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ANALYZING THE GROWING ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION IN FRANCE

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By Virginia Ruth Brommer

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
Croft Institute for International Studies  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

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Approved:

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Advisor: Dr. Melissa Graves

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Reader: Dr. William Schenck

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Reader: Dr. Benjamin Jones

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## ABSTRACT

### Analyzing The Growing Islamic Radicalization in France

Islamic radicalization in European countries is becoming more and more prevalent, as evidenced by the number of recent attacks by Muslims in Europe. I argue that the social, religious, and psychological environment in France creates a unique opportunity for Islamic radicalization, particularly through social media and in prisons. After defining radicalization and explaining two radicalization processes as well as different types of radicals, I analyze the specific factors present in France that contribute to this radicalization. I use case study analysis to examine several French citizens who radicalized, either online or in prison, in order to show how the recruiter exacerbated the situation in France. Additionally, I evaluate primary sources from the Islamic State and the Levant, in order to show how it capitalizes on certain aspects of French society, such as the discriminatory laws banning the burka. I also apply both theories of radicalization, and analyze which one matches the processes found in the case studies and primary sources. My findings support my hypothesis that France is a unique case where Islamic radicalization is more easily achieved, and that the presence of a mentor is crucial in the radicalization process.

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## **Introduction**

My thesis is about the torturous relationship that France has with its Muslim citizens. This thesis seeks to answer the question: why does France have particularly difficult relationship with its citizens of Muslim faith, sometimes resulting in Islamic radicalization? To answer this question, I explore recruitment pertaining to social media and in prisons. Based upon my case study analysis, I hypothesize all Muslims in France are discriminated against by state laws, but that social media and prison serve as a tipping point environment in which Muslims become radicalized. I also hypothesize that the presence of a mentor is crucial in the radicalization process in both instances. To test these hypotheses, I examine two case studies as well as primary sources from radical Islamic groups.

France experienced unprecedented international terrorist attacks in the 1980s, beginning with the Rue Copernic attack.<sup>1,2</sup> France's experiences with widespread Islamic terrorism, though, began in the 1990s as a spillover from the civil war between Algeria and Le Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), the most radical Islamic group in Algeria.<sup>3</sup> French

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Benedicte Suzan, "The French experience of counterterrorism," *Survival* 45:1 (Spring 2003), 71.

<sup>2</sup> The Rue Copernic attack was a terrorist attack on 3 October 1980 in an affluent neighborhood in Paris. A bomb originating from a motorbike's saddlebags exploded, killing four people and wounding 11. It was the sixth attack on a Jewish target that week, and authorities blamed neo-Nazis for the attack. They later discovered that the perpetrators of all of the attacks were Middle Eastern terrorists, thus marking the beginning of a wave of attacks in France by foreign terrorists.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 282.



officials began noticing an influx of members of Algerian Islamic groups into France in 1992.<sup>4</sup> These attacks have shaped French counter-terrorism efforts over the past 30 years.

This research project was completed during the intense civil war occurring in Syria, with many rebel groups and outside actors competing for territory and the right to rule. In 2015, France received the second largest number of asylum applications, and the refugee population continues to grow.<sup>5</sup> My goal going into this project was to understand why Muslims in France seem to choose a radical violent path more often than in other countries around the world. The Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, the November 2015 Paris attacks, and even other attacks in Europe, such as the March 2016 Brussels attack, make this research timely and relevant. The rise of the Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL) and its recruitment tactics will revolutionize how extremist groups operate, especially in countries with a large amount of discriminations against Muslims, like France.<sup>6</sup> Sebastian Rotella, an investigative journalist, highlights the importance of Western extremists by stating, “Extremists of European descent worry police for the same reason that Al Qaeda prizes them: their symbolic value, their Western passports and their fanaticism.”<sup>7</sup> As the influx of refugees increases, this anxiety on the part of police towards Muslims will continue to grow, potentially leading to more radicalization. The combination of French laws, the large Muslim population in France, and increased efforts to crackdown on terrorism creates an environment conducive to radicalization.

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<sup>4</sup> Shapiro and Suzan, “The French experience of counterterrorism,” 80.

<sup>5</sup> “2015 UNHCR subregional operations profile - Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe,” The UN Refugee Agency, June 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e571e.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL) is also known as the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS), Daesh, and the Islamic State (IS). It is a Salafi jihadist militant group that follows an Islamic fundamentalist Wahhabi doctrine of Sunni Islam.

<sup>7</sup> Sebastian Rotella, “Al Qaeda’s Stealth Weapons,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 2003, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/sep/20/world/fg-converts20>.

I use case study analysis and examples of Islamic terrorist propaganda to explore who is susceptible to Islamic radicalization in France, as well as how this process begins through social media and in prisons. In France, social media and prisons are both tipping points for the radicalization process. Muslims can easily connect with radical groups via social media, and serving time in prison provides a catalyst for radicalization. Case studies are an “appropriate way to answer broad research questions, by providing us with a thorough understanding of how the process develops in this case.”<sup>8</sup> To analyze how social media is used for radical Islam recruitment, I study the case of Anna Erelle in *In the Skin of a Jihadist*. This is an autobiography detailing an undercover French journalist’s experience being recruited to ISIL through Facebook and Skype by a young man named Bilel, who in reality was Rachid X, the French fighter closest to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.<sup>9</sup> I also analyze ISIL’s publications and recruitment methods. Examining the lives and radicalization processes of Amedy Coulibaly and Chérif Kouachi serve as the case studies for how the process works in French prisons. I study Karim Mokhtari, a man who was approached while in prison to convert to radical Islam, but did not. Additionally, I apply two different radicalization processes to each of these case studies and publications to determine which one recruiters use in France.

It is important to note what this thesis will not address. It does not address any type of extremism other than Islamic extremism in France. Although separatist groups in France often commit terrorist acts, studying Islamic extremism is more important at this time due to its rapidly expanding networks. It does not seek to create a profile of a terrorist. Anyone can be susceptible to radical ideology; this is why it can be so hard to

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Swanborn, *Case Study Research: What, Why and How?* (New York: Sage Publications Ltd, 2010), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the head of ISIL’s militant group.

detect. Today's terrorists "challenge many of the stereotypes that were held about who becomes a terrorist and why... they represent a diverse collection of individuals, fitting no single demographic profile, nor do they all follow a typical pathway to violent extremism."<sup>10</sup> This thesis analyzes how al-Qaeda and ISIL recruit those living in France, and posits that other extremist groups will use these recruitment methods in the future.

In the first chapter, I explain what radicalization is. Understanding this term is imperative in order to comprehend the current situation in France. The process of radicalization, though there are several different models, needs to be explored and defined. I analyze two separate models of the radicalization process. I also explain different types of radicals and give examples specific to France in this chapter. The second chapter explores the psychological, religious, and social factors that contribute to Islamic radicalization in France. Social scientists and psychologists study terrorists and those who have committed acts of violent extremism to determine whether their psychology played a role in their decisions. Understanding which tenets of Islam radical groups for recruitment exploit is also helpful in making sense of the process. The social situation of Muslims in France is unique, and a brief history is presented in this chapter, as well. The third chapter explains where this Islamic radicalization is happening in France, focusing on social media recruitment and the recruitment that occurs in prisons. Finally, I present my conclusions for this study.

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Travis, "MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain," *The Guardian*, August 20, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1>.

## Chapter I: What Is Radicalization?

### Radicalization

The first step to understanding the growing Islamic radicalization in France is defining radicalization. There are several definitions of radicalization in social science literature, and they each vary in meaning. A former imam in the American corrections system Frederick Al-Deen described radicalization as “something that everyone that is older than fifteen knows. That they are a member of soccer teams, football teams, basketball teams, unions, fraternities, sororities. Everybody’s taught to get fired up.”<sup>11</sup> This definition of radicalization is something that everyone can relate to. In this sense, radicalization simply means being committed to a cause and being excited about it. David Mandel, a researcher at the Defence Research and Development Canada, defines radicalization as “the active pursuit of and/or support for far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to the continuity of the democratic legal order (aim), possibly by using undemocratic methods (means) which may harm the functioning of that order (effect).”<sup>12</sup> Though the aim may change from group to group or individual to individual, all radicals want to change something in society by using unconventional means. Often, these unconventional means are acts of terrorism. Marc Sageman, a

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<sup>11</sup> Melissa Jane Kronfeld, “Prislam: The Recruitment and Radicalization of Terrorist Operatives in the Prison System and the Threat to the American Homeland” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2011), 12.

<sup>12</sup> David R. Mandel, “Radicalization: What does it mean?” in *Home-Grown Terrorism: Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalisation among Groups with an Immigrant Heritage in Europe*, ed. by Thomas M. Pick, Anne Speckhard, Beatrice Jacuch, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series Sub-Series E: Human and Societal Dynamics-Vol. 60 (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2009), 106.

leading expert on prison and terrorism in the United States, uses a definition of radicalization that is the one that most people think of when referring to acts of terrorism. He states, “ Radicalization is the process of transforming individuals from rather unexceptional and ordinary beginnings into terrorists willing to use violence for political ends.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Theories of Radicalization**

Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt, senior intelligence analysts with the New York Police Department, developed a four-stage model to explain the radicalization process.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, this theory will be referred to as the Silber and Bhatt model for the remainder of this work. The first stage is referred to as pre-radicalization, and is considered a normal life.<sup>15</sup> The next stage is the self-identification stage, where the person explores ideology and is triggered by “a cognitive opening, or crisis, which shakes one's certitude in previously held beliefs.”<sup>16</sup> This crisis is key in the radicalization process. Michael Arena, a law enforcement analyst, and Bruce Arrigo, a social theorist and research scientist, emphasize that both internal forces of human nature and external forces of the social environment play a role in the creation of self-concept.<sup>17</sup> The type of crisis varies from case to case; it can be a personal loss, an economic recession, a political issue or a social problem. This crisis gives individuals an opportunity to go through a process of doubt, both in self and in society. The third stage is indoctrination, where the

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<sup>13</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), viii.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that this process of radicalization is not set in stone. The radicalization process is fluid, and does not necessarily occur in these cookie-cutter type steps. This model is particularly helpful, though, in explaining the basics of how this process occurs.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, “Radicalization in the West: A Homegrown Threat,” (The New York City Police Department, 2007), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Silber and Bhatt, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Michael P. Arena and Bruce A. Arrigo, *The Terrorist Identity: Explaining the Terrorist Threat* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 16.

adherence to radical worldview is intensified, and the fourth and final stage of the Silber and Bhatt model is jihadization, which Silber and Bhatt describe as an acceptance “to participate in jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors or mujahedeen.”<sup>18</sup> An extremist generally does not consciously commit to becoming a terrorist. Instead, the involvement in terrorism “results from gradual exposure and socialization towards extreme behavior.”<sup>19</sup> The social psychologist Fathali Moghaddam calls radicalization “a staircase to terrorism.”<sup>20</sup> The eventual result of the process is to commit some sort of violent act in hopes of achieving change. Dr. Peter Probst, a counter-terrorism consultant, states that the goal of terrorism is “to immobilize the target groups and foster panic, despair and, ultimately, psychological surrender. The aim of the concomitant political and psychological operations is to convince target groups that the terrorists’ acts are justified, and that to resist them is to court death.”<sup>21</sup> His statement about the psychological and political operations helps to understand the radicalization process. The political and psychological operations that terrorists employ are designed to recruit others.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial branch of the United Nations, released its own version of the radicalization process, which includes more steps than the Silber and Bhatt model. This radicalization theory is referred to as the ICJ model for the

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<sup>18</sup> Silber and Bhatt, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Randy Borum, “Psychology of Terrorism,” *Mental Health Law & Policy Faculty Publications*, 2004, Paper 571, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Laila Bokhari, “Pathways to Jihad: Radicalisation and the case of Pakistan. A way forward?” in *Home-Grown Terrorism: Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalisation among Groups with an Immigrant Heritage in Europe*, ed. by Thomas M. Pick, Anne Speckhard, Beatrice Jacuch, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series Sub-Series E: Human and Societal Dynamics-Vol. 60 (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Peter S. Probst, “Terrorism: Perception, Illusion and the Art of Political Warfare,” in *Hypermedia Seduction for Terrorist Recruiting*, edited by Boaz Ganor, Katharina Von Knop, and Carlos Duarte (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2007), 6.

remainder of this work. The significance of the ICJ model of the radicalization process lies in its inclusion of a role model in the process. In this version, the first step is the manipulation of communication, which means the recruit is isolated from broader views.<sup>22</sup> This could happen online or through a school, mosque, etc. The next aspect of the radicalization process is social pressure, which includes things like reward and punishment and the emphasis of social status, followed by the creation of role models.<sup>23</sup> The presence of a role model plays a big role in the radicalization process. The role model can be someone accessible who lives in the community and advises new recruits, or it can be a martyr. Having a source of inspiration and authority helps the recruit justify the use of violence as a means to achieve a political or religious goal. The role model plays into the decision to commit an act of violence stemming from a radicalization process, proved in Case Study Two. The next step is to make a moral commitment by taking an oath or testament on behalf of the individuals, thereby redefining their relationship with the world. The ultimate realization of the radicalization process is to commit an act of violence in order to achieve a political, religious, or social goal.

These two theories of radicalization differ in several ways. Silber and Bhatt's model involves more internal forces, while the ICJ model involves outside forces. The manipulation of communication and creation of role models are two of the most influential steps of the radicalization process. The Silber and Bhatt model describes more of the mental state during the radicalization process, while the ICJ model explains how the process actually works.

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<sup>22</sup>“Policy memorandum on radicalism and radicalization.” The Hague: Ministry of Justice, August 19, 2005, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 10.

## **Types of Radicals**

This radicalization process can result in different types of radicals, and it is important to understand the differences and similarities. Some individuals who become radicalized, but never act on their beliefs or do not act violently until years later; and the majority of all radicalized individuals do not become terrorists.<sup>24</sup> Some individuals fall under the umbrella of terrorism and some do not. The term terrorism has a variety of definitions. The Global Terrorism Database defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.”<sup>25</sup> This definition does not include state-sponsored terrorism. Another terrorism research group describes terrorism as “a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination.”<sup>26</sup> This definition is less technical than the Global Terrorism Database definition, and could categorize a much wider range of events as terrorism. The definitions of radicals also vary; so much that one person may consider a member of a fascist party to be a radical, while others only consider individuals who commit acts of terrorism to be radicals. This paper defines a radical as someone who uses violence to achieve a political, religious, economic, or social agenda, so for these purposes a radical is a terrorist.

France experiences all of these types of terrorist attacks, perpetrated by many different terrorist groups. The recent rise in terrorist attacks by Islamic followers, though, is cause for analysis. According to the Global Terrorism Database, the terrorist group

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<sup>24</sup> “Radicalization Dynamics: A Primer,” The Gang Enforcement Company, June 2012, [http://www.gangenforcement.com/uploads/2/9/4/1/29411337/radicalization\\_process.pdf](http://www.gangenforcement.com/uploads/2/9/4/1/29411337/radicalization_process.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> “Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables,” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). June 2015, 8. <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> “What is Terrorism?” International Terrorism and Security Research, accessed January 31, 2016, <http://www.terrorism-research.com/>.



Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) is responsible for the majority of the attacks that occur in France, followed by unknown perpetrators.<sup>27</sup> The unknown perpetrators could be members of Islamic groups, white supremacist group, the separatist movements, or none of these. Islamic attacks in France are almost always more deadly than any other type of terrorist attack in the country, which could explain why the FLNC attacks do not receive as much media attention as the Islamic attacks do. The Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015 and the November 2015 Paris attacks, which Islamic radical groups claimed responsibility for both, have shifted the media's attention to the increasing Islamic radicalization in France. The increase both in number of attacks and fatalities make Islamic terrorism in France an important topic to consider.

Radicalization can occur through many avenues, but follows the Silber and Bhatt model and the ICJ model of radicalization. The Silber and Bhatt model explains the mental process of radicalization, while the ICJ model explains the outside pressures involved in radicalization. Though the psychological state is important, the outside forces of radicalization play a bigger role in the process.

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<sup>27</sup> "Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). June 2015, 8. <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf>.

## **Chapter II: Who Becomes a Radical?**

This chapter will analyze who becomes a radical. It will not create a profile of a terrorist, because constantly evolving recruitment tactics make everyone a potential target of recruitment. According to Dr. Steven Ellmann, a professor of law at New York Law School, using profiling, whether based on race, religion, or some other category, is a violation of “fundamental principles of the equal protection of the law.”<sup>28</sup> It will, however, highlight some indicators to look for and help with understanding who is susceptible to radicalization. Psychological, religious, and social factors all influence radicalization. France’s unique history and secular policies have created an atmosphere in which people can justify radicalization.

### **Psychological Factors**

In the past, many social scientists and psychologists have tried to explore the mind of terrorists, searching for a mental disease or disorder of some sort to explain their actions. Overwhelming evidence shows, though, that mental disorders and illnesses are not a factor in terrorism. Though terrorists may exhibit signs of particular disorders, they are often not diagnosed. A report published by the Department of Defense states, “Studies have shown that the prevalence of mental illness among incarcerated terrorists is as low or lower than in the general population. Although terrorists commit horrible acts,

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Ellmann, “Racial Profiling and Terrorism,” *New York Law School Review* 46 (2002-2003): 676.

they rarely match the profile of the classic psychopath.”<sup>29</sup> Martha Crenshaw, a leading expert on terrorism studies, states, “The outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality.”<sup>30</sup>

Researchers and psychologists have tried to use various mental illnesses and disorders in order to explain why an individual becomes a terrorist and/or why an individual commits an act of terrorism. Among these mental illnesses, Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) and psychopathy are the two most popular disorders that researchers try to use to explain terrorism. ASPD is a diagnosis characterized by lifelong symptoms of “engaging in a range of delinquent and antisocial behaviors, which might include lying, stealing, aggression, and criminal activity.”<sup>31</sup> Psychopathy includes these symptoms of antisocial behaviors, but also includes a deficient emotional experience as well as interpersonal exploitativeness.<sup>32</sup> In a clinical analysis of terrorists, psychologist Willem Martens discovered that not all terrorists have ASPD, nor are they all psychopaths. He does state, however, that terrorists and people diagnoses with ASPD do share characteristics such as:

Social alienation, disturbed early socialization process, aggressive, action-oriented, stimulus-hungry, narcissistic attitude, impulsivity and hostility, suffering from early damage to their self-esteem, defensive attitude, primitive defenses as shame, fear of dependency, unresolved oedipal issues, omnipotent denial, escalatory events, particularly confrontation with police, intolerant of criticism, arrogance and disdain, belief of superiority of their own belief system, indifference to other people’s belief systems, hostility, lack of self-criticism, justification of their violent behavior, suffering from deep trauma, moral disengagement by dehumanizing victims.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Defense Human Resources Activity, “The Radicalization Process,” *Department of Defense*, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.dhra.mil/perserec/osg/terrorism/radicalization.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 390.

<sup>31</sup> Randy Borum, “Psychology of Terrorism,” 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> W. H. J. Martens, “Terrorist with Antisocial Personality Disorder,” *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice* 4, no. 1 (2004): 45-56.

It is important to recognize that not all terrorists have these qualities, and of course not all people who display these characteristics will become terrorists. These are merely characteristics that were present in the incarcerated terrorists that Martens studied in his clinical trial.

Understanding that terrorism is not the result of a mental illness, it is necessary to explore which psychological factors are exploited during the radicalization process. Knowing how recruiters get into the minds of potential recruits and exploit factors that are found in all human psyches can help to develop a plan in how to prevent radicalization. Arena and Arrigo explain several of the psychological theories and phenomena that are involved in converting to an extremist. One of the most popular psychological explanations of radicalization is called psychodynamic theory. This theory focuses on the “unconscious forces and their deterministic influence on human behavior and social interaction.”<sup>34</sup> Psychoanalytic theory is similar; both operate on the premise that unconscious desires and external forces and events are key in shaping a person’s actions and personality as an adult.<sup>35, 36</sup> The most satisfying and complete explanation of the personal logic of terrorism within the psychoanalytic theory is narcissism.<sup>37</sup> Randy Borum, a professor of strategy and intelligence studies, explains that the two key narcissistic dynamics are “a grandiose sense of self and an idealized parental imago.”<sup>38, 39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Arena and Arrigo, *The Terrorist Identity: Explaining the Terrorist Threat*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> “About Psychoanalysis,” American Psychoanalytic Association, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://www.apsa.org/content/about-psychoanalysis>.

<sup>36</sup> It is important to note the conflicting literature (specifically, Randy Borum’s “Psychology of Terrorism”) that emphasizes the weak theoretical and empirical foundations on which psychoanalytical theory is founded.

<sup>37</sup> Borum, “Psychology of Terrorism,” 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> An imago is an unconscious, idealized mental image of someone, especially a parent, that influences a person’s behavior.

This idea of an idealized parental imago means that a person wants to have a relationship with someone that they think is perfect. Following a charismatic leader, a role model, would satisfy this need for an idealized parental figure. The ICJ model of radicalization includes the presence of a role model, and thus satisfies this psychoanalytic theory of narcissism, while the Silber and Bhatt model does not.

Other psychological theories that are emphasized in the radicalization and recruitment of terrorists are ego identity, developmental theory, collective identity, and social identity theory. Psychologist Erik Erikson developed several theories and definitions regarding how an individual views him or herself, and how his or her personality develops over time. Ego identity refers to the “awareness of the fact of that there is a self-sameness and continuity in the ego’s synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others.”<sup>40</sup> Erikson developed this definition of identity in response to the question, “Who am I?” and it is one of the first definitions of identity. Erikson’s developmental theory also contributes to sense of self. The theory is sensitive to the influence of family, socialization, and other social factors, but it relies most heavily on the belief that individuals have a strong internal desire to fulfill certain needs such as love, belongingness, attachment, and esteem, in order to develop a healthy personality.<sup>41</sup> Collective identity, which refers to the sense of belonging to a group, allows people to find meaning in their lives, a sense of coherent structure, and a stable social role to occupy.<sup>42</sup> The final theory, social identity theory, occurs when individuals strive to

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<sup>40</sup> Arena and Arrigo, *The Terrorist Identity: Explaining the Terrorist Threat*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

maintain or enhance their self-esteem, often through social groups or categories.<sup>43</sup>

Simply having others think that an individual belongs to a group is not enough; the individual themselves must make belonging to a group part of his or her identity. These theories satisfy the ICJ model's requirement of social pressure, while the Silber and Bhatt model does not have an equivalent stage. The manipulation of communication and creation of role models steps in the ICJ model parallel these psychological theories, and emphasize group belonging and group identity. These four psychological theories relate to terrorism in the explanation as to why people are drawn to radical behavior and groups. Arrigo and Arena explain that the need to have a stable identity (ego identity theory and developmental theory) and the need to belong (collective identity and social identity theory) helps explain the similarity in behavior of terrorists in different groups of different motivations and goals.<sup>44</sup> Individuals who become radicalized and join these extremist movements do so in order to satisfy these needs of a stable identity and belonging to a group.

Extremist groups focus on gaining new recruits using psychology in addition to theology. Social psychologist Arie Kruglanski explains that Islamic extremist groups, such as ISIL, take advantage of two basic human needs: the need for cognitive closure and the need for personal significance.<sup>45</sup> He defines cognitive closure as "individual's desire for a firm answer to a question and an aversion toward ambiguity."<sup>46</sup> The Muslims in France are usually descendants of immigrants, who often experience economic and

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>45</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski, "Psychology Not Theology: Overcoming ISIS' Secret Appeal," E-International Relations, October 28, 2014, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/28/psychology-not-theology-overcoming-isis-secret-appeal/>.

<sup>46</sup> Maria Konnikova, "Why We Need Answers," *The New Yorker*, April 30, 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/why-we-need-answers>.

social discrimination. This instability creates anxiety, which extremist groups can easily exploit. This idea of knowing what is going to happen, even if it is death, provides comfort to new recruits. This is a form of cognitive closure, because it claims to explain how the world works. Groups such as ISIL also offer an invaluable psychological reward, earning status as heroes and martyrs, which brings a sense of personal significance.<sup>47</sup> Extremist groups also take advantage of “humans’ most primordial proclivities, those for aggression and for sex.”<sup>48</sup> The violent nature of war allows recruits to express their aggression in a way that seems legitimized and legal, and the promise of many young wives satisfies the need for sex.

### **Religious Factors**

The religiosity of Islam plays a large role in the Islamic radicalization occurring in France. Adhering to religious fundamentalism does not mean that one is partaking in an extremist movement. Martin E. Marty, a religious scholar, and R. Scott Appleby, a professor of history, produced a project concerning fundamentalism during the 1990s. In the volume about religious fundamentalism, the authors define religious as including the following elements: “what concerns people ultimately, and provides them with personal and social identity; leads adherents to prefer myth and symbol, along with rite and ceremony, over other forms of expression; tends to imply some sort of cosmic or metaphysical backdrop and to stipulate certain behavioral correlates.”<sup>49</sup> These characteristics of religion draw new followers in, and can be exploited by extremist groups in order to recruit new members. Marty and Appleby state, “Fundamentalists

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<sup>47</sup> Kruglanski, “Psychology Not Theology: Overcoming ISIS’ Secret Appeal.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), vii.

begin as traditionalists who perceive some challenge or threat to their core identity, both social and personal.”<sup>50</sup> ISIL says that it adheres to the most literal tradition of the Qur’an possible, contributing to the idea that it is a fundamental Islamic group. The word fundamental is a key part of understanding fundamentalism; as Marty and Appleby point out, fundamentalists select what they believe is fundamental to their religion and only follow that.

Quintan Wiktorowicz, in his book *Radical Islam Rising*, explains how identifying with a certain ideology aids in helping individuals join extremist groups. He states, “An intense ideological identification with the values of the campaign acts to 'push' the individual in the direction of participation while a prior history of activism and integration into supportive networks acts as the structural 'pull' that encourages the individual to make good on his strongly held beliefs.”<sup>51</sup> Individuals use religion to cope with their life, and also expect this religion to make some sort of change in their lives. Wiktorowicz contains his explanation of why radical Islam is attractive to new followers below:

Radical Islam activists promote a set of values and identities that challenge dominant cultural codes. In doing so, they seek to create a common community of true believers tied together through a shared interpretation of Islam typically characterized by high levels of tension with common religious understandings. Activist proselytizing thus focuses on teaching Muslims (and even non-Muslims) about the deviance of mainstream interpretations while offering the movement's own understanding as definitive. The resulting network of shared meaning is the basis of a common identity that frequently involves commands to risky activism in the name of God.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>51</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littleman Publishers, INC, 2005), 15.

<sup>52</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, 17.



Extremist groups such as ISIL use incentives, networks, and frames to persuade people to join their movement. For example, young men are often promised multiple wives upon their arrival in Syria, and dying in war results in 72 virgins in Heaven, though this is not explicated stated anywhere in the Qur'an.<sup>53</sup> Different types of networks that Islamic groups use to proselytize to other people include charities, cultural societies, professional associations, mosques, political parties, and religious lessons and study circles.<sup>54</sup>

Converting to a religion is a major life decision. Converts are particularly useful for extremist groups for the following three reasons: the nature of conversion, the role of converts in the global Jihadist cause, and the “testament to the complex, amorphous nature of the threat of terrorism.”<sup>55</sup> Converts are particularly zealous and dedicated to the cause. They are willing to do anything that it takes to prove that they are serious about their new religion. One French intelligence officer stated that converts are particularly dangerous because they want to “show other Muslims their worth,” “go further than anyone else,” and are “full of rage and want to prove themselves.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Social Factors**

The radicalization process in France is so unique because of the history of Muslims in France. Three major Islamic movements characterize Islam in France. The Salafi movement, an ultra-conservative reform movement within Sunni Islam, became less relevant in France after the 9/11 attacks in the United States because French authorities refused Salafist sheiks entry into the country, suspended a June 2001 Salafist

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<sup>53</sup> This controversy stems from the translation of verse 33 of chapter 78 of the book sūrat l-naba in the Qur'an. The more accurate translation reads “companions of equal age,” while the translation used by jihadist groups reads “young full-breasted maidens of equal age.”

<sup>54</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> Kronfeld, “Prislam: The Recruitment and Radicalization of Terrorist Operatives in the Prison System and the Threat to the American Homeland,” 9-10.

<sup>56</sup> Rotella, “Al Qaeda’s Stealth Weapons.”

convention, and placed imams under surveillance.<sup>57</sup> There are 90 mosques that preach Salafist interpretations of Islam in France in 2015, compared to the 45 in 2010.<sup>58</sup> These trends show that the Salafist movement has gained popularity in the recent years because of its strict adherence to Sunni Islam, as a response to liberal Western actions.

Ahbâch, which draws inspiration from Sunni Islam and Sufism, is another Islamic movement that is present in France.<sup>59</sup> It developed in Lebanon, and by 1996 a French division had been created.<sup>60</sup> Ahbâch advocates social and economic integration in Europe, but does not permit participation in political process because it is contrary to its beliefs.<sup>61</sup> The third Islamic movement in France is Tablighi Jama'at, which arose around 1972. It adheres to strict Sunni Islam beliefs, and also prohibits any participation in politics.<sup>62</sup>

Many social factors contribute to the radicalization process, including education, discrimination, laws, and socio-economic status. An estimated 8 to 10% of the population in France is Muslim, which is the highest percentage in Europe.<sup>63</sup> Assimilation into society is extremely difficult because of various French laws as well as Muslim beliefs and practices. Molly Moore states, “This isolation and discrimination creates a generation

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<sup>57</sup> Samir Amghar, “Ideological and Theological Foundations of Muslim Radicalism in France,” in *Ethno-Religions Conflict in Europe: Typologies of Radicalisation in Europe's Muslim Communities*, ed. by Michael Emerson, Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2009, 27.

<sup>58</sup> “Salafism gains popularity among French Muslims,” Euro-Islam, April 26, 2015, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.euro-islam.info/2015/04/26/salafism-gains-popularity-among-french-muslims/>.

<sup>59</sup> Sami Amghar, “Les Ahbâch, ou le nouvel islam européen,” *Politique étrangère* 3 (2007): 605.

<sup>60</sup> Amghar, “Ideological and Theological Foundations of Muslim Radicalism in France,” 31.

<sup>61</sup> Amghar, “Les Ahbâch, ou le nouvel islam européen,” 605.

<sup>62</sup> “Tablighi Jama'at,” Pew Research Center, September 15, 2010, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/15/muslim-networks-and-movements-in-western-europe-tablighi-jamaat/>.

<sup>63</sup> Because of the secular nature of France, the country does not gather information on the religion of its citizens. Therefore, only estimations are available for the Muslim population in France.

that has little respect for the French authority, little chance of social movement, and deep resentment towards the majority of French or even Europeans.”<sup>64</sup>

Discrimination of Muslims in France is prevalent, even today. In 2010, the French legislative body passed a law that prohibited the covering of one’s face in public spaces.<sup>65</sup> The law states, “No one can, in a public space, wear an outfit which hides one’s face.”<sup>66</sup> This controversial law essentially prohibits Muslim women from wearing the burka or niqab, but not from wearing the hijab. (See Figure 1)<sup>67</sup> Another law that France recently passed in 2004 forbids anyone from wearing any religious symbol in a public school.<sup>68</sup> This can include crosses, rosaries, and any sort of head covering. Prohibiting the burka and niqab limits Muslims’ right to practice their religion, and results in feelings of oppression and discrimination. These laws have increased anti-Islamic sentiments in France, as evidenced by statistics collected by the National Observatory Against Islamophobia, which states that 80% of the anti-Muslim acts involving violence and

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<sup>64</sup> Molly Moore, “France: 70% of entire nations prison inmates are Muslim- making up 12% French population,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, August 10, 2012, <https://themuslimissue.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/france-70-of-entire-nations-prison-inmates-are-muslim-making-up-12-french-population/>.

<sup>65</sup> LOI no 2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010 interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public, NOR: JUSX1011390L, <http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000022911670&fastPos=1&fastReqId=409071613&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>.

<sup>66</sup> LOI no 2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010 interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public, NOR: JUSX1011390L, <http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000022911670&fastPos=1&fastReqId=409071613&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>. Translation mine.

<sup>67</sup> “What are the differences between the burka, niqab, and hijab?” ABC News, January 13, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-02/what-are-the-differences-between-the-burka,-niqab-and-hijab/5785816>.

<sup>68</sup> LOI no 2004-228 du 15 mars 2004 encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics, NOR: MENX0400001L, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000417977&fastPos=1&fastReqId=661265078&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>.

assault were directed at women, most of whom were veiled.<sup>69</sup> One 2013 source states that 74% of French citizens view the Islamic faith as “intolerant” and “incompatible” with French values, while 70% said that there are too many foreigners in France.<sup>70, 71</sup> French citizens and Muslims, whether nationals or immigrants, share a mutual distrust towards one another. The sense of social injustice creates an attitude that views the Muslim inmates as “victims of society” and harbors ideologies that condone and encourage retribution.<sup>72</sup>



**Figure 1: Examples and explanations of the niqab, hijab, and burka.**

<sup>69</sup> Suzanne Daley and Alissa J. Rubin, “French Muslims Say Veil Bans Give Cover to Bias,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/world/europe/muslim-frenchwomen-struggle-with-discrimination-as-bans-on-veils-expand.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/world/europe/muslim-frenchwomen-struggle-with-discrimination-as-bans-on-veils-expand.html?_r=0).

<sup>70</sup> Soeren Kern, “The Islamization of France in 2013,” *Gatestone Institute International Policy Council*, January 6, 2014, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4120/islamization-france>.

<sup>71</sup> One aspect of French culture that is important to understand is views on citizenship and foreigners. Most people in France do not view children of immigrants who are born in France as citizens. In fact, children of foreign citizens born in France cannot claim French citizenship until their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and only if they have been living in France for five years since their 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<sup>72</sup> Alex Wilner, “We must make sure that prison isn’t terrorism school,” *The Globe and Mail*, last edited August 23, 2012, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/we-must-make-sure-that-prison-isnt-terrorism-school/article4289638/>.

A study by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies in 2005 showed that the unemployment rate of those of French origin was 9.5%, while that of those of a foreign background was 14%.<sup>73</sup> Muslims are much less likely to be contacted by potential employers after they apply for a job than Jews or Catholics, as shown in Figure 2.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, there are zero Muslim members of the Assemblée Nationale, out of 577 seats. Without political representation, French Muslims cannot take effective action against discriminatory laws, such as the two laws mentioned above. This continuation of discrimination and underrepresentation contributes to the reasoning behind the radicalization of Muslims in France.

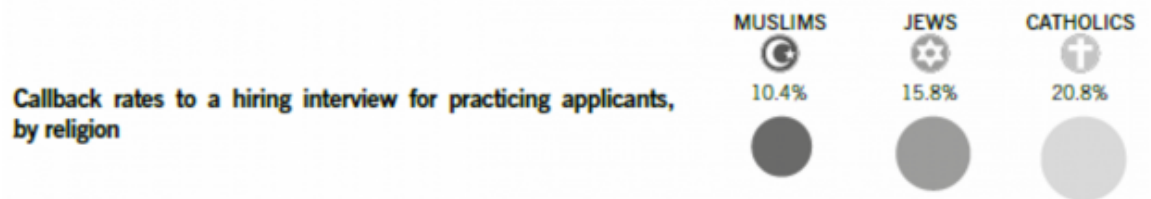


Figure 2: Rate of callback for an interview.

France prosecutes terrorists in a different way than most of the world. While most countries, such as the United States and Britain, use ordinary courts coupled with new powers to prosecute terrorists, France uses special courts and exceptional counterterrorism procedures within their judicial system.<sup>75</sup> The investigation and prosecution relies heavily on investigating magistrates, who direct the law enforcement

<sup>73</sup> “Islam in France,” *Euro-Islam*, accessed March 21, 2016, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/france/>.

<sup>74</sup> John Sides, “New research shows that French Muslims experience extraordinary discrimination in the job market,” *The Washington Post*, November 23, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/23/new-research-shows-that-french-muslims-experience-extraordinary-discrimination-in-the-job-market/>.

<sup>75</sup> Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France*, 3.

investigations into terrorism.<sup>76</sup> France has shown a pattern of a zero-tolerance approach against supporters of Islamist terrorism since the 1990s, often conducting wide scale raids that result in mass arrests.<sup>77</sup> This draconian approach leads to a diminishing legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its Muslim citizens.<sup>78</sup> French Muslims feel unjustly discriminated against, and thus act out against the government.

The combination of the social pressures, discrimination, and their belief systems puts Muslims in France in a particularly vulnerable position with regards to radicalization. The ICJ model of radicalization capitalizes on these types of social factors in the step of manipulation of communication. This manipulation of communication includes emphasizing the discrimination and social pressures of Muslims in France, which can provide a catalyst for the radicalization process. The economic and political disadvantage that Muslims in France are subject to plays a major role in the radicalization process. The Silber and Bhatt model does not take into account these types of social factors. Additionally, the religious environment and history in France can be easily emphasized through these radicalization processes.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 8.

## **Chapter III: How Are Radicals Recruited?**

### **The Internet and Social Media Recruitment**

Recruitment is essential to terrorist organizations. Gabriel Weimann, a professor of communications, explains, “Recruitment provides the killers, the suicide bombers, the kidnappers, the executioners, the engineers, the soldiers, and the armies of future terrorism.”<sup>79</sup> Without recruiting new members, terrorist organizations are not able to carry out their operations. The number of Internet users, and consequently social media users, continues to rise at a dramatic rate each year. A report by Simon Kemp, a professor of modern languages, outlines this Internet growth, stating that worldwide Internet users increased 21% from January 2014 to January 2015, and the number of users on social media worldwide increased by 12% during that same time year.<sup>80</sup> Both Islamic websites and social media websites are key components of the recruitment and radicalization process today. Peter Probst stresses the importance of understanding the radicalization process, and the role of the Internet in that process, in the following statement:

In our struggle against terrorism, we focus almost exclusively on the carnage, the inherent drama and the horror of unspeakable acts. But violence is only one arrow in the terrorist’s operational quiver. Of equal, and at times indeed very great, importance are the complementary political and psychological

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<sup>79</sup> Gabriel Weimann, “Using the Internet for Terrorist Recruitment and Mobilization,” in *Hypermedia Seduction for Terrorist Recruiting*, edited by Boaz Ganor, Katharina Von Knop, and Carlos Duarte (Amsterdam; IOS Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>80</sup> Simon Kemp, “Digital, Social, and Mobile Worldwide in 2015,” January 21, 2015, accessed on December 3, 2015, <http://wearesocial.net/blog/2015/01/digital-social-mobile-worldwide-2015/>.

operations. These make use of conventional media, the Internet, leaflets, rumor and wall graffiti as means to disseminate the message.<sup>81, 82</sup>

Radicalization is occurring more quickly, more anonymously, and more often with the use of the Internet.<sup>83</sup> Exploring how these tools are used in Islamic radicalization as a whole will help to explain how these are specifically being used in France to recruit new members. Anna Erelle's experience being recruited via Facebook and Skype serves as the case study for this section. Anna Erelle is the pseudonym of an undercover French journalist, and her book *In the Skin of a Jihadist* is her firsthand account of her experience.

The phenomenon of using the Internet as a recruitment tool for radical Islamic groups is nothing new. A report by the formerly named Foreign Broadcast and Information Service in 1999 stated, "These days, if you're not on the web, you don't exist."<sup>84</sup> Weimann outlines the advantages to using the Internet as a recruitment tool in the following statement:

It makes information gathering easier for potential recruits, by offering more information, more quickly, and in multimedia format; the global reach of the Net allows groups to publicize events to more people; and, by increasing the possibilities for interactive communication, new opportunities for assisting groups are offered, along with more chances for contacting the group directly.<sup>85</sup>

Terrorist groups use marketing techniques similar to those of large commercial companies, tracking and documenting information about users who visit their sites, and

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<sup>81</sup> Probst, "Terrorism: Perception, Illusion and the Art of Political Warfare," 6.

<sup>82</sup> This message can refer to terrorist propaganda and to recruitment efforts. The political and psychological component of both are essential, and recruiters exploit both through the media, Internet, leaflets, etc.

<sup>83</sup> Ines Von Behr, Anaïs Reding, Charlie Edwards, and Luke Gribbon, "Radicalisation in the digital era: The use of the internet in 15 cases of terrorism and extremism," RAND Europe, 2013, 17, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR400/RR453/RAND\\_RR453.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR453/RAND_RR453.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "The Use of the Internet by Islamic Extremists," testimony presented to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. (Washington, D.C., May 4, 2006), 3, accessed November 30, 2015. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND\\_CT262-1.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND_CT262-1.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> Weimann, "Using the Internet for Terrorist Recruitment and Mobilization," 50.



then contacting them at a later date.<sup>86</sup> The Internet, whether social media sites or traditional Islamic websites, allows terrorist operatives the chance to identify, profile, and select potential candidates for their network. The Internet is simply the first step in the radicalization and recruitment process. It can provide a point of contact for the potential recruit, and allows him or her to get a taste of what the organization believes in.

Language is a key component in terrorist recruitment, and is instrumental in helping legitimizing the cause. The way in which these Islamic websites and social media accounts phrase events and situations helps create a narrative conducive to violent extremism, signifying the manipulation of communication step in the ICJ model. Probst points out, “Terrorists describe the savage murders of social workers, news reporters, business people, teachers, civil servants, and even religious leaders as ‘executions.’ Thus they convey the impression that the killings are somehow legitimate and follow due process, and adhere to the customary laws of war-or are at least mandated by a higher religious precept or authority.”<sup>87</sup> Additionally, calling their own men “political prisoners” or “prisoners-of-war” legitimize their crimes, and makes it seem like the terrorist organization and whomever they are fighting are engaging in a war. Calling gunmen who die while killing others “freedom fighters” or “martyrs” gives those people a sense of honor and respect. This type of language draws in new recruits, and makes the terrorist acts seem respectable, legitimate, and legal.

The Internet is a way for terrorist organizations to tell their story in order to gain new members. Graphic design elements, such as calligraphy, semantics, and visual

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<sup>86</sup> Michelle Zanini and Sean J. A. Edwards, “The Networking of Terrorism in the Information Age,” in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, ed. by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001).

<sup>87</sup> Probst, “Terrorism: Perception, Illusion and the Art of Political Warfare,” 7.

imagery, are key in attracting new members of the audience. Figchel states, “Islamic visual motifs and key words are used to ‘trap’ sympathizers and potential recruits, as they offer the needed seduction through ‘virtual’ online Da’awa using marking techniques similar to those employed by commercial enterprises.”<sup>88, 89</sup> The Internet and social media websites and accounts are used for initial attraction, ideological recruitment, and social support rather than for direct operational recruitment. Once a person is attracted to the radical idea and has support for conversion, the operational recruitment is relatively easy. The first step in the on-line radicalization process is to use common Islamic key words and idioms in the website’s address and content.<sup>90</sup> Some popular Jihadi websites embed idioms such as these into their Internet address: Al Sahat (the fields), Al Qal’ah (the fortress), Al Islah (reform), and Al Ansar (supporters or warriors of Islam).<sup>91</sup> This raises the amount of website traffic and ensures that new people are looking at the content. Although the idioms may seem innocent, some may contain double meanings and sub-textual messages, if interpreted through the radical Islamic schools of thought. Additional Islamic terminology and motifs key words that are subject to radical interpretation include the following: Al-Walaa wal-baraa’ (absolute allegiance to the community of Muslims and total rejection of non-Muslims), Ansar, Al Neda (the Calling for the true and genuine believers to join true Islam), Bilad al-Haramain (the Land of the Two Shrines- Mecca and Medina), Jihad, etc.<sup>92</sup> New radical Islamic motifs can easily gain legitimacy because they appear to be authentic when they are used alongside, or in proximity to, mainstream

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<sup>88</sup>Jonathan Figchel, “Radical Islamic Internet Propaganda: Concepts, Idioms and Visual Motifs,” in *Hypermedia Seduction for Terrorist Recruiting*, ed. by Boaz Ganor, Katharina Von Knop, and Carlos Duarte (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2007), 34.

<sup>89</sup> Da’awa refers to the call, propagation and proselytizing of Islam.

<sup>90</sup> Figchel, “Radical Islamic Internet Propaganda: Concepts, Idioms and Visual Motifs,” 34.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Islamic symbols and cultural references.<sup>93</sup> Employing this concept along with the language and narrative ploy mentioned above helps make radical Islam seem legitimate and accepted. These websites also use only the Islamic Hijra calendar, instead of the Gregorian calendar, which gives them another level of authenticity. The “rapid visual screening process” is also in play in this process, and involves the potential recruit subconsciously scanning for additional motifs on the homepage of the website he or she has stumbled upon.<sup>94</sup> Radical Islamic visual motifs and calligraphy shapes are important, because they add a sense of mystery to the website. At this point, the potential recruit is already interested in some part of violent extremism, whether it is subconsciously or consciously. Some websites also use recordings of radical Islamic songs or verses from the Qur’an.<sup>95</sup> These elements draw in the potential recruits, and encourage them to explore the website in order to learn more. They also help create a perception of reality for the target audience that is favorable to the radicalization process.

Though the methods mentioned in the paragraphs above apply to extremist sites and groups on the Internet, the rise of social media sites has made it easier for Islamic groups to recruit new members. This transition from traditional Islamic websites to social media has been relatively easy for Islamic extremist groups because of the time and effort they expended on the websites in the beginning. The same sort of language and key words are used in social media. Instead of purposefully going to a specific Islamic website, a potential recruit can simply visit one of the social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram to connect with a radical Muslims around the world. Various messaging apps such as WhatsApp, WeChat, Skype, and Facebook Messenger

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 34.

allow users to communicate easily and cheaply, if not freely. Anyone with access can use these social media sites to connect with anyone around the world, and then use these messaging apps to communicate. Radical Muslims are taking advantage of this easy of using social media as a recruitment tool, even in France. The use of social media in this way easily fits the criteria for manipulation of communication and social pressure for the ICJ model of radicalization. ISIL has been particularly successful using Twitter, Facebook, and Skype to recruit new members. An article in *The Atlantic* outlines how ISIL's success on Twitter is possible. It uses a Twitter app called "Dawn of Glad Tidings," which is promoted to its top users as a way to keep up with the latest news of the Jihadist network.<sup>96</sup> The app then posts tweets to the user's twitter account, including, "links, hash tags, and images, and the same content is also tweeted by the accounts of everyone else who has signed up for the app, spaced out to avoid triggering Twitter's spam-detection algorithms."<sup>97</sup> In this way, ISIL is able to generate more than 10,000 mentions per day on Twitter. This traffic increases awareness of its cause, and makes it easier for recruiters to identify and profile potential members. Users also tag their tweets with the hash tag #EI, which is an abbreviation for l'état islamique.<sup>98</sup> Once a recruiter feels comfortable or confident with the recruit, he or she will direct the recruit to an Islamic extremist website to learn more. Another aspect of social media that jihadists are able to take advantage of is the ease of changing profiles and usernames. For example, French citizens who have pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State create Twitter accounts in order to spread information and propaganda in the French language. Once

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<sup>96</sup> J.M. Berger, "How ISIS Games Twitter," *The Atlantic*, June 16, 2014, accessed September 16, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> L'état islamique is French for the Islamic State.

authorities become aware of the accounts, they notify Twitter and the account is closed. To prevent this, the jihadists will change their usernames by simply adding one letter or number. This way, authorities have a harder time keeping up with the accounts, and the jihadists are able to spread their message more easily. Since working on this project, an account with the username of infosensibles38 has already been closed, and likely rerouted to a different username. Twitter accounts spreading ISIL propaganda in the French language are easy to find, especially when searching by the hash tag #EI.

Radical Islamic groups have also been successful recruiting teenagers and young adults in France through Facebook. Lori Hinnant tells the story of Nora, a fifteen-year-old daughter of Moroccan immigrants living in France, who was recruited to the Nursa Front.<sup>99</sup> Nora's family discovered that she had a second Facebook account targeted by recruiters, which included "propaganda videos... showing veiled women firing machine guns and Syrian children killed in warfare."<sup>100</sup> These videos, in the French language, also referred repeatedly to the restriction of the use of veils and headscarves in France.<sup>101</sup> These extremists are able to make a case for violence by playing on these issues that are important to Muslims in France. The family learned about Nora's methods and means of travel through the investigation that took place after her disappearance. A young mother in France paid for Nora's travel and gave her a place to stay overnight in Paris on her journey, and has since been criminally charged in the investigation, along with one other person.<sup>102</sup> Although investigators do not yet have all the details of how the recruiting

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<sup>99</sup> The Nursa Front is an Al-Qaeda branch in Syria.

<sup>100</sup> Lori Hinnant, "How two French girls were lured to jihad online," *The Japan Times*, October 12, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/10/12/world/how-two-french-girls-were-lured-to-jihad-online/#.Vxkp45MrKCQ>.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

process took place with these two girls, they do know that social media played a large role.

### **Case Study I**

Anna Erelle, a pseudonym, is an undercover journalist in France who specializes in ISIL. She has interviewed several French citizens who attempted to or successfully joined ISIL in Syria. Though she is an undercover journalist, her experience with online extremist recruitment allows an inside look at how this process unfolds. The journalist's journey began when she shared a video posted on Facebook by a militant named Abu Bilel al-Firazi in the spring of 2014. She created a fake Facebook account claiming the name of Mélodie, with her profile picture as the cartoon Jasmine from the Disney movie *Aladdin*, in order to aid in her research on European teenagers who were tempted by Islamist extremism. As Erelle checked Facebook later that night, she saw the following messages from Abu Bilel:

Salaam alaikum, sister. I see you watched my video. It's gone viral-crazy!  
Are you Muslim?  
What do you think about mujahideen?  
Last question: are you thinking about coming to Syria?

Bilel's message was concise and to the point. He assumed that some who post or repost things that sympathize with Islamic extremists may wish to move to Syria to help advance ISIL. Throughout their conversations that night, Erelle learned that Bilel was direct and authoritative. He answered her questions about Islam and ISIL, and asked her to video chat via Skype. Bilel also mentioned that Mélodie should get ready for her hijrah.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Hijrah refers to the migration of Muslims away from non-believers to a holier place, in this case Syria.

By mentioning these deeply religious and personal parts of Islam during the first conversation, Bilel was attempting to form a bond with Mélodie. Even though he did not know anything about her, he tried to fill a parental role by advising Mélodie on the steps she needed to take in order to strengthen her conversion to Islam. Acting as a spiritual guide makes it easier for the recruiter to gain trust and respect. This follows the ICJ model of radicalization by creating social pressure and a role model for Mélodie to follow.

As the weeks continued on, Bilel kept contacting Mélodie through Facebook messenger. He asked her to Skype instead, stating that conversations were more secure that way.<sup>104</sup> Bilel attempted to lull Mélodie into a false sense of security during their conversations. No matter what the question was, he was able to turn his answer into something that would be comforting to a newly converted Muslim teenage girl living in France. Mélodie mentioned that she liked children, and Bilel pointed out that many women serve ISIL as surrogate mothers, and that she would fit in with them perfectly.<sup>105</sup> Taking care of children would give Mélodie, and other girls like her, a sense of purpose while in Syria. When she said that she liked Bilel's Kalashnikov machine gun, he immediately promised many guns and shooting lessons.<sup>106, 107</sup> During their first Skype conversation, Bilel described Syria as "paradise," stating, "A lot of women fantasize about us; we're Allah's warriors."<sup>108</sup>

The way that these Islamic extremists interact with potential recruits is one of the key reasons that they are so successful. These examples show the manipulation of

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<sup>104</sup> Anna Erelle, *In the Skin of a Jihadist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 29.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

communication that Bilel took advantage of in the ICJ model of radicalization. His choice of words and ability to capitalize on Mélodie's likes and dislikes represent his capability to manipulate the conversations. They are persistent and authoritative while offering young adults in France a way to escape their lives of disappointment and discrimination with an actual territory and the promise of becoming a hero. The recruiting process with females works slightly differently, because the extremists often try to lure the recruits with a promise of marriage. While skyping with Mélodie, Bilel said, "If you agree to marry me, I'll treat you like a queen."<sup>109</sup> Bilel asked Mélodie to bring girlfriends, and not her male cousin, to Syria with her when she completed her hijrah, because "women in Europe are treated badly and used like objects."<sup>110</sup> Recruiters romanticize themselves and their daily lives in order to make ISIL territories an attractive place to be. The extremists use these stigmas and discrimination against women and Muslims in Europe to try to persuade them to join the cause. The combination of romanticizing ISIL and pointing out flaws in Europe allows recruiters to present violent extremism as a viable option.

Bilel also exploited Mélodie's faith in order to convince her to join him in Syria. He stated, "While we're out risking our lives, you're spending your days doing meaningless activities. Being religious means imposing your values. I'm worried about you, Mélodie, because I sense that you have a good soul, and if you continue to live among kafirs, you'll burn in hell."<sup>111</sup> Bilel told Mélodie that they "represent God's will," and that "giving [infidels] a painful death is a service to Allah."<sup>112</sup> Bilel mentioned that jihadists prefer new converts because they are "more serious about religion, and at the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 74-75.



same time more open about life.”<sup>113</sup> He later explained that he meant that the women take their religion seriously, but also know how to please a man.

Islamic extremists are able to successfully gain new recruits by using both guilt and promise of a better life. Recruiters use the guise of Islam in order to convince people to join their cause. New converts are easily impressionable and can be persuaded to follow this misinterpretation of Islam. This twisted sense of devotion to the religion is often a selling point.

Erelle and a photographer from the journal for which she works did plan to travel to Istanbul to secretly photograph the “mother” who was supposed to accompany Mélodie to Syria, and from there the two planned to travel to a town on the Syrian border to meet with another contact of theirs. Bilel believed that he had successfully convinced a young French woman to join ISIL, travel to Syria, and marry him. The last conversation that Mélodie had with Bilel was via Skype, while Erelle herself was in Amsterdam. Mélodie said she was bringing her fifteen-year old female cousin, who was extremely scared to take the journey to Syria. After Mélodie denied Bilel the chance to talk with the cousin, he became extremely angry and authoritative. These are his words:

Are you going to let me speak to Yasmine: yes or no? Do you think I’m an idiot? From now on, you’re going to shut up. I’m part of a terrorist organization. You can’t talk to me like that. Don’t you know who I am? I command a hundred soldiers every day. I haven’t even told you a quarter of the truth. I’m wanted internationally; that’s why I can’t even go to our cities in Turkey. I can only travel to Iraq. I’m thirty-eight, you brat, and you and your friend can’t bring me down. You don’t know who I am. You better tread lightly.<sup>114</sup>

Once Bilel sensed that something is wrong, he immediately responded with threats and disrespect. This proves that his actions and words throughout his conversations with

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>114</sup> Yasmine was the name of Mélodie’s cousin, who does not exist.

Mérodie were simply a plot to try to persuade her to travel to Syria to be with him. Once Bilel realized that Mérodie went back to France instead of joining him in Syria, he threatened her several times. Bilel's emotional involvement in this process shows how serious recruitment is for jihadists.

The case of Mérodie and Bilel shows two things: the process of recruitment via social media, and how quickly the idea spreads throughout the social media. After Bilel announced his intention to marry Mérodie, young women from all over Europe began to reach out to her via Facebook asking questions relating to traveling to Syria. They ranged from questions about what to pack to outcries of desperation regarding the decision to travel to Syria.<sup>115</sup> Mérodie's account received these messages less than three weeks after her initial contact with Bilel. Social media websites make this initial contact easy, and allow people interested in jihad to connect with other people.

Throughout Erelle's investigation, she learned that Bilel, whose real name is Rachid X., was born in northern Paris, and that he was the French fighter closest to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.<sup>116</sup> Bilel made decisions about the day-to-day operations of the French battalions there, as well as organized language and religion classes for the new recruits who recently arrived in Syria.<sup>117</sup> He was reported killed while trying to reach a peace agreement with the Nursa Front, but he is still considered to be alive by French authorities. Though Erelle is an undercover journalist and her reaction to the attempted radicalization was fake, this case study still shows the effectiveness of the radicalization techniques used by Islamic extremist groups on social media. They use tactics to play on the vulnerability of their potential recruits, and emphasize the oppressive environment in

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<sup>115</sup> Erelle, *In the Skin of a Jihadist*, 114.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

which Muslims in France live. This case study follows the ICJ model of radicalization, and not the Silber and Bhatt model.

### **ISIL Publications and Recruitment Methods**

Aside from affiliated accounts, ISIL also uses its own publications to try to recruit new members. Al-Hayat Media is an organization in the public relations branch of ISIL that specializes in the translation of propaganda for sympathizers and fighters outside of the territory itself.<sup>118</sup> It publishes a magazine in the French language called *Dār al-Islām*. Mathieu Slama, a communication expert, states that the primary goal of the magazine is recruitment.<sup>119</sup> Choosing to publish a magazine in French ensures that the message reaches strategic places such as France, Belgium, and northern Africa. The title *Dār al-Islām* refers to the “land of Islam.” The first issue focused on the importance of hijrah and travelling to the land controlled by the Islamic State.<sup>120</sup>

The seventh issue of the magazine, released in November 2015, has 58 pages and features photos ranging from women and children to prisoners who have been executed. The very first sentence of the introduction states, “Poor France. She finished the year like she started it: in tears and blood.”<sup>121, 122</sup> After a brief analysis of the November 13, 2015 attacks in Paris, the magazine addresses the prophetic methodology of establishing the religion, and then how to save your family from “Fire.” Quotes from the Qur’an are found abundantly throughout the issue, always in bold. The thing that is different about the French publication and the English publication is that *Dār al-Islām* emphasizes the

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<sup>118</sup> Eugénie Bastié, “Daech : *Dabiq* et *Dar-al-Islam*, des outils de propagande parfaitement maîtrisés,” *Le Figaro*, April 12, 2015, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/12/04/01016-20151204ARTFIG00217-daech-dabiq-et-dar-al-islam-des-outils-de-propagande-parfaitement-maitrises.php>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> *Dār-al-Islām: L’Etat Islamique Étend Son Territoire*, al-Hayāt Media Center, December 23, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> *Dār-al-Islām: La France à Genoux*, al-Hayāt Media Center, December 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Translation mine.

secular laws in France, which oppress the Muslims living there. The seventh issue features the chart of secularism in schools, shown in Figure 1, which is a poster placed in all public schools in France explaining the separation of church and state. The magazine labels the chart as “la charte de la mécréance,” which is translated as “The chart of disbelief.”<sup>123</sup> ISIL is using resources directly from the French government in order to foster contempt and highlight the feelings of oppression within Muslims who read the magazines. The magazine also features an interview with Abû Samîr al-Urdunî, who is an influential person in the Islamic State, and also a section that mentions how the rest of the world views ISIL. The magazine ends with a section that shows photos of the aftermath of the attacks in Paris (Figures 2 and 3).<sup>124</sup>

These ISIL publications are dispersed through social media, and are therefore used as a recruitment technique. Each step of the ICJ model of radicalization is emphasized in the *Dār al-Islām* magazines. This form of communication is clearly manipulated, as evidenced by how ISIL labels the chart of secularism. This chart also creates a social pressure for Muslims in France, calling for some sort of action as a response to this discrimination. The interview with Abû Samîr al-Urdunî provides an instant role model, while the result of the moral commitment of the jihadists involved in the Paris attacks emphasizes that stage in the ICJ model.

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<sup>123</sup> *Dār-al-Islām: La France à Genoux*, al-Hayāt Media Center, December 2015.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

**1** La France est une République laïque, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi, sur l'ensemble de son territoire, de tous les citoyens. Elle respecte toutes les croyances.

**2** La République assure la liberté des religions et de l'état. L'état ne reconnaît aucune religion officielle. Il n'y a pas de religion d'état.

**• • LA RÉPUBLIQUE EST LAÏQUE • •**

**3** La laïcité garantit la liberté de conscience à tous. Chaque enfant de maternelle ou de sapeurs-pompiers, doit pouvoir être représenté de ses convictions, sans le regard de ses pairs et sans discrimination de l'ordre public.

**4** La laïcité permet l'exercice de la liberté de conscience, en garantissant la liberté de chacun sans l'obligation de l'autrui, et la liberté de tous sans la peur de l'autre général.

**5** La République assure aux citoyens laïcité, sans aucune distinction de religion ou de croyance.

## CHARTRE DE LA LAÏCITÉ À L'ÉCOLE

La Nation confie à l'École la mission de faire partager aux élèves les valeurs de la République.

**6** La laïcité garantit à tous les élèves le droit de partager leur personnalité, leurs convictions, leurs croyances et leur appartenance à une religion, sans aucune discrimination. Elle favorise le respect de la diversité et de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves, sans aucune distinction de religion ou de croyance.

**7** La laïcité assure à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination.

**8** La laïcité permet l'exercice de la liberté d'expression de tous les élèves, sans aucune distinction de religion ou de croyance, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.

**9** La laïcité implique le respect de toutes les croyances, sans aucune distinction de religion ou de croyance, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.

**10** Il appartient à tous les personnels de l'école de transmettre aux élèves le respect de la liberté de conscience, ainsi que des autres principes fondamentaux de la République, la volonté de leur appliquer dans le cadre scolaire, et leur volonté de porter hautement la charte de laïcité de la République.

**11** Les personnels de l'école ont le devoir de garantir à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.

**• • L'ÉCOLE EST LAÏQUE • •**

**12** Les enseignants, volontaires, ont le devoir de garantir à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves. Ils ont le devoir de garantir à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.

**13** L'école a pour mission de garantir à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.

**14** Dans les établissements scolaires publics, les élèves de toutes les religions, pratiquant dans la République, doivent être traités de manière égale. La laïcité garantit à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.

**15** Par leurs actions et leur attitude, les élèves ont le devoir de garantir à tous les élèves le droit de pratiquer leur religion, sans aucune discrimination, et le respect de la liberté de conscience de tous les élèves.



La charte de la mécréance

Figure 3: “The chart of disbelief” Source: *Dār-al-Islām: La France à Genoux.*



Figure 4 Source: *Dār-al-Islām: La France à Genoux*



Figure 5 Source: *Dār-al-Islām: La France à Genoux*

## **Prison Recruitment**

Prisons are one of the key places that Islamic radicalization takes place in France and have been called “the cradle of the future Jihad.”<sup>125</sup> Around 70 percent of inmates practice Islam, though Muslims make up less than 8 percent of the general French population.<sup>126, 127</sup> This disproportionate number of Muslims in French prisons compared to Muslims in the French population create a sort of breeding ground for radicalization. Moussa Khedimellah, a sociologist specializing in Islam in Europe, attributes the disproportionate number of Muslims in French prisons to their failure to assimilate into French society, and discrimination by laws and citizens also plays a role.<sup>128</sup> The internal and external environments work together to create a unique situation for French Muslims, and those who may be interested in the religion. As more and more European Muslims are being jailed after attempting to join, or returning from, the Islamic State, the threat of prison radicalization increases. Prison offers an opportunity for Muslims to convert to radical Islam, or even non-Muslims to convert. Frank Viviano, a journalist, also describes French prisons as a “terrorist university,” where smuggled tapes and materials, including bomb making instructions, anti-Western propaganda, and training manuals are easily available.<sup>129</sup> The prevalence of these radical Islamic materials proves that this is a growing epidemic in French prisons. Prisons, however, have not always been a recruitment center for Islamic radicals. In 1992, one inmate told the French newspaper *Le*

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<sup>125</sup> Frank Viviano, “French prisons are ‘cradle of jihad,’” November 1, 2001, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/French-prisons-are-cradle-of-jihad-1070523.php>.

<sup>126</sup> Sean O’Malley, “France’s Prison Population Estimated to be 70% Muslim,” July 22, 2015, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.europeanguardian.com/93-by-country/france/523-france-s-prison-population-estimated-to-be-70-muslim>.

<sup>127</sup> Conrad Hackett, “5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe,” January 15, 2015, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/15/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>.

<sup>128</sup> Molly Moore, “France: 70% of entire nations prison inmates are Muslim- making up 12% French population.”

<sup>129</sup> Viviano, “French prisons are ‘cradle of jihad.’”



*Monde* that he only knew of a few inmates discussing Islam, but one year later stated that he found “extremists who spent their time trying to convert the maximum number of prisoners, proselytizing at a runaway pace.”<sup>130</sup> This growth has only continued in recent years, as evidenced by the many acts of terror committed by people who were formerly incarcerated in France.

Analyzing why and how radicalization happens in prisons is essential to understand the Islamic radicalization occurring in French prisons currently. People in prison are especially susceptible to terrorist recruitment, or just radicalization in general, because of their unique situation. Many people may feel that they have hit rock bottom, so they have nothing to lose in choosing to join a radical organization or movement. Alan Kreuger, an economist, states, “On the supply side, the economics of crime suggests that people with low opportunity costs will become involved in terrorism.”<sup>131</sup> Belonging to radical Islam brings a sense of comfort to prisoners who may feel lonely. Some extremely vulnerable inmates may turn to terrorism or radicalization as a last resort, in hopes that it will give them a reason to live. The religious aspect gives inmates a sense of belonging and something to hope for. The promises of the afterlife give inmates an enticing reason to join, and gives them reason to participate in illegal and potentially deadly acts. Inmate recruitment works in one of the following two ways: inmates belonging to the radical group recruit inmates directly, or they target others for recruitment after release.<sup>132</sup> The first way is the most common way that inmates are recruited to radical Islam in France. Inmates already believing and participating in radical Islam recruit other inmates while

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Alan Kreuger, “What Makes a Terrorist,” *The American*, November/December 2007, <http://www.american.com/archive/2007/november-december-magazine-contents/what-makes-a-terrorist>.

<sup>132</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Terrorists: Recruiting and Operating Behind Bars,” *Directorate of Intelligence*, August 20, 2002, <http://www.fas.org/irp/cia/product/ctc082002.pdf>.



both are incarnated. To these potential recruits, belonging to a group that has power and the ability to act, usually through causing mass destruction, becomes appealing. One French security official explained, “In France, the path to radical Islam often begins with a minor offense that throws a young man into an overcrowded, violent jail and produces a hardened convert ready for jihad.”<sup>133</sup> Because of external factors, such as a personal crises or discrimination, the jail sentence is a turning point for these young men. These impressionable inmates see radical Islam as a viable option to improve their lives.

Both Dr. Mark Hamm and Dr. Melissa Kronfeld, who has a PhD in global affairs from Rutgers University, have extensively research prison radicalization in the United States and have been influential in explain how prison radicalization works. Two schools of thought regarding Islam in prisons exist; one side states that Islamic prisoners are a threat, and the other protests that the Muslim faith offers the prisoners a reasonable and workable path to rehabilitation.<sup>134</sup> Prison life provides a unique opportunity for religion to make a meaningful impact on an inmate. Research shows that religion is a way for a prisoner to cope with unnatural surroundings, and provides alternatives to “passivity, withdrawal, conning, aggression, and predatory violence,” which are common coping mechanisms that inmates exhibit.<sup>135</sup> Hamm separates prisoners who convert to a religion into 5 categories: the crisis convert, the protection-seeking covert, the searching convert, the manipulating convert, and the free-world recruited convert. These prisoners are not trying to join a religion in order to commit a terrorist attack. Instead, they turn to religion

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<sup>133</sup> Alexandria Sage, “France struggles to fight radical Islam in its jails,” *Reuters*, May 7, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/07/us-france-radicalisation-insight-idUSBRE94600Q20130507>.

<sup>134</sup> Mark Hamm, “Terrorist Recruitment in American Correctional Institutions: An Exploratory Study of Non-Traditional Faith Based Groups” (report presented to the U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., December 2007), 3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

as a source of comfort, and then radicalize. The crisis convert is the prisoner who turns to religion because of a personal crisis, such as losing personal freedom while being incarcerated. This type of convert is searching for something to make his life meaningful. The protection-seeking convert, on the other hand, joins a religion in order to obtain protection.<sup>136</sup> This type of inmate may feel that he is at risk for bodily injury from another group of inmates, such as a gang. The searching convert often join a religion based on peer pressure. The manipulative convert joins a religion for special privileges, such as special meals, books, clothing, or visits, and the free-world recruited convert is one who joins based on an interaction with a religious leader who visits the prison.<sup>137</sup> While most inmates do not convert to radical Islam while incarcerated, Fathali Moghaddam asserted that the reason for Islamist extremism to take root is “among individuals who become convinced they are unjustly treated because of their group membership, they have no voice, and no hope for a better future.”<sup>138</sup>

Hamm’s research shows the while traditional Islam might have a pacifying effect in prisons in the United States, the mutated form of prison Islam poses a viable threat. The faith-based rehabilitation programs that are in place in the United States are not available in France. In the United States, religion is viewed as a tool of rehabilitation, and faith-based programs suggest that “prisoners (can) be changed morally after being

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<sup>136</sup> Hamm, “Terrorist Recruitment in American Correctional Institutions: An Exploratory Study of Non-Traditional Faith Based Groups,” 8.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>138</sup> Fathali Moghaddam, “The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter It,” Washington, D.C.: Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, July 10, 2008, 8, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/the-roots-of-violent-islamist-extremism-and-efforts-to-counter-it>.

subjected to a specific regime.”<sup>139</sup> State-sponsored religious materials and representatives have a marginal status in France because of the limiting funding it receives.<sup>140</sup> This lack of funding is evident in “the random character of worship facilities in prisons, the poor status and low remuneration of chaplains.”<sup>141</sup> Because of the lack of spiritual leaders available to inmates in France, inmates themselves act as spiritual guides and recruit other inmates to a form of radical Islam. The drive and commitment to the cause of those that do choose to participate in violent acts is so powerful that it trumps everything else.<sup>142</sup>

Understanding the current French penal system and how France is combatting radicalization within the system is the next step to understanding how radicals are recruited. As of 1 January 2016, 66,678 people are serving sentences in prison in France, and 60% of these prisoners are Muslim.<sup>143, 144</sup> Of these Muslims prisoners, 1,400 of them exhibit extremist behavior.<sup>145</sup> The Prime Minister of France, Manuel Valls, explained the current French policy for combatting these radical Islamic inmates. He stated that these inmates are separated from the rest, citing a trial program of segregation at a prison south of Paris at Fresnes.<sup>146</sup> The director of the prison, Stéphane Scotto, developed this plan

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<sup>139</sup> Corinne Rostaing, Céline Béraud and Claire de Galembert, “Religion, Reintegration and Rehabilitation in French Prisons: The Impact of French Secularism,” in *Religious Diversity in European Prisons*, ed. Irene Becci and Olivier Roy (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 67.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>142</sup> Hamm, “Terrorist Recruitment in American Correctional Institutions: An Exploratory Study of Non-Traditional Faith Based Groups,” 35.

<sup>143</sup> “World Prison Brief, France,” Institute for Criminal Policy Research, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/france>.

<sup>144</sup> Helene Fouquet, “Paris Attacks Draw French Vow to Stop Radicalization in Prison,” *Bloomberg*, January 14, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-14/paris-attacks-draw-french-vow-to-stop-radicalization-in-prison>.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Harriet Alexander, “What is going wrong in France’s prisons,” *The Telegraph*, January 17, 2015, accessed October 25, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11352268/What-is-going-wrong-in-Frances-prisons.html>.

after noticing that the number of radical Islamists in the prison increased from twelve in the summer to twenty in the fall.<sup>147</sup> Included in these twenty radicals now living in isolation is Flavien Moreau, the first French jihadist convicted upon his return from Syria. Scotto says the trial is showing positive results, stating that it is, “serving to calm other Muslim prisoners who complained that they felt pressured to behave in a certain way – praying five times a day, taking down the images of naked women that adorned their cells, and wearing clothes in the showers.”<sup>148</sup> Several counterterrorism experts have reservations about this plan, though. One source told the French newspaper *Le Figaro* that the problem is the lack of resources.<sup>149</sup> There is not a person dedicated to the problem of radicalization in prisons, and there are so many other issues that need to be addressed. Louis Caprioli, a former French intelligence counter-terrorism chief, stated that isolating the Islamist prisoners is the problem. He said, “It forms a terrorist cell within a prison. They come out even more radicalized.”<sup>150</sup> The alternative choice, keeping the Islamist prisoners mixed in with the other inmates, also has negative consequences. The director of the Quilliam Foundation Haras Rafiq pointed out that the need for protection can drive inmates into the arms of emirs, who act as heads of Islamic prison gangs.<sup>151</sup> Jean-Charles Brisard, an expert on counter-terrorism, states that those who convert to radical Islam have “more dangerous profiles” than those who convert while at liberty.<sup>152</sup> This environment makes radicalization easy. Sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar explains that young French men embrace the idea of jihad before even

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Tom Burgis, “The making of a French jihadi,” *Financial Times*, January 26, 2015, accessed October 27, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/a7fd3d50-a302-11e4-9c06-00144feab7de.html#axzz3qab0ZpRQ>.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

understanding the basic tenets of Islam. He states, “Islam is the only tool they have to give sacred meaning to their hatred of society. Once they become jihadised, they learn Islam- and mostly they do it in prison.”<sup>153</sup> The unique opportunity that French prisons give young Muslims results in rampant radicalization to Islamic extremism.

## **Case Study II**

Studying three men who did convert to Islamic radicalization while in prison and one who did not will assist in understanding how this process works. Both Amedy Coulibaly and Chérif Kouachi converted to radical Islam while serving time in a French prison. Karim Mokhtari did not convert, although he was coached to do so. Chérif Kouachi and his brother Saïd Kouachi were attending Muslim services at a mosque and receiving counsel from a mentor regularly when Chérif was sent to prison. Djamel Beghal mentored both Chérif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly in the Fleury-Mérogis prison in 2005. Djamel Beghal was one of Al Qaeda’s top operatives in France, sent to Paris in order to set up a cell aimed at attacking United States interests there.<sup>154</sup> Fleury-Mérogis is the largest prison in France, and is known for providing little access to imams or opportunities for Muslim religious services.<sup>155</sup> Coulibaly stated, “On a human level, he is a person who touched me.” They were able to communicate through their cell window, and Beghal made a lasting impression on Kouachi and Coulibaly. Chérif was released in 2006, and was reunited with his brother Saïd who was also on a path to radical Islam. The two brothers and their mentor continued communicating over the nine years, including plans to break the convicted terrorist Smaïn Aït Ali Belkacem out of jail, and trips to

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Rukmini Callimachi and Jim Yardley, “From Amateur to Ruthless Jihadist in France,” *New York Times*, January 17, 2015, [www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/world/europe/paris-terrorism-brothers-said-cherif-kouachi-charlie-hebdo.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/world/europe/paris-terrorism-brothers-said-cherif-kouachi-charlie-hebdo.html?_r=0).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Yemen. Saïd and Chérif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly coordinated the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015, which resulted in the death of sixteen people.

Karim Mokhtari was also imprisoned at Fleury-Mérogis. An elderly inmate gave Mokhtari spiritual guidance when he first arrived at the prison, in an attempt to soothe Mokhtari's loneliness.<sup>156</sup> After six months, though, the mentor instructed Mokhtari to "kill infidels" upon his release. Mokhtari resisted the radicalization, and now runs an organization dedicated to helping young men in prison resist the temptation to convert to violent extremism.

What is the difference in Coulibaly and Kouachi's situations and Mokhtari's? All three young men had similar backgrounds- born into a lower socio-economic class with some history of juvenile delinquencies. All three men had some sort of spiritual guide in the prison trying to convince them to turn to violent extremism after their release. Coulibaly and Kouachi, though, were influenced by one of Al Qaeda's top operatives, and Mokhtari's mentor was nowhere near as important in the organization. Additionally, Kouachi had some kind of Muslim background before his prison sentence, while Mokhtari did not. As the ICJ model of radicalization shows, a spiritual guide is definitely necessary for prison radicalization to occur, and this case study shows that the more established the person is the more likely the prisoner will convert.

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<sup>156</sup> Harriet Alexander, "What is going wrong in France's prisons."

## **Conclusion**

This thesis proves that Islamic extremists in France follow the ICJ model of radicalization, and not the Silber and Bhatt model. It also shows that the social and religious atmosphere in France creates a unique opportunity for Islamic radicalization. The process of radicalization involves a turning point in the individual's life that acts as a catalyst. In France, the systemic and lawful discrimination of Muslims creates this catalyst more often than in other countries with different histories and laws. Recruitment through social media and in prisons is particularly effective in France, because it gives Muslims a place to connect with extremists. The development of recruitment from the Internet to social media poses an immense danger because of the prevalence of social media accounts. Other extremist groups will begin to use these recruitment tactics because of their recent success. The prison recruitment cycle that has been developed in France emphasizes the ICJ model's step of the importance of having a strong leader in the prison. Looking at the case studies of Amedy Coulibaly, Chérif Kouachi, and Karim Mokhtari, it is evident that a stronger, more prestigious leader increases the likelihood that the prisoner will convert to radical Islam.

The radicalization occurring in social media and prisons points to a bigger problem. The discriminatory laws that the French government enacts foster an environment that allows non-Muslim French citizens to believe that discrimination is permissible, and even encouraged. France protects its culture more than any other country

in the world, and seeks to do so by not allowing Muslims to properly exercise their religion. This highlights a major disconnect, because many French citizens are Muslim. Additionally, because of these laws and practices, French Muslims feel that their country does not support or appreciate them. Being put in jail is the ultimate betrayal for French Muslims- a country that does not support them uses prison as a form of oppression. Prison reform is necessary to ensure that recruitment in prisons does not occur. There is an imminent need for institutional reform in France in order to afford Muslims in France better opportunities to integrate more fully into society.



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