(De)Radicalization and Security

Radicalization in Europe

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The spectacular attacks on New York City on 11 September 2001 carried out by 19 suicide bombers belonging to the al-Qaeda network kicked off the century. Other, more recent attacks in different European cities, this time claimed by the Islamic State, have made terrorist acts daily news across the globe. Despite the differences in organization (a network such as al-Qaeda or grouped by territories such as Islamic State), these youth, engaged on the path of violence in the name of jihad, are guided by the force of the singular narrative of membership in the Ummah, the world-wide Muslim community, that lends all its strength to the appropriation of an ideology and the transition to violence. They are fuelled by discourses of "humiliated Islam," of the war in Iraq and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and by a sentiment of revenge. By the same token, social networks, the main sites for dissemination of radical discourse and recruitment, play an important role in their commitment to the jihad cause. The rush towards Syria since 2011, where the Caliphate has been established, reflects a mobilization that follows the logic of any social movement aspiring to the emergence of a new society,[1] using the rhetoric of "restoring justice" and "obtaining revenge" for the domination suffered.

According to the report published by The Soufan Group in December 2015, some 5,000 young people had arrived from Europe to join the cause, declaring themselves "foreign fighters" in the ranks of the Islamic State in Syria.[2] According to another report from the US Senate Armed Services Committee published in February 2016,[3] over 38,200 "foreign fighters" – 6,900 of them from Western countries – travelled to Syria from about a hundred different countries. In Europe, France and Belgium are the most significant recruitment pools; in the Middle East and North Africa, it is Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia; and in Asia, it is Pakistan, India and Bangladesh from where youth go into action for the Caliphate and its lands, the territory that has become the "land of origin," the land of the Ummah diaspora, regardless of the national origins of its members.

Radicalization: The Birth of a Concept

The term "radicalization" appears in official and scientific discourse in association with the 'homegrown terrorists' who carried out the London attacks of 7 July 2005. To the British authorities, radicalization has become synonymous to jihadization since then.[4] "Homegrown" jihadists are described as individuals living locally, acting alone or in small groups, always autonomously, with limited means and as amateurs, particularly insofar as the manufacture of bombs. Emerging from a decentralized

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[1] Quintan WIKTOROWICZ, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003.
[2] "Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq," The Soufan Group (TSG), December 2015, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf. According to the report, there were 1,700 from France, 470 from Belgium, 760 from the United Kingdom and 760 from Germany.
[3] "Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria: Where do they come from?" Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, www.rferl.org/a/foreign-fighters-syria-iraq-is-isis-isil-infographic/26584940.html
[4] Sam MULLINS. "Home-grown Terrorism: Issues and implications," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2007, Vol.1, No. 3, p. 1-13

al-Qaeda organized as a vast network at the time, they are connected to other groups or individuals in other places through networks linking these local cells. According to Robert S. Mueller III, "the information age means [people] don't need training camps to become a terrorist";[5] virtual communication allows them to be in contact with the network. A new phenomenon calls for new vocabulary. The process turning this youth to violence is now called "radicalization." The concept specifically refers to a homegrown process, since this radicalization takes place in-country or at home.[6] Most experts associate this process with political, social and religious ideals and aspirations, and with the use of violence to attain these goals.[7] There are other definitions as well: "Radicalization is a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence."[8]

One study of this phenomenon divides it into four stages: 1) individuals become aware of a radical ideology; 2) they express an interest in the cause; 3) they end up accepting the extreme beliefs and norms dictated by it; and 4) they begin acting in accordance with these norms.[9] Radicalization can thus be defined as the internalization of a "set of beliefs, a militant mindset that embraces violent jihad as the paramount test of one's conviction."[10] For Arun Kundnani, a British expert on terrorism, "the concept of radicalisation has become the master signifier of the late 'war on terror' and provided a new lens through which to view Muslim minorities."[11]

Since the 11 September attacks, homegrown terrorists can be seen taking action here and there in their countries of residence – often also their countries of nationality and citizenship. Sometimes qualified as 'lone wolves' because they act individually, they are often actually part of a network that has allowed them to travel to the lands of jihad and prepare their action in their country of residence and/or the land of their citizenship. Using the "al-Qaeda label," which since the 2000s has become a means of legitimizing local organizations and/or groups, they at first often act in groups, in "cliques," to use Marc Sageman's expression,[12] or in bands spontaneously formed in neighbourhoods, mosques or at associations where they gather. Since 2011, they make return trips from Europe to Syria thanks to their European passport or their double nationality. Lately, the terrorist from Yvelines, outside of Paris, who killed a police couple, those who slit the throat of a priest in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, or Mohamed Bouhlel, the lorry-driving terrorist in Nice, demonstrate that the phenomenon of bands, cliques or groups of friends (as in Madrid and London) or of siblings (such as the Kouachi and Abdelsalem brothers) is giving way to radicalized individuals, alone in front of their computer screens, at home, isolated. Their terrorist action is individual, as in the case of Nice, Berlin, London or Stockholm, even if their action is immediately claimed by the Islamic State. In the majority of cases, they are young people with an immigrant background, "Europe's Angry Muslims," to use the title of a work by Robert Leiken.[13]

Indeed, the 19 jihadists who carried out the 11 September attacks had travelled the world: they had gone to training camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. They were not settled anywhere. Perpetrators in Europe were first-generation (such as the Madrid attackers) or second-generation immigrants (such as the London perpetrators). Having followed the fabric of transnational networks, they had crossed

[5] Robert Mueller (Director of the FBI), cited by Evan F. KOHLMANN, "'Homegrown' Terrorism: Theory and Cases in the War on Terror's Newest Front," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 2008, p. 95-109.

[6] Risa A. BROOKS, "Muslim 'Homegrown' Terrorism in the United States," *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Autumn 2011, p. 7-47.

[7] Lindsay CLUTTERBUCK, "An Overview of Violent Jihad in the UK," in Magnus RANSTORP (ed.), *Understanding Violent Radicalisation*, Routledge, 2010, p. 158

[8] Alex S. WILNER and Claire-Jehanne DUBOULOZ, "Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning," *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 22, lss 1, 2010, p. 38.

[9] Scott HELFSTEIN, *Edges of Radicalization: Ideas, Individuals and Networks in Violent Extremism*, The Combatting Terrorism Center at Westminster Point, February 2012, www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CTC_EdgesofRadicalization.pdf.

[10] Brian Michael JENKINS. "Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization and Recruitment" (testimony, US House of Representatives, 5 April 2007), cited in A. S. WILNER and C-J. DUBOULOZ, *art. cit.*

[11] Arun KUNDNANI, cited in: Alex P. SCHMID, "Radicalization De-radicalization and Counter-Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review," *ICCT Research Paper*, March 2013, The Hague, p. 1. www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf

[12] Marc SAGEMAN, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century,* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

[13] Robert LEIKEN, *Europe's Angry Muslims: The Revolt of the Second Generation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

paths in hub cities where they had been recruited for jihad.[14] Ten years after the London attacks, the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015 and those on the Bataclan concert hall, the Stade de France stadium and nightlife venues in Paris in November 2015 have been called the French 11 September, with IS claiming authorship this time, were carried out, as in London, by three young, "homegrown" French terrorists in the case of Charlie Hebdo and eight others in the Bataclan case. According to Leiken, these "homegrown terrorists" in France, Great Britain and Germany, despite different contexts, express their discontent similarly, i.e. through violence, turning old grievances – such as the colonial past – into new aspirations, namely, a will for local and transnational autonomy. Islamic converts join the parade.

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New technologies facilitate recruiting youth to the "army of the Ummah" and operations to draw them into jihad. A great many studies show that they are recruited via Internet sites, and that these sites produce the same effect on the young jihadists as "home-base" socialization insofar as building an "imagined community." It is through cybercafés that they confirm their engagement. It is on social networks that they share their common experiences of discrimination in Europe, and injustice and suffering in Palestine, Iraq or Chechnya. On the web, they develop communication techniques, invent new programs, continue the discourse of Bin Laden, Azzam,

Zawahiri… It is on these sites that they are indoctrinated and express their belonging and loyalty, first to al-Qaeda, then to the Caliphate; it is on these sites as well that they invent new heroes and join networks in social media. It is always on these sites that they assert their loyalty to the cause mobilizing them remotely and that lend them the assurance of belonging to a global community.

More recent studies have focused attention on prisons as places of radicalization of youth jailed for criminal causes.[15] A study shows that 46 young people out of 76 were in prison before getting involved in jihad. The same study emphasizes that it is at the prisons that the "recruiters" as well as extremist imams find "vulnerable" youth "angry" at their society and attempt to indoctrinate them.[16] It is also in prisons that networks and solidarities are redefined.

Profiles – Networks – Paths

It is very difficult to define the precise profile of homegrown terrorists and clearly establish their motivations. Numerous studies coincide in emphasizing the diversity of personal backgrounds, nationalities, ages, study levels, professions, socio-economic levels and personalities.[17]

In Great Britain, an official report by the British Secretary of State published in 2011 entitled "*Prevent Strategy*" examined the social background of al-Qaeda-friendly youth in the UK: 30% were known to be university students or students of higher education, 15% had vocational training diplomas, 10% were students at the time of their arrest. Some of them were drawn to terrorism before beginning higher education, others were radicalized at university or the equivalent.[18] By the same token, the official report of the 11 September Commission describes the jihadists of that attack as engineers, students, and reveals personal, familial and tribal links among them, and their association with various organizations, NGOs or businesses, as well as with leaders and other mili-

[14] Riva Kastoryano. *Que faire des corps de djihadistes ? Territoire et identité*, Paris, Fayard 2015

[15] Farhad KHOSROKHAVAR. *Prisons de France. Violence, radicalisation, déshumanisation : surveillants et détenus parlent*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2017

[16] Rajan BASRA, Peter R. NEUMANN and Claudia BRUNNER. *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures. European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus*, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, London, 2016

[17] Petter NESSER, "Joining Jihadi Terrorist Cells in Europe," in Magnus RANSTORP (ed.), *Understanding Violent Radicalisation*, Routledge, 2010, p. 81-114.

[18] "*Prevent Strategy*," report by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, June 2011, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

tants. In contrast, those who perpetrated the Madrid attacks of 11 March 2004 are qualified as grassroot jihadists, that is, a group consisting of individuals who attack their country of residence but ultimately share the strategic goals of global jihad.[19] Their organization type differs from that of the al-Qaeda cells insofar as the members reside in the country where they will perpetrate their attacks. The studies have revealed the great complexity of these networks, characterized by friendly relations and ties with the countries of origin. Scott Atran also used nationalities to establish ties within the network and identify individuals playing the role of "bridges" between the different circles of friends.[20] He notes that family relations, whether close or distant, and neighbourhood relations dating back to the country of origin or nationality constitute mechanisms for the formation of groups. The 11 March networks were the result of relations incubated with a combination of childhood friends, groups of young people, neighbourhood acquaintances, fellow prison inmates, or relatives and personal relations – sisters or brothers, cousins or sweethearts.[21] Another characteristic of 11M is the intertwining of terrorist and petty crime networks. The young perpetrators of the attacks were primarily delinquents involved in drug trafficking.

The majority of European jihadists are unqualified immigrant workers, in contrast to those of New York. Among them, the proportion of unemployed is higher than the average for European countries. The average age of the youth carrying out the Madrid attack was 27. For Petter Nesser, the process of radicalization varies from one individual to another. His reflection focuses in particular on what motivates their individual choice.[22] Their militancy and their motivation have a primarily ideological basis, to the point where converts are attracted to Salafism because they are seeking an ideology rather than a faith.[23]

Foreign fighters, the soldiers of the Caliphate, who have "migrated" (carrying out their *hegira*) to Syria

since 2011, or who remain put, are presented as youth with a criminal record and often a low level of education who are marginalized in their society or community. The report published by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence establishes a link between criminality and terrorism, indicating the disproportionate number of youth with a criminal past among the foreign fighters in Syria or acting locally. Other reports emphasize the "ghettoes" in European countries that have become hotbeds of jihadism due to unemployment rates, delinquency, and sentiments of social and geographical marginalization experienced by youth, who take refuge in Salafist ideology.[24] Moreover, recruiters' strategies would seem to lie in developing discourse that meets the needs of these young people with a criminal past.[25]

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By the same token, suicide bombings have been replaced by suicidal acts. For perpetrators of suicide bombings, the body is the weapon and bears witness to their sacrifice, to the sense of altruism that leads them to suicide, a way of ensuring they belong to a "community" and gaining the trust of its members.[26] The suicidal act, however, is carried out with weapons of a different nature, ranging from knives to lorries operated by a single individual, who will sooner or later be arrested by the police.

[19] Javier JORDÁN, Fernando M. MAÑAS and Nicola HORSBURGH, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Grassroot Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2008, p. 17-39.

[20] Scott ATRAN, *Talking to the Enemy*, *Faith, Brotherhood, and the (UN) Masking of Terrorists*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010, p. 194.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[22] NESSER, *op. cit.*

[23] Mark HUBAND, "Radicalization and Recruitment in Europe: The UK Case," in Magnus RANSTORP (ed.), *Understanding Violent Radicalisation*, Routledge, 2010, p. 131.

[24] Arturo VARVELLI (ed.), *Jihadist Hotbeds: Understanding Local Radicalisation Processes*, ISPI 2016. www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/jihadist.hotbeds_ebook_0.pdf

[25] *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures*, op.cit., 2016.

[26] Riva KASTORYANO, *op. cit.* 2015

The age of the young people also marks a difference between the youth who mobilized for al-Qaeda and those joining the Islamic State. There are many under 20 who have joined the movement, doing their *hegira* in Syria, becoming foreign fighters and then returning to their countries of citizenship. But the latest attacks in Europe are the work of much older jihadists. The studies also indicate the feminization of the phenomenon. They are "invited" or say they are "attracted" by images promising them heaven on earth if they participate in jihad. The press publishes messages and photos circulating on social networks, images of sumptuous festivities, selfies showing smiling men intended to demonstrate happiness and peace restored.[27] It is important to display the well-being and goodwill reigning there to attract young women as well, who are sought after in marriage, and to recall that the Islamic State grants subsidies to youth who join their organization and their cause,[28] and even more so to ensure the future of the movement.

Imagined Global Diaspora

Homegrown jihadists fight states engaged in war against terrorism, which they redefine as war on Islam.[29] They thus place Islam, a non-territorial affiliation, on the same level as the territorialized states of which they are citizens. Their double nationality means they hold passports allowing them to cross real state borders in order to reach the imaginary Ummah. A homegrown terrorist is thus the product of this multiplicity of references characteristic of plural societies.

When a branch of al-Qaeda, the al-Nusra Front, settled on the border between Syria and Iraq, proclaimed itself the "Islamic State," indicated it had conquered Baghdad and Mosul, appointed Al-Baghdadi as its caliph, and expanded its land by conquering neighbouring areas, eventually attaining a surface area equivalent to Great Britain, it confirmed the importance of the territory, attesting to its function as a war tactic and expansion strategy, although these conquests have no legitimacy in international law nor for the states concerned. These lands attract youth from the diaspora, but not only: they come from Europe, the Caucasus and Asia, joining local tribes to constitute an "army."

Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State coincide ideologically, according to Bernard Haykel, insofar as they are both the product of Islamist renewal that seeks to strengthen the power of Muslims vis-à-vis those they define as "enemies of Islam."[30] Whereas al-Qaeda launched "deterritorialized" global jihad through networks and a decentralized organization, the propaganda of IS calls on youth to migrate to Iraq and Syria (*hegira* -migration- to al-Sham, i.e. to Syria), recalling their religious duty to join "the Caliphate" and emphasizing that this migration is done in the name of jihad.[31] Such an organizational difference reveals the different conception of power and of the association between power and territory. As the name indicates, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (Al-Sham, referring to Greater Syria in ideological language) expresses the intention of building a state, appointing a Caliph, defining its territory, according to them, following the example of the Prophet, and planting their flag as a symbol of unity of a people and their cause, the Black Flag like the one brandished by the Prophet in his war against the infidels, as their rhetoric goes.[32] Moreover, printing their own currency, creating an army and obtaining weapons and land are at the heart of the self-proclaimed Caliphate's strategy.

The two organizations also coincide in the force of their discourse and rhetoric on their forming part of the Ummah. Since al-Qaeda, youth have been pre-

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[27] Aris ROUSSINOS, "Jihad Selfies: These British Extremists in Syria Love Social Media," *Vice*, 5 December 2013, www.vice.com/read/syrian-jihadist-selfies-tell-us-a-lot-about-their-war.

[28] Rick NOACK, "Here's how the Islamic State compares with real states," *Washington Post*, 12 September 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/09/12/heres-how-the-islamic-state-compares-to-real-states/?Post+generic=%3Ftid%3Dsm_twitter_washingtonpost

[29] Rick "Ozzie" NELSON and Ben BODURIAN, *A Growing Terrorist Threat? Assessing "Homegrown" Extremism in the United States*, CSIS Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Program Report, March 2010.

[30] Bernard HAYKEL, "The origins of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State," in *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 668, November 2016, p. 71-81

[31] Abdul Bari ATWAN, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate*, London, Saqi Books, 2015, p. 164

[32] William McCANTS, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State,* New York, St. Martin's Press, 2015, p. 25-27

paring for jihad through websites, where they become familiarized with the discourse radical Islamic leaders, who are attracting them through a singular narrative of membership in the Ummah, the reimagined global community, where the concepts of belonging to a nation, a religion and a land are merged. The discourses on the Ummah refer to a new "imagined geography" as a delocalized or "deterritorialized," denationalized representation of the world.[33] The leaders thus address Muslim youth of the diaspora as that of a people who constitute "all parts of the body of the Ummah," recalling the hadith: "The Ummah is like our body. If part of it is hurt, the whole body suffers." These youth, who recognize themselves in this imagined transnational community, constitute the Ummah's army, which is ready for jihad.

Patrick Cockburn asserts that the mobilization for the Islamic State is much more significant and better organized than the one for al-Qaeda.[34] And the author emphasizes that its controlling a territory that was originally much more extensive than al-Qaeda would have imagined constitutes a much more alarming threat.[35] Its recruitment is also more systematic. Its leaders target disadvantaged neighbourhoods in European cities with large Muslim populations, Roubaix, Brussels, Paris and the Seine-Saint-Denis department, and council estates in France. These ethnic enclaves, ghettos, all of these areas where foreignness and poverty combine, where youth unemployment far surpasses national averages, are presented as places of conflict between civil society and the forces of order, between generations and cultures, between national, local and community institutions.[36] IS designates local recruiters to act on site, working closely with networks in Syria or elsewhere. And insofar as the self-proclaimed Caliphate, al-Baghdadi, in Mosul, recalls the duty of jihad as a unifying force of the Ummah and has all his young fighters, thereafter called foreign fighters, "swear allegiance to the Caliphate." But despite the call to territorial jihad, all reports agree on the threat the organization represents, above all regarding the intentions of these foreign ji-

hadists in Syria to act anywhere in the world, in particular in their countries of citizenship. According to Bruce Hoffman, the Islamic State prepares operations outside of Syria thanks to its networks in Europe.[37] He believes Syria constitutes a geographic and operational platform that projects its influence and power in multiple directions,[38] which makes territorial jihad, global jihad.

In the face of strikes by the coalition that have reduced the territory of the Islamic State, the soldiers of the Caliphate are pursuing their action in a "delocalized" or "deterritorialized" manner, without the obligatory passage through the "ancestral land," but rather through attacks wherever they feel appropriate, thus recalling the objective, which is at once territorial, in the "construction of a state" with the territorial Caliphate in the manner of empires, and global, insofar as it implements networks of its imagined diaspora thanks to its foreign fighters.

The discourse on the construction of the Ummah as a global nation is based on identifying its members as a unit with multiple affiliations (national, territorial, religious, linguistic), shared experiences (colonization, exile or emigration) and a reference to a denationalized, delocalized "us" established in both so-called diaspora spaces and in national spaces at the same time.[39] The diaspora is represented as the ancestral land and the land of jihad, in the French case the diaspora space does not include the parents' country but refers to Syria, defined as the land of the Caliphate, now imagined as the ancestral land of resistance, the land to be reconquered and for which one must fight, a land that is not the fighters' parents' country of origin allowing diasporic ties to be made, but an "imagined global diaspora" in reference to the Caliphate.

This back and forth between the local – territorial – and the global in radical Islamism, the changing profiles of its dispersed fighters and soldiers, the limitless imagination of war weapons, all of these constitute a new challenge for states in their struggle against radicalization.

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[33] Riva KASTORYANO, *op. cit.*, Paris, Fayard 2015

[34] Patrick COCKBURN, *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution*, London, Verso, 2015, p. 38

[35] Patrick COCKBURN, *op. cit.*, 2015, p. 42

[36] Riva KASTORYANO, *La France, l'Allemagne et leur immigré. Négocier l'identité*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1995, Chapter 3.

[37] Bruce HOFFMAN, "The Global Terror Threat and Counterterrorism Challenges Facing the Next Administration," in *CTC Sentinel*, November/December 2016, Vol. 9, Issue 11, p. 1-7

[38] Bruce HOFFMAN, *op. cit.*, 2016

[39] Riva KASTORYANO, *op. cit.*, 2015