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A Processual Sociology of the Variables of Violent Engagement

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THINKING ABOUT RADICALIZATION

— A PROCESSUAL SOCIOLOGY —
OF THE VARIABLES OF VIOLENT ENGAGEMENT

Xavier Crettiez

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Since the 2005 terrorist attacks on London and those of 2015 and 2016 on Paris, the French authorities' concerns about the phenomena of a lurch by young French citizens of North African origin toward political violence of a terrorist kind and the press focus on this subject have emphatically brought back the notion of radicalization. In France, the public authorities immediately placed "the fight against radicalization" on the agenda and deployed significant legal, institutional, and financial resources to this end.¹ While this notion scarcely used to exist in the two main English-language journals on terrorism (*Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*), it now occupies a central place in the academic world. Whereas 3% of works published on terrorism between 1980 and 1999 focused on this notion, the proportion was at 77% by 2006.²

There are many reasons for the public success of this buzzword.³ Several explanatory theories, which are probably cumulative, can be put forward. First of all, there are political reasons. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, many academics no longer dared to refer to the "roots of terrorism" because they were unwilling to risk giving the impression of undertaking a sociological interpretation of violence – with an emphasis on the weighty determinants of engagement in extremism – that might appear to display compassion toward the authors of violence. From this, epistemological reasons follow: the majority of research works agree on the difficulty of putting forward the main causes behind terrorist acts and of creating a typical profile for a jihadist.⁴ The

1. Worth noting here is the introduction of a new legislative tool through France's Antiterrorist Act of 13 November 2014. The law provides for a mechanism that can be used to forbid French nationals from leaving the country, and it also makes justifying terrorism and individual terrorist enterprises into crimes. A platform to report individuals undergoing radicalization was also created. At present, this is managed by the "Radicalisation" CPSP (Comité de pilotage scientifique de défi; "Challenge Scientific Steering Committee"). By June 2016, there had been over 9000 reports. At the national level, a monitoring unit has been created in each prefecture. These fall under the authority of the public prosecutor. In June 2015, the 101 units were monitoring over 800 young individuals. From September 2016, three deradicalization centers are due to open under the authority of the Crime Prevention Interministerial Committee (CPIC), which is led by Prefect Pierre N'Gahane. In January 2016, more than 425 million euros of public money was allocated to the fight against radicalization, while in the university sphere around fifteen research vacancies for this area were created.

2. See Benjamin Ducol, "Devenir Jihadiste à l'heure du *web*", PhD thesis in political science, Université de Laval, 2014, 54 (dissertation supervised by Aurélie Campana).

3. Peter Neumann and Scott Kleinmann describe this notion as "one of the great buzzwords of our time" in "How rigorous is radicalization research?", *Democracy and Security*, 9(4), 2013, 360-82 (360).

4. The press has described the diverse and sometimes opposing profiles of young people who head down jihadist paths, whether they are the children of poor immigrants, members of the middle class or even of the bourgeoisie,

use of the term “radicalization” has served to eliminate pointless reflection on causes and place emphasis on processes. This is highlighted by Randy Borum, who calls on researchers “to be less focused on why people engage in terrorism and more focused on how they become involved”.¹ This stressing of the processual also responds to an academic reason: many specialists in phenomena related to terrorism or to political violence abandoned the field of international relations and security studies for the tools fashioned by the sociology of mobilization and collective action. The reflections made by Olivier Fillieule from France and those by Doug MacAdam and John Horgan from the Anglo-American sphere have inspired many researchers who study clandestine forms of violence;² they have consciously broken away from an analysis focused on the question of “why” and adopted an approach based on the “how” of the matter, affording the notion of radicalization its rightful place. A further analytical borrowing can be traced to the sociology of extreme violence and terror, which has long fixated on the question of “ordinary men” and their passage to the act. Although studies on terrorizing violence³ have long prioritized an approach that is historical or centered on combat structures, interactions with the state, or doctrinal developments as frames for explaining violence, they have scarcely considered actors’ subjectivities, biographical journeys, or psychological constructs that lead to armed struggle.⁴ The approaches taken by figures such as Christopher Browning in relation to groupthink favorable to violent engagement, or by individuals such as Stanley Milgram who emphasize the outcomes of submission to authority, have stimulated reflections on radicalization processes, suggesting keys to explain the aggressive transformations experienced – often quickly – by individuals who sometimes lack ideological depth.⁵ Finally, there is a situational reason in the form of the 2005 attacks on London,

individuals raised in a Muslim environment, converts from Catholicism, men, women, and so forth. Worth highlighting here are the quite innovative works of John Horgan, who suggests that, rather than studying the causes of terrorism in the hope of deducing standard terrorist profiles, it would be more appropriate to examine the processes behind actors’ adherence to terrorist values and acts (“routes better than roots”): John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

1. Randy Borum, “Rethinking radicalization”, *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4, 2011, 1-6 (2). John Horgan and Randy Borum support the idea that ideological radicalization must be studied independently of the passage to the violent act, which is not automatically the natural continuation of this radicalization.
2. See Isabelle Sommier, *La violence révolutionnaire* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2008); Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Lorenzo Bossi, Donatella Della Porta, “Micro-mobilization into armed groups: ideological, instrumental and solidaristic paths”, *Qualitative Sociology*, 35(4), 2012, 361-83.
3. Isabelle Sommier, *Le terrorisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000) proposes this term to define extreme forms of violence from mass terrorism to genocidal violence.
4. Although the psychological approach is often decried, it may nevertheless prove fruitful in two ways. The first relates to grasping the psychological determinants of actors who engage in extreme struggles by identifying as closely as possible their need for recognition or to increase their self-esteem. Michel Dubec’s works on Jean-Marc Rouillan, the founder of *Action directe*, and those of Antoine Linier on the proletarian left are illuminating here: Michel Dubec, *Le plaisir de tuer* (Paris: Seuil, 2007); Antoine Linier, *Terrorisme et démocratie* (Paris: Fayard, 1985). The second dimension emphasizes the psychological effects of socialization within sectarian groups, of the effects of clandestinity, or of a closed type of group thinking. Irving Janis, *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice and Commitment* (London: Macmillan, 1977).
5. In *Des hommes ordinaires* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994), with regard to understanding the direct participation of ordinary men in the extermination of thousands of Jews in Eastern Europe, Christopher Browning emphasizes in particular the spillover effects within combat units forged by the constraints of war. By showing that combatants were not compelled by SS superiors into their passage to the act, he thus challenges the widely known analysis of Stanley Milgram (*La soumission à l'autorité* [Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1994]), who argued that participation in violence was based upon submission to an authority that was perceived as legitimate. These two authors use different research protocols (historical and judicial sources versus real experiments), and their works come to opposing conclusions with regard to unquestioning conformity to violence. Abram de Swaan’s recent work *Diviser pour tuer. Les régimes génocidaires et leurs hommes de main* (Paris: Seuil, 2016) forcefully raises, though without truly being convincing, the issue of the validity of the “ordinary men” thesis, by high-

which in contrast to the New York attacks that took place four years before introduced the notion of “homegrown terrorism” into political and media discourses. Since then, the terrorist threat has been an internal one, and the notion of radicalization sought to better grasp and understand how individuals who appeared to be integrated have seen fit to turn against the society in which they live.

Although it is a seductive term, it has also been subjected to criticisms that relate both to its political effects and to a certain imprecision in terms of its meaning. The notion of radicalization has been attacked as a tool for stigmatizing and securing a community – in this case, Muslims – whose cultural practices are thereby linked with the use of terror.¹ The term is therefore also associated with an epistemological critique, highlighting a form of confusion between diverse phenomena such as fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism. The notion may also appear to be too broad and to spill over beyond violent behaviors. Lindsay Clutterbuck and Jennifer Rubin described it in 2008 as “The process whereby individuals transform their worldview over time from a range that society tends to consider to be normal into a range that society tends to consider to be extreme”;² they applied it to the *hikikomori*, the Japanese phenomenon of infantilized young adults who reject all socialization. As this example shows, not every radical behavior is necessarily violent, and establishing an automatic link between strict religious conduct (Salafism) and violent activism (jihadism) would amount to a dangerous leap that does not take into account the many forms of Salafist engagement.³ Finally, not all violent radicalization is necessarily of a terrorist nature when it is expressed. Use of the term “radicalization” has also served to discredit certain forms of political protest undertaken by social movements that do not have terrorizing ambitions.

Another difficulty of the radicalization approach is grasping what is being talked about. Radicalization can be cognitive, behavioral, or both at once. American sociology has stressed behavioral radicalization in particular, and it has often left aside forms of ideological extremism, which in the Anglo-American culture of freedom of speech are not in themselves considered reprehensible. By contrast, in European and in particular in French sociology, cognitive radicalization is viewed as indispensable, and it often precedes and apparently nurtures and prepares violent radicalization.⁴ This alternative view likely relates to unique historical experiences: the trauma of the major totalitarianisms has instilled in Europe a causal link between any form of extreme thought and violent acts.

lighting the Nazi indoctrination of the men from 101st battalion analyzed by Browning. In his view, there was nothing ordinary about them at all.

1. Jorgen Staun, “When, how and why elites frame terrorists: a Wittgensteinian analysis of terror and radicalization”, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 3(3), 2010, 403-20; Jonathan Githens-Mazer, “The rhetoric and reality: radicalization and political discourse”, *International Political Science Review*, 33(5), 2012, 556-67.

2. Quoted in Ducol, “Devenir Jihadiste à l'heure du web”, 56-7.

3. Samir Amghar, “Le salafisme en France: de la révolution islamique à la révolution conservatrice”, *Critique internationale*, 40, 2008, 95-130.

4. This point has caused severe divisions in the field of Islamic studies in France in recent months. Although this palpable tension relates to multiple variables involving the logic of ego as well as material issues and matters related to recognition, it also rests upon two seemingly contradictory theses. The first, embodied by Gilles Kepel, is regarded as essentialist by some. It conceives of ideological radicalization (a term that it disputes) as an indispensable prerequisite for any form of violent radicalization, making an understanding of the jihadist phenomenon inaccessible to anyone who is not versed in Islamic culture and who is not proficient in the holy texts mobilized by the actors involved. The second – embodied by Olivier Roy – conceives of Islamist terrorist violence as partially independent of any Salafist practice or literature and prioritizes actors' investment in the attractions of radical deeds alone. This opposition is artificial in certain ways. The present article seeks to put it into perspective by thinking about radicalization processes based on diverse struggles, but with an emphasis on actors' frames of ideological perception.

There is nothing automatic about this link across the Atlantic.¹ This point leads to an inevitable reflection on the relative nature of the term. While Salafist Islam is considered to be “radical” in France, republican and secular thinking is precisely what may be given the same label in Saudi Arabia or Iran! Similarly, liberal humanism that is hostile to any transcendence was likewise subjected to all kinds of suspicions and labeled as dangerous radicalism two and a half centuries ago during France’s period of absolutism. The view can be taken that the concept of “radicalization”, because it refers to a deviant form of thought, can rapidly come to resemble a state tool to stigmatize any “unconventional view”.²

In this article, I elect to think about radicalization in terms of a process that is common to several struggle-based experiences and that involves multiple mechanisms for involvement (for example, cognitive, relational, socialization, and psychological mechanisms). I will define radicalization as a progressive evolution toward adopting a rigid way of thinking that involves absolute and non-negotiable truth, the logic of which structures the world view of actors. They use it to assert violent repertoires of action, most often within clandestine, formalized, or virtual structures that isolate them from ordinary social referents and reflect back a grandiose perception of themselves. Three elements therefore form the basis of the radicalization approach: its evolutionary dimension, the adoption of sectarian thinking, and the use of armed violence.

In contrast to an approach to radicalization formulated in terms of “lurching”, I will therefore advocate a processual analysis of radicalization that has been presented elsewhere,³ in which the “pieces of the puzzle”⁴ that allow its logic to be understood correspond to a chronological staging that draws on the biographical itinerary of the actors under study. Only this processual approach is suited to conveying the structural causes and the choices of individuals who become involved in increasingly violent militancy.

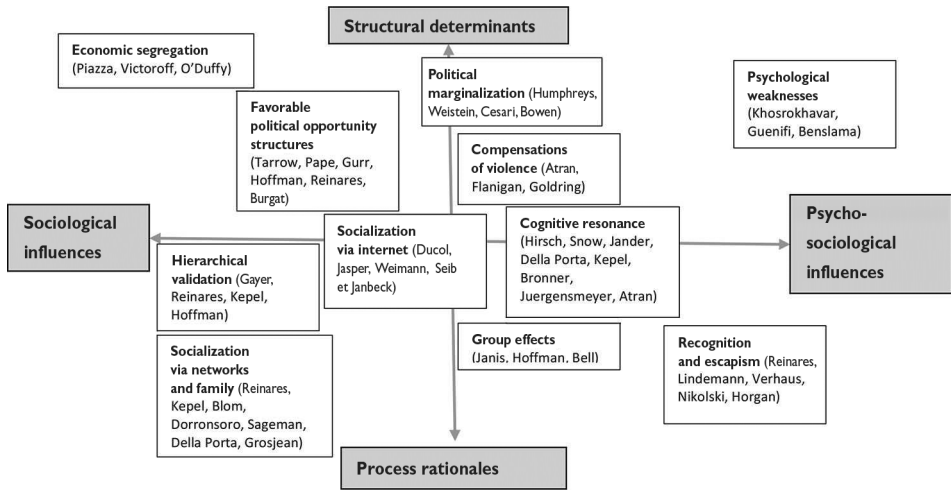
This article has two aims, which are summarized in the structure set out below. I will first of all seek to suggest a frame for understanding radicalization phenomena while taking into account a certain number of variables grouped around two axes. One of these sets sociological and organizational approaches against more psycho-sociological ones (horizontal axis), and the other sets reflections in terms of structural causes against causes that emphasize processual evolutions (vertical axis). I intend to present a literature review of research on phenomena related to engagement in political violence and simultaneously identify the authors who are most representative of the prioritized variables. I will draw upon a segment of the academic literature to think about radicalization phenomena by removing them from a solely jihadist context. Two experiences of armed struggle will be given priority, namely those of a nationalist and an Islamist kind, and I will attempt to demonstrate congruence between them in terms of the process of engagement in violence.

1. Peter Neumann, “The trouble with radicalization”, *International Affairs*, 89(4), 2013, 873-93 (886ff).

2. Neumann, “The trouble with radicalization”, 877.

3. Xavier Crettiez, “High risk activism: essai sur le processus de radicalisation”, *Pôle sud*, 34 and 35, 2011, 45-60 and 97-110. In relation to this notion, see also Olivier Fillieule, “Proposition pour une analyse processuelle de l’engagement individuel”, *Revue française de science politique*, 51(1), 2001, 199-215.

4. Mohammed Hafez and Mullins Creighton, “The radicalization puzzle: a theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38, 2015, 958-75.



Opportunity structures and cognitive resonances

I will first of all emphasize the structural reasons for radical engagement, whether it be economic segregation or political marginalization that leads certain actors to become involved in violence in order to oppose a situation that they perceive as unjust. The economic segregation experienced by a particular group can lead to radicalization, particularly if that segregation is perceived as being the result of an intentional policy on the part of the incumbent power, and even more particularly if that segregation is combined with significant community polarization that is based on distorted access to resources (the case of Northern Ireland may be the perfect illustration of this). Although the majority of researchers have not established direct links between a population’s socioeconomic level and phenomena related to violent radicalization, some have suggested a link between the socio-economic discrimination suffered by a particular group and an involvement in violence.

“There are two main conclusions produced by the study. The first is that a discrimination ‘matters’. The empirical results show that countries that permit their minority communities to be afflicted by economic discrimination make themselves more vulnerable to domestic terrorism. The second shows that the overall economic status of a country has a smaller effect on terrorism than does the economic status of a country’s minority groups.”¹

Political marginalization also entails placing emphasis on the removal of a group from the sites of decision making in favor of a rival or hostile dominant group, even without there

1. James A. Piazza, “Poverty, minority economic discrimination and domestic terrorism”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(3), 2011, 339-53 (350). James Goodwin also highlights that violent radicalization “is the result of extreme social polarization between groups”. James Goodwin, “A theory of categorical terrorism”, *Social Forces*, 84(4), 2006, 2028-46 (2035). This is also the conclusion arrived at by other analysts who make a link between youth and the economic and social discrimination experienced by young European Muslims on the one hand and the validation of suicide attacks on the other: Jeff Victoroff, Janice Achelman, and Miriam Matthews, “Psychological factors associated with support for suicide bombing in the Muslim diaspora”, *Political Psychology*, 33(6), 2012, 790-808. Brendan O’Duffy offers a similar explanation for the radicalization of young English Muslims who suffer economic frustration linked to “political grievances”. Brendan O’Duffy, “Radical atmosphere: explaining jihadist radicalization in the UK”, *Political Science and Politics*, 41(1), 2008, 37-42 (40).

being discriminatory intention. This point has been highlighted in particular in the case of the development of political violence in Corsica, which has principally been the result of the effects of a clan-based and clientelist political structure that has excluded a whole generation eager for political expression from the local arenas of power.¹ Violence has become one resource among several (others include ideology, the rewriting of history, and identity-based culture) in an attempt to gain entry to the local political domain and assert oneself as a credible interlocutor with the state in place of traditional clans.² This is also the point of view that researchers such as Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein have taken in analyzing factors related to the radicalization of young fighters in Sierra Leone.

“Individuals are more likely to join a rebellion if: they are economically deprived; they are marginalized from political decision making; they are alienated from mainstream political processes.”³

Eviction or marginalization from sites of political decision making as well as the strongly held feeling of having been deliberately excluded contributes to radicalization phenomena.⁴

Still at the macro level, I will next focus on the international and/or national context, which can lead certain actors who are faced with situations that they regard as shameful or unjust to become radicalized. Analytical examination of cognitive frames based on the perception of a strategic and political environment seeks to establish a link between cognitive frame and the “structure of political opportunity”, whether this is at a national or transnational level. The matter might be addressed here by taking into account the contributions of the sociology of collective action, and in particular Sidney Tarrow’s analysis. He stresses the interactionist dimension of violent collective action, which is highly dependent on the structures of opportunity that may exist on the national level (support from allies or hierarchical encouragement) or on the transnational level (the model of struggle, the existence of traumatic events that function as a trigger, the operational capacity to obtain international support from jihadists who are active and present in other countries, and so forth).⁵ Sociologists such as Robert Pape, the author of a famous study on suicide attacks, stresses in particular what he perceives as the marked effects of an international situation that is experienced as totally derogatory to the country’s dominant morality. For example, the occupation of holy

1. Xavier Crettiez, *La question corse* (Brussels: Complexe, 1999).

2. This view on the emergence of violence owes much to the resource mobilization paradigm, which in the 1980s challenged analysis that was conducted exclusively in terms of frustration in trying to grasp what drives collective engagement, regardless of whether this took a violent form. A useful reference here is Daniel Cefaï, *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on? Les théories de l'action collective* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012), 207-402.

3. Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, “Who fights? The determinants of participation in civil war”, *American Journal of Political Sciences*, 52(2), April 2008, 436-55 (440). Also see, in the case of Islamist violence, the analysis provided in Jocelyne Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); John Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, The State and Public Space* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

4. On this political or economic rationale for violent engagement, see the works of David Laitin: David Laitin and Roger Brubaker, “Ethnic and nationalist violence”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1988, 423-52; David Laitin and James Fearon, “Violence and the social construction of ethnic identity”, *International Organization*, 54(4), 2000, 845-77; and also Paul Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

5. For a very good application and summary of Sidney Tarrow's thinking, see Olivier Fillieule and Mounia Bennani Chraïbi, “Exit, voice, loyalty et bien d'autres choses encore” in Olivier Fillieule and Mounia Bennani Chraïbi (eds), *Résistances et protestations dans les sociétés musulmanes* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2003), 43-126 (75ff). Ted Gurr also speaks of an “international political opportunity structure” to grasp the likelihood of radicalization of a violent movement. Ted Gurr, *People versus States: Minorities At Risk In The New Century* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Research, 2000), 80.

Islamic sites by US armed forces from 1992 had important consequences, as it encouraged the radicalization of populations affected by this situation. The wave of suicide attacks that followed is evidence of this, and it functioned, according to Pape, as one of many strategic combinations that had a certain effectiveness (he wrote that “suicide terrorism is rising because it pays”).¹ In France, François Burgat has considered Islamist mobilizations not as a consequence of a particular relationship with Islam, but rather as the result of the imposition of models for living and of governing that reflect the dominant actors on the international scene, at the expense of local political cultures.²

Ultimately, what is of interest to the analyst here are the repercussions of the situational perceptions of actors and groups in relation to transnational events deemed to be significant or to national situations that evince a deliberate sidelining of certain actors.

In emphasizing perceptions, cognitive analysis and ideological or doctrinal frames come into play. Three elements are of particular interest when thinking about radical engagement.

The first involves taking into account violent reactions that stem from a phenomenon of anger provoked by a “frame of injustice” put forward by moral entrepreneurs to actors who are likely to accept it as such.³ William Gamson has long emphasized the capacity of cognitive frames to channel “just anger”, which he links to feelings of injustice.⁴ In the same vein, Eric L. Hirsch too speaks of the “rising awareness” that draws on militant know-how that is capable of offering cognitive tools and modes of interpreting injustice.⁵ The feeling of having suffered injustice may have the effect of augmenting the bonds of solidarity within a group whose identity will be consolidated based on this injustice, which is the foundation for its activities.⁶ For a form of injustice to be felt in this way and encourage radicalization processes, it is necessary for the interpretative frame put forward by the organizations in question to conform sufficiently to the beliefs and values of the groups within which it is deployed.

David Snow and Robert Benford call this “frame resonance”.⁷ Although ideology may not have the goal of driving the actor toward the use of violence, it can nevertheless serve as a springboard for radical engagement if the framing is managed effectively and is accompanied by “the appearance of a vigorous reserve of multiple resonance”.⁸ In the Muslim world, the

1. Robert Pape, “The strategic logic of suicide terrorism”, *American Political Science Review*, 97(3), 2003, 343-61 (344ff). See also Bruce Hoffman, “The myth of grassroots terrorism: why Osama bin Laden still matters”, *Foreign Affairs*, 87(3), 2008, 213-35; Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Laden's Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

2. François Burgat, *L'islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

3. On the notion of frame, which comes from the sociologist Erving Goffman (*Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* [New York: Harper, 1974]), see, principally in relation to the frame of injustice, David Snow *et al.*, “Frame alignment processes, micromobilization and movement participation”, *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), 1986, 464-81 (464ff).

4. William Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 32. On the link between anger and engagement concerning the activism of the Red Army Fraction (Rote Armee Fraktion, RAF) in relation to Palestinian entities, see Martin Jander, “German leftist terrorism and Israel”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38(6), 2015, 456-77 (456).

5. Eric L. Hirsch, “Sacrifice for the cause: group processes, recruitment, and commitment in a student social movement”, *American Sociological Review*, 55(2), 1990, 243-54.

6. As shown in James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

7. David Snow and Robert Benford, “Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization”, *International Social Movement Research*, 1(1), 1988, 197-217.

8. Cretziez, “High risk activism”, 45-60.

religious interpretation disseminated by a certain number of Salafist preachers via satellite channels has allowed a “frame of injustice” to take root. This frame rests upon victimhood-based explanations related to the perception of a general attack against the Islamic *Ummat* or upon a sense of an unjustifiable decline of Arab-Muslim civilization in the face of a West that is nevertheless held to be spiritually inferior. The strategy of bloc recruitment,¹ which during the very first years of the Algerian Civil War targeted a significant number of politicized and semi-politicized individuals close to the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF), demonstrates the importance afforded by armed groups affiliated with the Islamic Movement of Azawad (IMA) and then with the Islamic Salvation Army (ISA) to the frame of injustice adopted by the Islamic movement following the annulling of the 1991 legislative elections.² In the entirely different contexts of Northern Ireland and Italy, the Red Brigades (RB) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) capitalized with ease upon feelings of anger regarding the repression led by the Italian and British governments, just as they were able to exploit the feelings of injustice stemming from social inequality attributed to the policies pursued by those governments.³

The second element emphasizes the influence of bodies of professed ideologies and doctrines on militant actors.⁴ At a first level, ideology plays a central role in radicalization when it rests upon a grammar of violence that justifies passage to the aggressive act. When an action is carried out in the name of a doctrine that values violence, it can only blossom. This has been shown by revolutionary or nationalist experiences, two dimensions that are sometimes combined, as in the case of ETA in the Basque Country. A religious interpretation with a millenarian dimension – such as that put forth by Daesh, which skilfully reworks the theme of the end of the world that is present in Islam – values military experience, alongside its instrumentalization and hijacking of the concept of jihad.⁵ At a second level, Jean-Michel Muller also speaks of an “ideology of violence” that is considered by its adherents as “necessary, legitimate, and honorable”, constituting the very symbol of courage and proof of the greatness of engagement. According to this logic, J.-M. Muller explains, non-violence “can

1. I borrow the expression “bloc recruitment” from Anthony Oberschall, *Social Movements: Ideologies, Interests, and Identities* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 24.

2. Séverine Labat, *Les islamistes algériens, entre les urnes et le maquis* (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 262-3.

3. Edward Moxon-Browne, “The water and the fish: Public opinion and the provisional IRA in Northern Ireland”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 5(1-2), 1981, 54-72; Cynthia L. Irvin, *Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2010); Bossi and Della Porta, “Micro-mobilization into armed groups”.

4. Hamit Bozarslan, “Le Jihad: réceptions et usages d’une injonction coranique d’hier à aujourd’hui”, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 82, April-June 2004, 15-29. The dossier on “violent radicalization” released by France’s National Institute of Advanced Security and Justice Studies features the supposed importance of ideology in determining radical activity (see, for example, the articles by Asma Guenifi and Franck Bulinge). The dossier was published in *Cahiers de la sécurité et de la justice*, 30(4), 2014.

5. This hijacking is clearly demonstrated by Sophie Gherardi and Faker Korchane, who recall that Islam distinguishes greater jihad (a personal effort with a spiritual dimension) from lesser jihad (individual and non-compulsory and with a defensive aim). Daesh has thus transformed the meaning of the concept by removing the obligation of spiritual efforts and retaining only a version of jihad that is militarized, offensive, and obligatory (Sophie Gherardi and Faker Korchane, “Les djihadistes et la subversion des mots”, *Le Monde*, special edition on “jihadism”, 2016, 24). On the link between religion and violence, see Mark Jeuregensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God. The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Matthew Francis suggests a view that is less grounded in religion than it is in something sacred and non-negotiable (values, icons, and beliefs) to grasp violent outbursts (Matthew Francis, “Why the sacred is a better resource than religion for understanding terrorism”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 5, 2015, 1-16).

only be the weakness of the coward”.¹ The case of jihadist and Salafist violence in Algeria corresponds fairly closely to this reasoning. Each “jihadist emir” who reaches a command position must prove his courage through how cruel he is. The consequence of this is an increase in the intensity of indiscriminate violence toward civilian populations, as can be seen in the massacres in Bentalha and Sidi Youssef, near to Algiers, in 1997.²

The third element establishes an analytical link between ideology and emotions by demonstrating how doctrines incite in actors strong emotional reactions capable of encouraging violent radical action.³ Incorporating emotional dimensions into a processual analysis entails reconsidering the role of affects in the construction of the intentions that underpin violent action. Many works from different disciplines (and in particular from psychology, sociology, and philosophy) have contributed significantly to demonstrating the role played by emotions in individuals’ passage to the act.⁴ Clément Fabrice has theorized ideology’s instrumentalization of emotional factors by developing what he calls “the mechanisms of credulity”. By using “cognitive lures” in the form of a coherent discourse, these mechanisms apparently compromise the “cognitive filter” (which is supposed to detect implausibility) and encourage the “emotional filter” (which is supposed to detect the desirable).⁵ This logic rests upon a discourse constructed upon emotional registers – for example, feelings of fear, anger, or hatred, products of awareness-raising mechanisms⁶ – in such a way as to provoke affective reactions, with a view to mobilizing them for violent action. The case of Chechnya is an illustration of this. An Islamist (and nationalist) ideology of promoting a holy war against the enemy infidel was able to resonate with the extremely brutal ways in which the Russians administered Chechnya, and it also encouraged a reaction of hostility found in all outbursts of violence.⁷ In the Middle East, the value attached to the status of martyr within a particular religious interpretation of radical Islam has encouraged certain forms of extreme violence to be adopted on the basis of discourses centered on feelings of fear and hate in relation to “the Shia threat”.⁸

In the three cases (ideology as a source of victimhood; ideology as a violent doctrine; ideology as an emotional mechanism), it is important to think about ideological conviction in a

1. Jean-Marie Muller, “Philosophie de la non-violence” in Thomas Ferenczi (ed.), *Faut-il s'accommoder de la violence?* (Brussels: Complexe, 2000). The Islamist killer of a Parisian couple who were police personnel on 15 June 2016, declared in a posthumous video in which he regretted the cowardice of his “community” that: “A nation does not abandon jihad in Allah’s cause without being humiliated [”] Armed combat is a duty.”
2. On the massacres by the Armed Islamic Group (AIG) of Algeria, see Luis Martinez, “Algérie: les massacres de civils dans la guerre”, *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, 8(1), 2001, 43-58; Statys Kalyvas, “Wanton and senseless? The logic of massacres in Algeria”, *Rationality and Society*, 11(3), 1999, 243-85; Dalia Ghanem, “De la violence extrême en Algérie: le massacre de Bentalha du 22 septembre 1997”, PhD thesis in political science, 2012, Université de Versailles – Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (thesis supervised by Xavier Crettiez).
3. Ron Aminzade and Doug McAdam, “Emotions and contentious politics”, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 7(2), 2002, 107-9.
4. See, for example, António Damásio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam Publishing, 1994); Jing Zhu and Paul Thagard, “Emotion and action”, *Philosophical Psychology*, 15(1), 2002, 19-36; Sabine Döring, “Explaining action by emotion”, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53(211), 2003, 214-30.
5. Fabrice Clément, *Les mécanismes de la crédulité* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 2006).
6. Christophe Traïni understands an “awareness-raising mechanism” to be “the combination of material support, organization of objects, and staging that militants deploy in order to provoke affective reactions that predispose those who experience them to become engaged or to support the defended cause” (Christophe Traïni, *Émotions... mobilisation!* [Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2009], 13).
7. Julie Wilhelmsen, “Between a rock and a hard place: the Islamisation of the Chechen separatist movement”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57(1), 2005, 35-59 (40).
8. Olivier Roy, *Le croissant et le chaos* (Paris: Fayard/Hachette littérature, 2007); Thomas Hegghammer, “Combattants saoudiens en Irak: modes de radicalisation et de recrutement”, *Cultures et conflits*, 64, 2006, 111-26.

processual manner. Gerald Bronner stresses the existence of a “cognitive process” in which the believer “becomes engaged step by step along the path to an adherence that in other contexts may have seemed unreasonable”.¹ The temporality of radicalization is difficult to measure and cannot be identical for each actor studied. A homogeneous way of thinking might emphasize phases and lurches that do not in fact occur for each individual in the same way. As Annie Collovald and Brigitte Gaïti point out, “The temporality of experience is different from the temporality of radicalization processes, which is reconstructed and homogenized retrospectively around ‘origins’, ‘turning points’, and ‘causes and effects’”.²

Violent socializations: interpersonal circles, networks, and allegiances

At a meso-level, any research undertaking must take into account the influence of mobilizing organizations in radicalization phenomena within structured groups, as well as the importance of the effects of socialization. Above all, we should focus on the hierarchical validation of becoming involved in violence: radicalization is much stronger and quicker when it has the benefit of moral and even operational support from political actors who hold a dominant hierarchical position over the radicalized individuals. This point has been particularly highlighted in the case of conflicts that reveal the involvement of state services or the visible support of foreign institutional actors. In his case studies of Hindus and Sikhs in India, Laurent Gayer highlights the decisive role of the Pakistani secret services in supporting the Sikh rebellion and its gradual radicalization following Operation Blue Star in 1984.³ The hierarchical validation here took an operational form because it showed actors the “how” of their actions (for example, how to wage war, and training in military methods and rules) and at the same time told them “why” to act (moral validation related to the use of violence). This latter point effectively illustrates how radicalization was facilitated in the Basque case. The importance of militancy within ETA until the late 1990s, whether it was undertaken in French or Spanish territory, depended upon many elements. However, key among these was the continual support, which was most often passive and indulgent, of recognized institutional actors such as the ruling Basque Nationalist Party in Vitoria.⁴ In the Islamist sphere, the moral validation offered by certain extremist imams plays a not-insignificant part in radical enrollment, whether this takes place in countries with Muslim cultures⁵ or within the Muslim community in Europe.⁶ The centrality of sites for radicalizing young Europeans and socializing them into jihad is now well known. Their

1. “At each stage of the process, the follower is faced with new arguments that, as far as he can see, do not seem to make him much more engaged than he was before. But once this incremental cognitive mechanism has done its job, it becomes difficult to deconstruct the convert's beliefs through opposing arguments.” Gerald Bronner, *La pensée extrême. Comment des hommes ordinaires deviennent des fanatiques* (Paris: Denoël, 2009), 177-8, 186. This is also the advice offered by Annie Collovald and Brigitte Gaïti.

2. Annie Collovald and Brigitte Gaïti, “Question sur la radicalisation politique”, in Annie Collovald and Brigitte Gaïti (eds), *La démocratie aux extrêmes* (Paris: La Dispute, 2006), 19-45 (35).

3. Laurent Gayer, “Le parcours du combattant: une approche biographique des militants sikhs du Khalistan”, *Questions de recherche*, 28, May 2009, 1-63. See also in the same area Frédéric Grare, “Entre démocratie et répression: dix-huit ans de contre-insurrection au Cachemire indien”, *Critique internationale*, 41, October-December 2008, 81-96.

4. Xavier Crettiez, *Violence et nationalisme* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006); Fernando Reinares, *Patriotas de la muerte. Por qué han militado en ETA y cuándo abandonan* (Madrid: Taurus, 2011).

5. Thomas Hegghammer highlights the importance of “incitement by religious leaders [that] is another, more indirect method of hierarchical recruitment” (T. Hegghammer, “Combattants saoudiens”, 123). See also, in relation to Europe, Dominique Thomas, *Londonistan. La voix du djihad* (Paris: Michalon, 2003).

6. It should be noted that this radicalization occurs less and less within mosques and increasingly on their sidelines. Gilles Kepel writes with regard to Mohammed Merah and the Kouachi brothers: “The long-haired

radicalization is fostered by spending time in environments in which violent practices are valued, encouraged, and, above all, learned. For example, out of the nineteen members of the jihadist network responsible for the 13 November 2015 attacks in Paris who were identified, eleven had spent time in jihadist camps in conflict zones or in Syria.¹

Radicalization through familial and relational socialization is a highly decisive factor, as well as a central element very frequently highlighted by sociologists who study phenomena related to political violence. Studies in various areas have highlighted this almost anthropological dimension of a relationship to violence shaped by family biography. Whether it is through belonging to a lineage of fighters, through simple family encouragement to enter into armed struggle, or through the respect imposed via a violent clan-based culture, familial socialization into radical engagement plays a specific role. The Corsican and Basque examples attest to this if one examines the biographies of the many actors involved in armed struggle who come from families engaged in nationalist fighting and were sometimes directly affected by repressive abuses.² Other theaters of combat such as Northern Ireland and Kosovo reveal similar logics of “biographical continuity”.³ Jihadist engagements in Europe also involve fraternal logics and lead to affective unions based on family ties. This last point is an interesting one in that it accentuates the traits that are particular to actors’ clandestine isolation by causing them to develop in a closed-off affective and relational world. This was the case of Olivier Corel, the “white imam” of Syrian origin from Artigat in southwestern France, who “supported his followers in their private lives” and performed the marriage of Mohammed Merah’s mother to the father of Sabri Essid, the mentor of Mohammed Merah, over whose marriage he would also preside a few months later.⁴ In a more expansive version of the simple family nucleus, many theaters of combat reveal the importance of clan-based networks in radical engagement. This is the case, for example, of the Kurdish movement in Turkish Kurdistan, which has been deciphered by Olivier Grosjean.⁵

Salafist guru Farid Benyettou, through his small-group ‘lessons’ following Friday prayers at the al-Da’wa mosque (known as the Stalingrad mosque), was the one who reoriented the violence of these idle young individuals, who were eager for social revenge, toward the holy cause of jihad through the Buttes Chaumont’ Islamist cell”; Gilles Kepel and Antoine Jardin, *Terreur dans l’Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), 256.

1. *Le Monde*, 1 December 2015, 12-13; Kepel and Jardin, *Terreur dans l’Hexagone*, 257.

2. In his noteworthy study based on meetings with 700 ETA militants, Fernando Reinares underscores this point in relation to over a third of his sample. Anboto, one of ETA’s leaders, declared: “Nacidos y creídos en un ámbito familiar donde ser terrorista constituía el modelo y la norma para los niños” (Reinares, *Patriotas de la muerte*, 61). Belonging to ETA often operated as a continuation of a family’s engagement or a response to the repressive acts of the GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación). The same type of radical engagement driven by family considerations and encouragement can be found in Colombian cases (Mauricio Florez Morris, “Joining guerrilla groups in Colombia: individual motivations and processes for entering a violent organization”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 30(7), 2007, 615-34); or in Pakistani ones: Amélie Blom, “Le Hizb-ul-Mujahidin du Cachemire”, in Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *Milices armées d’Asie du Sud* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2008), 153-76, and Amélie Blom, “Les ‘martyrs’ jihadistes veulent-ils forcément mourir? Une approche émiqque de la radicalisation autosacrificielle au Pakistan”, *Revue française de science politique*, 61(5), 2011, 867-91.

3. Robert White, “Structural identity theory and the post recruitment activism of Irish republicans: Persistence, disengagement, splits and dissidents in social movement organizations”, *Social Problems*, 57, 2002, 341-70 (354). See also Nathalie Duclos’s excellent work “*Spoilers* ou intermédiaires de la paix? Les ex-combattants de l’UCK au cœur de l’action internationale post-conflit et de la formation du nouvel État du Kosovo”, advanced thesis to qualify to supervise reasearch, 6 November 2015, Sciences Po Paris, 95-116 (thesis supervised by Guillaume Devin).

4. Kepel and Jardin, *Terreur*, 129.

5. Gilles Dorronsoro and Olivier Grosjean, “Engagement militant et phénomènes de radicalisation chez les Kurdes de Turquie”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2004, <http://www.ejts.org>.

Beyond familial socialization, many authors highlight the importance of friendship and relational networks in the radicalization process. In his analysis of Islamist terrorism, Marc Sageman has placed particular emphasis on the influence of friendship, sporting, or associational networks in the creation of radicalized Salafist communities, and in his view this influence is much more important than ideological convictions (according to Sageman, over 70% of Al-Qaeda members joined the group on the basis of friendship ties).¹ The same conclusions can be found with regard to almost all domains of armed struggle,² such as poorer neighborhoods that have been radicalized under the influence of clandestine religious networks,³ or even within a neighborhood culture, the common areas of apartment buildings or sports centers can serve as conduits for socialization into engagement. The anthropologist Scott Atran emphasizes this in the cases of Southeast Asia and Iraq:

“Soccer, paintball, camping, hiking, rafting, body building, martial arts training and other forms of physically stimulating and intimate group action create a bunch of buddies, which becomes a ‘band of brothers’ in a simple heroic cause.”⁴

Finally, one might also refer to the experience of incarceration, which has been extensively analyzed in recent years.⁵ It may contribute to radicalization through affinity groups among prisoners, the chance influence of imams, or, in some countries, the traumatic experience of mistreatment.

More generally, emphasis may be placed on the importance of individuals who are “points of contact” who may serve as spiritual guides and operational models and thereby encourage the passage to the act. The Islamist attacks against *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris revealed that their perpetrators greatly benefited from moral support and active advice from an Islamist relay that was all the more influential because of the inexperience of its audience. Violent engagement is therefore highly dependent upon the links established with moral relays. Within more structured conflicts, this dimension is even more sensitive. Here, the effects of commitment to the organization are important, and they encourage loyalty to be transferred, thereby creating strong and durable connections between the violent actors and the leaders of the cause who supervise them. Commitment to the organization that underpins the

1. Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004), 113. Brendan O’Duffy also writes: “In sum, the most prominent literature on suicide terror and the global, violent, radical Islamic jihad identify two main components: first, a pool of potential recruits who are sufficiently aggrieved by personal or collective crisis to seek new solidarity bonds to replace dysfunctional or non-existent family and friendship networks; secondly, existing social networks with channels of communication and material support from sponsors of violent attacks”, Brendan O’Duffy, “Radical atmosphere: Explaining jihadist radicalization in the UK”, *Political Science and Politics*, 41(1), 2008, 37-42 (38). On this importance of networks in passage to the political act, see also David Campbell, “Social networks and political participation”, *Annual Review of Political Sciences*, 16, 2013, 127-45. On clandestine violence specifically, see Donatella Della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Donatella Della Porta and Lorenzo Bossi suggest a triad of access routes to violence. The last of these, the “solidarity path”, emphasizes the density of bonds of solidarity within neighborhoods, gangs, or affective networks (Bossi and Della Porta, “Micro-mobilization into armed groups”, 375ff).

2. This is one of Fernando Reinares’s major conclusions from his study of ETA.

3. This was the case in Lunel, in Hérault, southern France, where around ten young individuals left for Syria having become radicalized at a makeshift neighborhood mosque.

4. Scott Atran, “The making of a terrorist: a need for understanding” from the Field Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Washington, DC, March 12, 2008. 2008.

5. Farhad Khosrokhavar, *L’Islam dans les prisons* (Paris: Balland, 2004). See also in the case of Islamist prisoners in Spain, Humberto Trujillo *et al.*, “Radicalization in prisons? Field research in 25 Spanish prisons”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21(4), 2009, 558-79.

actor's submission to the violent exhortations of clandestine groups can take on different forms. It can be illustrated first of all through the adoption of a pseudonym, often chosen by the violent group, that signals the affiliation of the individual's identity to the clandestine structure. The case of Islamists and Basques alike demonstrate this loss of civil identity chosen by the family in favor of a functional identity imposed through clandestinity. Although this change of family name may respond to security imperatives, it is motivated above all by a desire for exclusive allegiance to the group and for submission to its practical imperatives. There are also loyalty rituals that command a feeling of exclusive belonging to the group. With regard to the case of Al-Qaeda, David Hofmann and Lone Dawson describe the practice of *bayat*, a pledge of total allegiance to the organization and to its leader that is formulated in an almost sacred way: "Breaking bayat is like breaking a promise to God", Stewart Bell writes.¹ In an entirely different context, namely Basque terrorism, one finds similar elements that describe a form of ritual of submission or commitment to ETA. The organization has imposed the practice of *kantada* on its militants when they face police interrogations. This entails producing a sort of detailed statement of the interaction with the "colonial forces", which allows the organization to control the voices of *etarras* acting in its name. Even though it is counterproductive – the discovery of these *kantada* allowed the police to dismantle a few command units – it has become an enduring practice owing to the strong desire of the organization's leadership for total control of the actions and words of its members.

This strong supervision encourages groupthink that nurtures violent engagement by structuring individual reflexes and perceptions. Groupthink describes the way in which clandestinity or activism within small, very tightly knit and closed groups can contribute to the production of sectarian and closed-off thinking that is conducive to a paranoid perception of one's environment, and also simultaneously to the carrying out of violence in a way that is accentuated by pressure from within the group – the fear of being seen as a coward and of behaving in a way that is at odds with the cause.²

The importance of the Web in relation to militant socialization should also be highlighted.³ Even though it is important to avoid giving in to a kind of "technological illusion" that affords this tool the role of autonomous vector in individual lurches toward jihad,⁴ it is possible to identify five ways in which the Web and ICT are used: to promote information

1. Stewart Bell, *The Martyr's Oath: The Apprenticeship of a Homegrown Terrorist* (Toronto: John Wiley, 2005), 108. See also David Hoffman and Lone Dawson, "The neglected role of charismatic authority in the study of terrorist groups and radicalization", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 37(4), 2014, 348-68 (357).

2. On these subjects, see Xavier Crettiez, *Violence et nationalisme* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006), 196ff; Irving Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); Gerald Bronner, *La pensée extrême* (Paris: Denoël, 2009). The latter emphasizes the isolation effects on individuals who are cut off from their families and enmeshed in closed-off sectarian groups, which prevents "cognitive competition" that is capable of threatening radical discourse (211).

3. Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on The Internet: The New Arena, The New Challenges* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006); Philip Seib and Dana M. Janbeck, *Global Terrorism and New Media: The Post Al Qaeda Generation* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010).

4. On this subject, see Benjamin Ducol's warnings (Ducol, "Devenir Jihadiste à l'heure du web"). The theory of self-radicalization over the Internet has also been criticized by several recent studies, including that of RAND: Ines Von Behr, Anais Reding, Charlie Edward, and Luke Gribbon, *Radicalization in the Digital Era: The Use of The Internet in Fifteen Cases of Terrorism and Extremism* (Cambridge: RAND, 2013). David Benson likewise highlights that intensive surveillance of the Web has put the brakes on online recruitment and means that the Internet is not a dominant vector for radicalization; David Benson, "Why the Internet is not increasing terrorism", *Security Studies*, 23(2), 2014, 293-328.

on jihadist combat; to offer “political and religious narratives” to encourage mobilization;¹ to present a positive image of a “soldier of God” via seductive allegories or devices (such as the use of video game aesthetics);² to provide practical advice on reaching combat zones or on acting locally and on an autonomous basis; and to establish “emotional communities” that “provide horizontal communication that is user-generated, interactive, instantaneous, highly personalized and easily mobile. As such, they could assist in forging a sense of communal belonging that is likely to appeal to some alienated individuals.”³ Within the jihadist sphere in France, the site Ansar-alhaqq, which is referenced in the majority of so-called self-radicalization cases, had more than 4,000 subscribers and allowed Ibn Mahmud, who ran the site, to spread his radical writings and encourage users to leave for Syria.⁴

The psychosocial logics of engagement

At this last, level, which is more micro, many researchers stress two strong and complementary dimensions: psychological aspects and the retributive dimension of violent activities.

Taking into account the psychological dimension of radical engagement means being wary of any emphasis on a single psychology of the actor and favoring a psychology of interactions.⁵ Some authors nevertheless emphasize the psychological fragilities of individuals engaged in violence. In the case of Islamist violence, and through studies conducted in prisons, Farad Khosrokhavar highlights the mental fragility of certain prisoners, while also revealing that, in the prison environment, almost half of individuals suffer from psychic and nervous problems that are accentuated by their being deprived of their freedom.⁶ Asma Guenifi likewise stresses psychological vulnerabilities in discussing a “Salafist pathology” that may be expressed through disorders in relation to controlling impulses, especially in the case of relationships with women. Strong desire for a woman returns the Islamist to a form of impurity that only violence can keep at bay.⁷ Although this type of analysis can sometimes

1. American sociologist James Jasper has described certain scenes and visuals as “moral shocks” that are in his view capable of encouraging radical engagement after an individual comes face to face with upsetting images that seem to be totally incompatible with our value system. By arousing anger and disgust, these images may nurture strong negative emotions that promote radicalization – for example, hate. One of the objectives of jihadists who make use of the Internet and social networks is to provide films and images that are suitable for arousing a common aversion to a “crusader and Jewish” enemy that is guilty of atrocities. James Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999). See also Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, “The return of the repressed: the fall and rise of emotions in social movement theory”, *Mobilization*, 5(1), 2000, 65-83.

2. This is particularly the case with regard to the videos shared by the Frenchman Omar Omsen, which were entitled 19HH (for “history of humanity” or in reference to the nineteen martyrs of 9/11). Widely watched by Islamists and conspiracy theorists, these long and grandiloquent videos that make excessive use of foreshortened explanations and an inexact style of language reveal a remarkable mastery of aesthetics and mix clips from Hollywood movies and video games as well as religious statements over an exhilarating soundtrack.

3. Mohammed Hafez and Mullins Creighton, “The radicalization puzzle: a theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38(11), 2015, 958-75 (969).

4. Kepel and Jardin, *Terreur*, 202.

5. This level falls within the recommendations made in Philippe Braud, *L'émotion en politique* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2002).

6. Farad Khosrokhavar, “Nouveau paradigme de radicalisation en prison”, *Cahiers de la sécurité et de la justice*, 30, 2014, 12-21 (17). “In prison, many psychologically frail individuals, who may even be instable or psychopaths, are fascinated by radicalization”; Farad Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation* (Paris: MSH Éditions, 2014), 158.

7. Asma Guenifi, “Le profil psychologique de l’engagement dans le salafisme”, *Cahiers de la sécurité et de la justice*, 30, 2014, 22-31 (27).

explain why violence is chosen in particular by those with sociopathic profiles, it does not allow us to understand the full gamut of aggressive engagement that is singular within structured and highly ideologized collectives.

With regard to political violence, several authors have underlined certain psycho-sociological characteristics that explain radicalization phenomena.

An individual's valuation of his or her self-esteem is a primary factor that can determine radical engagement. Becoming a *gudari* in ETA or a *mujahideen* or *shahid* combatant within Islamist groups allows individuals to significantly enhance their self-esteem beyond their true social identity.¹ Because this idea is a heuristic one, it must be coupled with analysis that takes into account not only violent actors' social and economic environments but also the political context in which they develop.

Some very thought-provoking interpretations have examined terrorist violence by focusing on a lack of recognition.² However, these have a tendency to overlook the "giving" nature of the desire for recognition.³ Actors whose capacity to act is denigrated may have a tendency to resort to violence to compensate for that social incapacity: because they are unable to "give" in accordance with their supposed capacities, they may be tempted to prove their capacity to act through putting their life and those of others on the line. The belligerent motivation of violent actors may thus be closely dependent upon their search for self-esteem, which is linked to their desire for recognition.⁴ Thomas Lindemann suggests defining a feeling of recognition as the congruence between the self-image that we claim for ourselves or for our reference community and the image that others attribute to us.⁵ A feeling of non-recognition comes about when the image claimed is more positive than the one attributed – or, to be more exact, when actors take the view that their status as a giver in society has not been valued as highly as it ought to be. From this perspective, it could be considered, as Lindemann suggests, that a desire for respect, honor, and revenge often plays a more crucial role than do strategic considerations such as the desire to maximize resources in economic or power terms.⁶ In many cases, a situation of non-recognition (one that fosters the perception of a denial of recognition) is strengthened by a combination between, on the one hand, a "virile" socialization that values physical force and a "disregard for death", and on the other a deliberate diminishing of the "giver's" status within society – that is, an overlooking of actors' role as "contributors" to a sphere of social interaction. It is clearly apparent,

1. Reinares, *Patriotas de la muerte*, 115. This is also what Julie Wilhelmsen points out with regard to Chechen Islamist warlords: "Most of these men were nobodies in peacetime: it was fighting wars that made their careers" (Wilhelmsen, "Between a rock and a hard place", 41).

2. Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes and Consequences* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011); Jerrold Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007); Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Quand Al-Qaïda parle* (Paris: Grasset, 2006).

3. Here I am drawing on the reflections of Thomas Lindemann, author of these lines, who bases these reflections on Marcel Mauss's seminal work *Essai sur le don* (Paris: PUF, 2001); and Alain Caillé's revised conceptualization in the journal *MAUSS*.

4. Braud, *L'émotion en politique*, 145-87; Philippe Braud, *Violences politiques* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 161; Isabelle Sommier, "Les états affectifs ou la dimension affectuelle des mouvements sociaux" in Éric Agrikoliansky, Isabelle Sommier, and Olivier Filleule (eds), *Penser les mouvements sociaux. Conflits sociaux et contestation dans les sociétés contemporaines* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), 185-202.

5. See Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War* (Colchester, UK: ECPR Press, 2010), 9ff.

6. Thomas Lindemann, "The case for an empirical and social-psychological study of recognition in international relations", *International Theory*, 5(1), 2013, 150-6.

Lindemann highlights, that violence labeled as terrorist is not always at its most significant levels in countries where economic deprivation is strongest. For example, Belgium, France, and Norway, which are among the world's richest countries, have seen a large number of their nationals set off for Syria and pledge allegiance to Islamic State. But these countries are precisely the ones where logics of invisibility linked with a difficulty in achieving the status of giver are clearly identifiable in relation to the engagement of jihadist perpetrators. This was illustrated during the Paris attacks of November 2015, where two forms of youth came face to face, and the jihadist form of the two seemed to shake off the impossibility of agency through the use of violence.¹

This self-esteem heightened by the adoption of violent posture or practice can also be interpreted through the experienced effects of global turmoil. For example, the US occupation of Iraq and the subsequent phase of chaos and extreme violence shocked many young people, who found in the form of Daesh a protector against the atrocities of Shia militias, an agent for local order to counter the prevailing anarchy, and a relay for recapturing the honor that they lost following the US occupation.² One of Olivier Roy's theories also emphasizes the fragile identity of certain Western Muslims who are caught up in a tension between an Islamic culture that they are fascinated by but do not understand well and a Western society that seems to reject them. Although some find a path to wholeness through a strict form of Islam, a minority may take the jihadist path as a form of affirming their identities.³ Fethi Benslama speaks of a "super-Muslim" complex that pushes certain Islamists to overplay their strict identity through violence in order to respond to an "Islamic ideal wounded" by the West and its values.⁴ Roy goes further by asserting that radicalization has less to do with religion than it does with a desire for a nihilistically inspired generational break that takes up the religious standard because it is available, just as left-wing and nationalist causes were in the past. The violent jihadist radicalization undertaken by young people from immigrant backgrounds may therefore be the outcome of a desire to break away, of self-hatred, and of reinvention that produces a glorious and seductive identity. This desire is turned into a passage to the armed act, in opposition to moderate and practical Islam, which is perceived as drab.⁵

This point relates to a further element, one that is less frequently highlighted but whose validity ought to be measured by examining the "escapist" dimension of armed

1. Emphasis is also to be placed here on the biographical availability of individuals, which is a constant in extreme militant engagement: the desire for recognition is greater because this young and often idle population's capacity to act is scarcely acknowledged.

2. This point is highlighted in particular in the interviews that one American journalist conducted with Daesh prisoners in Kurdistan: Lydia Wilson, *What I Discovered from Interviewing Imprisoned ISIS Fighters*, <<http://www.thenation.com/article/what-i-discovered-from-interviewing-isis-prisoners/>>. This thesis is also supported in Pierre-Jean Luizard, *Le piège Daesh* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015).

3. Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam* (London: Hurst, 2004).

4. "Although [the decline of Islam] is not the Koran's fault, it is the fault of Muslims who have not known how to retrieve its knowledge. From this flows the judgment that their faith has been weakened and that their defection is the cause of their decline – hence the self-reproach and expiation, the debasement and the re-idealization, the holy obligation to be more and more and more Muslim. This is the psychological invention of the super-Muslim", Fethi Benslama, *Un furieux désir de sacrifice. Le surmusulman* (Paris: Seuil, 2016), 85.

5. Olivier Roy, "Le djihadisme est une révolte nihiliste", *Le Monde*, 25 November 2015. American anthropologist Scott Atran arrives at a fairly similar conclusion, whilst rejecting the nihilism that Roy brings: "Violent extremism represents not the resurgence of traditional cultures, but their collapse, as young people [are] in search of a social identity that gives personal significance and glory [...] They radicalize to find a firm identity in a flattened world" (<http://blogs.plos.org/neuroanthropology/2015/04/25>).

engagement.¹ By “escapism”, I mean the intense pleasure that political militants can derive from engaging in radical activities that are totally removed from everyday ordinariness and provide those who go down this path with a grandiose and mythologized self-image. One of the sources of radical armed engagement, especially when it stems from a social world of disenchantment (for example, a poorer neighborhood), is the potential for an individual’s self-transformation into an all-powerful superbeing, which enhances the actor’s moral status and brings it into the narcissistic rapture of the glorious fight.² This “militant bovarism” is probably not unrelated to a number of conversions to radical Islamism by actors with criminal backgrounds. It should be noted that this escapist temptation ought not to be thought of solely as a psychological resource particular to the individual. It is also a construct of the individual’s biographical evolution – the fruit of a comparison with peers that leads to an enhanced self-image.³ The militant actor adopts a radical stance that he improves as he becomes engaged. He plays a role, develops an attachment to it, and gradually becomes the fighter that he had initially been trying to embody.⁴ To this end, he operates according to a conditioning that he receives through both frequenting his circle of socialization and adopting stances that suit the role. Among these, taking part in combat sports (which is frequent among young jihadists in French jails), rituals centered on civil unrest (such as *kale borroka* in the Basque Country), and possession of firearms contribute to the construction of a fighter role that is both seductive and operational. In a more theatrical way, the adoption of a politico-religious logorrhea prepares the actor for the role that will become his own. In relation to self-produced jihadist discourses on the Web, Gilles Kepel describes “Salafist gibberish, the Islamist era’s Orwellian newspeak, [which] is the quintessential vector for jihadist indoctrination, owing to the mental formatting through which it conditions newcomers.”⁵ Later, the use of psychotropic drugs or euphoria-inducing medication is what may complete the metamorphosis, making the personality that they thereafter inhabit – that of an individual fighting for Allah and working to help Muslims worldwide – credible to actors.⁶

Finally, following the line of thought begun by Bert Klandermans, there are authors who emphasize the psychological phenomenon of anticipation of a movement’s success to understand why it is seductive to a militant base. Robert White highlights this to grasp the success

1. Vera Nikolski, “Lorsque la répression est un plaisir: le militantisme au Parti national bolchevik russe”, *Cultures et conflits*, 89, 2013, 13-28.

2. Colonel John M. Verhaus, who questioned over 2,030 Al-Qaeda Islamists, established the following typology for combatants: revenge seekers, identity seekers, status seekers, and thrill seekers. The two latter groups (more than 30% of his corpus) may correspond to this profile of an escapist in search of personal glory and collective adventure (John M. Verhaus, “Why youth join Al Qaeda”, *United States Institute of Peace*, 236, May 2010).

3. This is well demonstrated by the account of David Vallat, who engaged with radical Islamism and described the progressive effects of becoming trapped in the combatant’s meaningful role; David Vallat, *Terreur de jeunesse* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2016), 92-3 and 99.

4. I refer here to Erving Goffman’s analysis in terms of “attachment to the role”. “The performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality”; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956), 10.

5. Kepel and Jardin, *Terreur*, 171. This linguistic conditioning can be found in other radical worlds, such as bellicose nationalisms. In the Corsican case, the use of aggressive or patriotic formulas by actors who often lack bilingual skills contributes to their staging as fighters. The role of “militant rhetoric and language” has already been highlighted in the case of experiences on the far left: Sommier, *La violence révolutionnaire*.

6. Press revelations about the use of Captagon – a medicine withdrawn from sale because of its hallucinatory effects – by the jihadists behind the 13 November 2015 attacks in Paris illustrate this point.

of the IRA in the 1990s.¹ One cannot rule out the possibility that this phenomenon of anticipation of success may play a significant role in the recruitment of young Westerners to Daesh. By showing the caliphate's strength and jihadists' military success, Daesh overturns the image of Islamic victimhood and demonstrates its "success", thereby arousing the support of the most ardent.²

On an individual basis, aggressive actors can also be sensitive to the symbolic retributions that the use of violence can lead to, from enhancement of the self to the search for protection³ and the identity acceleration⁴ encouraged by recourse to violence. Material forms of reward such as access to resources that are rare in certain places or the possibility of social and financial elevation may also encourage radicalization.⁵ As the anthropologist Scott Atran highlights, one of Daesh's successes is to "offer youth a positive personal dream, with a concrete chance of realization".⁶ The possible horizons include changing the world, bringing an end to the "extermination" of Muslims, and achieving a united and dignified caliphate – projects with particularly strong and seductive "moral virtues".

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By turning our attention toward the processual dimension of action, dispensing with the false problem of unexplained "lurches" to radicalism, and rejecting any research centered exclusively on causes, the notion of "radicalization" demonstrates definite heuristic potential. Although its use is not systematically associated with Islam from an essentialist viewpoint, it allows diverse combat experiences to be compared, and this article has tried to deploy the term to this end. This interpretation of the prioritized variables in the analysis of radicalization does not seek to provide a total understanding of extremist engagement, but it does

1. "Factors that influence recruitment, including biographical availability, biographical continuity, social connections with activists and expectations of success, also influence post-recruitment activism" (White, "Structural identity", 366).

2. Scott Atran, "Looking for the roots of terrorism", *Nature*, 15 January 2015, <http://www.nature.com/news/looking-for-the-roots-of-terrorism-1.16732>. Unlike the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria in the 1990s, which was weaker when faced with the authorities in Algiers, and also less attractive to the Algerian immigrant population in France, Daesh fascinates a minority of immigrant youth, and in spite of its being more distant, it is bolstered by its military success on the ground.

3. Supporting or engaging in violence can also stem from a highly instrumental strategy that aims to protect the community and the individual through an embedded militia. This was one of the driving forces behind republican engagement within the IRA: Maurice Goldring, *Renoncer à la terreur* (Paris: Édition du Rocher, 2005). In a similar vein, other authors emphasize engagement in armed movements that provide social assistance and services: Shawn Teresa Flanigan and Cheryl O'Brien, "Service-seeking behavior, perceptions of armed actors and preference regarding governance: Evidence from the Palestinian territories", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38, 2015, 622-51 (622).

4. By "identity acceleration", I mean the way in which violence may allow actors, who are sometimes not well versed in the culture or the religion that they claim to defend, to become more invested in their cause through the advertised use of their military commitment. This point seems to be a key one in understanding the high number of converts or former criminals involved in armed movements or in terrorist atrocities. See Timothy Holman, "Belgian and French foreign fighters in Iraq, 2003-2005: A comparative case study", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38, 2015, 603-21.

5. I refer here to the works of Amélie Blom ("Le Hizb-ul-Mujahidin du Cachemire") or that of Maurice Goldring on the IRA (*Renoncer à la terreur*).

6. Atran, "Looking for the roots of terrorism".

offer some significant reference points – beyond just the ideological motivations that are commonly put forward – to grasp its political, social, and psychosocial dynamics.¹

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