutralizing terrorist networks and increasing tools that aim to prevent radicalization. Furthermore, France distinguishes between three categories of people when returning from Syria and Iraq. For each category, a specific response is adapted. The first category refers to individuals who have become foreign fighters with strong conviction and the purpose to commit a terrorist attack in France. In this case, the only solution is a judicial procedure and imprisonment. Individuals, returning home with a feeling of disappointment and regret, caused by the violence they have experienced with ISIS and who didn’t take part in criminal activities, are assigned to the second category. These people have the option to take part in disengagement programs, focusing on their long-term rehabilitation. The final category relates to individuals highly traumatized when returning to France, in this instance the solution are psychological treatments (Pietrasanta 2015: 35).

Punishment

When foreign fighters return from Syria and Iraq back to France, the government’s PART conveys the assumption that **punishment** is the prioritised approach towards terrorism. With the aim to disengage individuals from terrorism, the French government conducts **expulsions**. In this context, it is relevant to refer to the withdrawal of citizenship, as this **harsh** measure may contribute to the expulsion of individuals from French territory. According to Article 2 of

the National Assembly's Draft on constitutional law regarding the 'Protection of the Nation' (Projet de loi constitutionnelle de protection de la Nation), it is permitted to strip a French citizen of his/her **nationality**, in case this individual was born in France and possesses a second nationality (Assemblée Nationale 2015a: 5). The withdrawal of the French citizenship is only possible if a person is convicted for a crime that poses a threat to the French Nation (ibid.). Additionally, to the withdrawal of citizenship, a further measure exists according to Article 23-8 of the Common Law (code civil), namely the **loss** of the French identity applicable for all citizens who have travelled to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq (Lellouche 2017). Since April 2014, 64 persons have been deported from national territory, a number which has extremely increased during the last two years (Gouvernement Français 2016: 29).

A further measure that targets to disengage individuals from terrorism can be understood as a **preventive punishment**, such as the ban to leave French territory and the revocation of passports and identity cards. From January 2015 until April 2016, 309 people have been hindered to leave French territory while 24 passports have been revoked (Gouvernement Français 2016: 28.) Moreover, 572 refusals for passports renewals have been registered for French citizens who have already left for Syria and Iraq (ibid.). Those preventive punishments have been developed to hinder radicalized individuals from travelling to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq and to better monitor them when coming back to France.

Prison

The first topic of the 'Action Plan against Radicalization and Terrorism' (PART), 'Detection of radicalization and terrorist networks', can be linked to the first category of people when returning from Syria and Iraq, namely individuals who became foreign fighters with the objective to commit terrorist attacks in France. When returning from the conflict zone to France, these individuals are obliged go through judicial procedures, followed by imprisonment in order to achieve their disengagement and thus to reduce the threat they may pose after being released from prison in the future (Gouvernement Français 2016: 21). In the fight against terrorism, the French government has developed new measures to encounter radicalization in prisons. In 2015, special units have been created in four prisons to **isolate** foreign fighters from other prisoners, with the objective to prevent further radicalization (Gouvernement Français 2016: 21). According to the Action Plan, the creation of those **isolated** units should become a necessarily condition in the future when it comes to radicalized people, such as individuals returning from ISIS. Thus, it can be argued that foreign fighters are isolated straight after they are placed under detention, however not in special terrorist section but in units that are only

designed for radicalized individuals (Gouvernement Français 2016: 21). In addition, PART emphasizes the importance of programs that are provided after an individual has left the isolated units, which focus on **rehabilitation**. More specifically, the special unit that provides those programs is called ‘rehabilitation and probation’ (insertion et probation), which is responsible for offering a personalized and efficient programme to achieve individuals’ de-radicalization and disengagement (Gouvernement Français 2016: 22). Although returning foreign fighters are isolated straight after they are placed under detention, the programme ‘rehabilitation and probation’ may be a first step to achieve the reintegration of former foreign fighters after them being released from prison. However, the content of this programme is not totally clear, as there is no available information whether they include job training skills, counselling or religious training, which in turn gives rise to the assumption that reintegration efforts are not the main objective of this program.

Surveillance

When foreign fighters are returning to France, do they need to undergo surveillance? The PART’s second topic ‘Monitoring, hindering and neutralizing terrorist networks’ mentions that in 2016, an automated national criminal register listing perpetrators of terrorist offences (fichier judiciaire national automatisé des auteurs d’infractions terroristes, FIJAIT) was deployed that is used to control and evaluate the behaviour of suspicious individuals who returned from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq (Gouvernement Français 2016: 6). Until now, 244 foreign fighters have returned to France, however only 147 are subject of a judicial procedure while 97 individuals are **monitored** by an Administrative Intelligence Framework, as there is still a lack of evidence, which makes a judicial procedure impossible at that stage (Gouvernement Français 2016: 30). Thus, the idea behind FIJAIT and the Administrative Information Framework consists of disengaging returning foreign fighters from terrorist activities through **monitoring** their behaviour, detecting their terrorist networks and preventing terrorist attacks at once. In addition, there is the option to carry out **supervision** of their entourage to obtain information and detect possible intentions related to terrorism (Gouvernement Français 2016: 28). To give an answer to the question above, it can be concluded that the French government stresses the importance of **monitoring** returning foreign fighters that are suspected to pose a threat to France and its citizens.

Reintegration and community engagement

The third topic ‘Increasing tools that aim to prevent radicalization’ can be linked to the second category of people when returning from Syria and Iraq: returned foreign fighters who show regrets regarding their journey to Syria and Iraq, but need to undergo a process of de-radicalization to reach their complete disengagement from violence. In the French ‘Action Plan against Radicalization and Terrorism’, the need for preventive measures is emphasized in order to disrupt the indoctrination of individuals. Such programs have the objective to achieve their disengagement (departure from violence) and/ or their de-radicalization (change of religious beliefs) (Gouvernement Français 2016: 37). These methods can be considered to de-radicalize already affected people or individuals vulnerable for radicalization (ibid.). Do these programs mention the importance of community engagement, such as the inclusion of family, relatives, friends and social networks? The Action Plan assigns reference to family and relatives in the process of de-radicalization, as their involvement may contribute to the possibility of a more effective action (Gouvernement Français 2016: 38). Additionally, the French government established in each department a monitoring unit, with the inclusion of social and public services, associated networks and families.

In 2014, the National Assistance and Radicalization Prevention Centre (Centre national d’assistance et de prévention de la radicalisation, CNAPR) created a national hotline (numéro vert) to support the disengagement of radicalized people (Assemblée Nationale 2015a: 117). This hotline can be used by families, relatives and friends to report about individuals who have radicalized or are on their path to radicalization, but also to give account regarding people who are believed to leave or have returned from the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq (ibid.). In this context, the involvement of the whole community (family, relative, friends) in disengagement efforts may lead to the prevention of radicalization. On the other hand, reporting about persons who travelled to Syria and Iraq and returned to France could be crucial. This ‘soft’-orientated initiative could improve the detection of radicalized individuals, which in turn may prevent their further engagement in jihadist networks through offering disengagement programs with the aim to achieve their de-radicalization and reduce the threat posed by them. A further initiative targeting the prevention of radicalization is the online webpage “Stop-Djihadisme”. However, this page is not relevant in the context of this research, as it is not applicable for returning foreign fighters (Gouvernement Français 2015).

Despite the importance of ‘soft’-orientated measures towards disengagement programs, the French government has sometimes difficulties to implement these initiatives in a successful way. For example, in 2015, the government developed a new project to work with radicalized persons with the objective to achieve their de-radicalization: Centre for ‘rehabilitation and citizenship’ (centre de réinsertion et de citoyenneté). This project consisted of providing help to young radicalized persons, aged between 18 and 30, with the purpose to work on their **rehabilitation** and **reintegration** (Ministère de l’Intérieur 2016: 2-3). The purpose of this Centre consisted of a mix between prison and an open environment («pour vocation de constituer un moyen terme entre un milieu totalement ouvert et la prison») (Benbassa and Troendlé 2017: 10). However, the program for ‘rehabilitation and citizenship’ failed in its implementation. According to the French senators, Ester Benbassa and Catherine Troendlé, the government’s measures in the field of de-radicalization have been implemented in a rushed manner in response to the ‘state of emergency’ due to the latest terrorist attacks in France (Benbassa and Troendlé 2017: 10). A further cause for its failure can be attributed to the involvement of initiatives without any professional qualification, inter alia due to financial reasons (ibid.).

In this context, Benbassa and Troendlé urge the revision of the French government’s concept regarding de-radicalization, such as Centres for de-radicalization or special units in prison (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2017). Currently, both are working on a fact-finding mission on ‘de-ideologization, dissociation and the reintegration of jihadists in France and Europe’ («désendoctrinement, désembrigadement et réinsertion des djihadistes en France et en Europe»), with the objective to improve **rehabilitation** and **reintegration** programs in France when dealing with jihadists (Benbassa and Troendlé 2017: 25). This new initiative, presented by Benbassa and Troendlé, also emphasizes the need to prevent the isolation of radicalized individuals, and stresses the importance to integrate teachers, social workers, family, relatives, sport associations etc. in the de-radicalization process (Benbassa and Troendlé 2017: 31-33) In this context, the senators presented the first evaluation (21 February 2017) of the fact-finding mission («désendoctrinement, désembrigadement et réinsertion des djihadistes en France et en Europe») to the Committee on Legal Affairs (commission des lois) of the French Senate. In a press release, Philippe Bas, the president of the Committee on Legal Affairs of the French Senate, made the following conclusion: “Regarding the political hesitations of the last 2 years in this field, the mission will continue its work in the coming weeks in order to assist the strategic choices of the next government” («Face aux hésitations de la politique menée depuis deux ans en ce domaine, la mission poursuivra ses travaux au cours des semaines à venir pour

éclairer les grands choix stratégiques du prochain gouvernement») (Commission des lois 2017). In other words, there is no available information of new legislations in the field of disengagement programs until now. However, Muriel Domenach, the general secretary of the Interministerial Committee on Crime Prevention and Radicalization (Comité interministériel de prévention de la délinquance et de la radicalisation, CIPDR), emphasized in an interview with the French Journal 'Libération', that there is a need to establish a third approach, situated between prison and open environment (Le Devin 2017). Thus, the suggestion of a third approach towards disengagement measures may be a new initiative, somewhere in between of a 'hard' and 'soft' approach.

To sum up, when foreign fighters return from Syria and Iraq, the French government prioritises repressive and judicial measures to reach the disengagement of those individuals to reduce the threat they could pose to France and its citizens. The PART emphasizes that judicial procedure is a priority when addressing those returnees. However, in case evidence is lacking, measures such as an administrative maintenance and/ or **surveillance** are applied (Assemblée Nationale 2015b: 96). More specifically, France established the following measures to achieve the disengagement of returning foreign fighter: **disengagement wings in prison, intelligence and surveillance, monitoring units**, including a **national support hotline** and an **online webpage**. The government's efforts in establishing effective rehabilitation and reintegration centres failed until today, although it could be interesting to investigate whether the new fact-finding mission 'de-ideologization, dissociation and the reintegration of jihadists in France and Europe', conducted by Benbassa and Troendlé, will contribute to improvements in the field of 'soft' disengagement initiatives. However, this investigation does not coincide with the period of this thesis and thus, is not scope of this research. Consequently, two out of three major measures can be classified in terms of '**hardness**'. In other words, the French government pursues a **centralized** and **security** orientated approach when addressing returning foreign fighters, which can be linked back to the hypothesis above: France experienced 13 terrorist attacks between 2011 and 2016, which could be an explanation for their 'hard'-orientated approach when it comes to the design of their disengagement programs.

4.2. Germany

Germany, which is also one of the largest EU Member States, experienced 6 terrorist attacks by which about 103 persons have been victimized between 2011-2016 (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2017a). In comparison with France's experience with the amount of terrorist attacks, it is expected that the German government applies a mix between repressive and preventive measures when it comes to their disengagement programs. According to the 'Federal

Office for the Protection of the Constitution’, 890 people have left to join the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq (until December 2016), and it is estimated that one third have already returned to Germany, of which 70 persons are known for taking part in criminal activities in Syria or Iraq or receiving terrorist training (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2017b). Due to the threat posed by those returnees, Germany has developed measures that target their disengagement in terms of changing their radical beliefs and violent behaviours.

Punishment

Germany only favours harsh punishment measures when the necessary evidence is available. In this context, administrative tools have been established to prevent prospective foreign fighters to join the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. For instance, the German government decided to implement a policy in 2015 that makes traveling abroad more difficult for individuals. Thus, German authorities are permitted **to withdraw the identity card** when a German citizen tries to travel to Syria or Iraq (Die Bundesregierung 2015). There is the possibility to withdraw a person’s identity card up to 3 years, while instead he/she receives **an alternative identity card** with a **strict travel prohibition** (Bundesministerium des Inneren 2015). With regard to **the withdrawal of the passport**, the same policy can be applied to constrain the freedom to travel of prospective foreign fighters or to reduce the threat returnees could pose to the internal security. In the case a of non-German citizen, authorities are not allowed to confiscate their passport. Instead, they can issue an order to prohibit leaving Germany (Vidino 2014: 11).

Prison

In the fight against Islamic extremism, the Bavarian ‘Prison for the Execution of Penal Sentences and Justice’ (Justizvollzug) established the Central Coordination Office (Zentrale Koordinierungsstelle, KZS) in 2015, which focuses on measures against Salafism/Islamism in prison (Bayrisches Staatsministerium der Justiz). This type of disengagement program includes the following tasks:

- The adjustment of strategies and actions while dealing with people who are radicalized, or on their path to radicalization
- The development of existing and the implementation of new methods of treatment to encounter extremism in prison
- Professional guidance and support in order to detect Salafism/Islamism in prison

In this context, de-radicalization is a priority in the Bavarian ‘Office for the Execution of Penal Sentences and Justice’. The process of de-radicalization is linked to various services in form of specific treatments and assistances, such as **school and job education, social therapy, anti-violence training programs, single and/or group therapies** etc. (Bayrisches Staatsministerium der Justiz). These services have the objective to facilitate and improve a person’s future after the release from prison. An additional offer of those disengagement programs are **rehabilitation** initiatives, which are adjusted to individual needs to achieve **their long-term reintegration** into society. With regard to disengagement and de-radicalization programs, the Bavarian ‘Office for the Execution of Penal Sentences and Justice’ exchanges with other institutions to strike most effective outcomes (Bayrisches Staatsministerium der Justiz). For instance, there is a close cooperation between the penitentiary and the civil society-orientated ‘Violence Prevention Network’ (VPN). Based on this collaboration, the VPN established the de-radicalization program ‘Taking Responsibility – Breaking away from Hate and Violence’, which is a “non-confrontational approach” to de-radicalize young people in prison, based on the principle of **voluntariness** (Korn et al. 2015: 4). The programme, which started in 2001 as a pilot project in Brandenburg, is the only training programme that has been proven successful in Germany. In 2007, its concept of ‘Education and Responsibility’ was expanded to involve young fundamentalist and neo-Salafists people (ibid.). According to a report of the VPN, “without preventive offers in prison”, young people at risk are vulnerable for further radicalization and taking part in informal neo-Salafist networks in prison, which in turn hinders their reintegration into society (Korn et al. 2015: 5).

This type of disengagement program consists of three phases: Group training, Transition management and Stabilisation coaching (Korn et al. 2015: 6). In the three phases, one aspect is consistently mentioned, namely the importance of the **involvement of relatives** with the role of “stabilising the young people after their release, of preventing them from becoming delinquent again and helping them maintain a distance from their old milieu” (Korn et al. 2015: 12). Moreover, this program focuses on **aftercare**, such as improving a person’s chances in the **labour market** after detention, while **offering personal and social skills, conflict resolution skills** and **giving training** regarding the ability to work in a group (ibid.). The reintegration into society and the labour market are strongly linked to the involvement of relatives and friends, as well as local networks, youth welfare services and job centres, which get involved when needed (Korn et al. 2015: 29). According to a document by the VPN, its disengagement program is used to work with people motivated by extremism, as well as radicalized parties, such as prospective foreign fighters and returnees from Syria and Iraq (Violence Prevention Network

n.d.: 10). In the case of Germany, the focus is not on isolating foreign fighters in special terrorist section, but rather on the need to work with those individuals by using disengagement programs to provide them with various supporting initiatives (involvement of relatives, job training skills, aftercare, etc.) and to realize their future societal reintegration. Although, the programs of the Bavarian ‘Office for the Execution of Penal Sentences and Justice’ and the VPN are only applied in prison, it entails a ‘**soft**’-orientated approach, “like assisting drop-out processes” to minimize the recidivism of foreign fighters in the future (Berczyk 2015). Thus, Germany provides exit programs for those that are willing to leave jihadist groups with “alternatives ways of recognition, purpose and emotional and ideological support systems” (Berczyk 2015).

Surveillance

In Germany, the monitoring of a person that is suspected to travel abroad for terrorist purposes, is linked to so-called ‘**Gefährderansprachen**’ (hazard talks), by which is meant that the police visit suspected individuals at home to make them aware that the police know about their intentions (Deutscher Bundestag 2017: 127). Thus, this measure is a suitable and effective **prevention tool**, which is used as a deterring method to influence a person’s future behaviour with the objective to reduce possible threats these individuals may pose to Germany (ibid.)

In 2017, Germany introduced an **electronic surveillance**, the so-called ankle monitoring, as a new method to prevent people to engage in terrorist and other criminal activities (Deutscher Bundestag 2017: 82). Thus, this new type of surveillance can be used after a person who committed delicts, such as the support of and participation in a terror organisation, is released from detention. For instance, when former foreign fighters are released from prison in the future, there is a high possibility that they need to undergo surveillance in term of an electronic ankle monitoring. Furthermore, this measure can be applied in case a foreigner is obliged to leave the country and a **tougher supervision** is needed to ensure the internal security of the country (Die Bundesregierung 2017). In both cases, the ankle monitoring could be able to contribute to a person’s disengagement, as this individual is aware about him/her being monitored, which in return could reduce the risk to have a relapse in terrorist or other criminal activities. However, the German Federal Government clearly states in a report, that the electronic ankle monitoring is not enough to prevent terrorist attacks in the future, but as part of a package of measures, it provides additional security (Die Bundesregierung 2017).

Reintegration and community engagement

A further initiative that has been established in 2011, is the counselling and de-radicalization network ‘HAYAT’. This network works as a counselling program for individuals “involved in radical Salafist groups or on the path of a violent Jihadist radicalization”, including those who left to join the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq (HAYAT-Deutschland Beratungstelle Deradikalisierung). HAYAT’s primarily objective is the development of methods and approaches, with the intention to advise and work with **relatives** (family, friends, teachers, employees etc.) of radicalized individuals to “eventually prevent, decelerate and invert the radicalization process” (HAYAT-Deutschland Beratungstelle Deradikalisierung). In this context, HAYAT pursues a de-radicalization process, including 3 steps (Lister 2015: 10):

1. Ideological: “de-legitimize and invalidate jihadi group narratives” and encourage foreign fighters to adjust with their past experiences
2. Pragmatic: assist foreign fighters in terms of finding a job, education, and residence (**Aftercare**)
3. Affective: support foreign fighters with the involvement of the **whole community** (family, relatives, friends)

With the collaboration of the ‘German Federal Office for Immigration and Refugee Affairs’ (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF), a ‘national counselling hotline on radicalization’ (Beratungsstelle Radikalisierung) has been established since 2012. The establishment of a **national hotline** is suitable for preventing and encountering the radicalization of people. For example, HAYAT is taking calls from relatives and other concerned people, assesses the concrete situation to gain a clear idea, and to design a plan with specific measures to prevent and encounter further radicalization (HAYAT-Deutschland Beratungstelle Deradikalisierung). Moreover, one of its most important goals is to give advice to parents, whose children plan to travel abroad to join the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq or have already left or have even returned to Germany. In this context, three main goals are specified (HAYAT-Deutschland Beratungstelle Deradikalisierung):

- Try to convince them **voluntarily** to stop traveling abroad
- If already abroad: try to stop them from taking part in criminal activities and convince them to return home
- Assist returnees regarding their **reintegration** into society that respects universal human rights

While the role of HAYAT has been emphasized, it can be argued that civil society actors can play a crucial role in the disengagement of returning foreign fighters, by using a **liberal** strategy. Furthermore, Germany's disengagement measures include a **'balanced approach'**, with a mix of repressive and preventive measures. The strand 'punishment' is in nature a 'hard' approach, however the German government does not primarily focus on prosecution, but rather emphasizes that other tools in terms of 'softness' are at least as important when addressing returning foreign fighters. In some prisons, such as the Bavarian 'Prison for the Execution of Penal Sentences and Justice', disengagement and de-radicalization programs have been established in collaboration with the civil society-orientated 'Violence Prevention Network'. In this context, returning foreign fighters are not isolated in special terrorist sections in prison. On the contrary, 'soft'-orientated programs are used, which involve specific workshops (school and job education, social therapy, anti-violence programs), community engagement (families, relatives, friends, etc.), aftercare (finding a job, education, and residence) and integration back into society as the final objective. The strand 'surveillance' includes measures both in terms of 'hardness' and 'softness'. While the tool of 'Gefährderansprachen' (hazard talks) is a preventive tool, the electronic ankle monitoring can be defined as a repressive measure in order to reduce the threat posed by possible and former foreign fighters. Finally, the civil-society actor HAYAT pursues a liberal approach when addressing and working with foreign fighters.

4.3. United Kingdom

Although the United Kingdom (UK) has a great past with terrorism (IRA), the country only experienced two small-scale Islamic terrorist attacks with 2 victims between 2011 and 2016. Belonging to one of the biggest EU Member States in terms of economic growth and resources, the country announced in 2016, that new funding is being made available for British security and intelligence agencies to better respond to the threat posed by international terrorism, cyber-attacks and global risks (GOV.UK 2016a). Until 2016, it is estimated that around 850 people have gone to Syria and Iraq, including women and families, and just under half have returned (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 15). Despite the small amount of attacks and the lowest number in foreign fighters, the UK's terrorism threat level, set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, is 'severe', meaning that an attack is highly likely (Security Service MI5 n.d.). However, compared to France and Germany, it is assumed that the UK pursues a 'soft' approach towards terrorism, as it has only experienced a small amount of terrorist attacks in the last years.

As a response to terrorism, the UK established its counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST in 2011, which aims “to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism” (HM Government of the United Kingdom: 9). The strategy CONTEST is based on four main strands:

- Pursue: the investigation and disruption of terrorist attacks;
- Prevent: work to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism;
- Protect: improving our protective security to stop a terrorist attack; and
- Prepare: working to minimise the impact of an attack and to recover as quickly as possible (ibid.)

In the context of this research, the focus is only on ‘pursue’ and ‘prevent’, as those two strands are most important for analysing disengagement measures when addressing prospective and returning foreign fighters.

Punishment

Currently, prospective and returning Islamist terrorists pose the predominant terrorist threat to the UK. In this context, the purpose of ‘pursue’ consists of preventing terrorist attacks by detecting and investigating terrorist activities (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 10). According to the British government, the most effective way to stop terrorists is conviction in court, however in case prosecution is not possible, CONTEST suggests a range of measures to prevent terrorist activities (ibid.). For instance, an important tool to prevent individuals from traveling to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq is regulated in the ‘**Royal Prerogative**’, which can be “exercised against **British passport holders to cancel, or refuse to issue**, a passport on public interest grounds” (ibid.). From 2013 until 2015, the Royal Prerogative was used 61 times: 14 times in 2013, 24 times in 2014, and 23 times in 2015 (GOV.UK 2016b).

A further measure is regulated in the Counter-Terrorism and Security ACT 2015 (CTSA), focusing on police, security and intelligence in order to ensure that the responsible agencies have the required powers and capabilities to disrupt the travel of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq and to manage those individuals on their return to the UK (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 11). The Schedule 1 power of the CTSA 2015 is a tool that enables police officers **to seize and temporarily retain travel documents** to prevent immediate travel of individuals. Thus, this tool is especially applied when there is proof that a person intends to join terrorism-related conflict zones abroad. According to the Annual Report of CONTEST (2015), the Schedule 1 power was used 24 times (ibid.). Additionally, there is also the possibility of a ‘temporary exclusion order’ (TEOs) when British citizens have been involved in terrorism-

related activities (Gower 2015: 11). The application of the TEOs is linked to the confiscation of the suspected person's travel documents and the registration of its details to a relevant border 'watch-lists' (ibid.). The permission to return to the UK is only approved if the individual applies to the Home Secretary for a specific permit (details about time, manner, place of arrival, etc.) and is willing to take part in de-radicalization programs (ibid.)

With regard to the **withdrawal of citizenship**, the government introduced the 'immigration power' in 2015, a measure to "deprive duals nationals of British citizenship on not conducive to the public good grounds" (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 11). Under certain vague conditions, citizens with a dual-nationality can become '**stateless**' if seriously prejudicial activities have been proven and there is "reasonable ground to believe that they could acquire another nationality" (Lister 2015: 5). While 8 foreign nationals have been **expulsed** from the UK on national security grounds, 16 foreigners have been excluded on grounds of 'unacceptable behaviour', such as hate speech (ibid.). In addition, through the use of Deportation with Assurances (DWA) and a wider deportation and removal powers, 3 foreigners have been deported due to the conviction of terrorism-related offences in the UK (ibid.).

Prison

Within the strand 'prevent', the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) manages over 1,000 prisoners in 2015, who were identified as radicalized or vulnerable to radicalize (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 16). The tasks of NOMS is to help those people to disengage from radicalization through measures, such as "disciplinary action and transfers within the prison estate" and specific programs (ibid.) Those measures convey the idea, that prospective and returning foreign fighters are **isolated in special terrorist sections** in prison, where they receive standard and dedicated programs. An example of such a dedicated plan is the 'Ibaana' program, which has been designed to target the small number of Islamic extremists with the most deeply rooted extremist views. However, the program was never implemented and was cancelled in 2015 (Grimwood 2016: 20). Due to the failure of this scheme, it is assumed that tailored disengagement programs are not the most important goal setting when addressing Islamic extremists and foreign fighters in detention. On the contrary, the British government favours measures that target **to isolate** radicalized individuals with extremist views as much as possible. For example, a "**jihadi prison block**" has been established in the first British prison, to isolate convicted terrorist to prevent radicalization of other prisoners (The Guardian 2017). Thus, considering disengagement programs in prison, the British government prioritizes security over rehabilitation and reintegration.

Surveillance

The UK's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST), refers to 'Capabilities to detect, investigate and disrupt terrorist threat' (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 11). In this context, the government announced an increase in resources for security and police agencies in the field of counter-terrorism with the objective to increase the number of police investigators and to strengthen police capabilities to detect suspected people engaged in terrorist activities and terrorist networks (ibid.). During 2015, the British law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies "disrupted six terrorist plots to attack" in its territory, while there have been 280 terrorism-related arrests (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 10). In addition, there have been 53 terrorism-related offenders under probation supervision (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 17). However, the action of 'surveillance' remains very vague, as neither CONTEST nor the disengagement program Channel mentions any information regarding the supervision of returning foreign fighters.

Reintegration, community engagement and aftercare

In 2012, the British government introduced a program called 'Channel', a multi-agency approach to protect individuals vulnerable for radicalization or support already radicalized people in their de-radicalization process through specific programs (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 5). The disengagement program Channel has been placed on a statutory footing under the strand 'prevent' in 2015, to hinder people who attempt to travel to Syria and Iraq while protecting those at risk for radicalization (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 15). In other words, this program can be used where appropriate, to provide support to people vulnerable for radicalization and to those who are already serving prison sentences (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 14) However, the disengagement program offered by Channel is not a matter of course in British prison, but is mainly used when the release of an individual is in the near future and there is still a need for some form of intervention or support prior to the final release (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 14).

While analysing the British government's Channel Duty Guidance, it is not totally clear whether the reintegration of former foreign fighters is emphasized or not. However, the report mentions that the 'support to address identified vulnerabilities' is part of the Channel program (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2016: 17). For example, to support individuals in their de-radicalization process, Channel stresses the importance to make a wide range of support accessible for those people, such as mainstream services, including "**health and education**, through to **specialist mentoring** or guidance to increase theological understanding and/or

challenge the claims of violent ideologies” (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 17). Additionally, this type of disengagement program can include “wider diversionary activities”, such as suitable training courses tailored to the specific condition of the concerned person. In other words, the design of the support package will depend on various factors: possible risk, vulnerability and local resources (ibid.). This means, that a person in the early stage of being drawn into terrorism needs a different program than a person who has already been involved in terrorist-related activities. According to the Channel Duty Guidance, the following types of support can be applied: **mentoring support contact, life skills, educational skills contact, careers contact, family support contact, health awareness contact, housing support contact** (ibid.). Thus, the involvement and cooperation between Channel and other partners, such as the whole community, family, relatives, mentors, social workers etc. are crucial for a successful program (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 5). Since 2014, this highly flexible program has been increasingly focusing on aspiring foreign fighters (Vidino 2014: 14) The National Police Chief’s Council (2016) states in a report, that 3,955 persons were referred to the Channel program between 1 January 2015 until 31 December 2015. To sum up, the disengagement program Channel emphasizes the importance of **community engagement**, such as **the inclusion of family, relatives, friends, social workers** etc. and refers to **aftercare** tools, such as career contact and housing support contact, but remains very vague in this area.

The British approach towards disengagement programs appears to be harsh, which has been especially shown by its punishment measures, such as travel documents confiscations, refusals and seizures, withdrawals of citizenship for dual-nationals (possibility of ‘stateless’), and expulsions of foreigners. In prison, foreign fighters are isolated in specific terrorist units where they receive disciplinary action and specific programs as part of disengagement programs. However, these programs are not well-implemented in prison, which give rise to the assumption that British detentions favour security over rehabilitation and reintegration. The only ‘soft’-orientated effort is the disengagement program Channel, which focuses on aspects such as community engagement (inclusion of family, relative, friends etc.), and aftercare (job, school, residence). Although the Channel program does not clearly state the objective of reintegrating former foreign fighters, it stresses the importance of job training skills, life skills, counselling etc. There is no evidence whether a ‘hard’-orientated approach towards disengagement programs contributes to the reduction of outward flows of foreign fighters, however the UK achieved its “real central operational aim”, namely preventing attacks (Gearson and Rosemont 2015: 1042). More specifically, it is the prevention of terrorist attacks that “remains what

matters most to counter-terrorism practitioners working in the security and intelligence agencies” (Gearson and Rosemont 2015: 1054) Therefore it is not surprising, that the UK continues to prioritize a security-sensitive nature, with the preference of punishing returning foreign fighters instead of focusing on their reintegration. In the case of the UK, the hypothesis is invalid: Although the country has only experienced two small-scale terrorist attacks during the last years, the government’s efforts to design disengagement programs are shaped by restrictive and repressive tools.

In the following chapter, a comparative analysis of the above outlined disengagement programs will be conducted, with the objective to investigate whether France, Germany and the United Kingdom show convergence regarding their programs when addressing returning foreign fighters.

5. Comparative analysis of disengagement programs in EU Member States

In the following chapter, the final part of this research sets out a comparative analysis of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the UK based on the findings presented in chapter 5. An in-depth comparative analysis is crucial, as it provides the necessary condition to investigate whether convergence of disengagement programs is present or absent in EU Member States. The first section of this chapter conducts a comparative analysis of disengagement programs of France, Germany and the UK and takes into account the relevant variable of terrorist threat. The final section investigates whether convergence has taken place in the context of this research, while considering the theory of policy convergence and the EU’s efforts to harmonize national counter-terrorism policies of chapter 2 with the objective to guide this examination and explain for its outcome.

5.1. Comparison of disengagement programs

Before conducting a comparative analysis of disengagement programs of France, Germany and the UK, the findings of chapter 4 are summarized in the following table:

Table 6. Findings of patterns of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the UK

Hard approach	France	Germany	United Kingdom
Expulsion	Present	Absent	Present
Withdrawal of citizenship	Present	Absent	Present
Preventive punishment, including revocation of identity card/ passport or the refusal to issue a passport	Present	Present	Present
Isolation in special terrorist units	Present	Absent	Present
Surveillance, monitoring	Present	Present	No information
Soft approach			
Rehabilitation in prison	Present but vague	Present	Present
Inclusion of family, relatives, friends	Present but vague	Present	Present but vague
Finding residence, job, school coaching	Absent	Present	Present but vague

Following the insights of Table 5, I will elaborate this comparison more in detail, to obtain an in-depth overview of differences and similarities regarding disengagement programs of France, Germany and the UK, a precondition to finally investigate whether the design and rationale of these programs converge.

Punishment

While considering Table 6, it becomes apparent that France and the UK are very similar when it comes to their ‘hard’ approaches towards disengagement policies, even though both countries are highly diverse in terms of their amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims. However, both governments currently have a high level of terrorist threat, France declared ‘the state of emergency’ and the UK classifies the threat posed by terrorism as ‘severe’, which in turn may be an explanation for their similar policies in terms of ‘hardness’. For instance, in France and the UK, ‘punishment’ is especially prioritized, as it has been shown by their policies regarding ‘expulsions’, ‘withdrawal of citizenship’ and various ‘preventive punishments’, such as the ‘revocation of travel documents’ or ‘the refusal to issue passports’. In both countries, expulsions can be conducted in case a suspected person poses a real terrorist threat to their internal security. This policy is linked to the withdrawal of citizenship: in France, it is permitted to strip a French citizen of its nationality if this person is French-born and possesses a second nationality, while in the UK the government introduced a policy to withdraw dual-nationals of British citizenship. In this context, the UK goes one step further, meaning that under some vague conditions, a citizen can become ‘stateless’ in case there is “reasonable ground to believe that they could acquire another nationality” (Lister 2015: 5). Moreover, the two countries stress ‘preventive punishments’ as essential when addressing returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq. In France, it is possible to revoke passports and identity cards to hinder individuals from traveling abroad to join terrorist organizations and to refuse the renewal of passports for people that have been registered for traveling to Syria and Iraq (Gouvernement Français 2016: 28). The British government regulates the withdrawal, cancellation and issue of passports against British citizens in the ‘Royal Prerogative’. As it has already been the case with the withdrawal of citizenship, the UK also has additional policies regarding preventive punishment, such as the temporarily retention of travel documents and the use of a ‘temporary exclusion order’. Consequently, a high level of terrorist threat can be a plausible explanation for France and the UK’s tendency of normalizing exceptional ‘hard’-orientated measures. In other words, a high threat perception “threatens to turn a generalized security threat into grounds for a constant state of emergency” and the preference for harsh policies towards disengagement programs. (Amnesty International 2016). The continuous implementation of those policies contributes to

the condition that disengagement programs in terms of ‘hardness’ become the new norm, which “is dangerous for a democracy based on rule of law” (Amnesty International 2016). For example, the law which provides the ability to withdraw the citizenship is a typical case “of a symbolic measure with questionable effect on the prevention of terrorism” (Boutin and Paulussen 2016: 3). According to a report, France and the UK’s high level of terrorist threat perception “is not an isolated issue, and should be seen as part of an increasingly tougher legislative stance on terrorism” (Boutin and Paulussen 2016: 3). In contrast to France and the UK, Germany only complies with one out of three policies in the dimension ‘punishment’, namely ‘preventive punishment’. Thus, the withdrawal of the identity card is permitted if there is proof that a person intends to travel to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. However, in comparison to France and the UK, the concerned person receives an alternative identity card with a strict travel prohibition. The same policy is applied for the revocation of passports, however, the German authorities are not allowed to confiscate passports of non-German citizens (Bundesministerium des Inneren 2015).

Prison

With regard to the dimension ‘prison’, France and the UK pursue disengagement measures that aim to isolate returning foreign fighters from other prisoners with the objective to prevent further radicalization. The only difference within this dimension is, that compared to the UK (establishment of “jihadi prison block”), France does not isolate foreign fighters in special terrorist units, but in sections that are only designed for radicalized individuals (Gouvernement Français 2016: 21). In contrast, Germany does not focus on isolating foreign fighters in special terrorist units.

Surveillance

Furthermore, France and Germany prioritize surveillance actions as an essential part of their disengagement programs. For instance, in France a policy (FIJAIT) has been deployed to control and evaluate the behaviour of suspects who returned from Syria and Iraq (Gouvernement Français 2016: 6). The supervision of terrorism-related individuals through monitoring their behaviour and detecting their terrorist network may lead to their disengagement, which becomes especially relevant in case a judicial procedure is still impossible (Gouvernement Français 2016: 30). The German government however established a ‘hard’- and ‘soft’-orientated approach towards the supervision of returning foreign fighters. While supervision in terms of ‘softness’ can be referred to so-called ‘Gefährderansprachen’ (hazard talks), the ‘harsh’ approach addresses the electronic surveillance through an ankle

monitoring. The inclusion of both ‘hard’- and ‘soft’-orientated surveillance actions reinforce the assumption that Germany is favouring a ‘balanced approach’ when designing their disengagement programs. In the dimension ‘surveillance’, it is difficult to classify whether monitoring terrorism-related suspects is part of the British disengagement programs, as neither CONTEST nor the disengagement program Channel mentions any information regarding the supervision of returning foreign fighters or after their release from prison. What we know is, that the UK’s intelligence ‘community’ is composed of the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), the Government Communications Head Quarters (GCHQ) and the Defence Intelligence Staff (Gregory 2005: 3), meaning that the country has a well-established domestic intelligence system. However, the intelligence and security services “existed in a kind of ‘limbo’ where the Government refused to allow open discussion of their function” (Gregory 2005: 3), which can still be an explanation for the lack of information on monitoring returning foreign fighters.

Reintegration

When analysing ‘soft’ approaches towards disengagement programs, Germany is not comparable to France and the UK. More specifically, the German government emphasizes ‘reintegration’, ‘community engagement’ and ‘aftercare’ as an essential part of its disengagement programs, while France and the UK remain more restricted towards their ‘soft’ approaches. In this context, Münkler’s concept of “heroische Gelassenheit” (heroic serenity) can explain Germany’s ‘soft’-orientated approach towards disengagement programs (Kemmesies 2006: 30). More specifically, the concept “heroische Gelassenheit”, which is also mentioned in a document of the German Federal Criminal Office (Bundeskriminalamt), signifies that in case of a terrorist attack, daily life should continue as usual to show that terrorism is not in the position to achieve its goals, namely to spread fear and horror (Kemmesies 2006: 31). In this context, the continuing with daily life rejects the application of exceptional, often ‘hard’ driven policies, such as it has been the case in France (‘state of emergency’) and the UK (‘severe’ threat level). On the contrary, the German government pursues a ‘balanced approach’ towards its disengagement programs, because as it has been shown above, exceptional repressive measures contribute to the risk of spreading panic and insecurity among the concerned population, which in turn may restrict an effective and consistent counter-terrorism approach. In France, rehabilitation in prison (‘rehabilitation and probation’) is only provided after an individual has left the isolated unit, but the procedure and content of this program is not stated in the Action Plan against Radicalization and Terrorism.

The lack of publicly available information on those programs demonstrates that reintegration of former foreign fighters is not a priority in France. On the contrary, Germany provides a program that is used to de-radicalize foreign fighters straight after they are detained in prison, including specific treatments and assistances, such as school and job education, social therapy, anti-violence training etc. (Bayrisches Staatsministerium der Justiz). The long-term reintegration into society is a key feature of German disengagement programs. Compared to France, the German initiatives to prevent and counter de-radicalization are extremely advanced. In the matter of reintegration, the British disengagement program Channel aims to address identified vulnerabilities of radicalized individuals, such as foreign fighters, in order to support their rehabilitation through a range of services in the field of health, education, theology etc. (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 17). Although Channel does not specify the reintegration of former foreign fighters into society, it can be argued that it provides diverse activities and tailored courses with the aim to reduce the threat posed by them while maintaining the internal security and preventing future terrorist attacks.

Community engagement

According to the French view towards counter-terrorism measures, the involvement of family, relatives and friends, as well as the integration of social networks, such as social and public services, are emphasized as important in the de-radicalization process and may contribute to a more effective disengagement from radicalization. However, in the French Rapport d'Information it is stated, that there is still a lack when it comes to the mobilisation of the whole society, such as the involvement of teachers, social workers, family, sport associations etc. in relation to disengagement initiatives (Benbassa and Troendlé 2017: 33). This flaw can be attributed to the failure of rehabilitation and reintegration centres in France so far and explains why official government documents only refer vaguely to community engagement. In Germany, the engagement of the whole society is an integral part of disengagement programs. Different from France, the involvement of the society is not only mentioned in terms of social networks, such as HAYAT (Germany) and the National Assistance and Radicalization Prevention Centre (France), but also in relation to disengagement programs in prison. The VPN's non-confrontational program emphasizes that the involvement of family and relatives helps "stabilising the young people after their release, of preventing them from becoming delinquent again and helping them maintain a distance from their old milieu" (Korn et al. 2015: 12). A central aspect of the counselling and de-radicalization network HAYAT is advising and working with the family and relatives of radicalized people, such as returnees from Syria and Iraq, to "eventually prevent, decelerate and invert the radicalization process" (HAYAT-

Deutschland Beratungsstelle Deradikalisierung). In other words, the focus is on supporting foreign fighters in their reintegration process through the involvement of the whole society. The UK differs from France and Germany in this matter. Although the importance of community engagement, such as family support contact is stated by Channel, the information remains very vague and is not further outlined in the program, which makes it difficult to assess whether this ‘soft’ approach is actually implemented, as it has been proved above that the UK is especially security-orientated when it comes to dealing with returning foreign fighters.

Aftercare

The dimension on which the three countries differ completely is ‘aftercare’: French disengagement programs do not refer to aftercare, Germany attaches much importance to this domain, while the UK stays quite vague once again. A reason for the absence of aftercare in French disengagement programs can be linked to the lack of clarity when it comes to the question of reintegrating former foreign fighters. In other words, as stated above, reintegration of those individuals is not a priority in France, which can explain the absence of supporting activities, such as providing help in finding a residence, job, school coaching etc. Moreover, Germany also mentions aftercare in the context of prison and reintegration. Disengagement programs in prison address aftercare measures, such as helping individuals improve their chance in the labour market, while offering personal and social skills, as well as conflict resolution skills (Korn et al. 2015: 12). Furthermore, HAYAT emphasizes aftercare in terms of assisting former foreign fighters in finding a job, education and residence after they are released from detention or are on probation. In the UK, aftercare is only mentioned in the Channel’s support package, which refers to activities such as career contact, educational skills contact, life skills and housing support contact (HM Government of the United Kingdom 2015: 17).

Finally, it can be concluded that France and the UK pursue a ‘hard’-orientated approach towards disengagement programs when addressing returning foreign fighters, while Germany applies a ‘balanced approach’, including a mix of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ policies. France’s ‘hard’ approach, such as the new adoption of “three terrorism-related laws as well as numerous decrees” can be a result of terrorist incidents between 2011-2016, that have led the government “to draft new stricter laws” (Boutin and Paulussen 2016: 3). This explanation is not adaptable to the UK, as the country only experienced 2 small-scale attacks in that period. However, its success “at achieving the ‘real’ central operational aim” through ‘hard’-orientated policies, namely preventing terrorist attacks on its territory, may be an explanation why its disengagement policies remain unchanged while showing a lack of strategic developments (Gearson and

Rosemont 2015: 1042). In other words, it can be argued that the prevention of attacks, fatalities and casualties “remains what matters most to counterterrorism practitioners working in the security and intelligence agencies (Gearson and Rosemont 2015: 1054) Lastly, Germany’s ‘balanced approach’ of disengagement programs can be justified by its liberal attitude of heroic serenity, which rejects the exclusive focus on ‘hard’ policies in the field of counter-terrorism and the dealing with returning foreign fighters.

The final section analyses whether convergence has taken place in the context of this research, while considering the theory of policy convergence and the EU’s efforts to harmonize national counter-terrorism policies to guide this investigation and explain its outcome.

5.2. Convergence? How can we explain the outcome?

Before answering the crucial research question of this thesis, I first need to refer once again to the theory of policy transfer and the EU’s effort in harmonizing national counter-terrorism policies, such as disengagement programs. In this context, the term policy transfer can be defined as a process in which specific policies of one political setting are adapted to another political setting, which in turn leads to the condition of policy convergence, based on the presumption that EU Member States face a similar threat posed by terrorism that can be solved in similar ways (Bennett 1991: 217). Thus, the process of policy convergence implies that Member States may tend to develop similar structures, processes and performances in the field of counter-terrorism over time, resulting in the condition that societies grow more alike and converge in the design of their policies (Bennett 1991: 215). Policy convergence is strongly linked to the process of harmonization, meaning that the implementation of new policies in the field of counter-terrorism is dependent on others, which is in this case the EU. In general, the EU has the role of facilitating the guidance of similar responses to similar threats, however policy convergence can be “incremental, irregular and uneven” and is dependent on the mutual recognition and willingness of various states, otherwise a continued divergence of policies is assumed (Bennett 1991: 227). The EU provides inspiration with its counter-terrorism policies to encourage Member States to implement a similar approach. With regard to the design of disengagement programs when addressing returning foreign fighters, the EU stresses the need for a ‘balanced approach’, while emphasizing the importance of preventive measures, such as the rehabilitation, reintegration and aftercare of former Islamic extremists. Hence, the EU’s tendency to guide and harmonize national counter-terrorism policies, gives rise to the assumption that Member States disengagement programs have developed towards convergence.

During this research, it has been analysed to what extent the EU Member States France, Germany and the United Kingdom have shown convergence with regard to the implementation of disengagement programs while addressing returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2016. While conducting a comparison of France, Germany and the UK, this analysis has shown that a certain degree of convergence has taken place in the domain of disengagement programs. According to the findings of the comparison above, France and the UK react in a similar manner when dealing with returning foreign fighters, and pursue a ‘hard’-orientated approach towards their disengagement programs. However, it is difficult to determine whether this outcome is a result of a policy transfer from the EU level to the national one, achieved by the EU’s effort to guide and harmonize counter-terrorism policies of its Member States. A more plausible explanation for their coherent approach in terms of ‘hardness’, is a process of policy transfer from one Member State to another, resulting from replicating effective practices and dominant perceptions of another powerful country (Gavrilovic 2016: 89). For example, as this research elucidated in section 3.1.2.1., France and the UK diverge extremely on the variables amount of terrorist attack and number of victims, although the British success in preventing terrorist attacks between 2011-2016 may be a reason why the design of British and French disengagement programs converge. More specifically, there is a high probability that the British counter-terrorism approach has become an inspirational guideline for France regarding the prevention of attacks, meaning that there is a policy transfer from the UK to France. Following this, it can be argued that France pursues the point of view, that the terrorist threat posed by returning foreign fighters can be solved in similar ways than in the UK, resulting in replicating its repressive and harsh policies, which leads to policy convergence towards their disengagement programs. As policy convergence refers to a constant process, rather than a static phenomenon, a completely coherent approach towards disengagement programs is not feasible, which in turn may account for the condition that France and the UK show differences towards their ‘hard’ approach. A further explanation for the French and British government’s preference of a repressive approach can be related back to their similar history with terrorism and the number of foreign fighters.

On the contrary, Germany’s disengagement programs only show a minimal degree of convergence with the French and British approach when addressing returning foreign fighters. In comparison to France and the UK, the German government pursues a ‘balanced approach’, like it is suggested by the EU. In this context, a policy transfer from the EU level to the national one may be present, however there is no proof for this assumption, as there are many other potential explanations for Germany’s divergent approach towards disengagement programs.

For instance, the attitude of heroic serenity could justify Germany's rejection to mainly focus on 'hard' policies when dealing with returning foreign fighters. In turn, this can be linked to a country's national context, meaning that the German attitude does not contain any reference to a EU dimension, as the consequences of a terrorist attack is a matter of that specific country and its counter measures are shaped by its own threat perception.

To conclude, the degree of convergence regarding disengagement programs is dependent on the willingness of EU Member States, otherwise a divergence of policies is assumed (Bennett 1991: 227). In this section of the thesis it has been shown, that only a certain degree of convergence regarding disengagement programs has taken place in France, Germany and the UK. Although this research identified a certain degree of convergence regarding disengagement programs, especially in France and the UK, it is difficult to prove whether this is a result of policy transfer or rather because of their similar history with terrorism or/ and number of foreign fighters. Further research has to be conducted to address this limitation.

6. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to investigate whether EU Member States pursue a coherent approach towards the design of their counter-terrorism policies. More specifically, the objective of this research was to answer the following research question: “To what extent have the EU Member States France, Germany and the United Kingdom shown convergence with regard to the implementation of disengagement programs while addressing returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2016 and how can we explain this?” Thus, the purpose of this thesis consisted of identifying differences and similarities of current disengagement programs in France, Germany and the UK when dealing with returning foreign fighters, which has been established through the assessment whether those programs prioritize a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ approach, which in turn accounts for the absence or presence of convergence.

This analysis used the theory of policy transfer, based on the idea that countries face similar threats that can be solved in similar ways, which contributes to a process of policy convergence. According to the theory of policy transfer, it is assumed that disengagement programs of EU Member States converge, as they face a similar threat posed by terrorism. On the other hand, there are strong arguments against convergence, arguing that states respond differently to a similar threat, which is in this context the level of ‘terrorist threat’, shaped by the amount of terrorist attacks and the number of victims. Nevertheless, this thesis hypothesized that “if convergence of disengagement programs is present in EU Member States, despite their differences in the level of terrorist threat, the proposition regarding the theory of policy transfer is proven to be validated”.

After having provided a structured overview of disengagement programs in France, Germany and the UK, a precondition was given to carry out a comparative analysis of those three cases. The findings of this comparison can be summarized in the following way: a ‘hard’-orientated approach is pursued by France and the UK, while Germany prioritizes a ‘balanced approach’, including a mix of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ measures towards their disengagement programs. Thus, it can be assumed that the French approach in terms of ‘hardness’ is influenced by the country’s high amount of terrorist attacks and number of victims between 2011-2016. However, this explanation is not applicable for the UK, as the country only experienced a small amount of terrorist incidents in that period, but its repressive approach may be justified by the British governments success in preventing terrorist attacks on its territory. This in turn restrains the government to revise and change the design of British disengagement programs. Lastly, the German preference of a ‘balanced’ approach towards disengagement programs can be

explained by its liberal attitude of heroic serenity, which rejects the exclusive focus on ‘hard’ disengagement policies when dealing with returning foreign fighters. The findings of the comparative analysis demonstrate that only a certain degree of convergence regarding disengagement programs has taken place in France, Germany and the UK, which means that it is difficult to assess whether the proposition of the theory of policy transfer is proven to be validated. Although this research identified a certain degree of convergence regarding disengagement programs, especially in France and the UK, it is difficult to prove whether this is a result of policy transfer or rather because of their similar history with terrorism or/ and number of foreign fighters. Finally, it can be concluded that the degree of convergence towards disengagement programs is dependent on the willingness of EU Member States.

These findings offer many promising avenues for further research. The period of this research is restricted to 2011-2016, however the current incidents in Europe, such as the cancellation of the German Festival “Rock am Ring” due to a serious terrorist threat and the terrorist attacks in the UK (Manchester and London), create a condition for additional research on this topic. In this context, it would be interesting to conduct further research on the effects of those incidents on national counter-terrorism policies with the objective to investigate whether such events contribute to a harsher approach towards disengagement programs. The current responses to the Manchester and London Bridge terrorist attacks perceive the assumption that the UK will become tougher in its counter-terrorism policies when dealing with prospective and returning foreign fighters. Although this discussion is not included in the scope of this research, further research may contribute to crucial findings and explanations for the absence or presence of convergence regarding disengagement programs in France, Germany and the UK.

Bibliography

Alderman, Liz (2016): Terror Threats Thaw Budgets Across Europe [online]. Available from: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/01/business/international/europe-training-financial-firepower-on-terrorism.html?_r=1 [Accessed 20 May 2017].

Alesina, Alberto/ Spolaore, Enrico/ Wacziarg, Romain (2005): Trade, Growth and The Size of Countries. Chapter 23. In: Aghion, Philipp/ Durlauf, Steven N. (2005): Handbook of Economic Growth, Volume 1B. North Holland: Elsevier, p. 1500-1522

Amnesty International (2016): France: Renewal of State of Emergency Risks Normalizing Exceptional Measures. Press Release [online]. Available from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/12/france-renewal-of-state-of-emergency-risks-normalizing-exceptional-measures/#> [Accessed 4 June 2017].

Assemblée Nationale (2015a): Projet de loi constitutionnelle de protection de la Nation. N° 3381 [online]. Available from: <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/projets/pl3381.pdf> [Accessed 28 May 2017].

Assemblée Nationale (2015b): Rapport Fait au nom de la Commission d'enquête sur la surveillance des filières et des individus djihadistes. N° 2828 [online]. Available from: <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/rap-enq/r2828.pdf> [Accessed 6 June 2017].

Bayrisches Staatsministerium der Justiz (n.d.): Extremismusbekämpfung im Justizvollzug [online]. Available from: https://www.justiz.bayern.de/justizvollzug/extremismusbekaempfung/#jump_0_3 [Accessed 30 May 2017].

Benbassa, Esther/ Troendlé, Catherine (2017): Rapport d'information. N° 438 [online]. Available from: <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r16-438/r16-4381.pdf> [Accessed 6 June 2017].

Bennett, Colin J. (1991): What is Policy Convergence and What Causes It? British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 21:2. Cambridge University Press, p. 215-233

Berczyk, Julia (2015): Returning from the 'IS'- Experiences from the counselling service HAYAT-Germany [online]. Available from: <http://www.sicherheitspolitik-blog.de/2015/03/20/returning-from-the-is-experiences-from-the-counseling-service-hayat-germany/> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

Bjørger, Tore (2005): Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, reality and ways forwards. Chapter 1: Introduction. United Kingdom: Routledge, p. 1-15

Bjørger, Tore/ Horgan, John (2009): Leaving Terrorism Behind. Individual and collective disengagement. New York: Routledge

Boutin, Bérénice/ Paulussen, Christophe (2016): From the Bataclan to Nice: A Critique of France's State of Emergency Regime. Policy Brief No. 01. Asser Institute: Centre for International & European Law

Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (2017a): Übersicht ausgewählter islamistisch-terroristischer Anschläge. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [online]. Available from: <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/zahlen-und-fakten-islamismus/zuf-is-uebersicht-ausgewaehlter-islamistischer-terroristischer-anschlaege> [Accessed 19 May 2017].

Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (2017b): Reisebewegung von Jihadisten Syrien/ Irak. Stand: 17. Mai 2017 [online]. Available from: <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/zahlen-und-fakten-islamismus/zuf-is-reisebewegungen-in-richtung-syrien-irak> [Accessed 29 May 2017].

Bundesministerium des Inneren (2015): Verhinderung von Reise radikalisierter Personen [online]. Available from: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/2015/01/bundesregierung-beschließt-aenderungen-des-personalausweisgesetzes-und-passgesetzes.html> [Accessed 30 May 2017].

- Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (2017): Bericht über französische Maßnahmen zur Deradikalisierung: Senatorinnen über harte Kritik [online]. Available from: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/radikalisierungspraevention/246017/bericht-ueber-franzoesische-massnahmen-zur-deradikalisierung-senatorinnen-ueben-harte-kritik> [Accessed 6 June 2017].
- Carter, Nancy/ Bryant-Lukosius, Denise/ DiCenso, Alba/ Blythe, Jennifer/ Neville, Alan J. (2014): The use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, Vol. 41:5, p. 545-547
- Collier, David (1993): The Comparative Method. Chapter 5. In: Finifter, Ada (1993): *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, p. 105-119
- Commission des lois (2017): Communiqué de presse. « Désendoctrinement, désenbrigadement et réinsertion des djihadistes en France et en Europe » : la mission d’information de la commission des lois du Sénat présente son bilan d’étape [online]. Available from: <http://www.lagazettedescommunes.com/telechargements/2017/02/cp-rapport-desendoctrinement.pdf> [Accessed 7 June 2017].
- Council of the European Union (2014): Revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism. 9956/14 [online]. Available from: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9956-2014-INIT/en/pdf> [Available from: 7 May 2017].
- Deutscher Bundestag (2017): Gesetzentwurf der Fraktion der CDU/CSU und SPD. Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Neustrukturierung des Bundeskriminalamtgesetzes. Drucksache 18/11163. Deutscher Bundestag
- Die Bundesregierung (2015): Personalausweisgesetz geändert. Kampf gegen internationalen Terrorismus [online]. Available from: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2015/04/2015-04-24-gesetz-staatsgefaehrliche-straftaten.html> [Accessed 30 May 2017].

Die Bundesregierung (2017): Bundesrat billigt Gesetz. Überwachung mit elektronischer Fußfessel [online]. Available from: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2017/02/2017-02-07-elektronische-fussfessel.html> [Accessed 30 May 2017].

Dolowitz, David P./ Marsh, David (2000): Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making. Governance, Volume 13:1, p. 5-23

European Council (2016): EU fight against terrorism [online]. Available from: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/?lang=de> [Accessed 19 April 2017].

European Council (2017): Response to foreign terrorist fighters and recent terrorist attacks in Europe [online]. Available from: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/foreign-fighters/> [Accessed 15 March 2017].

European Commission (2014): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response. COM(2013) 941 final [online]. Available from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com\(2013\)0941/com_com\(2013\)0941_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com(2013)0941/com_com(2013)0941_en.pdf) [Accessed 8 May 2017].

European Commission (2015): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The European Agenda on Security. COM(2015) 185 final [online]. Available from: <https://www.cepol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/european-agenda-security.pdf> [Accessed 7 May 2017].

European Commission (2016): Standard Eurobarometer 85. Public opinion in the European Union. European Commission

- European Council (2011): EU Action Plan on combating terrorism. 15893/1/10 REV 1 [online]. Available from: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2015893%202010%20REV%201> [Accessed 5 May 2017].
- European Parliament (2015): European Parliament Eurobarometer (EB/EP 84.1). Parlemeter 2015 – Part II. European Parliament, p. 2-90
- Europol (2016): European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT). The Netherlands: European Police Office.
- Fink, Naureen Chowdhury/ Hearne, Ellie B. (2008): Beyond Terrorism: Deradicalization and Disengagement from Violent Extremism. International Peace Institute, p. 1-20
- Friedrichs, Jörg (2008): Fighting Terrorism and Drugs. Europe and international police cooperation. United Kingdom: Routledge
- Gavrilovic, Jelena (2016): The European Fight Against Terrorism. Diversity in unity or unity in diversity? [online]. Available from: <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/36786/> [Accessed 5 June 2017].
- Gearson, John/ Rosemont, Hugo (2015): CONTEST as Strategy: Reassessing Britain's Counterterrorism Approach. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Vol. 38: 12, p. 1038-1064.
- Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (2014): Foreign Fighters under International Law. Academy Briefing No. 7. Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, p. 3-61
- George, Alexander L./ Bennett, Andrew (2004): Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 3-25
- Golafshani, Nahid (2003): Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. The Qualitative Report, Vol. 8:4, p. 597-606.

- Gouvernement Français (2015): #StopDjihadisme: contre le djihadisme, tous vigilants et tous acteurs [online]. Available from: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/stopdjihadisme-contre-le-djihadisme-tous-vigilants-et-tous-acteurs> [Accessed 6 June 2017].
- Gouvernement Français (2016): Plan d'action contre la radicalization et le terrorisme. Dossier de presse – 9 mai 2016 [online]. Available from: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/liseuse/7050/master/projet/Plan-d-action-contre-la-radicalisation-et-le-terrorisme.pdf> [Accessed 6 June 2017].
- Gouvernement Français (2017): Lutte contre le terrorisme [online]. Available from: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/action/la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme> [Accessed 7 June 2017].
- GOV.UK (2016a): Speech. Home Secretary: International action needed to tackle terrorism [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-international-action-needed-to-tackle-terrorism> [Accessed 31 May 2017].
- GOV.UK (2016b): Collection. CONTEST [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/contest> [Accessed 31 May 2017].
- Gower, Melanie (2015): Deprivation of British citizenship and withdrawal of passport facilities [online]. Available from: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06820> [Accessed 31 May 2017].
- Gregory, Frank (2005): Intelligence-led Counter-terrorism: A Brief Analysis of the UK Domestic Intelligence System's Response to 9/11 and the Implications of the London Bombings of 7 July 2005. Real Instituto Elcano, ARI No. 94/2005
- Grimwood, Gabrielle Garton (2016): Radicalisation in prisons in England and Wales. Briefing Paper Number 07487. United Kingdom: House of Commons Library
- Hadfield, Amelia (2005): The EU and Strategic Culture: Virtual Identity Vs Uploaded Preferences. Journal of Contemporary European Research, Volume 1, Issue 1, p. 59-72.

- Hantais, Linda (2009): International Comparative Research. Theory, Methods and Practice. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- HAYAT-Deutschland Beratungstelle Deradikalisierung (n.d.): HAYAT-Germany. Counseling/ De-radicalization/ Network [online]. Available from: <http://hayat-deutschland.de/english/> [Accessed 30 May 2017].
- Hix, Simon/ Høyland, Bjørn (2011): The Political System of the European Union. Third Edition. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan
- HM Government of the United Kingdom (2015): CONTEST. The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report 2014. United Kingdom: William Lea Group, Stationery Office.
- HM Government of the United Kingdom (2015): Channel Duty Guidance. Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism. Statutory guidance for Channel panel members and partners of local panels. United Kingdom: Home Office Press Office.
- HM Government of the United Kingdom (2016): CONTEST. The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report 2015. United Kingdom: William Lea Group, Stationery Office.
- Hoefl, Gabriel (2015): 'Soft' Approach to Counter-Terrorism: An Exploration of the Benefits of Deradicalization Programs. International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, p. 3-66
- Horgan, John (2009): Deradicalization or Disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiative in Need of Evaluation. *Revista de Psicología Social* 24.2, p. 291-298
- Kemmesies, Uwe E. (2006): Terrorismus und Extremismus – der Zukunft auf der Spur. Beiträge zur Entwicklungsdynamik von Terrorismus und Extremismus – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer prognostischen Empirie. Deutschland: Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) Kriminlistisches Institut.

- Keohane, Daniel (2006): Implementing the EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Intelligence, Emergencies, and Foreign Policy. Chapter 3. In: Monar, Jörg/ Mahncke, Dieter (2006): International Terrorism. A European Response to a Global Threat? Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang
- Knill, Christoph (2005): Introduction: Cross-national policy convergence: concepts, approaches and explanatory factors. Journal of European Public Policy, Vol. 12:5, p. 764-774
- Korn, Judy/ Koschmieder, Christine/ Lotthammer, Cornelia/ Mücke, Thomas (2015): Taking Responsibility – Breaking away from Hate and Violence. Berlin: Violence Prevention Network, 4-30
- Lavoix, Helene (2017): The impact of the Islamic State Terrorist Attacks – Geopolitics, Uncertainties and Business [online]. Available from: <https://www.redanalysis.org/2017/01/16/impact-islamic-state-terrorist-attacks-geopolitics-uncertainties-business-4/> [Accessed 20 April 2017].
- Lehne, Stefan (2012): The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy [online]. Available from: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2012/07/05/big-three-in-eu-foreign-policy-pub-48759> [Accessed 20 May 2017].
- Lellouche, Pierre (2017): Une guerre sans fin. Chapter 5. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf
- Le Devin, Willy (2017): Interview. Déradicalisation: «Il faut une troisième voie entre prison et milieu ouvert»[online]. Available from: http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/03/07/deradicalisation-il-faut-une-troisieme-voie-entre-prison-et-milieu-ouvert_1554035 [Accessed 7 June 2017].
- Lijphart, Arend (1975): The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research. Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 8:2. Sage Publications, p. 158-177
- Lister, Charles (2015): Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration? Policy Briefing. USA: Brookings DoHA Center Publications

- Martínez, Carlos Conde (n.d.): Policy transfer in the EU: a model for MENA countries? [online]. Available from: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan030445.pdf> [Accessed 14 March 2017].
- Mayring, Philipp (2014): Qualitative Content Analysis. theoretical foundation and basic procedures and software solution [online]. Available from: http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/39517/ssoar-2014-mayring-Qualitative_content_analysis_theoretical_foundation.pdf?sequence=1 [Accessed 29 April 2017].
- Meyer, Christoph O. (2005): Convergence Towards a European Strategic Culture? A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms. *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 11(4), p. 523-549
- Ministère de l'Intérieur (2016): Réinsertion et citoyenneté [online]. Available from: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/SG-CIPDR/Prevenir-la-radicalisation/Prevenir-la-radicalisation/Reinsertion-et-citoyennete> [Accessed 6 June 2017].
- Monar, Jörg (2007): Common Threat and Common Response? The European Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its Problems. *Journal compilation, Government and Opposition*, Vol. 43(3), p. 292-313.
- National Police Chief's Council (2016): Freedom of Information Request Reference Number: 000026/16. United Kingdom: National Police Chief's Council
- Nohrstedt, Daniel/ Hansén, Dan (2010): Converging Under Pressure? Counterterrorism Policy Developments in the European Union Member States. *Public Administration*, Vol. 88:1, p. 190-210
- Official Journal of the European Union (2012): Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [online]. Available from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=en> [Accessed 7 May 2017].

Pietrasanta, Sébastien (2015): La déradicalisation outil de lute contre le terrorism [online]. Available from: <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/154000455.pdf> [Accessed 6 June 2017].

Radicalisation Awareness Network (2013): Declaration of Good Practices for Engagement with Foreign Fighters for Prevention, Outreach, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration [online]. Available from: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/RAN-Declaration-Good-Practices-for-Engagement-with-Foreign-Fighters.pdf> [Accessed 5 May 2017].

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) (2016): Foreign fighter returnees & the reintegration challenge [online]. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_foreign_fighter_returnees_reintegration_challenge_112016_en.pdf [Accessed 6 June 2017].

Riding, Alan (1994): Hijacked Airliner Forced to France [online]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/26/world/hijacked-airliner-forced-to-france.html> [Accessed 20 May 2017].

Riding, Alan (2002): French Court Sentences 2 for Role in 1995 Bombings That Killed 8 [online]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/01/world/french-court-sentences-2-for-role-in-1995-bombings-that-killed-8.html> [Accessed 20 May 2017].

Rineheart, Jason (2010): Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency. Perspectives on Terrorism Vol. 4, Issue 5, p. 31-47

Schmid, Alex P. (2005): Prevention of terrorism: towards a multi-pronged approach. Chapter 18. In: Bjørge, Tore (2005): Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, reality and ways forwards. United Kingdom: Routledge, p. 223-240

Seawright, Jason/ Gerring, John (2008): Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research. A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. Political Research Quarterly, Vol. 61, no. 2, p. 294-308

Security Service MI5 (n.d.): Threat Levels [online]. Available from: <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels> [Accessed 31 May 2017].

The Guardian (2017): Guantánamo UK? Durham jail first to have ‘terrorist only’ wing [online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/31/guantanamo-uk-durham-jail-first-to-have-terrorists-only-wing> [Accessed 1 June 2017].

United Nations (2016): In Meeting on Countering Cross Border Movement of Terrorism, Secretary-General Calls for Urgent Action against ‘Phenomenon’ of Foreign Fighters. United Nations, Press Release SG/SM/17974

Van Ginkel, Bibi/ Entemann, Eva (Eds.) (2016): The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles, Threats & Policies. The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. The Hague, no. 2, p. 3-68

Vidino, Lorenzo/ Snetkov, Aglaya/ Pighi, Livio (2014): Foreign Fighters: An Overview of Responses in Eleven Countries. Zurich: Center for Security Studies, p. 4-17

Violence Prevention Network (n.d.): Deradicalisation, Intervention and Prevention. Berlin: Violence Prevention Network e.V., p. 4-22

Waxman, Dov (2011): Living with terror, not Living in Terror: The Impact of Chronic Terrorism on Israeli Society. Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 5, no. 5-6, p. 4-26

Wensink, Wim/ Warmenhoven, Bas/ Haasnoot, Roos/ Wesselink, Rob/ Van Ginkel, Bibi/ Wittendorp, Stef/ Paulussen, Christophe/ Douma, Wybe/ Boutin, Bérénice, Güven, Onur/ Rijken, Thomas (2017): The European Union’s Policies on Counter-Terrorism. Relevance, Coherence and Effectiveness. PE 583.124. Policy Department for Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs, p. 2-212

Wintour, Patrick (2015): David Cameron to boost security spending after Paris attacks [online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/david-cameron-to-boost-security-spending-after-paris-attacks> [Accessed 20 May 2017].

Wright, Joanne (1991): Terrorist Propaganda. The Red Army Faction and the Provisional IRA, 1968-86. USA: Palgrave Macmillan

Zeit Online (2016): De Maizière will Videoüberwachung ausbauen [online]. Available from: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-10/innere-sicherheit-terrorbekämpfung-thomas-de-maizi-re-videoueberwachung> [Accessed 20 May 2017].