

ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION IN BELGIUM

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ABSTRACT

Belgium has become a major hotbed for radicalization in Europe. At least 380 Belgians have travelled to Syria as foreign fighters, giving Belgium the largest number of jihadists per capita at 33.9 fighters per one million residents. Radicalized Belgian Muslims are significantly involved not only in terrorist attacks in Belgium, but throughout Europe. What has caused Belgium to become this fertile a ground for Islamic radicalization? This paper points to the low levels of employment, high levels of discrimination, low educational achievement, poor integration, and inconsistent governmental funding pervasive among the Belgian Muslim community. These poor demographic realities of the Belgian Muslim community might be significant in providing a fertile ground for radical Islamic parties and organizations to influence and recruit. This paper analyzes Islamic radicalization in Belgium. The first part of this paper examines Belgian-Muslim demographics, including population, integration, political participation, and organization. Then, Belgian Islamic radicalization is examined through the theoretical frameworks of both McCauley and Moskaleiko and Social Movement Theory. To conclude, this paper considers governmental responses and recommendations for future preventative actions.

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

Table of Contents

MUSLIMS IN BELGIUM: BACKGROUND, DEMOGRAPHICS AND ORGANIZATIONS	3
<i>Population and Immigration</i>	3
<i>Muslim Population in Belgium</i>	3
<i>Muslim Immigration into Belgium</i>	5
<i>Dispersion of Muslims in Belgium</i>	8
<i>Integration and Religious Freedom</i>	10
<i>Integration of Muslims in Belgium</i>	10
<i>Religious Freedom and Governmental Funding</i>	12
<i>Employment, Housing, and Education</i>	14
<i>Employment & Housing Discrimination</i>	14
<i>Educational Achievement</i>	15
<i>Islamic Schools</i>	16
<i>Political Involvement</i>	17
<i>Muslim Political Participation</i>	17
<i>Islamist Parties in Belgium</i>	18
<i>Mosques, Islamic Centers, and Organizations</i>	23
<i>Mosques and Islamic Centers</i>	23
<i>Organizations</i>	26
RADICALIZATION: A THEORIETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	30
<i>Defining Radicalization</i>	30
<i>Mechanisms of Radicalization – Existing Theories and Models</i>	33
<i>McCauley and Moskalkenko: Pyramid Model & Mechanisms of Radicalization</i>	33
<i>Social Movement Theory</i>	35
RADICALIZATION IN BELIGUM.....	37
<i>Radicalization Theory – Applied</i>	37
<i>Demographics</i>	38
<i>Strained Environmental Conditions</i>	38
<i>Organizations: Framing the Grievances</i>	40
<i>Availability of Mechanisms / Pathways to Radicalization</i>	41
<i>Select Cases</i>	42
GOVERNMENT RESPONSES	44
<i>Limiting Islamist Political Involvement</i>	45
<i>Banning Extremist Organizations – Sharia4Belgium</i>	45
<i>Banning Headscarves</i>	46
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	50

MUSLIMS IN BELGIUM: BACKGROUND, DEMOGRAPHICS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Population and Immigration

Muslim Population in Belgium

Belgian law and society are generally respectful of religious liberty¹. Knowing this, it should perhaps be unsurprising that it hosts a large Muslim population – the second highest per capita in Europe².

Roughly 6% of the Belgian population is identified as Muslim³, making Islam the most prevalent minority religion in the country⁴. The other minority religious affiliations in Belgium include non-Catholic Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists⁵. Making up the bulk of the population, are the Roman Catholics (estimated at 50% of the Belgian population), the unaffiliated (32%), and the atheists (9%)⁶. It is important to emphasize that many of these and forthcoming numbers and figures are approximations. The Belgium government does not request religious affiliation information in a national census⁷, affecting the availability of reliable demographic data on Belgian Muslims.

¹ “Religious Freedom in Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/religious-freedom-in-belgium>.

² Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

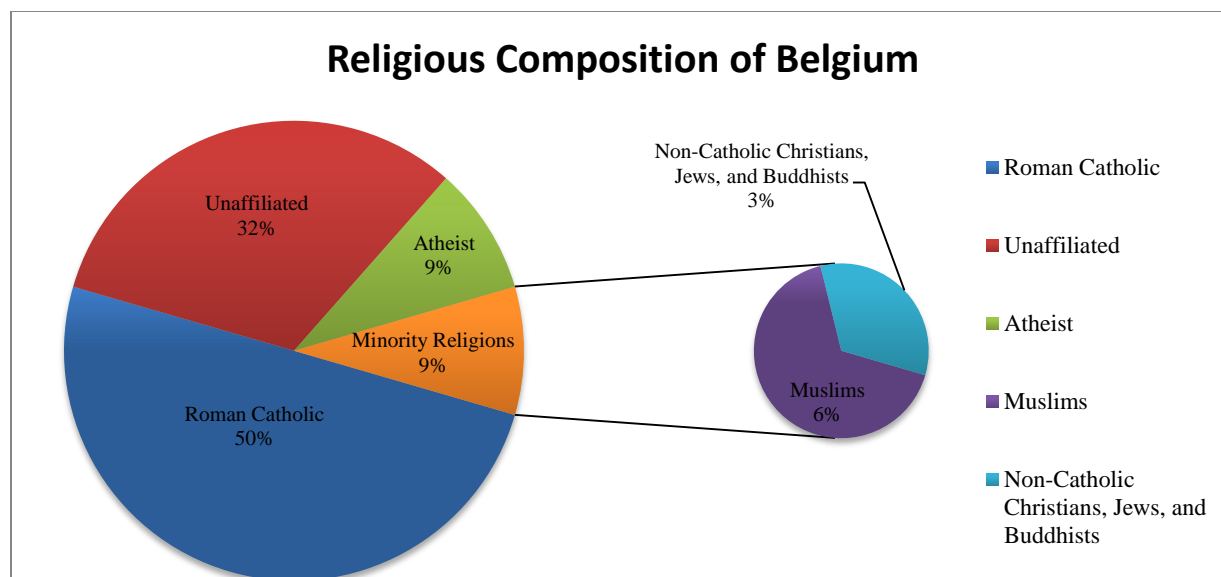
³ Ibid.

⁴ “Table: Religious Composition by Country, in Numbers,” *Pew Forum*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/table-religious-composition-by-country-in-numbers/>.

⁵ “Religious Freedom in Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/religious-freedom-in-belgium>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.



The Muslim population of Belgium has been growing rapidly, almost doubling in the past ten years. In 2005, Muslims numbered 364,000⁸ (out of a population total of 10,478,617⁹): comprising roughly 3.5% of the Belgian population¹⁰. In 2010, Muslims numbered 630,000¹¹ and comprised roughly 5.9% of the Belgian population¹². In 2014, Muslims numbered 650,000 and comprised roughly 6% of the Belgian population¹³.

⁸ "Belgium," *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

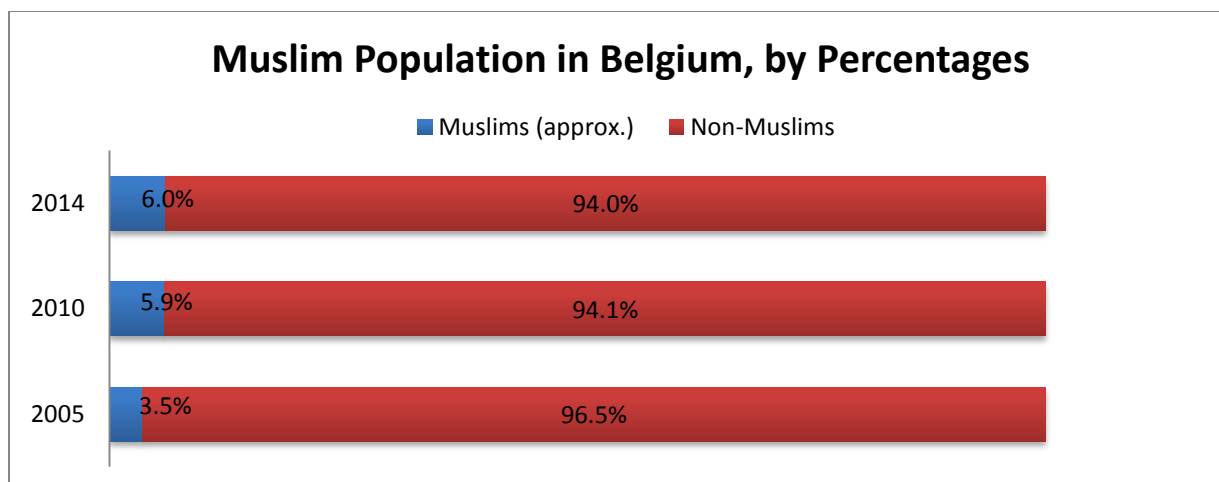
⁹ "Population, total," *World Bank*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?page=1>.

¹⁰ "Belgium," *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

¹¹ "Table: Religious Composition by Country, in Numbers," *Pew Forum*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/table-religious-composition-by-country-in-numbers/>.

¹² "Table: Religious Composition by Country, in Percentages," *Pew Forum*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/table-religious-composition-by-country-in-percentages/>.

¹³ Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013," *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.



As noted above, Belgium has the second highest Muslim population per capita within the European Union. Only France (with an estimated 7.5% Muslims) has a greater proportion of Muslims¹⁴. Nearly tied with Belgium is the Netherlands, whose Muslim population also comprises roughly 6% of its total population¹⁵.

Muslim Immigration into Belgium

Until very recently, Belgian immigration policies have been responsive in nature, rather than in pursuit of a long-term vision¹⁶. In response to the shortage of labor workers following the two World Wars, Belgium adopted policies set to attract immigrant labor migration, including the establishment of bilateral migration agreements¹⁷.

After World War I, foreign labor was attracted first from surrounding countries, and then from Poland and Italy¹⁸. When labor shortages were satisfied in the 1930s, the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Milica Petrovic, "Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Marco Martiniello and Andrea Rea, "Belgium's Immigration Policy Brings Renewal and Challenges," *Migration Policy Institute*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgiums-immigration-policy-brings-renewal-and-challenges>.

government restricted immigration and introduced immigration laws that are the basis for Belgium immigration policy today¹⁹.

After World War II, when there was again a shortage of workers, Belgium designed *gastarbeider* policies to combat the labour shortages²⁰. Belgium turned back to foreign labor, and signed bilateral migration agreements with Italy in 1946, Spain in 1956, Greece in 1957, Morocco in 1964, Turkey in 1964, Tunisia in 1969, Algeria in 1970, and Yugoslavia in 1970²¹. It was a consequence of these agreements that Belgium experienced its first main wave of Muslim immigrants in the early 1960s²². In the first half of the decade, at which point Belgium had only signed agreements with Muslim countries Morocco and Turkey, Muslim immigrants mostly came from those two countries²³. By the end of the decade, after agreements were also signed with Muslim countries Tunisia and Algeria, Muslim immigrants began also originating from those two countries²⁴. Statistical data from 2003 reveals that Muslim populations in Belgium continue to reflect the impact of these agreements, as the two largest Muslim groups in the country are Moroccans (125,000) and Turks (70,000), followed by Algerians (8,500) and Tunisians (4,000)²⁵. Between 2003 and 2007, it is estimated that these group population counts all doubled²⁶.

In addition to the establishment of bilateral migration agreements following World War II, the Belgian government eased up on immigration law enforcement, to allow for

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Spyros A. Sofos and Roza Tsagarousianou, *Islam in Europe: Public Spaces and Civic Networks* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²¹ Marco Martiniello and Andrea Rea, "Belgium's Immigration Policy Brings Renewal and Challenges," *Migration Policy Institute*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgiums-immigration-policy-brings-renewal-and-challenges>.

²² "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

²³ "Belgium," *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

²⁴ "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

increased numbers of foreign workers to easily acquire Belgium residency²⁷. By the late 1960s, however, as the economic situation worsened and unemployment rose, the government returned to a strict enforcement of immigration legislation²⁸. By the 1970s, new laws were put forth to further restrict foreign immigration²⁹. In 1974, Belgium imposed new strict conditions on the entry of foreign labor³⁰, including formal caps of economic migration³¹, while remaining highly liberal regarding family reunification and asylum seeking³². Consequently, while the first wave of Muslim immigrants was economic, the second was family reunification. Muslim immigrants continued to arrive in Belgium, but primarily as family reuniting or as asylum seekers³³.

Family migration now represents almost 50% of the overall immigration to Belgium, although this may be expected to decline following recent government actions. In 2011, the government both established stricter conditions for family reunification, and strengthened its legal framework to combat marriage fraud³⁴.

Following family reunification, the second- and third-leading immigrant groups have been asylum seekers and students, respectively. Nevertheless, Muslim student immigrants to Belgium are less prevalent than European Union student immigrants to Belgium (65% of Belgium's foreign student population hold European Union citizenship) – making this category less relevant in the study of Muslims in Belgium.

Asylum seeking immigrants to Belgium have been steady rising throughout the past few decades, especially from unstable Muslim-populated countries. Consequently, Belgium appears to be in the midst of a third, political asylum-dominated wave of

²⁷ Marco Martiniello and Andrea Rea, "Belgium's Immigration Policy Brings Renewal and Challenges," *Migration Policy Institute*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgiums-immigration-policy-brings-renewal-and-challenges>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

³¹ Milica Petrovic, "Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

³² "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

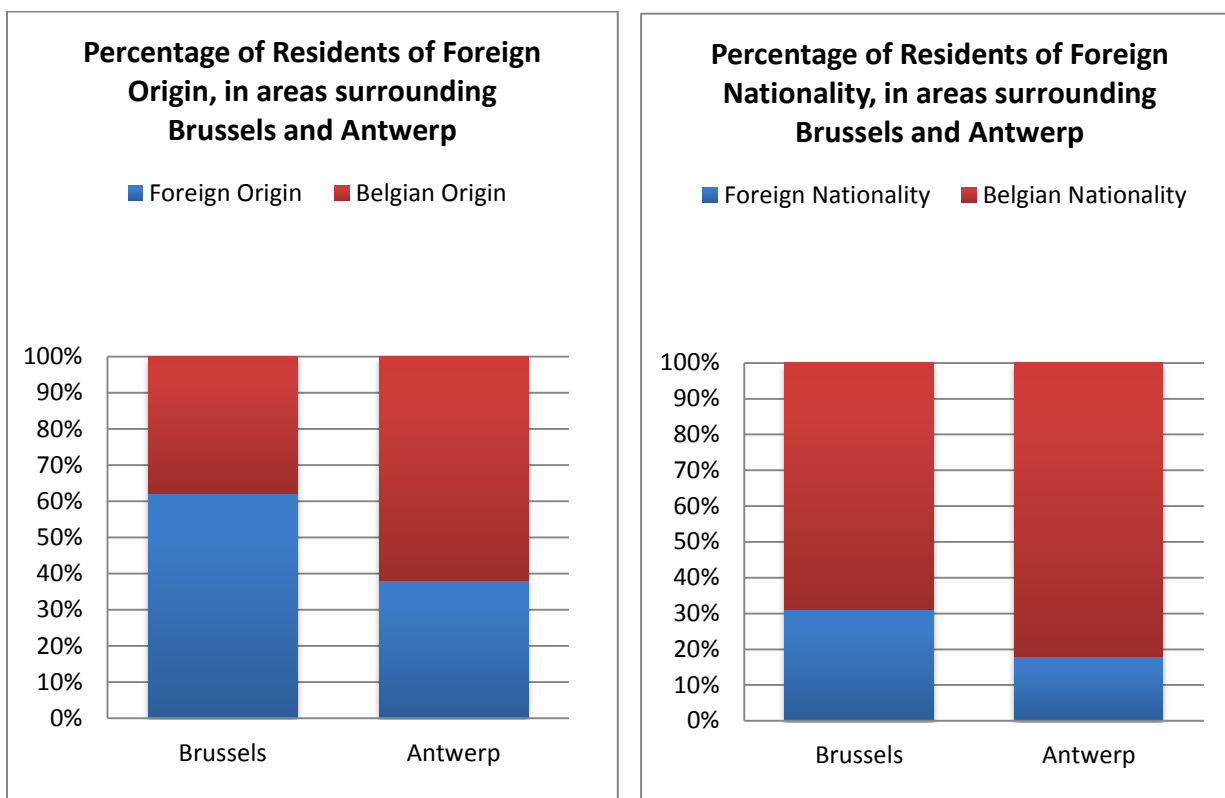
³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Milica Petrovic, "Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

immigration. Throughout these three immigration waves, Belgium has become home to an incredibly large Muslim population, especially in the areas surrounding its major cities of Antwerp and Brussels³⁵.

Dispersion of Muslims in Belgium

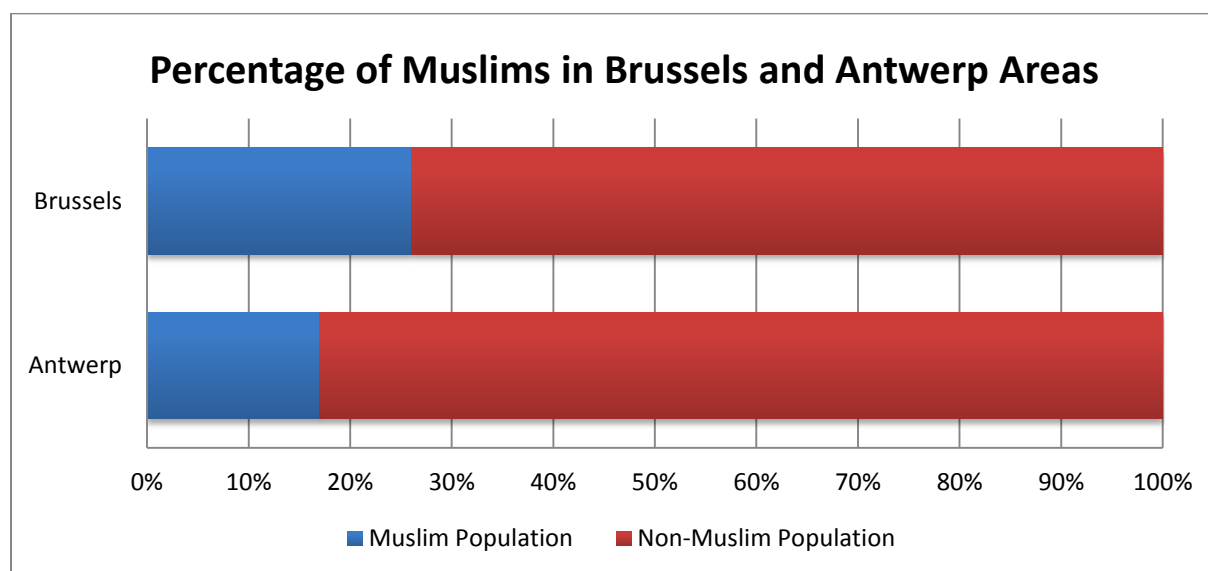
The areas surrounding the two largest Belgian cities – Antwerp and Brussels – attract a disproportionate amount of foreign immigrants. Almost 38% of Antwerp’s population, and almost 62% of Brussels’ population, is comprised of residents of foreign origin. Roughly 18% of Antwerp’s population, and roughly 31% of Brussels’ population, is comprised of residents of current foreign nationality³⁶.



³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Muslim immigrants specifically also tend to reside in areas surrounding Belgium’s largest cities. Antwerp’s population consists of roughly 17% Muslims, while Brussels’ population consists of roughly 26% Muslims (or 300,000 Muslims)³⁷. The Muslim populations of both Brussels and Antwerp contain large numbers of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants – as Moroccans and Turks are the two largest Muslim groups in the country³⁸, and two of the oldest. As discussed in the previous section, the Moroccan and Turkish populations immigrated to Belgium beginning with the first economic wave of immigration. It was from that first wave, that Muslim workers began settling in the regions surrounding Brussels and Antwerp, two cities where the demand for labour was pressing³⁹. Brussels specifically is home to more than 50% of the Moroccan Muslim immigrants⁴⁰. Additionally, both major cities are home to a growing number of Muslim converts⁴¹.



³⁷ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

³⁸ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

³⁹ Spyros A. Sofos and Roza Tsagarousianou, *Islam in Europe: Public Spaces and Civic Networks* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁴⁰ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁴¹ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

Integration and Religious Freedom

Integration of Muslims in Belgium

Similar to its policies on immigration, Belgian integration policies have (until recently) been responsive in nature, rather than in pursuit of a long-term vision⁴². The Belgian Nationality Code lacked formal integration conditions, putting Belgium behind countries like the Netherlands and France. Naturally, establishing integration legislation in Belgium is complicated by the country's dual linguistic and political reality. From the mid-1990s, Wallonia and Flanders held separate integration policies, with Wallonia consistently focusing on general social inclusion and Flanders shifting focus from minority policies to overall inclusive policies⁴³. Until recently, there was a lack of integration legislation at the federal level. This may be because, at the very beginning, Belgian authorities believed that the foreign workers would come to Belgium, do their work, and return to their home country. Consequently, there was a noticeable lack of preparation, program, or means of integration.

Beginning in 2012, integration legislation became a national priority. New legislation (passed in 2012⁴⁴, and implemented in 2013⁴⁵) stipulated formal integration requirements for naturalization, including minimum residence of five years, proof of economic participation⁴⁶, knowledge of at least one of the national languages, and proof of social integration⁴⁷.

⁴² Milica Petrovic, "Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Alan Hope, "Who wants to be a Belgian citizen?" *FlandersToday*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.flandertoday.eu/current-affairs/who-wants-be-belgian-citizen>.

⁴⁶ Milica Petrovic, "Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

⁴⁷ Alan Hope, "Who wants to be a Belgian citizen?" *FlandersToday*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.flandertoday.eu/current-affairs/who-wants-be-belgian-citizen>.

These legislative changes drastically shifted Belgian integration policy. Prior to 2012, naturalization was accelerated, as it was thought to integrate immigrants⁴⁸. Currently, integration is seen as a prerequisite for naturalization, as only the integrated immigrants could be eligible for Belgian citizenship⁴⁹. These changes have been controversial, as they broaden the possibilities for loss of Belgian citizenship, and limit family reunification⁵⁰. Moreover, its effectiveness is questionable given the continuingly low labor market integration of non-European Union immigrants in Belgium⁵¹. Nevertheless, it is clear that the earlier mindset of integration naturally following naturalization was ineffective, especially for Muslim immigrants. One 2007 study found that Muslim immigrants to Belgium identified more strongly with their origin country than with Belgium – and this result was significantly stronger than that of non-Muslim immigrants⁵². Another survey found that only 30% of Muslim males ages 15-25 (and only 25% of Muslim females in that age group) were found as feeling accepted by Flemish society⁵³. The same survey also found that over 50% of Muslims youths in Belgium felt they were victims of racism: 1/3 of respondents claimed personal discrimination against at school, and 1/5 claimed personal discrimination at work⁵⁴. 60% of Muslim youths surveyed believed they would never be integrated into Belgian society, and although 93% of all respondents held Belgian citizenship, 42% consider themselves foreigners in Belgium⁵⁵. In addition to a clear ineffectiveness of the prior laissez-faire⁵⁶ mindset, there is some preliminary evidence of integration effectiveness following the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Milica Petrovic, “Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration,” *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Vassilis Saroglou and François Mathijsen, “Religion, multiple identities, and acculturation: A study of Muslim immigrants in Belgium,” *Archive for the psychology of Religion* 29 (2007): 177-198.

⁵³ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Milica Petrovic, “Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration,” *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

2013 legislative reforms. The 2014 Migrant Integration Policy Index ranked Belgium at number 7 (out of 38 European countries), with the “slightly favourable” score of 67⁵⁷. Still, this index does not appear to adequately measure the perceptions of Muslim youth, highlighting the importance of further research to measure the effectiveness of the new integration legislation.

Possibly impending successful integration, is the widespread intolerance among Belgians. According to one survey, 25% of Belgians show intolerant attitudes, above the EU average of 14%⁵⁸. Perhaps related, another study found that more than one-third of native Belgians are significantly bothered by women wearing headscarves in public, and one-half would prefer them to be banned⁵⁹.

Religious Freedom and Governmental Funding

The Belgian government supports freedom of religion by granting a recognized status to seven particular religious communities: Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Non-Religious Philosophical Communities⁶⁰. These seven recognized religious communities are legally entitled to governmental funding and subsidization⁶¹.

Islam became a state-recognized religion in 1974⁶², at which point they became entitled to the government subsidies. However, the Muslim community’s actual receipt of funds has been vacillating over the years. At first, it was the Muslim community’s lack of representative institution that prevented them from obtaining their share of funds from the

⁵⁷ “Key Findings: Belgium, 2014,” *Migrant Integration Policy Index*, <http://www.mipex.eu/belgium>.

⁵⁸ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ “Religious Freedom in Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/religious-freedom-in-belgium>.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

government⁶³. Partly as a response, the Belgian government facilitated the creation of the Muslim Executive of Belgium⁶⁴ quickly in 1974⁶⁵.

Almost since its enactment, the Muslim Executive of Belgium has had a rocky relationship with the Belgian government⁶⁶. Accused by the government of holding fundamentalist ties, the money earmarked for the Muslim Executive of Belgium has been tied up a number of times⁶⁷, causing Muslim institutions of Belgium to go largely unfunded since 1974^{68 69}.

Two additional legalities prevent the Muslim community from consistently receiving governmental subsidies. First, that recognition of a mosque is a precondition for it to receive funding⁷⁰. Not all mosques in Belgium are recognized officially, and this is a long and bureaucratic process for the Muslim community⁷¹. Consequently, although there are approximately 328 mosques in Belgium – 162 in Flanders, 77 in the Brussels region, and 89 in Wallonia – only a fraction of these are officially recognized⁷². Approximately 43 mosques are recognized for funding by the Walloon regional government, 24 are recognized by the Flemish government, and eight are recognized by the Brussels regional government⁷³. Second, mosques in Flanders are now required to use the Dutch language with the exception of rituals conducted in Arabic, tolerate women and homosexuals, and

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ “Muslim Executive of Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/muslim-executive-of-belgium>.

⁶⁶ “Belgium,” *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁶⁹ The Muslim Executive of Belgium will be discussed further in Section 5 of this paper.

⁷⁰ Jocelyne Cesari, Nadia Fadil, Farid El Asri and Sarah Bracke, “Belgium,” *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁷¹ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁷² Jocelyne Cesari, Nadia Fadil, Farid El Asri and Sarah Bracke, “Belgium,” *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁷³ Ibid.

cease preaching of extremist ideas⁷⁴. These additional conditions mandated by the administration of the Flemish region in January 2005, apply only to Islam⁷⁵.

Employment, Housing, and Education

Employment & Housing Discrimination

There is no data specifically on Muslim employment levels in Belgium. However, there are statistics suggesting foreign-born Belgian residents have unemployment rates more than twice that of native-born Belgian citizens⁷⁶.

Many studies point to systemic discrimination as an operating cause of low foreign-born employment⁷⁷. Scholars have found that job applications are rejected based on Muslim names, and there are many cases of Muslims with professional degrees remaining unemployed for years⁷⁸.

Housing discrimination is also rampant⁷⁹. Scholars have found apartment applications are also rejected based on Muslim names, and ALARM (Action pour le logement accessible aux réfugiés à Molenbeek) has confirmed a substantial bias exists against asylum seekers searching for housing⁸⁰.

Employment and housing discrimination disproportionately affects Muslims from North African communities: including both immigrant and first generation. For example, 40% of North Africans reported first-hand experience of housing discrimination⁸¹. This disproportionality suggests that discrimination may be more ethnic than religious⁸².

⁷⁴ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Jocelyne Cesari, Nadia Fadil, Farid El Asri and Sarah Bracke, “Belgium,” *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁷⁹ Spyros A. Sofos and Roza Tsagarousianou, *Islam in Europe: Public Spaces and Civic Networks* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

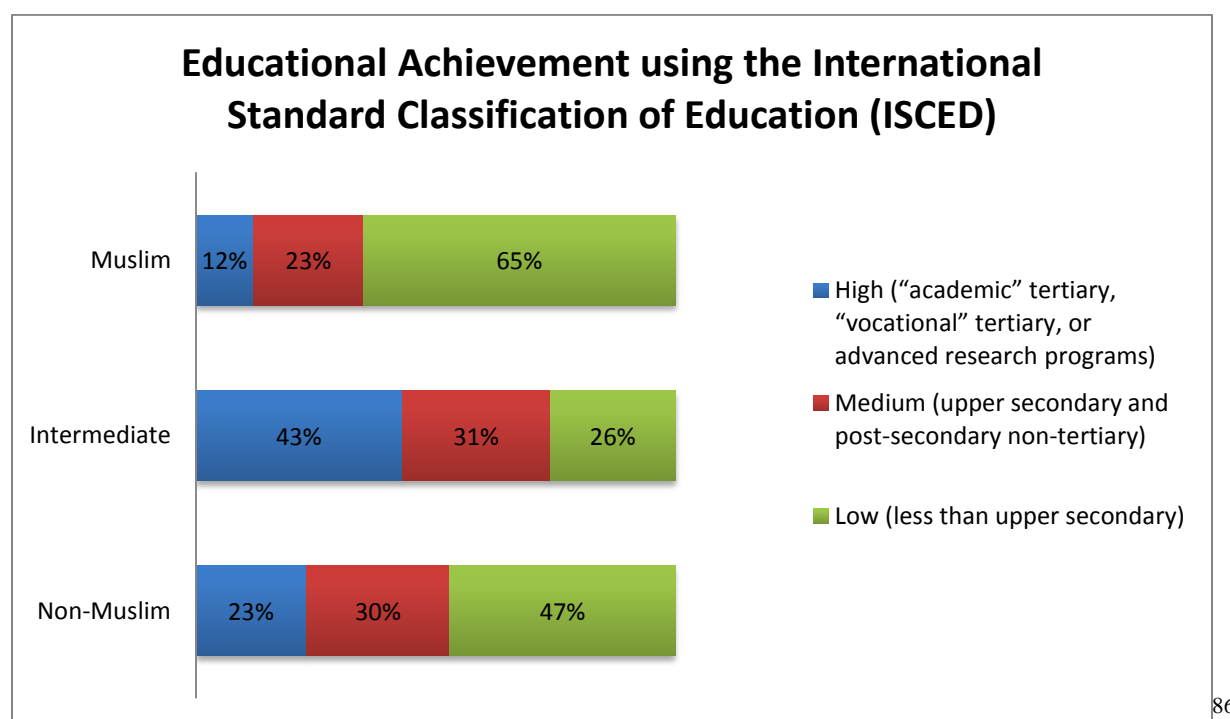
⁸⁰ Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Educational Achievement

Muslims in Belgium disproportionately achieve low education levels⁸³. Using the International Standard Classification of Education, outlined below, only 12% of Muslims hold high educational achievement, while a staggering 65% hold low educational achievement⁸⁴. In contrast, 23% of non-Muslims hold high educational achievement, and only 47% of non-Muslims hold low educational achievement⁸⁵.



⁸³ Jocelyne Cesari, Nadia Fakil, Farid El Asri and Sarah Bracke, "Belgium," *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁸⁴ Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Islamic Schools

The Belgian government has granted its Muslim community the right to both publically funded Islamic education programs in public schools, and publically subsidized Islamic private schools⁸⁷.

In fall 2007, the Muslim community of Belgium opened its first Islamic School⁸⁸. Named the Avicenna Islamic School, this institution receives no governmental subsidies, and is not yet recognized by the Belgian government⁸⁹. This may be partly a consequence of the rocky relationship between the Muslim Executive of Belgium and the Belgium government⁹⁰. This means that Avicenna school diplomas have no official value, and graduates must pass a Belgian public examination in order to receive an officially recognized high school diploma⁹¹. The Avicenna school is open to Muslim and non-Muslim children of both genders, with an enrollment fee of 1800 euros⁹². While the school is conservative (and right-wing) Islamist, Johan Leman of the Brussels Foyer Integration Centre has contended that the mosque leaders are not militant or anti-democracy⁹³. The Avicenna school is additionally a refuge of sorts for female students to wear headscarves without persecution⁹⁴.

Islamic education is also administered within the public school system, and has been since before the establishment of the Avicenna school in 2007⁹⁵. In the public school system, all students must enroll in either non-denominational ethics classes, or religious classes⁹⁶. The Muslim community is entitled to provide teachers for Islamic instruction, at government expense⁹⁷. Consequently, Islamic education has been available

⁸⁷ “Islamic Education in Europe,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/key-issues/education/>.

⁸⁸ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ “Islamic Education in Europe,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/key-issues/education/>.

⁹² “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁹³ “Islamic Education in Europe,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/key-issues/education/>.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

to public school students since at least 1975⁹⁸. Since 1998, the Muslim Executive of Belgium increased its involvement, by developing the curricula for these classes, and recommending public school teachers for Islamic religious instruction⁹⁹.

Political Involvement

Muslim Political Participation

Muslims are increasingly participating in Belgian political life. Within the Brussels Parliament, more than one-fifth of parliament members are Muslim in origin¹⁰⁰. Representing a first in the entire European Union, one of these Brussels members wears a headscarf¹⁰¹. This high degree of Muslim political participation is not limited to the Brussels-Capital region, and is not limited to only recent years. Over a decade ago, following the federal elections of 2003, six Belgian Muslims served in the national parliament: Fauzaya Talhaoui, Dalila Douifi, Nahima Lanjri, Fatma Pehlivan, Meryem Kacar, and Talbia Belhouari¹⁰². More than simply federal participation, Belgian Muslims are active politically in the European Parliament, and have been for over a decade. For instance, Said El Khadraoui began serving in the European Parliament in 2003¹⁰³.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Islamic Education in Europe,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/key-issues/education/>.

¹⁰⁰ Fatima Zibouh, “Muslim Political Participation in Belgium: An Exceptional Political Representation in Europe,” in *Muslim Political Participation in Europe*, ed. Jorgen S. Nielsen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 23.

¹⁰¹ Fatima Zibouh, “Muslim Political Participation in Belgium: An Exceptional Political Representation in Europe,” in *Muslim Political Participation in Europe*, ed. Jorgen S. Nielsen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 17.

¹⁰² “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Growth in Number and Percentage of Muslim MPs in Brussels-Capital Parliament		
	Number of MPs	Percentage of the Total Number of Seats
1989	0	0%
1995	4	5.3%
1999	9	12%
2004	17	19.1%
2009	20	22.5%

104

Islamist Parties in Belgium

More than simply participating in existing Belgian political parties, Muslims in Belgium have created many of their own. Until recently, Islamist party creations have been more attempts than successes. Parti Noor, then Parti Citoyenneté et Prospérité (PCP), Parti des Jeunes Musulmans (PJM), Musulmans.be, Égalité, and Resist, all achieved only limited electoral success¹⁰⁵. It was only with the formation of the Islam Party – and their successful election of two representatives in 2012¹⁰⁶ – that Islamic parties in Belgium became a significant issue.

Parti Noor

Parti Noor was Belgium's first Islamic party, founded by Redouane Ahrouch in 1999¹⁰⁷. Parti Noor was developed partly in reaction to the secular Muslims beginning to

¹⁰⁴ Fatima Zibouh, "Muslim Political Participation in Belgium: An Exceptional Political Representation in Europe," in *Muslim Political Participation in Europe*, ed. Jorgen S. Nielsen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 23.

¹⁰⁵ Sergio Castaño Riaño, "The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium," *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 141.

¹⁰⁶ Sergio Castaño Riaño, "The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium," *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 144.

¹⁰⁷ Sergio Castaño Riaño, "The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium," *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 141.

be involved in the Belgian political scene¹⁰⁸. Ideologically conservative, Parti Noor aimed to defend Islamic values (even if contrary to the Belgian constitution), and to offer an Islamic social and political alternative to the population¹⁰⁹. Promoting a 40-point program based on Sharia law, Parti Noor promoted teenage marriage, gender segregation in public spaces, the creation of an official Islamic alms fund, the restoration of capital punishment, the redesigning of the Belgian judiciary to comply with Sharia law, the prohibition of alcohol and cigarettes, the prohibition of gambling and the lottery, and the abolishment of interest payments in the Belgian banking sector¹¹⁰. Despite widespread controversy over issues such as forced marriage and death penalty, Parti Noor continued to defend Islamic values and reject European lifestyle elements, such as alcohol consumption¹¹¹. As a result of their poor electoral success – having only gotten 1,037 votes¹¹² – Parti Noor shifted their strategy from one of attracting voters, to a more defiant one of convincing voters *away* from other secular political groups¹¹³. This shift in strategy, however, caused Parti Noor to lose followers, and disband in 2007¹¹⁴.

Parti Citoyenneté et Prospérité (PCP)

In 2003, Jean-François Bastin and Basam Ayashi co-founded a new Islamic party, called Parti Citoyenneté et Prospérité (PCP), which translates to Party of Citizenship and Prosperity¹¹⁵. PCP was founded in the wake of the Molenbeek Belgian Islamic Center,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Soeren Kern, “Belgium Will Become an Islamic State,” *Gatestone Institute*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3442/belgium-islamic-state>.

¹¹¹ Sergio Castaño Riaño, “The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium,” *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 141.

¹¹² Felice Dassetto, *L’Iris et le Croissant: Bruxelles et L’Islam au Défi de la Co-inclusion* (Louvain: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011), 132.

¹¹³ Sergio Castaño Riaño, “The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium,” *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 141.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Sergio Castaño Riaño, “The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium,” *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 142.

with the aim of promoting the presence of traditional Islam¹¹⁶. Bastin – a convert to Islam – positioned his party as defender of Muslim rights, focusing on the controversy surrounding Islamic veils in schools¹¹⁷. Bastin and Ayashi promoted Islamic values within the context of Belgian democracy. As a result of their moderate ideological position – and their avoidance of controversial issues, learned from Noor – PCP attained modest results. Nevertheless, they did not achieve a significant enough percentage of the vote to gain a seat in parliament. This spawned an internal debate between Bastin and Ayashi regarding appropriate strategy for the next election, causing Bastin to split off and form a new Islamic party – the Parti des Jeunes Musulmans (PJM)¹¹⁸.

Parti des Jeunes Musulmans (PJM)

Bastin’s Parti des Jeunes Musulmans (PJM) – translated as Muslim Youth Party – became the major competitor of Ayashi’s PCP. While Ayashi realized his new strategy of committing to hardline, controversial issues, Bastin’s PJM stuck to PCP’s original moderate Islamic ideological position. In the next election, PJM gained over 2,000 votes more than PCP. This revealed the major influence held by Bastin over the Muslim population. After PJM’s success over PCP, PCP declined¹¹⁹.

Musulmans.be

Despite PJM’s moderate success, Bastin formed a new party for the 2009 regional elections, together with Redouane Ahrouch: called Musulmans.be¹²⁰. Musulmans.be was moderately successful, with 4,055 votes in the 2009 election^{121 122}.

¹¹⁶ Marie-Thérèse Coenen, *L’Etat de la Belgique: 1989-2004: Quinze Années à la Charnière du Siècle* (Bruxelles: De Boeck & Larcier s.a., 2004), 174.

¹¹⁷ Sergio Castaño Riaño, “The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium,” *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 142.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Felice Dassetto, *L’Iris et le Croissant: Bruxelles et L’Islam au Défi de la Co-inclusion* (Louvain: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011), 132.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Égalité

One of Musulmans.be’s competitors in the 2009 regional elections, Égalité was formed as a coalition between the Parti du Travail de Belgique (PTB) (a Marxist-Leninist Party) and Belgian Muslims¹²³. Égalité – although not exactly an Islamist party – earned 4,289 votes in 2009, and 5,041 votes in 2010^{124 125}.

Votes for Islamist Parties (and the Coalition Égalité) in Brussels-Capital Elections					
	Noor	PCP	PJM	Musulmans.be	Égalité
Legislatives 1999	1,037	--	--	--	--
Legislatives 2003	819	7,740	--	--	--
Regionals 2004	--	3,281	4,214	--	--
Legislatives 2007	--	--	4,135	--	--
Regionals 2009	--	--	--	4,055	4,289
Legislatives 2010	--	--	--	--	5,041

¹²⁶

Resist

Égalité was not the first coalition involving the Parti du Travail de Belgique (PTB). In 2003, the Arab European League allied itself with the PTB in order to increase its public presence¹²⁷. The coalition, called Resist (also not exactly an Islamist party), got

¹²² Platform and Ideology remain unknown; no further information is available on publically accessible databases.

¹²³ Felice Dassetto, *L’Iris et le Croissant: Bruxelles et L’Islam au Défi de la Co-inclusion* (Louvain: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011), 132.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Platform and Ideology remain unknown; no further information is available on publically accessible databases.

¹²⁶ Felice Dassetto, *L’Iris et le Croissant: Bruxelles et L’Islam au Défi de la Co-inclusion* (Louvain: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011), 132.

¹²⁷ Sergio Castaño Riaño, “The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium,” *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 143.

over 10,000 votes and achieved widespread popular support¹²⁸. In reaction, authorities became involved with leaders' almost-illegal attachments to Hezbollah, and Resist dissolved¹²⁹. This ideologically far left coalition did not use religious discourse¹³⁰. Consequently, it cannot be classified as an Islamist party¹³¹, although it remains indicative of Islamic political involvement.

Islam Party

Only the most recently established Islam Party has achieved electoral success. The Islam Party, created and headed by Redouane Ahrouch, elected two local representatives in 2012: one in Molenbeek and one in Anderlecht¹³². In 2012, the Islam Party had the support of 5150 voters, spread across the three municipalities of Molenbeek, Anderlecht, and Brussels-Vile¹³³. In Molenbeek and Anderlecht, the Islam Party achieved 4.1% of the votes, but the percentage of votes in Brussels-Vile was insufficient to elect a representative¹³⁴. Ahrouch, the founder also of Parti Noor and Musulmans.be, has contended that his agenda for the Islam Party is unchanged¹³⁵. Ahrouch strategizes sensitizing the population, and convincing them of the importance of Islamic people and Islamic laws – so that the establishment of an Islamic state (the party's stated end goal) becomes easily achieved¹³⁶. The Islam Party purposefully does not have the word "Arab" in its name, in order to more effectively reach the Turkish Muslim immigrants who

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Theodoros Koutroubas, Ward Vloeberghs and Zeynep Yanasmayan, *Political, Religious and Ethnic Radicalisation Among Muslims in Belgium* (MICROCON Policy Working Paper 5, Brighton: MICROCON).

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Sergio Castaño Riaño, "The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium," *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 144.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Soeren Kern, "Belgium Will Become an Islamic State," *Gatestone Institute*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3442/belgium-islamic-state>.

¹³⁶ Sergio Castaño Riaño, "The Political Influence of Islam in Belgium," *Partecipazione e conflitto* 7 no. 1 (2014): 144.

identify not with an Arab identity but with Islamic values¹³⁷. Similar to the PJM, the Islam Party positions itself as a party for all Muslims, who have felt excluded from Belgium society¹³⁸.

Mosques, Islamic Centers, and Organizations

Mosques and Islamic Centers

Belgium houses an estimated 328 mosques, although the majority of them are not recognized¹³⁹. Of these, approximately 162 mosques are located in Flanders, 77 are located in the Brussels region, and 89 are located in Wallonia¹⁴⁰. Approximately 43 mosques are recognized for funding by the Walloon regional government, 24 are recognized by the Flemish government, and eight are recognized by the Brussels regional government¹⁴¹.

Belgian mosques throughout the country (in Wallonia, Flanders, and the Brussels region) are generally organized by ethnicity or nationality¹⁴². For instance, in Wallonia, 44 mosques are Moroccan while 45 are Turkish. In Flanders, 67 are Turkish and 82 and Arab¹⁴³. The exact proportions in the Brussels region are unclear.

The majority of Belgian mosques are located discreetly in simple converted buildings, with only a small minority displaying classical architecture elements of domes and minarets¹⁴⁴. One such classically designed mosque is the Grand Mosque of Brussels.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Jocelyne Cesari, Nadia Fadil, Farid El Asri and Sarah Bracke, "Belgium," *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Mohamed El Battiui, "Imams in Belgium: Integration Factor or Radicalisation Instrument?" in *Islamic Movements of Europe: Public Religion and Islamophobia in the Modern World*, ed. Frank Peter and Rafael Ortega (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

The Grand Mosque of Brussels / The Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium

Located in Brussels' downtown area, in the Cinquantenaire Park, the Grand Mosque of Brussels is the oldest mosque in Brussels¹⁴⁵. The Grand Mosque of Brussels is also the seat of the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium¹⁴⁶, the de facto representative of Muslims in Belgium prior to the formation of the Muslim Executive¹⁴⁷.

The Grand Mosque of Brussels was originally located in a small rented building, funded by the Muslim embassies in Belgium¹⁴⁸. It was only in 1967, during a visit by the Saudi Arabian King (King Fayçal), that the renovation process began¹⁴⁹. The Grand Mosque was moved and reconstructed, and a new Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium was built, completely funded by Saudi Arabia¹⁵⁰. Consequently, the ambassador of Saudi Arabia chairs the Islamic Centre's board of trustees¹⁵¹. In 1982, the Centre was given a yearly budget by the Muslim World League¹⁵². The Grand Mosque of Brussels is Sunni in denomination. The Grand Mosque of Brussels has not been conclusively linked to terrorism or radicalization.

Rida Mosque

The overwhelming majority of Belgian Muslims are Sunni in orientation¹⁵³, but Shiite Belgian mosques continue to endure. The largest Shia mosque in Brussels is the Rida Mosque¹⁵⁴. In early 2012, Rida Mosque suffered an arson attack in which the imam

¹⁴⁵ "Cinquantenaire Park – Brussels," *Crescentrating*, <http://www.crescentrating.com/belguim-attractions-for-muslim-travelers/item/1829-cinquantenaire-park-brussels-for-muslim-travelers.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

¹⁴⁸ "Historical overview," *Islamic and Cultural Center of Belgium*, <http://www.centreislamique.be/en/node/161>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

¹⁵² "Historical overview," *Islamic and Cultural Center of Belgium*, <http://www.centreislamique.be/en/node/161>.

¹⁵³ Palash Ghosh, "Imam Killed in Belgian Mosque Arson Attack," *International Business Times*, March 13, 2012, <http://www.ibtimes.com/imam-killed-belgian-mosque-arson-attack-424414>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

was killed¹⁵⁵. The attack, as well as previous threats against the mosque, was linked to the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Syria¹⁵⁶. Rida Mosque itself, however, has not been linked to acts of terrorism or radicalization. Rida Mosque is located in the district of Anderlecht, in Brussels¹⁵⁷.

Masjid Annasr

Masjid Annasr is the only mosque in the notoriously volatile city of Vilvoorde¹⁵⁸, an industrial suburb of Brussels¹⁵⁹. The small city of Vilvoorde is a hotbed for radicalized youth and foreign fighters¹⁶⁰. Located just 10 kilometres north of Brussels¹⁶¹, Vilvoorde is a “hardscrabble Brussels suburb where marginalized Muslim youths have proved susceptible to quick radicalization”¹⁶², according to the Washington Post.

Located in one of Belgium’s many simple converted buildings¹⁶³, it would be easy to hastily characterize Annasr Mosque as a radicalization hub. However, it is unclear whether or not that is indeed the case. Mimoun Aquichouh, chairman of Annasr Mosque, discussed with the media the estimated 28 Vilvoorde residents fighting in Syria. He

¹⁵⁵ Ferry Biedermann, “Mosque attack linked to Syria strife,” *The National*, March 14, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/europe/mosque-attack-linked-to-syria-strife>.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Reuters, “Muslim leaders call for calm after Brussels mosque attack,” *ArabianBusiness.com*, March 13, 2012, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/muslim-leaders-call-for-calm-after-brussels-mosque-attack-449756.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Birnbaum, “Belgian Muslims face renewed anger, alienation after attacks in Paris,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/after-paris-attacks-belgian-muslims-face-renewed-fight/2015/01/14/823d8f40-9b62-11e4-96cc-e858eba91ced_story.html.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Birnbaum, “Anti-Muslim tensions rise in Belgium following Paris terror attacks,” *thestar.com*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/01/16/anti-muslim-tensions-rise-in-belgium-following-paris-terror-attacks.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Birnbaum, “Belgian Muslims face renewed anger, alienation after attacks in Paris,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/after-paris-attacks-belgian-muslims-face-renewed-fight/2015/01/14/823d8f40-9b62-11e4-96cc-e858eba91ced_story.html.

¹⁶¹ Michael Birnbaum, “Anti-Muslim tensions rise in Belgium following Paris terror attacks,” *thestar.com*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/01/16/anti-muslim-tensions-rise-in-belgium-following-paris-terror-attacks.html>.

¹⁶² Michael Birnbaum, “Belgian Muslims face renewed anger, alienation after attacks in Paris,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/after-paris-attacks-belgian-muslims-face-renewed-fight/2015/01/14/823d8f40-9b62-11e4-96cc-e858eba91ced_story.html.

¹⁶³ Lachlan Carmichael, “Personal struggles turn some youth to jihad,” *The Daily Star Lebanon*, October 23, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Oct-23/275022-personal-struggles-turn-some-youth-to-jihad.ashx>.

claimed he was unable to intervene due to the unpredictability of the foreign fighter phenomenon¹⁶⁴. Aquichouh asserted of his region, “it’s easy to convince people of this radicalization. They don’t go to school and don’t really know their religion”¹⁶⁵.

There is some academic support for the assertion that it is more organizations than mosques that are responsible for radicalization of European youth¹⁶⁶. Belgian mosques are run by immigrant imams who often do not speak the same language as their congregation; it may be difficult for them to prevent youth from being influenced by radical preachers and organizations¹⁶⁷.

Organizations

Muslim Executive of Belgium

As discussed in previous sections, the Muslim Executive of Belgium was created in 1974¹⁶⁸ partly as a response to the governmental recognition of Islam¹⁶⁹. With the official recognition, came the opportunity for government subsidies, if a representative body was established¹⁷⁰. So it was, and the Muslim Executive of Belgium was formed, facilitated by the Belgian government¹⁷¹. The Muslim Executive of Belgium was created in order to facilitate communication and cooperation between the Belgian Muslim community and the national government¹⁷². Unfortunately, government subsidies of the Belgian Muslim community have been far from consistent, due to the rocky relationship

¹⁶⁴ Michael Birnbaum, “Belgian Muslims face renewed anger, alienation after attacks in Paris,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/after-paris-attacks-belgian-muslims-face-renewed-fight/2015/01/14/823d8f40-9b62-11e4-96cc-e858eba91ced_story.html.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Mohamed El Battiui, “Imams in Belgium: Integration Factor or Radicalisation Instrument?” in *Islamic Movements of Europe: Public Religion and Islamophobia in the Modern World*, ed. Frank Peter and Rafael Ortega (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ “Muslim Executive of Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/muslim-executive-of-belgium>.

¹⁶⁹ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² “Muslim Executive of Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/muslim-executive-of-belgium>.

between the organization and the government¹⁷³. The relationship began to deteriorate quickly after concerns regarding the growing role of fundamentalism within the Muslim Executive came to light¹⁷⁴. Consequently, the Muslim Executive dissolved in 1992 to make way for a new Muslim Executive to be created in 1993. Although created in 1993, communication and cooperation with the government was delayed when the new Muslim Executive postponed its elections for official posts until 1998¹⁷⁵.

Despite its unstable past, the Muslim Executive is currently operational. The Executive is comprised of 17 diverse members. 7 members are Moroccan Muslims; 4 are Turkish Muslims; 3 are Muslims of other nationalities; and 3 are Muslim converts¹⁷⁶. Currently, the Muslim Executive advocates on behalf of the Muslim community it represents. The Executive has been especially active in challenging the government's headscarf ban¹⁷⁷. The extent of the Executive's fundamentalist ties remains unclear.

The Arab European League

The Arab European League (AEL) was created in Antwerp, Belgium, in 2000¹⁷⁸. The AEL aims to defend civil rights of Arabs in Europe¹⁷⁹, but has been linked to homophobia¹⁸⁰, anti-Semitism¹⁸¹, and arguably support of terrorism¹⁸².

Dyab Abou Jahjah, a political asylum-seeker from Lebanon in Belgium, leads the AEL¹⁸³. Although the AEL itself has not been conclusively linked to terrorism, Jahjah – portrayed often as a Belgian Malcolm X – publically supports acts of terror, including the

¹⁷³ “Belgium,” *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

¹⁷⁴ “Muslim Executive of Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/muslim-executive-of-belgium>.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Michael Birnbaum, “Why is tiny Belgium Europe’s jihad-recruiting hub?” *Chicago Tribune*, January 17, 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-belgium-jihadist-20150117-story.html>.

¹⁷⁸ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Brian R. Farmer, *Radical Islam in the West: Ideology and Challenge* (McFarland: McFarland, 2010), 46.

¹⁸¹ “Dutch court acquits Arab group over cartoon,” *BBC News*, April 22, 2010,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8638841.stm>.

¹⁸² Brian R. Farmer, *Radical Islam in the West: Ideology and Challenge* (McFarland: McFarland, 2010), 46.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Madrid bombing of 2004. The AEL rejects homosexuality, praises Saddam Hussein, and denies the legitimacy of Judeo-Christian civilization¹⁸⁴.

The AEL was also involved in the formation of the coalition Resist, discussed in Section 4. After Resist was relatively unsuccessful in the 2003 elections, Jahjah announced the creation of a new party, the Muslim Democratic Party, which never seemed to get off the ground¹⁸⁵.

The Arab European League – true to its transnational name – is currently growing branches in both France and the Netherlands¹⁸⁶. However, in the last few years, Jahjah disappeared from Belgium; it seems he went to fight in Lebanon against Israel in 2006.

Sharia4Belgium

Sharia4Belgium – a Salafist group, with a pro-sharia ideology – was the main hub of radicalization in Belgium, and worked to move foreign fighters to Syria¹⁸⁷. Although now the organization is a designated terrorist organization¹⁸⁸, Sharia4Belgium operated in Belgium for many years as a legitimate Muslim organization, until the extent of their extremism was revealed.

Sharia4Belgium surfaced in 2010, following the model of Islam4UK, an Islamist organization formed by Omar Bakri and Anjem Choudary in 2008¹⁸⁹. Almost from the outset, Sharia4Belgium was clearly articulating that the organization aimed to implement Sharia law throughout Belgium. Sharia4Belgium appealed strongly to Belgian Muslims

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Melodie Bouchaud, “‘Sharia4Belgium’ Leader and Dozens of Other Militants Are Sentenced to Jail Time,” *VICE News*, February 12, 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/sharia4belgium-leader-and-dozens-of-other-militants-are-sentenced-to-jail-time>.

¹⁸⁸ Andrew Higgins, “Head of Belgian Group Said to Recruit Fighters for Syria Gets 12-Year Term,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/world/europe/fouad-belkacem-sharia4belgium-verdict-trial-belgium.html>.

¹⁸⁹ Melodie Bouchaud, “‘Sharia4Belgium’ Leader and Dozens of Other Militants Are Sentenced to Jail Time,” *VICE News*, February 12, 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/sharia4belgium-leader-and-dozens-of-other-militants-are-sentenced-to-jail-time>.

to overthrow the national democracy¹⁹⁰. Sharia4Belgium promoted a political vision of religion, openly affirming the supremacy of Islam, and rejecting both democracy and the separation of church and State¹⁹¹. Since its formation, the organization's anti-democratic stance continued to deepen, and as a result, Sharia4Belgium was banned in 2013¹⁹².

Since its disbandment, however, Sharia4Belgium seemed to have continued to operate unofficially. Moreover, it was discovered that the organization played a major role in recruiting Belgians to travel to fight in Syria as foreign fighters, with an estimated 10% of Belgian foreign fighters being linked to Sharia4Belgium¹⁹³. Most of these foreign fighters are believed to be fighting alongside Al Qaeda's Al Nusra Front in Syria¹⁹⁴. There is evidence that Sharia4Belgium leader Fouad Belkacem brainwashed and indoctrinated dozens of young Belgians with lectures and social media designed to recruit, radicalize, and send to theatres of jihad¹⁹⁵. Additional evidence found that Sharia4Belgium members were involved in actual terror activities¹⁹⁶.

In February 2015, a criminal court judge in Antwerp ruled that Sharia4Belgium was a terrorist organization¹⁹⁷. Subsequently, Belgium sentenced the Sharia4Belgium leader, Fouad Belkacem, to 12 years in prison^{198 199}. Despite these actions, a wide Sharia4

¹⁹⁰ Soeren Kern, "Let's Turn Belgium into an Islamist State," *Gatestone Institute*, December 19, 2011, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2682/belgium-islamist-state>.

¹⁹¹ Melodie Bouchaud, "'Sharia4Belgium' Leader and Dozens of Other Militants Are Sentenced to Jail Time," *VICE News*, February 12, 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/sharia4belgium-leader-and-dozens-of-other-militants-are-sentenced-to-jail-time>.

¹⁹² Mark Eeckhaut, "Sharia 4 Belgium – militanten naar Syrië," *De Standaard*, March 11, 2013, http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20130310_00499216?word=sharia4belgium.

¹⁹³ Duncan Crawford, "Sharia4Belgium trial: Belgian court jails members," *BBC News*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31378724>.

¹⁹⁴ Melodie Bouchaud, "'Sharia4Belgium' Leader and Dozens of Other Militants Are Sentenced to Jail Time," *VICE News*, February 12, 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/sharia4belgium-leader-and-dozens-of-other-militants-are-sentenced-to-jail-time>.

¹⁹⁵ Duncan Crawford, "Sharia4Belgium trial: Belgian court jails members," *BBC News*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31378724>.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Andrew Higgins, "Head of Belgian Group Said to Recruit Fighters for Syria Gets 12-Year Term," *New York Times*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/world/europe/fouad-belkacem-sharia4belgium-verdict-trial-belgium.html>.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Sharia4Belgium's role in recruiting foreign fighters will be discussed in detail in Part 3 of this paper, after the following discussion of radicalization theory.

network continues to exist throughout the world²⁰⁰. Sharia4Belgium was one of the largest and most well-known Sharia4 franchises, and had contacts and influence with many other organizations²⁰¹. Consequently, it is likely that Sharia4Belgium ideology, tactics, strategy will continually influence the global Sharia4 network.

RADICALIZATION: A THEORIETICAL FRAMEWORK

Defining Radicalization

There is no international consensus regarding the definition of *radicalization*²⁰², partly due to the lack of consensus regarding the definition of *terrorism*. More than a lack of international consensus, organizations within the same country often disagree as to the definition of *terrorism*. The United States government alone has roughly twenty different definitions in use among its many agencies and organizations²⁰³. The lack of definition consensus is so notable, that French political scientist Didier Bigo asserted that “terrorism does not exist: or more precisely, it is not a useable concept in social sciences”²⁰⁴.

A natural consequence of this is the failure to reach consensus regarding the definition of *radicalization*. There is disagreement between governmental definitions put forth by (among others) the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), the Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), and the Canadian Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) defines radicalization as “a process, by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a

²⁰⁰ Lorenzo Vidino, “Sharia4: From Confrontational Activism to Militancy,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 no. 2 (2015), accessed online, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/415/html>.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Alex P. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)*, March 2013, <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

specific political/ideological objective”²⁰⁵. The Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) defines radicalization as “the (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim) which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect)”²⁰⁶. The Canadian Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) defines radicalization as a “process by which individuals – usually young people – are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs toward extreme views”²⁰⁷. In each governmental definition, the emphasis is different. The Danish PET emphasizes undemocratic or violent means; the Netherlands AIVD emphasizes far-reaching societal changes²⁰⁸; and the Canadian RCMP emphasizes exposure to extremist ideology²⁰⁹.

One major area of disagreement is regarding the end-point of radicalization²¹⁰. Radicalization is often conceptualized as the process by which individuals become extreme (i.e., radical)²¹¹. However, are fully radicalized individuals those who hold extremist beliefs, or those who resort to radical acts of terrorism? Individuals whose beliefs have been radicalized are not necessarily terrorists – especially as beliefs are

²⁰⁵ PET, “Radikalisering og terror,” Center for Terroranalyse (Denmark), October 2009, available at http://www.pet.dk/upload/radikalisering_og_terror.pdf.

²⁰⁶ Alex P. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)*, March 2013, <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>.

²⁰⁷ “Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, June 2009, <http://cryptome.org/2015/06/rcmp-radicalization.pdf>.

²⁰⁸ Alex P. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)*, March 2013, <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>.

²⁰⁹ “Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, June 2009, <http://cryptome.org/2015/06/rcmp-radicalization.pdf>.

²¹⁰ Carolin Goerzig and Khaled Al-Hashimi, *Radicalization in Western Europe: Integration, Public Discourse and Loss of Identity among Muslim Communities* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 28.

²¹¹ Ibid.

insufficient to predict action, according to a social psychological academic research²¹². To accommodate this fact, Peter Neumann differentiated between cognitive and behavioral radicalization, to focus on extremist beliefs and behavior, respectively²¹³. This distinction is important to bear in mind as causes and solutions to radicalization are discussed: as some factors might enable or prevent only one of these two types of radicalization.

Unsurprisingly (given the lack of consensus), Belgium has its own definitions of both terrorism and radicalization. Terrorism is nationally defined (broadly) as “an act or threatened act organized in secret for ideological, political, ethnic or religious ends, performed individually or in groups and intended as an attempt on the lives of individuals or to either partially or completely destroy the economic value of tangible or intangible property, whether to impact on the public, create a climate of insecurity or put pressure on the authorities in a bid to impede the running and normal operation of a service or business”²¹⁴. Belgium’s national Radicalization strategy addresses radicalization to violence²¹⁵ – in other words, behavioral radicalization in Neumann’s framework. Belgium’s Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (OCAM) broadened their definitions in 2013 to include foreign fighters, address prison radicalization, and counter internet-based radicalization processes²¹⁶.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Carolin Goerzig and Khaled Al-Hashimi, *Radicalization in Western Europe: Integration, Public Discourse and Loss of Identity among Muslim Communities* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 29.

²¹⁴ Marc Dierckx, “Terrorism Insurance in Belgium” (paper presented at the OECD Conference for Terrorism Insurance in 2010, Paris, France, June 1-2, 2010).

²¹⁵ United States Department of State, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 – Belgium,” *Refworld*, April 30, 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53622a01e.html>.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Mechanisms of Radicalization – Existing Theories and Models

This paper will analyze radicalization in Belgium through a particular theoretical framework, including the McCauley and Moskalkenko Pyramid Model, the McCauley and Moskalkenko Mechanisms of Radicalization, and applied Social Movement Theory.

McCauley and Moskalkenko: Pyramid Model & Mechanisms of Radicalization

McCauley and Moskalkenko conceptualize radicalization as a pyramid structure, with the terrorists (who are few in number) at the apex, and their sympathizers and supporters (who are many in number) at the base of the pyramid²¹⁷. From base to apex, higher levels of the pyramid are associated with increased radicalization but decreased numbers, as increased radicalization means more money spent, more time committed, and more risks taken²¹⁸, which many would-be extremists are not willing to do. To explain how and why radicalization occurs, McCauley and Moskalkenko point to mechanisms of radicalization, which can act to radicalize at the individual, group, or mass-public level²¹⁹. They outline twelve mechanisms of radicalization, explaining that there are often many of the twelve processes acting in consort to radicalize an individual, group, or mass-public to extremism²²⁰. The mechanisms, or pathways to violence, are delineated as such:

²¹⁷ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 417.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 417-418.

²²⁰ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 418.

Table 1. Pathways to violence: Mechanisms of political radicalization at individual, group, and mass-public levels²²¹	
Level of radicalization	Mechanism
Individual	1. Personal victimization
	2. Political grievance
	3. Joining a radical group – the slippery slope <i>Individuals slowly increasing their radical behavior.</i>
	4. Joining a radical group – the power of love <i>Individuals join because their loved ones are members.</i>
Group	5. Extremity shift in like-minded peers <i>It is a noted phenomenon that groups of like-minded groups grow more extreme in their thinking over time.</i>
	6. Extreme cohesion under isolation and threat
	7. Competition for the same base of support <i>Increasing radical action helps recruitment when there is competition.</i>
	8. Competition with state power – condensation <i>When a radical group attracts state counter-measures, the risks increases and only the most radical members stay.</i>
	9. Within-group competition – fissioning <i>Within-group competition can cause fissioning or splitting of the terrorist group into cells that target one another.</i>
Mass	10. Jujitsu politics <i>Terrorist leaders provoke the state into attacking them, to mass radicalize their group.</i>

²²¹ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 418-428.

	11. Hate
	12. Martyrdom

McCauley and Moskaleiko additionally point to the importance of groups in the radicalization process²²². Without the presence of small groups to pressure members to participate, individuals will rationally choose to free ride off the concessions achieved by the radical group²²³. For instance, although personal victimization is cited as a pathway to individual radicalization, social psychologists find that personal grievance is unlikely to cause group sacrifice unless framed and interpreted as a group grievance²²⁴.

Social Movement Theory

Developed by Zald and McCarthy, Social Movement Theory (SMT) first defined social movements as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population, which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society”²²⁵. Traditional SMT – formed in the 1940s – asserted “movements arose from irrational processes of collective behavior occurring under strained environmental conditions (what sociologists would call ‘Strain Theory’), producing a mass sentiment of discontent”²²⁶.

There are a few variants of contemporary SMT: New Social Movement (NSM) Theory focuses on macro structural processes²²⁷; Resource Mobilization (RM) Theory focuses on group dynamics; and Framing Theory discusses how social movements frame

²²² Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskaleiko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 417.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskaleiko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 419.

²²⁵ Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy, *Social movements in an Organizational Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987), 2.

²²⁶ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 no. 4 (2011): 17.

²²⁷ Ibid.

messages in a certain way in order to construct and propagate meaning²²⁸. Dalgaard-Nielsen of the Danish Institute for International Studies explains how Framing Theory in particular (and SMT in general) might be particularly useful in understanding radicalization:

“Movements diagnose problems and attribute responsibility, offer solutions, strategies, and tactics (prognostic framing), and provide motivational frames to convince potential participants to become active. Key to mobilization, according to this perspective, is whether the movement's version of the 'reality' resonates or can be brought to resonate with the movement's potential constituency.”²²⁹

In other words: the strained environmental conditions and mass discontent are framed in particular ways to facilitate recruitment. Social movements are primarily concerned with keeping themselves alive²³⁰; they use and re-direct mass discontent to mobilize the masses.

Putting all this together, Social Movement Theory in general and Framing Theory in particular can help in explaining radicalization²³¹. Social Islamist movements, in an effort to keep their organizations alive, recruit new members from strained populations, by framing their personal grievances as political Islamist ones. In this way, their organizations begin to resonate with the people they are trying to recruit, and they keep their organization alive by continuing to radicalize European youth. This is consistent with the importance placed by McCauley and Moskalenko on small groups: they also

²²⁸ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 no. 4 (2011): 18.

²²⁹ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, *Studying Violent Radicalization in Europe I: The Potential Contribution of Social Movement Theory* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008), 6.

²³⁰ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 no. 4 (2011): 17.

²³¹ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 no. 4 (2011): 18.

emphasize that personal grievance is unlikely to cause group sacrifice unless framed and interpreted as a group grievance²³².

The applicability of Social Movement Theory to radicalization is only beginning to be appreciated. Donatella Della Porta was one of the first to connect SMT principles in a study of Italian and German militants²³³. More recently, Quintan Wiktorowicz used SMT principles to develop a four-step developmental framework for radicalization in Western democracies²³⁴. The forthcoming analysis of Islamic radicalization in Belgium will continue this trend, and use Social Movement Theory – in conjunction with McCauley and Moskalenko’s framework – to shed light on Belgium’s growing radicalization problem.

RADICALIZATION IN BELIGUM

Radicalization Theory – Applied

Belgium has become a major hotbed for radicalization. At least 380 Belgians have travelled to Syria as foreign fighters, giving Belgium the largest number of jihadists per capita at 33.9 fighters per one million residents²³⁵. What has caused Belgium to become this fertile a ground for Islamic radicalization? There are a number of factors that seem to be at play: strained environmental conditions, organizational framing of those grievances in an effort to facilitate recruitment, and availability of mechanisms/pathways to radicalization. It is a deadly combination of fertile ground, and organizational

²³² Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 419.

²³³ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 no. 4 (2011): 18.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Guy Van Vlierden, “How Belgium Became a Top Exporter of Jihad,” *Terrorism Monitor* 13 no. 11 (2015), accessed online through the Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43966&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=462a3da25136ea4c02b6a99f9e5fa442#.VdToZ1NViko.

maneuvering. Before delving into this topic, it is useful to outline the demographics of the average Belgian radical.

Demographics

- **Location:** Most Belgian jihadists are from Antwerp, Brussels, Mechelen, or Vilvoorde²³⁶. However, this is not all that informative or surprising, given the limited dispersion of Muslims in Belgium.
- **Age:** Most Belgian jihadists fall between the ages of 17 and 25²³⁷.
- **Employment/Education:** Most Belgian jihadists are lacking “qualifications”²³⁸.
- **Criminality:** Many Belgian jihadists hold a criminal record²³⁹.

Strained Environmental Conditions

As articulated by Social Movement Theory, movements arise out of strained environmental conditions producing a mass sentiment of discontent²⁴⁰. One such condition might be low employment. Foreign-born Belgian residents have unemployment rates more than twice that of native-born Belgian citizens, and it is clear that employment discrimination is rampant²⁴¹. Many Muslims with professional degrees remain unemployed for years, and see their applications for both jobs and homes rejected based on their Muslim names²⁴². Another source of strain for Belgian Muslims might be their low educational achievement. Only 12% of Muslims (compared to 23% of non-Muslims) hold high educational achievement, while 65% of Muslims (compared to 47% of non-

²³⁶ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ David Stellini, “The European Jihadist: a profile,” *epp group*, February 20, 2015, <http://www.eppgroup.eu/news/The-European-Jihadist%3A-a-profile>.

²⁴⁰ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 no. 4 (2011): 17.

²⁴¹ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

²⁴² Ibid.

Muslims) hold low educational achievement²⁴³. More than simply a grievance, a lack of education likely causes Belgian Muslims to be more susceptible to Islamist organizations' recruitment efforts, as they do not have the education to know better.

Another important source of strain is likely Muslims' previously poor integration into Belgian society. Before integration became a national priority, studies have found many indicators of poor integration: Belgian Muslim immigrants have been found to identify with their origin country over Belgium²⁴⁴; 70% of Muslim males aged 15-25 (a primary demographic for radicalization) felt unaccepted by Flemish society; and over 50% of Belgian Muslim youths had personally experienced racism²⁴⁵. Although legislation has changed since these results²⁴⁶, it is unclear whether anything of note has yet to change. Especially noteworthy is the clear lack of confidence among Muslim youth that they will be able to integrate in the future. 60% of Muslim youths surveyed believed they would never be integrated into Belgian society, and although 93% of all respondents held Belgian citizenship, 42% consider themselves foreigners in Belgium²⁴⁷.

Likely an impediment to integration, but itself a discrete cause of strain, is the discrimination and intolerance prevalent against Muslims by native-born Belgians. One study revealed 25% of Belgians show intolerant attitudes, above the EU average of 14%²⁴⁸. The aforementioned employment and housing discrimination also falls under this category.

Lastly, religious governmental funding has been incredibly inconsistent for the Muslim community²⁴⁹. This goes against Belgium's stance of religious freedom.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Vassilis Saroglou and François Mathijsen, "Religion, multiple identities, and acculturation: A study of Muslim immigrants in Belgium," *Archive for the psychology of Religion* 29 (2007): 177-198.

²⁴⁵ Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013," *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

²⁴⁶ Alan Hope, "Who wants to be a Belgian citizen?" *FlandersToday*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.flandertoday.eu/current-affairs/who-wants-be-belgian-citizen>.

²⁴⁷ Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013," *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

²⁴⁸ "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

²⁴⁹ "Belgium," *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

Moreover, Muslim religious freedom was also arguably compromised with the recent public headscarf ban (discussed in the Part 4, Government Responses)²⁵⁰.

This combination of factors likely creates a strained environment for Belgium's Muslims. Nonetheless, a strained environment is not enough for radicalization. It is becoming clear to researchers that "poverty, hunger, and a disheartened populace create an environment ripe for planting the radical Islamist ideology, which offers redemption"²⁵¹. It is important to examine the organizations that are planting the radical Islamic ideology: arguably the Islam Party, and certainly the infamous Sharia4Belgium.

Organizations: Framing the Grievances

The Islam Party arguably participates in the utilization of Belgian Muslim grievances, by approaching grieved Muslim youth and seeking political support. The Islam Party – as an advocate of Sharia law – likely naturally plays some role in radicalizing Belgian youth, or at least in isolating Muslim communities that are then more fertile to radicalization. According to Alain Destexhe, MP in the Reformist Movement,

"The people of the Islam Party refuse to shake hands with women... They do not want to mix with others in public transport and other communal places. They advocate getting married and wearing a veil at 12 years old, based on Islamic law."²⁵²

Destexhe claims that in this way, the Islam Party is aiming to establish isolated communities and parallel societies²⁵³. In reality, this process is not completely one-sided: voters turn to the Islam Party as a result of the existing exclusion. The Islam Party likely reflects the current reality, in addition to propagating it.

²⁵⁰ Rikard Jozwiak, "Belgian Face-Veil Ban Goes Into Effect," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, July 23, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/belgian_face_veil_ban/24274154.html.

²⁵¹ Jennifer L. Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Groups* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2013), 2.

²⁵² Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013," *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

²⁵³ Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013," *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

The clearest case of an organization recruiting grieved youth is Sharia4Belgium, the now-disbanded terrorist organization²⁵⁴. The organization rose to distinction in 2010, following a protest against the proposed public headscarf ban²⁵⁵. Led by Fouad Belkacem, the organization was able to claim responsibility for at least 10% of Belgian foreign fighters sent to theatres of jihad²⁵⁶. Belkacem was known as a radical ideologue, having already been convicted for incitement to hate in 2012²⁵⁷. Belkacem was the spiritual leader of Sharia4Belgium, highly effective in recruiting young Belgians to jihad, and famous for his online videos and powerful street sermons²⁵⁸. By March 2013, at least 70 former members (and sympathizers) of Sharia4Belgium were actively fighting in Syria against the Assad Regime²⁵⁹.

Availability of Mechanisms / Pathways to Radicalization

In addition to Social Movement Theory, McCauley and Moskalenko's theoretical framework is also useful in examining Islamic radicalization in Belgium. First, that terrorist radicalization is structured like a pyramid – with less people taking the higher risk and becoming terrorists (at the apex). Keeping this model in mind, Belgium's number of foreign fighters per capita becomes even more noteworthy. Second, McCauley and Moskalenko discuss twelve pathways to radicalization, and the importance of groups in the radicalization process. While it is impossible to know the specific pathways used by Belgian radicals, the importance of groups (which is supported by the fact that the majority of pathways are not at the individual level) – may signify the importance of Belgium's large (and growing) Muslim population to Islamic radicalization.

²⁵⁴ This organization is discussed in detail in section 5.2.

²⁵⁵ "Radical Belgian Jihadist Group Gets Jail Time," *Arutz Sheva*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/191209#.VdUQTVNViko>.

²⁵⁶ Duncan Crawford, "Sharia4Belgium trial: Belgian court jails members," *BBC News*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31378724>.

²⁵⁷ "Radical Belgian Jihadist Group Gets Jail Time," *Arutz Sheva*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/191209#.VdUQTVNViko>.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Mark Eeckhaut, "Sharia 4 Belgium – militanten naar Syrië," *De Standaard*, March 11, 2013, http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20130310_00499216?word=sharia4belgium.

Select Cases

Belgium has put 160 people on the international wanted list²⁶⁰. Some are convicted in absentia of terrorism, while some are suspected of terrorist activities²⁶¹. This list includes Belgians who have left to fight in Syria²⁶². However, the real risk is posed by those who return. Already, returned foreign fighters have wreaked havoc in Europe – notably, in the November 13th Paris attacks. These, and some notable older cases, are briefly described in the table below.

Year	Radical	Case
2015	Abdelhamid Abaaoud	Abaaoud, architect of the November 13 th Paris attacks, was a Molenbeek resident who had left for Syria in early 2014 to fight for the Islamic State ²⁶³ . A dual Belgian-Moroccan national, Abaaoud was involved in petty gangsterism and criminality, before falling in with ISIS European terror cells ²⁶⁴ ²⁶⁵ . Abaaoud was the suspected leader of the Verviers cell raided by police on January 15, 2015 ²⁶⁶ . Following the raid, Abaaoud remained at large ²⁶⁷ , but was killed during a raid of the Saint-Denis

²⁶⁰ “Belgium Puts 160 Terror-Related Suspects on International Wanted List,” *Sputnik News*, December 7, 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/europe/20151207/1031354397/belgium-terror-suspects.html>.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Andrew Higgins, “Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/its-capital-frozen-belgium-surveys-past-failures-and-squabbles.html?_r=0.

²⁶⁴ Guy van Vlierden, “Profile: Paris Attack Ringleader Abdelhamid Abaaoud,” *CTC*, December 15, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/profile-paris-attack-ringleader-abdelhamid-abaaoud>.

²⁶⁵ Michael Martinez, Ed Payne, Catherine E. Shoichet and Margot Haddad, “Belgium warns of 'serious and imminent threat' to Brussels,” *CNN*, November 21, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/20/world/paris-attacks/>.

²⁶⁶ Ivan Watson and Antonia Mortensen, “Toxic mix that makes Belgium fertile ground for terrorism,” *CNN*, January 22, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/22/europe/belgium-terror-recruiting/>.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

		neighborhood outside Paris ²⁶⁸ . According to French Interior Minister Cazeneuve, Abaaoud played a decisive role in the Paris attacks ²⁶⁹ . He was additionally involved in four out of the six terror attacks foiled since spring 2015 ²⁷⁰ .
2015	Ibrahim Abdeslam	Brahim Abdeslam, also living in Molenbeek ²⁷¹ , detonated a suicide vest in the November 13 th Paris attacks ²⁷² , on the boulevard Voltaire ²⁷³ .
2015	Salah Abdeslam	Salah Abdeslam, age 26 ²⁷⁴ , is the target of an extensive manhunt for his involvement in the November 13 th Paris attacks ²⁷⁵ . He is a French national, but born in Belgium ²⁷⁶ . The brother of Brahim Abdeslam, Salah had lived in Molenbeek ²⁷⁷ .

²⁶⁸ Michael Martinez, Ed Payne, Catherine E. Shoichet and Margot Haddad, "Belgium warns of 'serious and imminent threat' to Brussels," *CNN*, November 21, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/20/world/paris-attacks/>.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Isabelle Fraser, "Molenbeek mayor received terror suspects list including on-the-run Salah Abdeslam one month before Paris attacks," *The Telegraph*, November 26, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/belgium/12015522/Manhunt-for-Salah-Abdeslam-as-Brussels-reopens-after-Paris-attacks-lockdown-Wednesday-live.html>.

²⁷² Andrew Higgins, "Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light," *New York Times*, November 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/its-capital-frozen-belgium-surveys-past-failures-and-squabbles.html?_r=0.

²⁷³ Isabelle Fraser, "Molenbeek mayor received terror suspects list including on-the-run Salah Abdeslam one month before Paris attacks," *The Telegraph*, November 26, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/belgium/12015522/Manhunt-for-Salah-Abdeslam-as-Brussels-reopens-after-Paris-attacks-lockdown-Wednesday-live.html>.

²⁷⁴ Michael Martinez, Ed Payne, Catherine E. Shoichet and Margot Haddad, "Belgium warns of 'serious and imminent threat' to Brussels," *CNN*, November 21, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/20/world/paris-attacks/>.

²⁷⁵ Andrew Higgins, "Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light," *New York Times*, November 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/its-capital-frozen-belgium-surveys-past-failures-and-squabbles.html?_r=0.

²⁷⁶ Michael Martinez, Ed Payne, Catherine E. Shoichet and Margot Haddad, "Belgium warns of 'serious and imminent threat' to Brussels," *CNN*, November 21, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/20/world/paris-attacks/>.

²⁷⁷ Isabelle Fraser, "Molenbeek mayor received terror suspects list including on-the-run Salah Abdeslam one month before Paris attacks," *The Telegraph*, November 26, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/belgium/12015522/Manhunt-for-Salah-Abdeslam-as-Brussels-reopens-after-Paris-attacks-lockdown-Wednesday-live.html>.

2013	Jean-Louis Denis	Denis, a Muslim hate preacher, was detained by police in Brussels for recruiting young Muslims for Syrian jihad ²⁷⁸ . Denis was a Muslim convert, aged 39, involved in a charitable organization that distributed food to the poor and homeless ²⁷⁹ .
2005	Muriel Degauque	Degauque, aged 38 and a Belgian convert to Islam, committed a suicide attack by an American Army convoy ²⁸⁰ . Degauque was “the first Belgian involved in such an attack” ²⁸¹ .
2003	Nizar Trabelsi	Trabelsi (a former Tunisian soccer player) plotted a suicide attack against the Kleine Brogel NATO air base, was given 10 years jail sentence ²⁸² .
2003	Tarek Maaroufi	Maaroufi (a Tunisian) was involved in a fake passport ring centered in Brussels; he was given six years jail time ²⁸³ .

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

Belgium has been widely criticized for insufficient and overly reactive government responses²⁸⁴. Although Belgian governments have taken some counter-radicalization measures – limiting Islamist political involvement, banning Sharia⁴Belgium, banning headscarves, adjusting integration policy²⁸⁵, and engaging in police raids – there is a notable lack of long-term strategy and national unity/uniformity. For instance, while Dutch-speaking Flanders (especially Antwerp) has cracked down on

²⁷⁸ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² “Belgium,” *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Andrew Higgins, “Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/its-capital-frozen-belgium-surveys-past-failures-and-squabbles.html?_r=0.

²⁸⁵ This was discussed in Part 1.

Islamist extremism, authorities in the Brussels region have “neither the means nor the powers” to survey suspected radicals²⁸⁶. This lack of strategy and uniformity is likely a consequence of the national disunity pervasive throughout the country. Belgium is divided among linguistic and ideological lines, with language barriers and historical rivalries²⁸⁷. Perhaps consequently, information sharing and centralized counter-radicalization have been noticeably lacking²⁸⁸.

Limiting Islamist Political Involvement

In reaction to the Islam Party gaining ground, the Belgian Parliament introduced a bill in 2013 to limit the amount of power the Islam Party could obtain should they win national or local elected office positions²⁸⁹. This action was a pragmatic response to the Islam Party aim of implementing Sharia law in Belgium – an anti-democratic goal²⁹⁰.

Defending the bill, Alain Destexhe, MP in the Reformist Movement, and Philippe Pivin, MP and deputy mayor of Koekelberg, asserted that, “it is imperative to curb the power of elected Muslims whose beliefs are inconsistent with the European Convention on Human Rights”²⁹¹.

Banning Extremist Organizations – Sharia4Belgium

The limits introduced to Islamic parties have gone hand-in-hand with the banning of extreme Islamic organizations in Belgium. The emblematic case of this is the recent

²⁸⁶ Andrew Higgins, “Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/its-capital-frozen-belgium-surveys-past-failures-and-squabbles.html?_r=0.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

banning of Sharia4Belgium, now fully considered a terrorist organization²⁹². Especially with the recent imprisonment of the organization’s leader, Fouad Belkacem²⁹³, the Belgium government has shown that they will not tolerate extremist organizations.

Banning Headscarves

One of the most controversial counter-radicalization measures was the 2011 banning of headscarves. The law – passed in 2010 but only implemented in 2011²⁹⁴ – banned “garments that obscure one’s public identity”²⁹⁵. Although generally worded, this law affects only a small minority of the population²⁹⁶. Approximately 600,000 Belgians are Muslim, but the vast majority do not wear headscarves – only an estimated 28-200 women in Belgium wear niqabs and/or burqas²⁹⁷. As such, the problem with this ban is two-fold: first, it is specifically discriminatory to this small group of Muslim women; and two, it goes against Belgium’s stance on religious freedom. On these grounds, Amnesty International, the Council of Europe, and various human rights groups have criticized the ban as violating basic human rights²⁹⁸. The Muslim Executive of Belgium has been especially active in contending ban²⁹⁹.

²⁹² Andrew Higgins, “Head of Belgian Group Said to Recruit Fighters for Syria Gets 12-Year Term,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/world/europe/fouad-belkacem-sharia4belgium-verdict-trial-belgium.html>.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Rikard Jozwiak, “Belgian Face-Veil Ban Goes Into Effect,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, July 23, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/belgian_face_veil_ban/24274154.html.

²⁹⁵ “Religious Freedom in Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/religious-freedom-in-belgium>.

²⁹⁶ Rikard Jozwiak, “Belgian Face-Veil Ban Goes Into Effect,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, July 23, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/belgian_face_veil_ban/24274154.html.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ “Muslim Executive of Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/organizations/muslim-executive-of-belgium>.

The Belgium government has stuck to the headscarf ban, and support for the legislation has uniquely crossed the traditional left-right political spectrum³⁰⁰. Some politicians have articulated their support on the basis of gender equality, while others have called it a national security measure³⁰¹. Center-right politician Peter Dedecker claims that he supports religious freedom with limits; and that the new legislation was for safety reasons³⁰². A result of the controversy, the law was appealed; and in 2012, the Constitutional Court of Belgium upheld it³⁰³. The ruling acknowledged that the ban interferes with certain individual rights, but needed to be upheld for the purposes of public security, equality between men and women, and “a certain conception of ‘living together’ in society”³⁰⁴.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Both scholarly research and governmental action concerning Islamic radicalization in Belgium are noticeably lacking. Belgian Muslims represent the second-largest Muslim population per capita in the European Union³⁰⁵, and the number one largest foreign fighter population per capita³⁰⁶. This is perhaps unsurprising given the low levels of employment, high levels of discrimination, low educational achievement³⁰⁷, poor integration^{308 309 310}, and inconsistent governmental funding^{311 312} that is their reality.

³⁰⁰ Rikard Jozwiak, “Belgian Face-Veil Ban Goes Into Effect,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, July 23, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/belgian_face_veil_ban/24274154.html.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ “Religious Freedom in Belgium,” *Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*, <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/religious-freedom-in-belgium>.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

³⁰⁶ Guy Van Vlieden, “How Belgium Became a Top Exporter of Jihad,” *Terrorism Monitor* 13 no. 11 (2015), accessed online through the Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43966&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=462a3da25136ea4c02b6a99f9e5fa442#.VdToZ1NViko.

³⁰⁷ “Islam in Belgium,” *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

³⁰⁸ Milica Petrovic, “Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration,” *Migration Policy Institute*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration/>.

These poor demographic realities of the Belgian Muslim community provide a highly fertile ground for radical Islamic parties and organizations to influence and recruit.

Belgian government responses have been widely criticized as insufficient, non-uniform and overly reactive³¹³. In banning organizations and limiting Islamist parties, there is a noticeable lack of long-term strategy/proactivity, which is likely a consequence of the national disunity pervasive throughout the country³¹⁴. A larger focus should be given to the root causes of the problem: the low integration, the low education and employment, and the discrimination that causes the population to be susceptible to radical influencers. For instance, affirmative action, tolerance educational programs, and community outreach might be viable options.

A national counter-terrorism/counter-radicalization plan should encompass both a shorter-term (detective, policing) component and a longer-term counter-motivation component. Belgium seems to have some successes in the utilization of police and detective forces to prevent terrorist attacks^{315 316}. Although detection and policing should be continually improved, a greater focus should be given to the longer-term preventative component discussed above. By focusing on the root of the problem, and improving the lives of the large Belgian Muslim population, successfully disbanding radical organizations will become less important. If the Muslim population feels taken care of at home, they will cease to be a highly fertile ground for Islamic radicalization recruitment.

³⁰⁹ Vassilis Saroglou and François Mathijssen, "Religion, multiple identities, and acculturation: A study of Muslim immigrants in Belgium," *Archive for the psychology of Religion* 29 (2007): 177-198.

³¹⁰ Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of Belgium and the Netherlands in 2013," *Gatestone Institute*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4129/islamization-belgium-netherlands>.

³¹¹ "Belgium," *Frontline*, January 25, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html>.

³¹² "Islam in Belgium," *Euro-Islam.info*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/belgium/>.

³¹³ Andrew Higgins, "Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light," *New York Times*, November 24, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/world/europe/its-capital-frozen-belgium-surveys-past-failures-and-squabbles.html?_r=0.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Ian Traynor, Julian Borger, and Alexandra Topping, "Two dead in Belgium as police foil 'grand scale' terrorist plot," *The Guardian*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/15/three-killed-belgium-counter-terror-raids-reports-verviers>.

³¹⁶ Molly Hennessy-Fiske, "Counter-terrorism sweeps net more than two dozen suspects in Europe," *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-terror-arrests-belgium-20150116-story.html>.

In this way, viewing Islamic radicalization in Belgium as a social problem, and engaging in preventative actions, might be the best alternative for a safer Belgium in the future.

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