Ethics and Deradicalization against Terrorism

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Since the great successes of Daesh in 2014 and the series of spectacular attacks in France in 2015, the phenomenon of religious radicalization (supposed to be the origin of the jihadism), has been particularly studied. Despite the uncertainties, between 2014 and 2016, nearly 2,000 French people were involved in jihadist networks in Syria and Iraq. This figure is to be compared with the 4,609 reports for radicalization in France (police and prefectures). But, in reality, it is estimated that almost 10,000 French are radicalized, unreported. In february 2016, the number of reports had risen to 8,250, following the bombing of *Charlie Hebdo*. But all reported did not switch to jihadism nor the apology of terrorism.

1. Is there a radical threat?

The profiles are so varied that it is difficult to give typical portraits: minors represent 25% of cases, women 27%, people reported are rather young (between 16 and 30 years), their level is generally low, even if there are graduates. Most of them work. Internet represents a necessary passage, but it takes on a different form: initial ground for radicalization, or reinforcement tool. The sharing of the jihadist contents on the Internet does not have the same function for a connected teenager, a convinced salafist and an experienced fighter in Syria[1].

Obviously, the attraction for religious radicalism is not necessarily linked to a phenomenon of social rupture. The difficulties of contemporary society and individual frustrations create a breeding ground, but not at all decisive[2]. The religious dimension remains essential, because radicalization is a "passage", a personal conversion and a break with the past[3].

The eradication of Daech in the Middle East will not mean the end of the radical phenomenon. Indeed, jihadists returning with a european nationality will have "to be treated": condemnation, imprisonment or police surveillance for those who will agree to give up arms, but how to eradicate the mentalities that have pushed them to Syria? How to get a sincere repentance[4]? How to reintegrate the wives who have been the allies of Daech's propaganda? Not to mention the children, deeply marked by the parental model.

Radicalization is also debated inside French companies, although it rarely takes the form of terrorism. In May 2015, the Randstad Institute published, in conjunction with SciencesPo-Rennes, the results of a study carried out by its Observatory of Religious Facts in Enterprises[5]. Based on a sample of 1333 people, this work showed that 61.8% of people are believers. On the whole, 63.2% declared themselves Catholic, 5.1% Muslim, 2.6% Protestant. This means that religious identity is still strong in

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[1] « Internet est loin d'avoir le rôle qu'on lui attribue dans les trajectoires de radicalisation », *Le Monde*, 12 janvier 2015.
[2] In Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, more than 40 % of young people are unemployed, but the people concerned by the jihadist networks are only thirty out of 30 000 inhabitants (Safia Bannani, *Middle East Eye*, 2 december 2015).
[3] THOMSON 2014.
[4] According to THOMSON 2014, the veterans of Syria return tired or disappointed, but few repent.
[5] Cf. O. HANNE, Th. POUCHOL, *Islam et radicalisation dans le monde du travail*, Paris, B. Giovanangeli Éditeur, 2015.

France. Moreover, the study revealed that for 12% of the people, the religious fact was a recurring subject in company, but that it was a problem only in 3% of the cases met. Religion would therefore not be a conflictual factor.

The results avoid identifying a particular religion, more alarming than others. However, the results leave little room for doubt, since the three quarters of the difficulties evoked by the inquiry belong to Islam: absence for religious festivals, prayers during working hours or during breaks, refusal to work with a woman. So Islam would only bring 5% of employees but 80% of the problems? The thoughtlessness of the study allows all conjectures. Surprisingly, the 2015 attacks in France increased the number of conversions to Islam and sales of the Koran. In January 2015, the Grand Mosque of Paris registered 44 conversion certificates, twice as many as the year before. At the same time, the number of converts gained 30% at the mosque of Aubervilliers[6]. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the majority of Muslims do not contest the social and professional habits of Europe, but a minority ostensibly adopts Islamism, the ideological movement that wants to impose Islam in French law, society and society. Political world. This movement leads to attitudes and beliefs that slip into provocation, proselytism or misogyny. These militants are the heirs of Salafiyya, or "Salafism", a reform movement born at the end of the 19th century in Egypt, which sought to regenerate Islam by returning to the tradition represented by the "al-Salaf" Al-Salih). Faced with the state of subordination of Muslim societies, Salafism proposes a return to pure faith, a reminder of the absolute uniqueness of God and a scrupulous practice of worship. Salafism created a political movement, the first of which was the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1928. For him, Islam is a perfect, revealed order that structures the whole of collective life. The Brothers make social development: mass literacy, schooling of girls, creation of dispensaries. Politically, al-Banna has confidence in the intelligence of the masses, accepts the electoral system to create a Muslim state: "The Koran is our constitution".

The Salafist temptation can affect French society, but also companies. This temptation makes it possible to compensate for the humiliations experienced every day, in family life, business, social and friendly relations. The lost memories of the Umma and the medieval caliphate are exhumed to affirm that, in former times, women were virtuous, that piety reigned, that Islam was respected, and so on. By applying to the letter the ritual rules described in Sharia and Sunnah, the radicalized person finds a sense of authenticity and truth that justifies his existence under the gaze of God.

Actualy, in the world of work, this posture is impossible, because the opportunities to break the Islamic sacredness are innumerable. An employee who would respect scrupulously the distinction between licit and illicit would inevitably have to resign, or be hired only in denominational enterprises (restaurants, butchers, etc.). Managers are mainly confronted with people whose religious attitude evolves gradually, and not to employees hired by being already radical.

The most violent situation that the company can encounter is the example of Saint-Quentin-Fallavier (Isère), June 26, 2015, when Yassin Salhi beheaded his boss. The murder appeared to be a terrorist act. Its author, a Muslim fundamentalist, was entered in the S register of personalities to be monitored. He killed this man in the middle of Ramadan, following the orders of the Islamic state (Daesh). Yet, in this case, the victim is his employer on a chemical site belonging to the American company Air

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[6] Information RTL, "De plus en plus de convertis à l'islam depuis les attaques" (10 Feb 2015).

Products. A fight with his boss pushed him to murder, which justice has not described as a terrorist act. The company may therefore be confronted with ambiguous situations, where Islamism mixes with a conflict at work.

2. The deradicalization tests

Faced with the threat, the States, overwhelmed by this mental and security phenomenon, supported initiatives which they framed afterwards. In 2002, a *Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires* was created in France. In April 2014, an association founded the *Centre de prévention contre les dérives sectaires liées à l'islam* (CPDSI), represented in medias by Dounia Bouzar. All the proposed solutions were gathered through an "anti-jihad plan" and the anti-terrorist law of 13 November 2014. In Denmark, the city of Aarhus set up a social tutoring program in 2007 to accompany the targets in their daily lives and to reinsert them. In April 2015, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls announced the opening of a dozen centers for the prevention of radicalization. One of them opened in June 2016 in Pontourny, near Tours (Indre-et-Loire), where some thirty young people between 18 and 30 are welcomed for 10 months by mixed teams (police officers, psychologists, social workers, even theologians and religious). The target audience, however, is not people who have gone to Syria, who may be charged by a criminal court[7]. In some prisons, as well as in Osny (Val-d'Oise), awareness groups have been organized for voluntary detainees, but their effects are modest[8]. Meanwhile, the proselytizing leaders are isolated from other prisoners, too sensitive to radical propaganda.

The authorities are trying to face a multifaceted radicalization. All those responsible for these programs admit that the processes are long and complex; they require individual support and multidisciplinary teams. What is their purpose? "Preventing action, framing, training, re-socializing those people who are ideologically separated from our society, so that they can become full citizens again", or "modify, neutralize ideologies, ideals of armed struggle[9]". To do this, the programs are constantly adapted, people go into an open environment (prefectures, associations), in a semi-closed center, or even in prison.

More modestly, official websites have been created and offer technical sheets against radicalization and terrorism. But their content is often simple, even manichaean. Thus on the French site *stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr*, a banner headed "Jihadist Radicalization, the first signs that can alert" states: "they are suspicious of the old friends, considered impure"; "they suddenly change their eating habits"; "they no longer listen to music"; "they no longer watch television and no longer go to the cinema".

The effectiveness of these schemes has been highly contested since 2015, because some have benefited from public funds. The personality of Dounia Bouzar, her methods and her results have attracted criticism in the press[10]. Individuals through de-radicalization programs have been totally impervious to their citizen speech, and have

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[7] Communication from the Prefecture in *La Nouvelle République du Centre*, 11 marsh 2016.
[8] *Le Monde*, 28 november 2015.
[9] PIETRASANTA 2015.
[10] « Surchauffe sur le dispositif antiradicalisation », *Le JDD*, 20 december 2015.

hidden their ideological resistance by the islamic concept of *taqiya*[11]. A young 17-year-old from Lyon, involved in a planned attack on a synagogue, was arrested in january 2016 after a session with the CPDSI[12].

The methods used are derisory in the face of too ambitious objectives. The prefecture cells are composed of overloaded agents. The associations involved do not have the same compulsory power as the public institutions. Finally, the effectiveness of the testimony of victims of terrorism faced by extremist individuals is doubtful.

Perhaps ambitions were disproportionate: "resocialize", "help young people to regain their free will" (according to the prefect of Indre-et-Loire), to restore a sense of identity. The vocabulary hesitates between the social, the societal, the cultural and even the philosophical vision. Do we know where we are going? Many experts believe that the answer must go beyond the security framework, but the project of reinsertion seems limitless, especially as the boundaries between radicals, delinquents and jihadists are often blurred. Since the radicalization borrows the Internet, is it necessary to impose a weaning of the Net? An education for social networks?

Within the companies, we advocate a reminder of the republican law, and even, in doubtful cases, the "living together" and the "values of the company", even if it means signing ethical charters to employees, with the support Trade union organizations. But the legal framework often seems incomplete in the light of the issues and concerns expressed.

A group of senior French officials - called *Plessis* - even made proposals to fight against Islamism[13]. Some were common sense, such as controlling the preaching or funding of Muslim associations. Others were more questionable, such as the idea that the State should organize the Islam of France, extending the powers of the CFCM (*Conseil français du culte musulman*), giving approval for Koranic teaching, or appointing a "great mufti of the Republic".

3. Conversion, Salafism and Jihadism

For many researchers, such as Olivier Roy and Mohssin el-Ghabri, jihadism is not a Salafism that would swing into armed violence, but an identity malaise masked by violence already acquired, which then disguises itself with religious arguments. It was thus possible to speak of the Islamization of violence. "They are first radical and then religious, and not the other way around," says Mohssin el-Ghabri[14]. Such an interpretation, however, fails to exonerate Muslim history and theology, and does not explain why Christianity and Buddhism do not lead to the same "brutalization". According to this analysis, de-radicalization would be primarily to combat social violence ...

It is certain that the Salafist currents did not provide massive support for Daech's jihadism. In fact, Salafism is a rigorous, but quietist Muslim movement. The Salafist wishes to live a pure and integral Islam - in the sense of integral - within the framework

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[11] Authorization given in the tenth century to Muslims to hide their faith in case of danger of death. But during the 20th century, this permission could be diverted by radicals living in Europe, allowing a certain form of hypocrisy against the institutions of the infidel countries.
[12] *Europe 1*, 29 feb. 2016.
[13] http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2015/11/16/31003-20151116ARTFIG00173-islamisme-les-propositions-choc-d-un-groupe-de-hauts-fonctionnaires.php
[14] Safia Bannani, *op. cit.*

of the family and the community. This movement, similar to the Pakistani Tabligh, is distinct from political commitment, so that the Salafists are rarely linked to the Muslim Brothers, who form a political movement.

Salafist ethics preaches a peaceful man ("Muslim", in the etymological sense of the term), united to his group, anxious for his family, fleeing agitation. There is no inaccessible requirement. "Let no one seek to be too strict in the observance of religion," says a hadith, "otherwise he will succumb to the task." Faith is very close to ethics, the inner behavior is modeled on external attitudes. This mentality is a true renunciation of oneself. The faithful forgets himself to set foot in those of Muhammad, who preceded him and shows him the way. In such a mentality, mockery of Muhammad, and even more insult, is considered a totally prohibited blasphemy:

> Those who offend Allah and his messenger, Allah curses them down here, as in the Hereafter, and prepares for them a degrading punishment (Surah 33, verse 57).

Most Muslim commentators, however, state that only God does the punishment, and that no one on earth must avenge the flouted honor of the prophet. The assassination of cartoonists *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 would thus have no justification in the tradition. However, a hadith says that Mohammed was insulted by a man who hated him.

> The prophet asked:
> -Who can get rid of Kaab ibn Ashraf?
> -Do you want me to kill him?" asked a companion.
> -Yes, said the prophet.
> And the man was killed soon after[15].

This explains why the demonstrations of 11 January in favor of freedom of the press did not meet the unanimity of the Muslims. The world of work follows rules of behavior between men and women that French culture considers courteous and civil. Yet they are not experienced as such by the Salafists. Thus, hadith excludes physical contact with women:

> When the believers came to join the prophet, he tested them (...). By God, I swear that the hand of the prophet never touched that of one of these women. By God I swear that he never had any other behavior towards them than that prescribed by God (al-Bukhârî, *Sahîh*, n° 5288).

This passage concerns mainly lascivious contacts between men and women who are not unmarried, and not merely involuntary touches. However, the ban is clear. We understand the repulsion of some faithful to the idea of shaking the hand of a Western woman, certainly Christian or atheist, perhaps in concubinage, and therefore in a state of prostitution! If she is menstruating, man loses even the benefit of his prayer. If he is in physical contact, he risks removing the *halal* certification from all the animals he has sacrificed.

Traditional Muslim ethics have little to do with western ethics. They are not opposed, but cohabit more or less well. It all depends on the degree of religious scruple of the employee, his knowledge of the Sunnah, his ability to adapt ritual regulations. Age also plays: the difficulty of applying in a secularized society all the prescriptions of *halal* and *haram* removes young people from mosques and practice, even if they return there once married, or after death a parent, a pilgrimage or an awareness in middle age,

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[15] Al-Bukhârî, *Sahîh*, n° 3031-3032.

when choosing to educate children in a religion. The political context is often also important: an attack in Syria or France, an Israeli attack on a Muslim country, a brutally veiled woman, or a caricature against Mohammed, is enough to wake up a sleeping religious identity.

These salafist mentalities influence jihadism, but they remain different in thought and in facts. Radicalization involves in varying degrees and in incomparable forms the sympathizers of Salafism and the partisans of Daesh's jihadism. Some are primarily religious, while others are supported by the will to power, by political, social and religious factors. Salafists represent a complete alternative to European civilization, but not a security danger, and the answer to their ideology can only be cultural, unless all European law is changed.

To understand the radical phenomenon, it must be remembered that the term itself is totally inappropriate in Islamology. We never speak of radicalization in Islam. It is above all a conversion. Sura 9, called *Al-Tawba* ("The Return"), defines this conversion as a return to God:

> "The first [believers] among the Emigrants and the Auxiliaries and those who followed them in beautiful behavior, Allah accepts them, and they agree Him. He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, and they shall abide therein. Here is the huge success" [9, 100].

After a life of disorder, the sincere believer turns to his Lord and decides not to disobey him any more. This *tawba* effaces his faults, if at least he has the firm intention of no longer falling, and of repairing injustice. If he turns back, he becomes an apostate (*Murtadin*), a crime that deserves hell. The process of conversion affects both Muslim and non-Muslim individuals. Both decide to obey the imperative of *aslama*, that is to say to islamize or to re-islamize, to submit to God. For them, deradicalization would mean a form of treason, a return to the initial state and therefore apostasy.

Most converts choose Salafism rather than a more tolerant Islam movement such as Malikism or even Sufism. In fact, Salafism proposes an inner and demanding way, while the Malikism is considered compromised with the Republic, institutional and not very dynamic. To turn to God must necessarily be a process that transforms the whole being and creates a major break in life, which does not seem to be allowed by the Malikism.

4. An Ethical Issue

Islam has fourteen centuries of existence. It was born and grew up divided. As soon as the Prophet died, a multitude of branches clashed to determine the true nature of Islam, giving rise to Shiism, Kharidjism and Sunnism. As early as the 8th-9th century, understanding the rules of Islam led to the development of different schools of thought and law - the *maddhab* - whose purpose was to interpret the Qur'anic message and narratives about the Prophet, and to apply as best as possible to new societies. This *ijtihad*, this search for both community and personal adaptation, has always been at the heart of Muslim intellectual and doctrinal identity. It has provided Islam with its richest, most audacious texts. The *ijtihad* still enriches today the ways of thought of most of the Muslims of the Maghreb and France: no believer, no scientist has a perfectly definitive and generalizable answer to all questions, and only knowledge and piety are the authentic ways for faith and right. Certainly, the Salafist currents claim to have this

unique and ultimate answer, and try to impose it. But they encounter the opposition of the majority and the ingrained traditions of Malikite Islam.

In the name of which religious authority, the Republic would efface fourteen centuries of ijtihad to impose its vision of Islam? Despite the violence of the secular battles between 1901 and 1906, the Republic never claimed to define Catholic dogma or the organization of the Church. Why would it define Islam and its structures? To deal with terrorism and Salafism? The issue is intelligence and judicial review. Is the Islam of France divided? It has not been less since the creation of the CFCM in 1995. On the contrary, the associations that compose it are still divided and even compete for power and prebends. The risk is great that the imams participating in a reinforced CFCM are somewhat more discredited to the faithful, isolated and therefore not at all representative.

The confusion of the genres is permanent around the deradicalization. The vocabulary proposed on the site *stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr* draws a portrait of the candidates that can be applied to any sectarian or even alternative group: "They withdraw into themselves, hold antisocial remarks, reject any form Authority, or life in community ". Such a definition applied to Islamism is questionable when we know the solidarity displayed by the radical groups and their obedience to a religious ethics. The deradicalization purpose define between the lines the Western positive model: a world of leisure, consumption, personal and professional fulfillment. The vocabulary of radicalization masks the rejection of this cultural model. The public authorities are reluctant to call their objective by its real name: mental reconditioning.

The danger of deradicalization lies in the growing intrusions of the State. In seeking to reintegrate, State penetrates into the spiritual intimacy of individuals in order to redefine the religious and give it an acceptable place. Now, is the State competent to define what is Islam, "good" Islam? Can State deny that the Prophet Muhammad himself was a warrior and that it does not have to justify or invalidate Muslim history? Using the words of Islamism - *jihad, taqiya, mujahidin ...* - political leaders adopt the keys to reading the world of the enemy and validate his perception of politics. They thus mean that the identification of the crime is outside the legal framework. Unaware of the threat, the State is tempted to be ubiquitous, without having the legal capacity to do so. Deradicalization could be an intellectual posture.

The problem undoubtedly comes from the hesitations of the vocabulary. After all, what is radicalization? Farhad Khosrokhavar mentions two conditions to this process: an ideology and violent actions, and Pierre Conesa speaks of "intellectual, philosophical and religious legitimation of the passage to violence[16]", two definitions that completely neglect the religious aspect and Islam. In the fourteenth century, the word "radical" in French had the same meaning as *radical* in English: "complete, absolute". From the nineteenth century it was used to designate British political parties demanding liberal democratic reform. Transferred as such to France, it was applied to the left, secular and liberal parties that wanted to reform society. The verb "radicalize" was used regularly in the years 1960-1970 in a political sense with the idea of "becoming more intransigent, harder" or "more extreme[17]". The first meaning was therefore political and not necessarily negative. Deradicalizing was a synonym for "compromising". Applied to Islamism, the verb imposes a complete redefinition of

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[16] « Quelle politique de contre-radicalisation en France ? », *classe-internatioanle.com*, 18 marsh 2015.
[17] *Le Robert, dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, dir. A. Rey, Paris, 2000.

terms: from when does one judge an intransigent or extreme Islam? By what standard? To what average? If radicalization is a conversion, deradicalization imposes a second ontological conversion. But what? Can one convert to secularism or the Republic?

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Documents

Image posted on jihadist social networks (March 2015). By taking up the iconography of the painting of David, *Le Serment du jeu de paume*, the radicals recover the western culture to transform it.
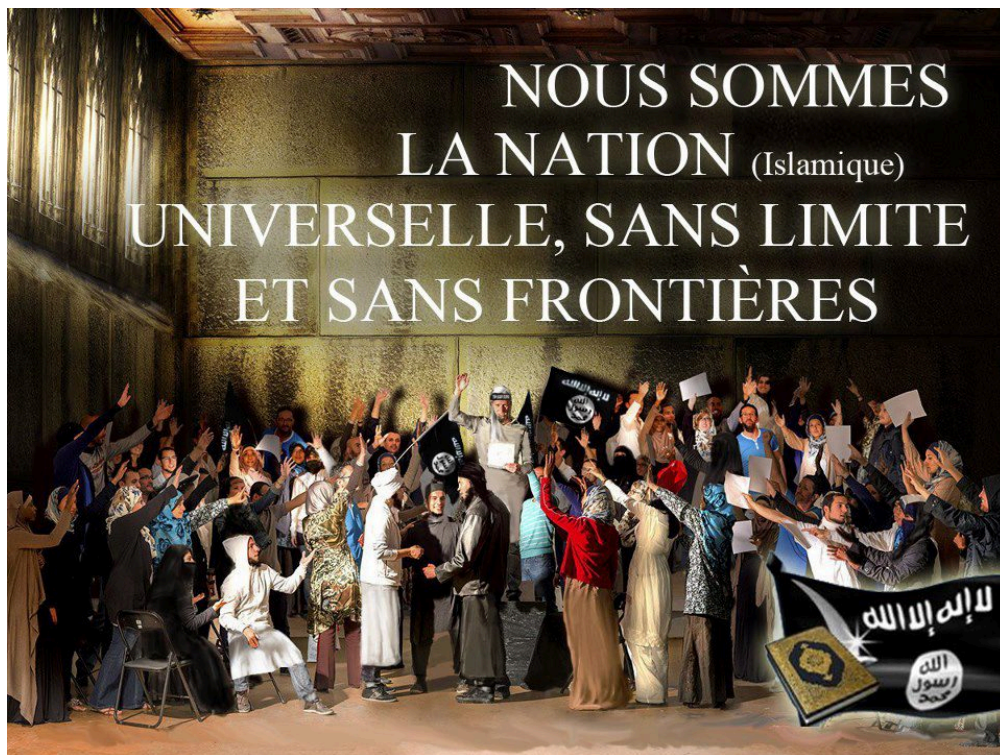

Image posted on the Salafist social networks (November 2015). During the search of the Salafist mosque in Aubervilliers, the Koran fell to the ground. The photography immediately went around the social networks to show "French Islamophobia".

Diagram on the violent radicalization provided by the *Centre de prévention de la radicalisation menant à la violence*. The French institutions limit the religious dimension to only one square of the process. They limit it to the expression "ideology".