

Department
of Political Science

Chair of Sociology of Terrorism

Radicalization of Islam or islamization of radicalism?

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this elaborate is to answer the following question: which of the concepts “radicalization of Islam” or “Islamization of radicalism” refers to the effect of Islamist terrorism in the West? This dissertation intends to demonstrate which of the two authors of the debate between Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel is correct in the examination of the issue. It is necessary to emphasize that various resources are used to support each of these views, since radicalization is a very complex phenomenon and there are numerous methods for an individual to become radicalized. My theory is that we are experiencing an Islamization of radicalism. Recent events demonstrate that Roy’s theory is increasingly effective. I believe that radicalization is not based on religion, and that the violent attacks performed by self-declared jihadists are not fueled by their affiliation with Islam.

In detail, the first chapter explores the fundamental aspects of the radicalization phenomenon. It begins with a general introduction of the phenomenon through Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley's book *Radicalization to terrorism* in which radicalization is identified as a process through which individuals increasingly accept violence for a cause. The four stages of the phenomenon are then described: pre-radicalization, identification, indoctrination, and manifestation. Scholars, to understand the reasons behind the radicalization of an individual, have developed models of analysis and, in this chapter, Fathali Moghaddam’s “staircase to terrorism” will be analyzed.

Subsequently, a background on terrorism will be provided in order to better understand this phenomenon and, in particular, the debate between Roy and Kepel. In this section, the positions of the two scholars will be addressed. Kepel argues that a radical form of neo-Salafism emerged through Saudi Arabian financial preachers, whose penetration should be seen in the context of the growth of Islamic extremism and jihadist terrorism in the 1990s and 2000s. Roy defines the radicalized youth as “sincere believers” who, once inside the terrorist organizations, find themselves sharing specific doctrines such as the conviction of going to paradise after certain actions. Roy believes there is no point in distinguishing

between good Islam, which provides a spiritual interpretation of jihad, and radical Islam, which is seen as the incubator of terrorism. Alessandro Orsini also brought his contribution to the debate with 'La radicalization des terroristes de vocation', an article published in *Commentaire*, which deals with a specific anthropological class of terrorists for whom personal death is the means to their spiritual necessity. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the importance of ideology in this debate.

The second chapter of my work will examine a series of case studies in order to demonstrate the validity of the thesis developed by Oliver Roy. For example, the Khaled Kelkal case, the Kouachi brothers, the Abdeslam brothers, and others. Through a study of their lives, from the time of their commission of petty crimes to their radicalization in prison, it will emerge how religion plays a minor role in radicalization, a concept akin to the thought of Oliver Roy. The last section of this chapter will focus on the analysis of the DRIA model developed by Alessandro Orsini. The model deals only with terrorists by vocation and to every letter corresponds a phase of the happened jihadist, and case studies will also be examined for this model.

Finally, the third chapter will focus on case studies to show the validity of Gilles Kepel's theory. The author emphasizes on the fact that Salafism peaked in France between 2005 and 2015, when Muslims were fleeing to Muslim areas to fulfill their religious requirements.

CHAPTER I

1. The intellectual debate on Islamist terrorist activity

The first chapter of my thesis is committed to outlining the fundamental aspects of the phenomenon of radicalization that in the last years has acquired more relevance. I will examine the concept of terrorism by going through the distinction between “state terrorism” and “non-state terrorism”. Finally, the last section of this chapter will analyze the debate between the French scholars Oliver Roy and his theory “Islamization of radicalism” and Gilles Kepel and his theory “Radicalization of Islam” focusing in particular on whether ideology is a cause of radicalization.

1.1 Introduction to the phenomenon: what is radicalization?

There are many experts and scientists who have tried to define the notion of radicalization, sometimes giving rise to different perceptions of the same phenomenon, but a clear definition of this concept has not been developed yet. One thing is certain, radicalization is a growing international threat.

Sophia Moskalenko¹ and Clark McCauley² in their book *Radicalization to terrorism* define the meaning of radicalization as a process by which individuals, groups, or even large publics become increasingly accepting of violence for a cause. Terrorism is an end point while radicalization is the road that leads to that end point³. Therefore, it indicates a process that brings one or more persons to become more rigid, more unconventional in their way of thinking and then of acting. Radicalization is in a certain way the result of a “transformation of the person”

¹ Sophia Moskalenko is a psychologist, radicalization expert, and co-author of the books, “Friction” and “The Marvel of Martyrdom”

² Clark McCauley is a Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Bryn Mawr University and an expert on group dynamics, stereotyping, disgust, and intergroup conflict in relation to genocide and terrorism.

³ Moskalenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, Oxford University Press, United States of America , 2020, p. 4

towards an absolute that has been found, an absolute that is specific to the individual or to the group with which the person identifies and, is thus considered as a changeable process that varies based on the local context and certain individual circumstances, rather than a continuous and consistent process.

This phenomenon leads individuals to develop a desire to support hard to achieve changes in the society that may aim for example at the abolition of the established democratic order and that could cause the use of non-democratic methods. To express it more clearly, in radicalization the use of violence is promoted as a political instrument, as a tool for changing society, thus ideas become actions. Radicalization can occur gradually over time, or it can erupt quickly and violently. It usually manifests itself when individuals begin to act in unusual ways such as the acquisition of extremist ideologies or orientations and it is mostly an individual mental process that manifests as a change in mindset and does not always involve visible changes in the person's appearance or behaviors.

Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley claim that radicalization may begin with thinking about destroying property of, or hurting or even killing someone who represents a group or a cause that the individual finds objectionable. This consists in the highest point of this phenomenon, at one time or another, many of us may have experienced something like radicalization of opinion. The activity of ISIS's presence is directly tied to Islamist terrorism and radicalization. Terrorism and radicalization, without doubt, have a reciprocal relationship in which one supports the other, such that a terrorist organization that spreads success will raise the possibilities of radicalization. As a result, because radicalization frequently leads to terrorism, the possibility of terrorist acts increases. Islamist radicalization can lead to jihadism and acts of terrorism. It is not the only form of radicalization, but it has particularly mobilized public policy since the waves of attacks in 2015. This form of radicalization also imposes a separation between those who are radicalized and those in society who are not. Jihadist foreign fighters represent only a portion of people who have become radicalized and who manifest tendencies related to violent extremism. The consequence of this phenomenon leads the individual who takes this approach to marginalize themselves from society.

There are four main stages of radicalization that can be identified⁴:

1. “Pre-radicalization”: personal triggering mechanisms. This encompasses internal triggering mechanisms as well as the environmental elements that constitute a person vulnerable to extremism. It is the beginning of the procedure, the individual and subjective state from which it develops.
2. “Identification”: active ideological (religious) choices. In this phase individuals begin to investigate radical narratives because of both domestic and foreign influences, rendering them prone to radical narratives. Internal permeation such as interactions with other radicalized prisoners is a common occurrence in the prison system, and external impacts are less common for example people coming from the outside who have access to prison.
3. “Indoctrination”: the conviction that society must change. Individuals gradually expand their comprehension of radical ideologies and conclude that action is required for the cause. Aspiring extremists begin to believe that society is flawed and must be altered. Although the first steps are mainly individual processes, here it involves interaction with others who have similar thoughts. The formation of small, ethnically, or ideologically based organizations that isolate themselves from the mass of the faithful, such as distinct prayer groups, might show itself in the prison environment as a transition phase between identification and indoctrination. Inside the prisons, some could confirm the assignment of roles related to community representation to contrast the system and the prison organization, the refusal of corporal inspections that violate Islamic principles of honor and modesty, and

⁴ Governo italiano. *Scheda sul manuale in tema di radicalizzazione (luglio 1015)*

initiatives aimed at strong affirmation of religious norms, including hierarchical formalization and manifestations of leadership.

4. “Manifestation”: personal commitment according to ability or capacity (with the possible use of violence). It is defined as an individual’s personal determination to engage in violent action to promote his ideas and, as a result, reform society.

The reasons that can lead an individual to radicalization are several, from the lack of integration in the society to the interaction with extremist elements and, in these phases, the cultural, local, and social context greatly influences the radicalization process. In a final analysis, this is a phenomenon for which there is no explanation, but whose causes are multiple. The academicians have focused on analyzing the chronology of the different stages that people go through in the radicalization process. Their analysis had led to the development of models that aim to capture the initial and final state of a radicalization process and any intermediate states.

Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley in their book *Radicalization to terrorism* claim that terrorism is not usually the result of radicalization. They claim that this behavior can lead to a life of crime, with minor transgressions becoming increasingly serious and terminating in violent crime. A person’s radicalization process may lead them to join a criminal group. The scholars argue that this propensity is not always negative, and that radicalization is a challenge for example for individuals who desire to help the country in the military. Training for this profession includes building up one’s tolerance for violence and willingness to engage in it, for the right reason. The radicalization of these courageous men and women in the protection of our freedom and safety benefits us all. In fact, every revolution in history has been the outcome of radicalization, according to this theory.

In order to study this phenomenon, the most direct method is to talk with radical individuals. Moskalenko and McCauley identified the following methods⁵ to follow:

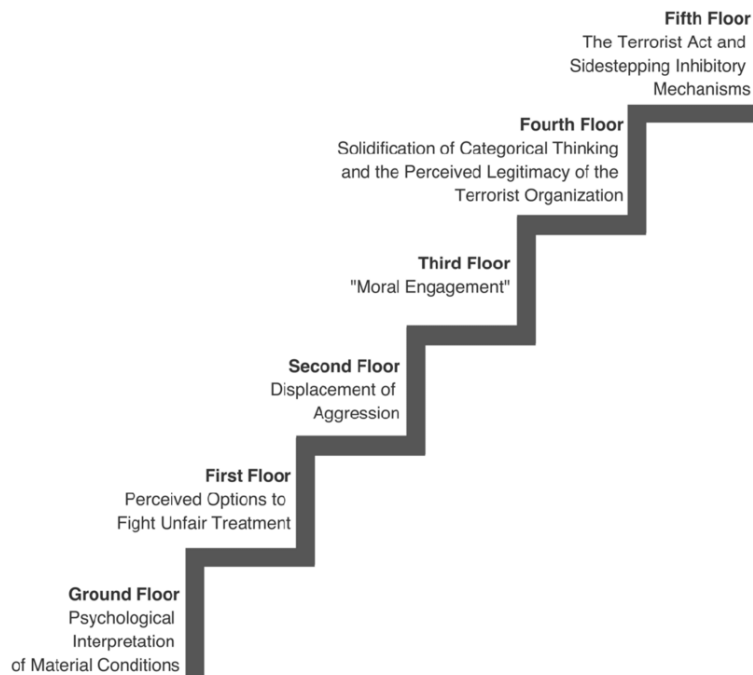
- Interviews, through which it is possible to acquire answers about the process of radicalization undertaken by the individuals in object. The disadvantage of this method is that people unfortunately lie;
- Case Studies, this phase concerns a deep study of the terrorist's life through their own blogs, posts, diaries, emails, and letters. The case study will then be analyzed for evidence of trends or characteristics that may explain radicalization;
- Surveys, this method consists of traveling to the areas where radicalization is rampant, such as Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, so that we can analyze the terrorists face to face;
- Databases, this method collects and compiles all types of data into databases, which can then be used to look for links between a wide range of individual characteristics and terrorist acts.

Throughout the years, many models have been developed to analyze the radicalization pathway of an individual, models that address radicalization as a comprehensive process. This form of research, for the most part, ignores specific ideas or claims, as well as the cultural and social context in which radicalization occurs. radicalization. Instead, it focuses on the broad elements of radicalization that lead to violent action, as seen through psychological analyses of individual events.

Fathali Moghaddam is an excellent example of such radicalization models.

⁵ Moskalenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, cit., p.12-13-14

Fathali Moghaddam, a psychologist, coined the “staircase to terrorism” metaphor to describe the rise of violence in 2005. As the aspiring terrorist mounts the stairs leading to actual terrorism, the staircase narrows, according to this concept. Instead, then focusing on individuals just at the top of the staircase, Moghaddam's goal was to throw light on the radicalization process from the bottom up.



Credits: Lone Actor Terrorists: The Performance of Hegemonic Masculinity Through Acts of Violence - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate.

Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Staircase-to-Terrorism-99_fig3_346535752 [Accessed 10 March 2022]

People on the ground floor perceive poverty and seek to improve their circumstances. Here, Moghaddam emphasizes the importance of perceptions in interpreting a scenario. Terrorist radicalization is not caused by poverty or a lack of a sufficient education. The method of understanding to which individuals turn in a given setting is at issue, as general impressions are what matter most. Thus, the

majority of individuals live on the "foundational" ground floor, where views of fairness and reasonable treatment are most important. To fathom individuals who ascend the terrorism staircase, one must first realize the magnitude of perceived injustice and feelings of frustration and guilt felt by hundreds of millions of people on the ground floor. Evidence that material variables such as poverty and lack of education are problematic as explanations for terrorist attacks emphasizes the essential significance of psychological issues. Individuals on the first level experiment with many possibilities in attempt to transform their life, particularly by engaging in decision-making systems. People climb to the first level and try various doors in quest of answers to what they believe is unfair treatment. If those attempts failed, some people would climb to the second floor and direct their aggression against out-groups. All those who make it to the third floor are possible terrorists who are willing to support extreme organizations' ideology. Former sympathy becomes active adherence on the fourth floor. The individual will "join the terrorist organization's secret world." "Involvement in secret, small-group operations lead to changes in perspectives among recruits: a legitimization of the terrorist organization and its goals, a belief that the ends justify the means. The recruit has been so thoroughly socialized in the cell that he or she is prone to blindly accepting the leader's authority. Thus, after climbing to the fourth story and entering the terrorist organization's secret world, there is little chance of escaping alive. The first type of new recruits, in most situations, consists of those who will be reasonably long members and who join small cells of four or five people, each with access to only information about the other members in their own cells. In the case of the second group of recruits, the soldiers who are trained to carry out violent acts and become suicide bombers, the complete recruiting, training, and execution of the terrorist act may take less than 24 hours in some cases. Inside those 24 hours, the enrolled individual is usually lavished with praise and treated as a celebrity, especially by the recruiter, who always remains at his or her side, and a dynamic cell leader.

Finally, because there are no "inhibiting procedures" in place on the fifth floor, individuals will execute the terrorist act. The cell helps to eliminate psychological barriers among its members by categorizing individuals as part of the out-group. Terrorism is defined as acts of violence against people, which frequently

end in several deaths, and this is the floor in which an individual concludes its process. As a result, people who reach the fifth level are psychologically equipped and motivated to commit terrorist acts, which can result in several civilian deaths. However, in order to comprehend the conduct of the few who ascend to the top of the terrorism stairwell and commit terrorist acts, it is fundamental to analyze before the living conditions and justice views of the millions on the ground floor. It's crucial to note that Moghaddam's concept became part of the post-9/11 US ideological debate since it was a response to critiques that the endeavor to comprehend the phenomenon's core origins was a misdirected form of indulgence.

The staircase concept instructs us to provide a strong base of contextualized democracy so that individuals have less incentive to climb to higher floors in order to join terrorist organizations. Finally, terrorism is a moral issue with psychological roots; the difficulty is to keep disillusioned adolescents and others from becoming involved in terrorist organizations' morality. The history of terrorism teaches us that this moral problem lacks a technology answer; this lesson runs counter to the current trend of looking for technical advances to moral dilemmas.

1.2 Background on Terrorism

Radicalization is a term mostly used in the context of terrorism. Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley in their book *Radicalization to terrorism* affirm that there is no one accepted definition of terrorism. There is, however, a general agreement⁶ among government definitions that terrorism is either violence or a threat of violence whose purpose is to coerce a government or citizen. It is fundamental to make a distinction between “state terrorism” and “non-state terrorism”.

State terrorism aims to keep control over citizens through the use of violence and terror. According to the authors, the more recent example of state terrorism comes from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and shows how horrific and deadly these means can be. Hussein’s Baathist government was known for torturing, persecuting, and

⁶ Moskalenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, cit., p.20

murdering Kurds⁷ in large numbers. Kurds lost their Iraqi citizenship and were renamed Iranians. Their traditional grounds were destroyed by the government, and they were forced to choose between dying of dehydration or relocating to barb-wire encircled “new villages” with no sanitation, water, or employment opportunities. An estimated 25.000⁸ Kurds were killed because of systematic torture and executions. Thousands more Kurds were killed in northern Iraq during the Anfal Campaign⁹ as a result of chemical weapons, mass executions, acute deprivation, and torture. The terror campaign waged by Hussein’s government did not just target Kurds. A wide range of transgressions, many of which were prescribed by Sharia law, were subjected to harsh punishments such as branding, amputations, and death. Journalists, dissidents, and businesspeople have all been kidnapped, tortured, and murdered.

One of the most well-known examples of non-state terrorism described by academicians Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley is al-Qaeda, which is tragically well-known to those who lived through the 9/11 attacks. Al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, began by resisting Soviet invaders in Afghanistan. Bin Laden began attacking US military and diplomatic institutions abroad once the Soviets left, then turned on to the US homeland. The 9/11 attacks were the apex of al-Qaeda's efforts. A total of nearly 3.000¹⁰ persons were killed. Following 9/11, the United States and its allies worked together to put an end to al-Qaeda’ operations. With al-Qaeda's leaders imprisoned, assassinated, or hidden, jihadist terrorism had a new face: ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), often known as IS (Islamic State). Unlike al-Qaeda, ISIS did not emerge from a single commander with a single objective. Instead, it grew out of dissatisfied Baathists and military officers who lost their posts after Saddam Hussein was deposed by a US-

⁷ Kurds or Kurdish people are an Iranian ethnic group native to the mountainous region of Kurdistan in Western Asia, which spans southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, and northern Syria.

⁸ Moskalenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, cit., p.25

⁹ The Anfal campaign, also known as the Anfal genocide or the Kurdish genocide, was a genocidal counterinsurgency operation which was carried out by Baathist Iraq and killed between 50,000 and 182,000 Kurds in the late 1980s.

¹⁰ Moskalenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, cit., p.26

led operation. The US Viceroy in Iraq, Paul Bremer, had barred members of the ruling Baathist party from all but the lowest levels of administration.

ISIS had a different organization and goals than al-Qaeda because of its origins in the aftermath of invasion and defeat. Whereas al-Qaeda aspired to combat Western meddling in Muslim countries, ISIS sought to establish a new Islamic state right away. It began as a terrorist organization, but it eventually seized large territories and began collecting taxes, policing streets, and performing other services normally undertaken by governments. ISIS, like al-Qaeda, is not afraid to attack ordinary Muslims, to exclude Muslims who disagree with its authority, and to shell Muslim cities, hospitals, and schools. As a result, ISIS mixes aspects of both state and non-state terrorism. State terrorism is unquestionably deadlier than non-state terrorism. The number of persons murdered by Mao's, Stalin's, and Hussein's terrorist regimes is in the millions. Thousands of people may be killed by non-state terrorists.

Terrorism is one of the most concerning issues of our time. Recent terrorist assaults, which I shall discuss in detail in the next chapters, have strengthened the European Union's resolve to eradicate terrorism, its causes, and support networks. They also emphasized the importance of revisiting and improving our understanding of terrorism in order to strengthen security strategies. Public authorities have a shared obligation to secure citizens' safety while upholding European principles of liberty, tolerance, and solidarity. The European Union contributes to this by providing Member States with tools and assistance to assist them in addressing this common challenge. Terrorism's core causes and structures have definitely evolved in recent years. Radical organizations have been effective in recruiting an alarming number of young European people, both born and raised in Europe, who then go on to conduct violent acts both within and outside our borders. From democracy to the enforcement of human rights and civil liberties to pluralism, tolerance, and the development of social inclusion, this violence challenges the European Union's core ideals.

Jihadi terrorism is becoming an expanding threat in Europe. Radicals who follow a militant brand of Islam used to be a menace from the outside, organizing missions in other countries before flying to their Western targets. With the advent

of loose-knit indigenous terrorist organizations, jihadi terrorism has since morphed into an internal menace. Second and third generation immigrants have been increasingly radicalized against the society into which they were born and reared, turning to extremist Islam. This is a complicated problem that stems from an identity crisis in which second and third generation immigrants do not have a sense of belonging to their European host societies or their ethnic homelands. Youth who are often excluded and discriminated against find a sense of dignity and purpose in radical Islam. Individuals also find a much-needed sense of belonging in the larger Islamic organization and its defined value system. Radicalization is a challenge to Europe's social cohesion, and it necessitates a complex and accurate counter-terrorism strategy that builds trust and communication among communities. Terrorist acts by second and third generation immigrants have increased in recent years in Europe. Individuals radicalized not in their parents' countries of origin, but in their host-European societies, have carried out these terrorist assaults. These young, educated citizens have no strong links to their parents' home country, but they are equally rejected by European societies. Many of the persons were not raised as Muslims, but later chose to follow the faith for its identification and communal aspects. Although second and third generation immigrants appear to be more integrated than earlier generations, profound feelings of exclusion and resentment persist.

In many aspects, homegrown terrorist networks diverge from their forerunners, most notably in terms of group membership. Homegrown terrorist groups are increasingly made up of second and third generation immigrants. This is significant since, previous to adopting an extremist worldview, the sons and grandsons of Muslim immigrants had little to no involvement with radical Islam. Second and third generation immigrants are attracted into a radicalization process that might emerge out of nowhere, whereas their parents tend to embrace a conventional and moderate view of Islam. These young, well-educated residents appear to be well-integrated members of society, with a comprehensive understanding of Western society and the native dialect. The significant incorporation of second and third generation immigrants, on the other hand, may raise future expectations. While first-generation immigrants face substantial challenges, following decades have the

vocabulary knowledge and cultural awareness to be more positive about their prospects. Second and third generation immigrants desire to be active members of society, and it is precisely because of this that they are more susceptible to exclusion.

1.3 The debate between Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel

Gilles Kepel¹¹ and Olivier Roy¹² are the central figures in one of the most fascinating arguments about radicalization and terrorism. In France, there is a lot of discussion regarding what motivated some young Muslims to join armed jihadism. Gilles Kepel argues that a process of “Radicalization of Islam” has been ongoing for decades, while Olivier Roy feels that we should speak of an “Islamization of radicalism”. Both ideas provide interesting insights and contribute to providing full explanations of the occurrence, which would be less understandable if we relied just on a mono-causal view, given the wide range of perpetrator profiles.

In analyzing this phenomenon, I consider of extreme importance the theories on radicalization proposed by the French scholars. The intellectual debate which they have held is centered on the following question: is the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism in the West to be understood as “radicalization of Islam” or as “Islamization of radicalism”?

In 2015, Roy’s concept of the “islamization of radicalism” was opposed to Kepel’s concept of the “radicalization of Islam”. I intend to explore the positions of both these two intellectuals to find out which of the two experts on terrorism is right on the question at hand. Kepel argues that a radical form of neo-Salafism emerged through Saudi Arabian financial preachers, whose penetration should be seen in the context of the growth of Islamic extremism and jihadist terrorism in the 1990s and 2000s. The academic debate between Roy and Kepel emerged because of Roy’s examination of the lifestyle of “born again” French terrorists. The “born again”

¹¹ Gilles Kepel is a French political scientist, Arabist, and philosopher, specializing in the study of the contemporary Middle East and Muslim communities in the West.

¹² Olivier Roy is a French Islamist and political scientist.

become radicalized by their own choice, and their radicalization is political before it is religious. As a result, Roy thinks that it is religiosity, not religion, that creates the difference, which the radicals pay little attention to. In agreement with Kepel, Roy does not disregard the evident allusions to Islam in the victimistic and fanatical preaching of the massacre murderers, and partly blames Salafism of not enough condemning violence and of being prone to social secession. But, unlike Kepel, he believes that fundamentalism is not the cause of radicalization and that the shared matrix does not always imply a direct link. From a doctrinal standpoint, Roy also emphasizes the decontextualization of the term jihad, which originated as a collective obligation to defend a threatened territory and was subject to a series of conditions to prevent individuals from declaring themselves jihadists and causing divisions in the Muslim community. The extremist lecturers' reasoning has imbued the concept of "working on God's path" with maximalist overtones that are absent from the Holy Book, even if they do not compel Jihadists to commit acts of terrorism. Furthermore, the quietist Salafists condemn suicide because it anticipates God's will: Salafite norms aim to codify an individual's behavior in all aspects, including the use of violence, and are certainly not obsessed with the search for death, which Roy believes is the leitmotif of the attacks carried out in the West, where the nihilistic dimension is central. These points will be expanded upon in the following paragraphs, which will be exclusively devoted to the two French professors' extensive study.

Alessandro Orsini has brought his contribution to the debate, with "*La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation*" an article published in *Commentaire*, discussing a specific anthropological class of terrorists for whom personal death is the means to their spiritual necessity. After studying their biographies, Orsini¹³ concludes that they possess a "mental universe" presenting five fundamental characteristics¹⁴:

¹³ Orsini, Alessandro, *La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation*. "COMMENTAIRE", 2016, p.783

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 783

- radical catastrophism
- expectation of the end
- obsession with purity
- identification of evil
- obsession with purification

These phases explain how terrorism consists of a “narrative”¹⁵, a particular way of reporting the facts that resembles this: the world has fallen into an abyss of suffering and misfortune (radical catastrophism) and is heading towards an imminent catastrophe (expectation of the end), for which a category of men is responsible (identification of evil) and which must therefore be liberated (obsession of purification) by a handful of morally superior men (obsession of purity).

1.4 The “islamization of radicalism” thesis

The theory of the Islamization of radicalism of the scholar Roy stems from his own analysis of the facts, from an investigation that he has conducted on the personal profiles of jihadists and blacks who, especially in recent years, have been spreading terror in Europe. As Alessandro Orsini has written in an article entitled "*La radicalisation des terroristes de vocation*" Oliver Roy, after the London Underground massacre of 7 July 2005, writes that the hatred of Islamic terrorists against Western citizens stems from their psychological frustration. And this is precisely the center of Roy's studies on who elaborates his theory, which is instead contrasted to the theory of Kepel.

The scholar defines the radicalized youth as “sincere believers”¹⁶ who, once inside the terrorist organizations, find themselves sharing specific doctrines such as the conviction of going to paradise after certain actions. Roy believes there is no

¹⁵ Ibid. p.784

¹⁶ Campi Mario, *Islamizzazione e Radicalizzazione Saggio su Oliver Roy e Gilles Kepel*, Cavinato Editore International, Brescia, 2021, p. 90

point in distinguishing between good Islam, which provides a spiritual interpretation of jihad, and radical Islam, which is seen as the incubator of terrorism. Roy claims that “as we have seen, jihadists do not turn to violence after reflecting on the texts” and, consequently, he writes “they do not become radical because they have misread the texts or have been manipulated: they are radical because they want to be, because it is only radicalism that attracts them”¹⁷. The author focuses on the fact that the secularization of our societies leads to an approach to religion exclusively through texts. Oliver Roy's approach is based on answering the following questions¹⁸: What role does Islam play in radicalization? Are the radicalized young people Salafists? In the “Islamization of radicality”, is there also a “radicalization of Islam?”. As reported in the work of Mario Campli (2021) the scholar, using a method of concentric circles argues the following questions¹⁹:

- a. “Jihadism is often considered an extension of Salafism. Not all Salafists are Jihadists, but all Jihadists would be Salafists: consequently, Salafism would be the gateway to Jihadism. On the basis of this prospective, “religious” radicalization would constitute the first stage of political radicalization. The radicalized youth are sincere believers, their frames of reference are deeply Islamic but, in reality, things are much more complex”. Then he specifies:
- b. “It is certainly not our intention to exonerate Salafism from its two main responsibilities. The first is ‘secession’ from secular society and the refusal to share what are now considered to be common European values. The second responsibility is a moral one and is specific to Salafism. The Salafist preachers, even if they can prove that the terrorists do not come from their parish (a statistically true fact), cannot fail to comment on the strong proximity between a

¹⁷ Campli Mario, *Islamizzazione e Radicalizzazione Saggio su Oliver Roy e Gilles Kepel*, cit., p. 90

¹⁸ Campli Mario, *Islamizzazione e Radicalizzazione Saggio su Oliver Roy e Gilles Kepel*, cit., p. 98

¹⁹ Ibid.

- certain number of assumptions typical of their discourse and the concepts expressed by Isis”;
- c. “Do the young people who join Isis adhere to the same religious line as the Caliphate? In principle, no, since most of the militants we surveyed are characterized rather by a history of links to al-Qaeda”.
 - d. “However, the fact that Isis currently dominates the field of insurgency in the name of Islam gives its agenda considerable impact. But again, one should not fall into a textual approach at the expense of a contextual one focused on how actors live and relate to religious norms.”
 - e. “It would be vain to seek an essence of Muslim orthodoxy of which jihadism would represent the quintessence or perversion. Or, rather, it would be up to Muslims themselves and not to "Islamologists" or public opinion. Decisive, in this regard, is the practice of the faithful and not the secular exegesis of the texts. The question is not “what does the Koran really say?” but "what do Muslims say about what the Koran says?”.
 - f. It is therefore in their behavior in the West or in the countries where they live that the relationship of the radicalized with Islamic norms must be analyzed. The western radicalized have little religious knowledge and orthopraxis is not at the center of their concerns. A first point on which the distance with Salafism can be measured is, precisely, the orthopraxis: the young radicalized do not seem to attribute particular importance to the daily rules of the halal, to the five prayers, to the food that conforms to the religious dictates.

In the last two decades, Oliver Roy has come to the view that terrorist and jihadist violence has evolved into a modernity. The willful pursuit of death, according to Roy's famous book *"Generation ISIS, who are the young people who choose the caliphate and why are they battling the West,"* is the new compound. In reality, he

notes how from Kaled Kelkal²⁰ in 1995 until the Bataclan atrocity in 2015, all terrorists have ‘blown themselves up’ or been murdered by the police without trying to escape. As a result, for the author, the systematic decision of death is where the innovation lies. In reality, in the 1970s and 1980s, terrorists agreed to plan a safe escape path at the end of their attack, primarily because the Moslem tradition opposes the idea that an individual actively wants death, primarily because such an action would be a usurpation of the divine will. But then the author’s question emerges spontaneously: why has a certain type of actor been systematically choosing death for the past twenty years or so?²¹

The relationship with death in discussion can be linked to jihadism, a young people’s movement formed outside of their parents’ religious and cultural reference points. As we have seen in recent terrorist incidents, this movement’s generational hatred leads to cultural iconoclasm, or the destruction of bodies, statues, temples, and, in a way, the erasure of the past of the places under attack. According to the expert, this dimension has nothing to do with Middle Eastern geopolitics. In fact, Roy’s association with the Isis Caliphate concept renders any political settlement, any negotiation, impossible; those who seek death, therefore, have nothing to negotiate. The Caliphate is a vision, and it is exactly because of this strategic impossibility that those who identify with it do not align themselves with the interests of local Moslem communities, but with a death pact.

Salafism, which condemns suicide as a usurpation of the divine will and focuses, above all, on the codification of individual behavior, is central to Oliver Roy’s theory. The Caliphate does not seek death because he is fascinated with salvation and need life to prepare for his meeting with the Lord at the end of a life lived in accordance with the rules and rites. Finally, there is the military aspect of suicide terrorism to consider, which the author believes is ineffective. In fact, he claims that the terror effect radicalizes Western cultures rather than bringing them to their knees. To this aim, Roy contends that a crucial component of the current

²⁰ He was a French and Algerian terrorist affiliated with the GIA. He has been involved in the 1995 terrorist bombings in France.

²¹ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Milano, 2017, p. 10

trend toward radicalization is the systematic link with death, and that the nihilistic dimension is particularly essential in this regard²².

The scholar thus outlines so-called generational nihilism²³, arguing that the new radicals, Islamists, and Salafists, are more radical than the old revolutionaries, Islamists, and Salafists, in their hatred for existing societies, both Western and Muslim, and that this hatred is embodied in the pursuit of death through mass slaughter. The new radicals are killing themselves by destroying the world they despise, as evidenced by recent terrorist incidents in Europe. Thus, Roy believes that the jihadists who spread terror belong to the second generation or are European converts, as he believes that the background of this generation is nihilism, not religion. The pure uprising intrigues rather than the development of utopia; violence is depicted as a goal rather than a means. In this sense, the grounds for Isis' growth are inextricably linked to the Middle East's condition, and the Caliphate's demise is set to radicalize geo-strategic data by attracting numerous regional powers. As a result, Isis' skill has been to provide young volunteers with a narrative structure within which they might realize themselves.

In conclusion, Oliver Roy states that he prefers a transversal approach that attempts to understand contemporary Islamic violence by placing it in parallel with forms of violence and radicalism that present similar traits. His research leads him to affirm the following views²⁴:

- “Suicide terrorism or phenomena such as al-Qaeda and Isis, representing a novelty in the history of the Muslim world, cannot be explained solely by the rise of fundamentalism. That is why I wrote that terrorism does not come from the radicalization of Islam, but from the Islamization of radicality”.
- “This formula, which is far from exonerating Islam of all responsibility, aims to understand the reasons why disaffected young people have been able to find in Islam the paradigm of their absolute revolt.”

²² Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p. 13

²³ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p. 84

²⁴ Campi Mario, *Islamizzazione e Radicalizzazione Saggio su Oliver Roy e Gilles Kepel*, cit., p. 120

- “I don't want to deny that a fundamentalist Islam has been developing for the last forty years, as demonstrated by the fact that I have dedicated two books to the phenomenon: *Global Muslim*, aimed at highlighting the specificity of this fundamentalism, and *Holy Ignorance*, whose objective was to show how the development of any religious fundamentalism is part of a process of religious deculturation, which also involves Christianity”.
- “Undoubtedly, we are faced with a fundamentalist hardening of the confessions, due to the deculturation of the religious and the triumph of secularism (...) Certainly, religious fundamentalism poses dramatic problems for society in that it rejects the founding values of the centrality of the individual and his freedom in all spheres (...) There are believers who are more absolute than radical, who live in a sort of social secession but are not politically violent. Most Salafists are on this non-violent register.”
- “My thesis, misunderstood and often misquoted by others, is centered on the idea that violent radicalization is not the consequence of religious radicalization, even though it often takes up its guidelines and paradigms (this is what I call the Islamization of radicalization. (...)) What I would like to underline is how fundamentalism is not enough to produce violence”.

These are the reasons why Oliver Roy, rather than taking a vertical approach and going from the Koran to Isis, assuming the constant manifestation of an invariant, namely, Islamic violence, has chosen to take a transversal approach and try to understand contemporary Islamic violence by comparing it to other forms of violence and radicality that share similar characteristics. The reason Roy writes that “terrorism derives not from the radicalization of Islam, but from the Islamization of radicality”²⁵ is that, according to the author, too often, the fact that suicide terrorism or phenomena like Isis, which are considered novel in the history of the Moslem world, cannot be explained solely by the rise of fundamentalism, is overlooked.

In his analysis, Roy emphasizes the necessity of comprehending that terrorism is caused by the Islamization of radicalism, not the radicalization of Islam. He claims that it is often forgotten that suicide terrorism and groups like Al-Qaeda

²⁵ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p. 14

and Isis are relatively recent in Muslim history and cannot be explained solely by the advent of fundamentalism. As a result, his argument concentrates on the fact that, in his opinion, violent radicalization is not a result of religious radicalization; religious fundamentalism exists, but it does not always lead to political violence. With this formula, the scholar explains how he does not intend to absolve Islam of any blame, but rather to comprehend why disgruntled young people have been able to find in Islam the paradigm of their absolute revolt; Roy thus wishes to demonstrate how fundamentalism is insufficient to produce violence. Without even a question, Oliver Roy's approach has been met with a great deal of criticism, much of which I will focus on in the following section, particularly in relation to the figure of Gilles Kepel. Roy, according to Kepel, ignores the link between terrorist violence and Islam's radicalization in the form of Salafism. Roy has defended himself against this charge by elaborating on his theory, specifically that what he does not ignore this dimension, but rather emphasizes that it is insufficient to account for the occurrences studied because no causal link can be identified from the data available. His argument contends that violent radicalization is not a byproduct of religious radicalization, despite the fact that it adopts its principles and norms.

Roy's research also focuses on the radicalized, claiming that they nearly never come from downtrodden classes, and hence their decision to radicalize is not based on their objective situation. As a result, Roy's problem in studying the phenomenon of radicalized Moslems is analyzing their motivations, and in this regard, he recognizes the importance of radicals' words on social media, the words of the radical who sends video messages, uses WhatsApp, submits to interviews, and so on, and through these processes, we can, in a sense, know but not understand these individuals. As a result, when examining the profile of terrorists, the researcher contends that while there is no conventional physiognomy of a terrorist, repeating traits can be identified. The radicals nearly always go through the same process; they are a group of friends and brothers or are known in prison, and the prevalence of kinship relationships is remarkable; even when they are not there, they are made by marriage with a friend's sister. The generational factor is crucial in these processes; the young reject their parents' authority and their Islam; in fact, the bulk of the radicalized are fully involved in contemporary youth culture, both

in terms of the subject of communication technologies and other dimensions. Young, radicalized people, on the other hand, live normal lives. Today, even the beard is no longer seen as a specific symbol of commitment; fashion pervades all emotions, and the beard, which was once associated with religious radicalism, is now trendy among all young people. In this sense, Roy emphasizes that the profiles have not changed in the last two decades, and that Khaled Kelkal²⁶ and the Kouachi brothers²⁷ share some striking similarities:²⁸

- Second generation belonging
- Good initial integration
- Transition to minor criminality
- Radicalization in prison
- Attack
- Weapons in hand death in front of police forces

As a result, the usual profile of terrorists and jihadists has stayed basically unchanged over the last two decades. In his research of the terrorist profile, Roy also identifies two distinct groups²⁹: second-generation terrorists (60%) and converts (25%). The other 15% of the sample, according to the claim, is made up of members of the first generations (such as Mohamed Lahouaiej, the perpetrator of the Nice massacre on July 14, 2016) and, to a lesser extent, the third generations. To this perspective, it's worth noting that the targets haven't changed in the last two decades: transportation, public spaces, and sites associated with Judaism. As a result of these findings, it is possible to conclude that the typical profile of a radicalized person is that of a young second generation or convert, frequently involved in common criminal acts, almost always lacking religious education, but

²⁶ French and Algerian terrorist affiliated with the GIA. He was involved in the 1995 terror bombings in France.

²⁷ The two brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi are French-Algerian jihadists responsible for the 2015 attack in Paris on the headquarters of the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo.

²⁸ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p. 31

²⁹ Ibid.

with a recent and rapid conversion/conversion process behind him, which in most cases did not take place in a mosque, but rather within a friendship group or via the Internet. The shift from atheism to religion is openly discussed and rarely kept a secret. According to his studies, the 2015 attacks represented a significant shift in the profile of the attackers, owing to the difference in the terrorists' profiles, which is predicated on the lack of ties with ISIS and thus acts independently. As a result, there is no Salafist incubation and, at the very least, a jihadist transition. Following the recent assaults in France, another feature to note is the edged weapon, i.e., all attacks since 2016 have been carried out with knives.

However, Roy claims that his examination of the terrorists' goals and tactics contradicts Gilles Kepel's assertion that a new jihad strategy arose in France in 2005, linked to the rise of a third generation of jihadists. Following his research, Oliver Roy declares that the attacks in Europe are the result of the Islamization of radicalism, and that studying these individuals and understanding the reasoning behind their choices is critical in bringing them back to political reason. In his book "Generation Isis", Roy attempts to explain the lives of young people who chose the Caliphate and fight Europe as a consequence of analyzing the biographies of numerous assailants, from their family history to their political reasons. The islamization of radicality, rather than the radicalization of Islam, is the source of terrorism, according to Roy. A project that centers on a novel concept: the deliberate pursuit of death.

1.5 The "radicalization of Islam" thesis

Gilles Kepel has developed his theory by following the flow of the Islamization of the political order, the gradual Islamization of societies and the timing of jihadism. Unlike Roy, who focuses on radicalization processes, Gilles Kepel explores the centrality of the Syrian war and the jihads in the Levant, giving special attention to the political order dimension. In Campli's *Islamization and Radicalization Essay*

on Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel the author lists the key points³⁰ of Kepel's thinking which the latter deals within his publication entitled "Coming out of Chaos":

- "Started as a democratic uprising to protest against the arbitrary of the Syrian regime, the movement turned into an armed insurrection that set the Levant ablaze in a few months"
- "In late summer 2011, the Syrian uprising turned into an armed insurrection: but its Western supporters intentionally avoid seeing its Salafist and jihadist dimension, which is becoming increasingly strong"
- "This has resulted in the "Islamization of radicalism" taking precedence over the "radicalisation of Islam". In other words, jihadism was thought of as a contingent, superficial and passing phenomenon."
- "Over the past forty years, the Mediterranean and the Middle East have experienced enormous upheavals that have placed this religion at the center of earthquakes from which the new world order was born at the beginning of the twenty-first century."

Thus, Kepel believes that a radical version of neo-Salafism was created through financial preachers from Saudi Arabia and, this dissemination should be understood in parallel with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and jihadist terrorism between the 1990s and 2000s. He emphasizes the connection between the third generation of French Islam and the third wave of international jihadism. Kepel highlights on the radicalization of young Muslims who have interacted with the Salafists' intolerant speech, particularly online, but also in prisons and some mosques. Web 2.0 is critical as a platform for propagating fundamentalist writings and as a proper environment for transnational umma³¹ relations and contacts. Social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook have aided in the propagation and globalization of jihad, allowing the Caliphate's cause to gain more supporters,

³⁰ Campli Mario, *Islamizzazione e Radicalizzazione Saggio su Oliver Roy e Gilles Kepel*, cit., p. 233-234

³¹ Is an Arabic word meaning "community". It is distinguished from sha'b which means a nation with common ancestry or geography.

organize attacks underground, and coordinate tactics and movements between Europe and the Middle East.

In expressing his theory, through the reading of his book *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, the main features of his thought emerge. The author distinguishes between modern jihad, which is centered in the West, and previous forms of jihad, such as the 1979 form, which lasted eighteen years in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Egypt, and Algeria, and the form that began in Iraqi territories in 1998 and ended in 2005 at the hands of the US. According to Kepel, third-generation jihadism emerged in 2005 because of Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks, aiming to incite a religious conflict between Western cultures and Muslims by targeting the West, mainly European countries. The key difference between previous generations and the third generation is the method of recruitment, which has been modified to reflect technological advancements since 2005 by utilizing “social media” and “the creation of YouTube.”³² The development of the internet represents in fact one aspect that has led to the mobilization of young Muslims after 2005 and linked them to “the third wave of jihadism”. As a result, the shift from Salafism to violence in 2010 was aided by the phenomena of online jihadist recruitment, which was made possible by the digital revolution. From a first generation of immigration and a second generation of unsatisfied political unrest, Kepel calls this the third generation of Islam in France.

The goal of the jihadist system, according to Kepel, is Europe. He argues that the philosophy of Al Suri, who desired a holy war in the West with the goal of eliminating it and stabilizing an Islamic state, is promoting the third wave of jihadism, which began in 2005. He identifies recruiting, residences as detention centers, social networks, and banlieues, and it is precisely in these degraded suburbs that a solidarity arises between the Muslim populations. Salafism, he claims, is the violent interpretation utilized by jihadism to carry out their attacks, and his thesis “radicalization of Islam” arose from this. Kepel believes that the homicidal jihadism that swept France in 2015 is a symptom of a hard Islamist radicalization that has developed over decades because of failed integration.

³² Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2017

In conclusion, it is notable how Kepel's position is in strong disagreement with what Roy argues. The two thinkers, former friends, have come into conflict with each other over their ideas, so much so that Kepel muttered “*That ignoramus*”³³ addressed to Roy in an interview, offering some jokes about his former friend's lack of Arabic. In fact, the scholar insists on the fact that for him religion is a key component and that the center of the problem is therefore the difference represented by a form of radicalization of Islam while Roy believes that we are testimonies of a new generation of radical rebels who are going against society. When it comes to the acts of these young Muslims, I believe Roy is correct in pointing out that there are other essential aspects to consider aside than religion, but, like Kepel, I believe that religion must be treated seriously to comprehend what has occurred in France, Europe, and other areas of the globe. To begin with, religion does not exist outside of people's daily lives; religious doctrines, beliefs, and practices are the result of people's experiences, and as these religious doctrines, beliefs, and practices impose themselves on people generation after generation, they also become part of new discussions and internal conflict; we can say that people shape religion, and religion shapes people, and the process continues.

1.6 The role of ideology

The main argument in the debate between Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel is whether ideology is a cause of radicalization. Roy favors a transversal approach to understanding modern Islamic violence by comparing it to other types of violence and radicalism with similar characteristics, such as a generational uprising. The expert feels that it is too often overlooked that suicide terrorism, as well as groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS, are new in Muslim history and hence cannot be explained through the emergence of fundamentalism. As a result, Roy concludes that terrorism is caused by the Islamization of radicalism rather than the radicalization of Islam. This argument does not seek to absolve Islam of any blame; rather, it seeks

³³ Nossiter, Adam, “*That ignoramus*”: 2 French Scholars of Radical Islam Turn Bitter Rivals. The New York Times, 2016

to comprehend why disenchanted young people have found in Islam the model of their total revolt. The scholar is dedicated to demonstrating how religious fanaticism alone is insufficient to create violence, believing that individuals are motivated by radicalism rather than religious fundamentalism or political objectives. This method has gotten a lot of criticism, especially from Gilles Kepel.

In this regard, Kepel accuses Roy of neglecting the link between terrorist violence and Islam's radicalization in the form of Salafism. Kepel³⁴ is of the opinion that Salafism peaked in France between 2005 and 2015, which is the period when Muslims were looking for coreligious sub-societies. The scholar, believes that Abu Musab Al Suri's ideology is a role model for third generation jihadists and, it is this ideology that inspired the attacks from 2012 to follow. He believes³⁵ that the goal of this ideology is to provoke "wars between enclaves that would lead to the destruction of the West" and this through terrorist attacks, as we have seen in recent years, in European countries in order to fuel religious discrimination against those of the Islamic faith. Thus, Kepel intends the role of Salafist ideology as a connection between generations of jihadists by focusing specifically in Al Suri ideology and the importance of the task that mentors have in bringing potential jihadists to radicalization.

At this point, it is significant the thought expressed by Sophia Moskalkenko and Clark McCauley in their book "Radicalization to terrorism". In truth, the two write that not all radical ideas are associated with violence, and, a radical opinion challenges the basic assumptions of a culture, so a radical is someone who wants deep change in society, using the women who sought the vote as an example. As a result, radical ideas are popular, but political violence is uncommon. Some radical beliefs are, of course, cited to justify violence. Thus, the connection between radical ideas and terrorism is tenuous in three ways³⁶: Many radical ideas are unrelated to violence, few who justify violence perpetrate violence, and many terrorists do not engage in violence because of radical ideas. The authors answer the following

³⁴ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit.

³⁵ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit., p.170

³⁶ Moskalkenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, cit., p.74

question: “*Can we understand radicalization if we focus on ideology?*”³⁷ Giving themselves the answer that doing so cannot be done.

The two experts argue that radical actions often have nothing to do with radical ideas. The reasons that drive people to join a radical group can be many, from personal revenge to the desire to escape personal problems or to be part of a group that offers support and friendship, and these are the same reasons why individuals then decide to undertake attacks. Hence, none of these reasons requires a knowledge of radical ideology, attacking those who have offended us does not necessitate anything as substantial as ideology, justice or revenge are universal human motivations that are unaffected by religious beliefs. Ultimately arguing that ideology is a justification for violence and not a reason for violence as if it were not so anyone with radical ideas would engage in radical action.

³⁷ Moskalenko Sophia, McCauley Clark, *Radicalization to Terrorism*, cit., p.212

CHAPTER II

2. Case studies supporting Oliver Roy's theory

The second chapter of my thesis, to prove the validity of Oliver Roy's thesis, will analyze several specific cases of people involved in terrorism in the last 20 years. From Khaled Kelkal, the Algerian terrorist who carried out seven attacks in France in 1995, to the Bataclan killers of 2015, almost all French terrorists have either blown themselves up or been killed by the police. Thus, as argued by the French scholar, there is no standard terrorist profile, but there are common elements, and the cases considered will demonstrate this. Finally, the last paragraph of the chapter focuses on the DRIA model elaborated by Alessandro Orsini, providing several examples of individuals radicalized through this model.

2.1 The case of Khaled Kelkal

Since the 1980s, the brutality connected with terrorist actions conducted by the radicalized in Western countries has been frequent, raising questions among many experts about what drives certain young people from working-class districts to violence. Dissatisfaction, robbery, surveillance during a crime, and the conclusion of the radicalization process will all be part of Khaled Kelkal's criminal career.

Khaled Kelkal was born in the Algerian city of Mostaganem in 1971. When he was young, his family relocated to Vaulx-en-Velin, a suburb of Lyon. He had three brothers and four sisters, and he became a petty criminal while attending Lyon's La Martinière lycée. He deviated from his studies and went into criminality, despite being an excellent student in the first place. He learnt Arabic and got politicized while serving a four-year sentence in prison. Following his release, he contacted an Algerian intelligence recruiting agent, who assigned him various tasks to bring weapons, money, and papers to Algeria in 1993. He returned radical and was

involved in six attacks, including the attack of the Saint-Michel station. He was caught near Lyon in 1995 and shot while attempting to resist.

Nouredine, his older brother, was accused of armed robbery and condemned to 9 years in prison. Afterwards Kelkal was imprisoned to four months of probation in 1990 for dealing stolen vehicles. Khaled Kelkal ended up in prison at the age of 19, expressing the arrogant carelessness that characterizes many young men in his situation, the unwanted Arabs of the French banlieues. He was arrested for stealing cars and using them as battering rams to break into private homes and he was given a four-year prison sentence. During his days in prison, his conversion to radical Islam began and, after his release, he started to attend the Bilal Mosque in Vaulx-en-Velin regularly.

Kelkal turned to the Islam he had been reared with but experiencing through it a sense of solidarity and inclusiveness similar to that which he had found in criminality. He was presumably recruited in 1993 by one of the radical branches of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, the terrorist group responsible for carrying out a series of bombings in France in 1995, and whose leader was Djamel bin Mohamed Zitouni, whose aim was to punish France. In that year Kelkal was in Mostaganem, Algeria to visit his family.

2.1.1 Radicalization in prison

During the wave of attacks in 1995, the figure of Khaled Kelkal stands out. He arrived to terrorism by first passing through petty crime. France has been terrified of the terrible repercussions of improvised explosives since the early summer of 1995. A gas cylinder containing nuts detonated at the Saint-Michel RER station in Paris on July 25, killing eight people and wounding 119 more. A similar device was placed in a rubbish can near the Arc de Triomphe on August 17, injuring 17 persons, three of whom were critically hurt. Therefore, the driver of the high-speed train Lyon-Rennes TGV observed a blue gas canister along the track at the foot of a catenary on August 26, 1995. The TGV bomb was shipped to Paris after it was defused. The central forensic identification department discovered many fingerprints on the tape used to secure the car. Khaled Kelkal will be identified, and,

at the time, the young terrorist was wanted since July as a suspect for having forced a roadblock and shot and wounded three policemen in Bron³⁸.

According to Kelkal, the legal system dislikes Arabs, making justice unjust. His extremism will be fueled by his anti-justice feelings. He represents the first home grown Islamic terrorist for France, who was born out of its prison system. Kelkal in fact, at first appears as one of the many petty criminals of the Lyon suburbs, well integrated and even a very good student. In his adolescent period the young man began to feel different and to commit his first crimes, such as theft, until he was arrested in 1990 and, in the following year, sentenced to four years in the Saint-Paul prison in Lyon. During his days in prison, Kelkal found himself sharing his cell with a Muslim who was probably the cause of his recruitment. In fact, in jail it seems that Kelkal was called back to religion by an Algerian Islamist. Indeed, as soon as he was released, he had the desire to go to Algeria to get closer to what he thought was the true Islam. In 1994, after a meeting with a GIA³⁹ member he was sent to Algeria with the task of transferring weapons and finances. Kelkal soon became the most wanted man in France and was wanted nationwide as a suspect in several attacks, including the explosion of a car bomb in front of a Jewish school.

To the question posed by Dietmar Loch⁴⁰, “What does Islam mean to you?” Kelkal’s answer is the following: “Honestly? That's an important thing in life. Even there, I am gamberger. I say, “I have to be in religion. I have to pray.” Every three or four days we rent a tape with great scholars of Islam, with Westerners, where they show the words of the Quran. One of the greatest astronomy professors in Japan certified that the Quran is the voice of God. NASA’s greatest scientist has also certified. What is said cannot be human; it can only be divine. After that, we cannot deny anymore. When the greatest scholars certify, we can no longer deny. This is very important for me. When I was in college, I was already praying, I was feeling really good about myself, I had no vices. Good. On God's level, on people’s level, good. We had even come first in my class saying prayer and everything. The

³⁸ Bron is a French commune in the Lyon metropolis of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. The commune is located east of Lyon and is part of its urban area.

³⁹ Armed Islamic Group of Algeria

⁴⁰ Professor of political sociology, sociology of migration, urban sociology, sociology of conflict

day I stopped praying is the day all the problems happened to me. I stopped doing Ramadan, prayer, where did I end up? In a hole, in prison. But even in prison I did not give up. First, I could neither write nor read Arabic. When I arrived in prison, I said to myself, "I must not waste my time," there was a Muslim brother with us, "I must learn Arabic." I learned Arabic. Within a week I could read. Yes, it was going fast. It's because I love. I learn super fast. From then on, I got religion. I go to the mosque every Friday. When I see the tapes, when the scholars speak, you can't deny it anymore. There is a Creator. There is no danger. Everything is in its place. Everything has meaning. I cannot deny it."⁴¹

Many young individuals with a criminal record began their radicalization process in prison, looking for a way out of their misery in jihadism. Kelkal claims that he was taught everything by a Muslim: "I even learned my language. I learned Arabic there, I learned well my religion, Islam, I learned a great open-mindedness knowing Islam. Everything has gone away. And I see life. Not simpler, but more coherent."⁴² Kelkal therefore, like so many other bombers after him, sharing a cell with an incarcerated terrorist began his radicalization process by following the teachings of his cell neighbors many other terrorists in prison.

2.1.2 Final considerations

Based on Oliver Roy's theory that fundamentalism is not the main cause of radicalization because he believes that it is not sufficient to produce violence, we can see how, in the analyzed case of Kelkal, this theory is put into practice. Second-generation radicalized people grew up in residential neighborhoods just like Kelkal and, at a later stage, started committing petty crimes. This demonstrates, as Roy argues, that revolutionaries never come from oppressed classes. The terrorist under analysis after having been admitted to an excellent high school in the neighborhood, began to feel no longer accepted, thus beginning his rebellion that led him to prison.

⁴¹ Jovelin, Emmanuel, "Un radicalisé nommé Khaled Kelkal: parcours, rupture, bifurcation". *Vie Sociale*, 2017, p.143-156

⁴² Ibid.

It was through the small crime that he entered the main door of terrorism, beginning his radicalization process in jail. At the time in fact, Islamists arrived massively in the French prisons and, began to convert the criminals with whom they were detained to jihadism, however, Kelkal represents exactly what happened. The terrorist felt part of a society that he felt had rejected him and, his goal was to return to his country to live his true life.

In the present case, it emerges also the association of jihadism and terrorism with the deliberate search for death, a topic addressed by Oliver Roy in the elaboration of his thesis. As the author writes in his book *“Generation ISIS”* according to the testimony of David Vallat, a convert linked to Kelkal to the point of providing him with a weapon: “The rule is not to be taken alive. Kelkal, when he sees the gendarmes, knows that he will die. He wants to die!⁴³”. An attitude that, as we will see with the next cases under analysis, will be repeated by many other terrorists of the time.

Ultimately the examination of this case allows us to have a greater comprehension of the observable factors that can lead to radicalization. As a result of Oliver Roy's thesis, it is clear that radicals are attempting to realize their ideal of pathological bravery rather than to Islamize civilizations. In this scenario, they are referring to an Islamic equipment that provides solutions to their questions. Given Kelkal's approach, Islam would merely be a chance presented in an unstable scenario, rather than the foundation that would lead to radicalization.

2.2 The case of Said Kouachi and Cherif Kouachi

Chérif and Said Kouachi are the two French terrorists responsible for the terrorist attack in Paris against the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015, which caused the death of twelve people. Said Kouachi and Chérif Kouachi, being brothers, reflect one of Oliver Roy's considerations that the protagonists of the Brussels attacks, like those in Paris, share certain common characteristics, such as

⁴³ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p.10

the being linked by bloodlines. Born in France, the French-Algerian brothers were orphaned and were given into a foster home experiencing a tormented life.

By looking at the two men's lives it is possible to find several characteristics outlined by Roy. I will focus in particular on the detention period faced by Chérif. Detention periods bring the prisoners into contact with radicalized peers who are far from any institutionalized religion. Prison, therefore, intensifies many of the factors that encourage contemporary radicalization:

- The generational dimension
- The rebellion against the system Period of petty crime
- The diffusion of a simplified Salafism
- The formation of a compact group
- The research of dignity tied to the respect for the norm
- The reinterpretation of the crime as legitimate political protest

At the time of the terrorist attack which they had organized, the authorities were not unaware of the two young men. In 2008, Chérif was condemned to three years' detention for being involved in an international recruitment network of jihadists to be sent to Iraq, named Buttes-Chaumontot in reference to the Parisian Park in the 19th arrondissement where they used to meet. It has been named the 19th arrondissement's Iraqi network. An organization that formed militias in Iraq by recruiting relatively young second-generation Maghrebi immigrants from the suburbs of Paris. Young males in their twenties who were radicalized in a controlled mosque by a preacher a few years older than them. All having one goal in mind: to fight alongside the mujaheddin between Fallujah and Baghdad, as part of the Al-Qaeda leadership's Abou Moussab Al-Zarkaoui. It all started when they met Farid Benyettou a boy from the suburbs. Farid Benyettou, a young prophet, persuaded them to convert to Islam by inviting them to a study center established up in his home, he seemed to have a lot of charisma and had a lot of power on people who chose to follow him, including Chérif. In 2004, Benyettou began to openly criticize the United States' military participation in Iraq, asking young French people of Arab descent to come to the Iraqi border and fight US soldiers.

According to a 2008 Le Monde article⁴⁴, French newspapers of the time reported the story of their change: “Quickly, their families all make the same observation. Their boys stop smoking, drinking, petty trafficking. But in their rooms, without them knowing anything about it, they surf radical Islamist sites, watch jihad videos”.

Chérif, along with many others, has been planning to make the leap from the battlefield to martyrdom. The group considers everything, produces forged documents, trains them, and instructs them on how to use the Kalashnikov until they arrive in Syria's Damascus, where they will be received and guided to the front. All of this occurred in 2005, when Al Qaeda was still the most powerful radical Islamist organization in the region. Many of the lads from the 19th arrondissement would never return home; others, like Chérif, would be unable to leave because they were stopped by the French criminal police before to their journey. For Chérif the Fresnes prison period seems to correspond to his indoctrination. While in prison in fact he knew Djamel Beghal, an Algerian terrorist deprived of French citizenship, convicted several times for acts related to terrorism and leader of a jihadi group in 1997, taking part to the Buttes-Chaumont group in 2004 and in which he met Peter Chérif⁴⁵, who went to Yemen to join al-Qaeda and who would later be his contact with the organization.

Djamel Beghal is a pivotal figure since he mentored Chérif while in prison. He would play a key role in the brothers' and their friends' radicalization and growth. Beghal was convicted of plotting to assault the US Embassy in Paris and was once known as al Qaeda's top European recruiter. During Chérif's captivity from 2005 to 2008, the two grew closer, and Beghal, who was far more extremist and jihadist-oriented, is thought to have had a considerable effect. Amedy Coulibaly, the third Paris bomber, is another disgruntled and enraged young Muslim in prison, suspected of killing a French police officer and four others in a kosher grocery store last week. Coulibaly and Chérif met in jail, where Coulibaly was serving a term for armed robbery. Beghal, a radical Islamist, became a conduit between the two.

⁴⁴ Palladino, Andrea, “*Charlie Hebdo, storia di Cherif Kouachi: dai furti alla condanna per terrorismo*”. Il Fatto Quotidiano.it, 2015

⁴⁵ French Islamic militant who was a member of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. He is also believed to have assisted in the planning of the Charlie Hebdo attack.

Beghal was freed from prison in mid-2009, and Kouachi and Coulibaly have been visiting him in Murat, Cantal, bringing him food and money since then.

Chérif Kouachi when released, the young man was found by people close to him to have changed. However, this transformation did not stop, and in 2010 his name appeared again in relation with the escape plan of Smain Ait Ali Belkacem, a member of the GIA, who had been condemned to life imprisonment for the attack on the Paris metro in 1995. During this period the counter-terrorism services noticed his brother Said appearing by his side, but with very few details.

2.2.1 *Charlie Hebdo Attacks*

Charlie Hebdo is a French weekly satirical newspaper that had earned a reputation for satirizing everyone. According to a statistical analysis undertaken by the newspaper Le Monde, the magazine was significantly more concerned with French politics than religion; in the decade leading up to the attack, it had only devoted 1.3 percent⁴⁶ of its covers to the subject of Islam. The magazine's problems began in 2006, when Charlie Hebdo began reproducing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. Islam restricts the use of icons or images to represent living beings, hence these renderings were prohibited. The magazine was then accused of inciting hatred against Muslims and, in 2011, its headquarters were destroyed in an incendiary attack.

On January 7th, 2015 the terrorist attack of the offices of Charlie Hebdo took place killing twelve people. At 11:30 a.m. the brothers Kouachi, armed with weapons, entered the magazine's offices and brutally murdered the custodian Frédéric Boisseau, later forcing cartoonist Corinne Rey to enter the security code that allowed access to the second floor, where an editorial meeting was taking place. The attackers burst into the newsroom, and police officer Franck Brinsolaro, who had been assigned to protect Charlie Hebdo director Stéphane Charbonnier, was shot before he had a chance to draw his weapon. The attackers then asked for the name of Charbonnier and four other cartoonists before killing them too. A cartoon

⁴⁶ Petrikowski, Nikki Peter, "Charlie Hebdo shooting". Encyclopedia Britannica, 1 Jan. 2022

of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State, has been posted on the satirical weekly's Twitter profile just a few hours before the attack. Following the shooting, the terrorists escaped, killing another police officer in the street while shouting slogans glorifying Allah and the punishment of Charlie Hebdo; "We have avenged the Prophet⁴⁷", these were the words shouted by the brothers in carrying out their inhumane action. At that moment a police car appeared, but the two attackers opened fire on the cops and were able to flee in their own vehicle. The police have been diverted off track, but they found an identity card in the abandoned vehicle and thanks to this they had been able to identify the attackers.

In studying this case, it is possible to notice the repetition of the aggregation structure discussed by Roy, i.e., a group of brothers in this case, to highlight the frequency with which he discusses sibling relationships in his works. In this regard, therefore, the overlapping of siblings is too systematic to be causal, especially since it is not seen in any other context of radicalization. It shows the importance of the generational dimension in the radicalization processes under consideration. Roy claims in fact that those who share the same youth culture do not listen to their fathers. With the second generation, the separation between religion and culture is the widest. Parents have not passed on their religion to their children, in part due to language barriers: the second generation speaks French, whereas their parents speak Maghreb languages, and the first generation's religion is very cultural, they talk for example about Moroccan Islam, and the fathers have a hard time passing it on to their children who are instead rooted in the French school system and do not speak Arabic, or speak it poorly. The generational aspect is crucial because it emphasizes how young terrorists reject their parents' authority and Islam, or how, as in the case of the Kouachi brothers, the radicalized are frequently orphans. They shaved on a regular basis, avoiding the prominent beards worn by many Islamists and they dressed casually in jeans and basketball sneakers, giving no indication of their intentions or jihadist beliefs.

⁴⁷ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis, chi sono i giovani che scelgono il califfato e perché combattono l'Occidente*, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, Milano, 2017, p.55

2.3 The case of Salah and Brahim Abdeslam

The Abdeslam brothers were born in Brussels where they lived in Molenbeek⁴⁸ to two Moroccan immigrants with French citizenship. The people close to the two do not describe them as violent boys, but as quiet. Brahim smoked cannabis and committed some petty crimes, but he is not described as a violent person, his ex-wife, married with a civil and not religious rite, describes Brahim as a quiet and lazy person. The young terrorist was the owner of Le Béguines, a bar in Molenbeek, which has been closed 9 days⁴⁹ before the attacks after that cannabis was found inside. The protagonist of the young man was a little trouble with the justice system that was repeated periodically, Brahim was caught in the act during a robbery at a tobacco shop, and his arrest was even reported on Belgian television. Salah Abdeslam was the manager at his brother's bar. He had a very active lifestyle, full of nightclub parties and other forms of entertainment.

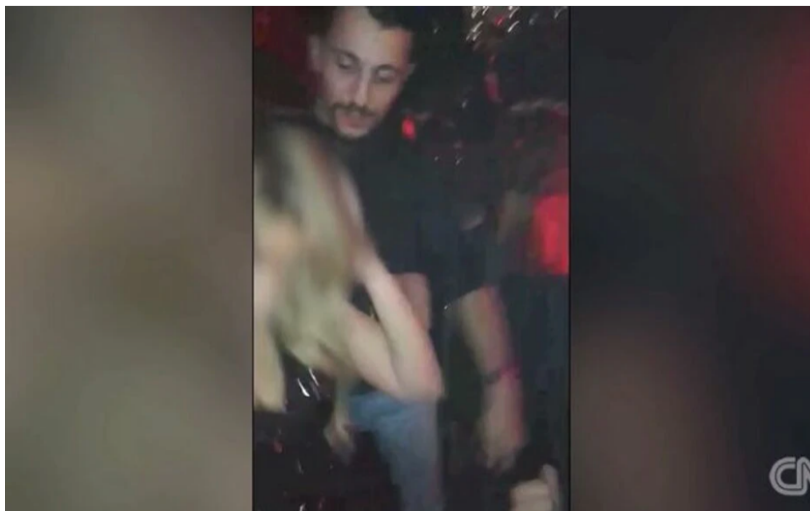
Salah began his radicalization process in 2010, after going to prison for fraud and drug trafficking. It is during this time that the boy approaches and associates with Abdelhamid Abaaoud⁵⁰. In 2013, he joined the Islamic State's militia, and during that time, he and his brother quit drinking and smoking and began to devote themselves to physical training.

Before becoming radicalized, the Abdeslam brothers did not live a halal lifestyle, however, they spent their time in nightclubs and going out with girls rather than praying. Most radicals appear to be westernized, as can the music they listen to demonstrate.

⁴⁸ Molenbeek, a neighborhood located west of the center of Brussels, characterized by a large concentration of foreigners from North Africa and more generally from Arab countries.

⁴⁹ 23 November 2015, *Chi è Salah Abdeslam. Identikit del "perfetto" foreign fighter*. Left Redazione.

⁵⁰ Abdelhamid Abaaoud was a Belgian terrorist of Moroccan origin. He has been a militant jihadist associated with the attacks organized by the Verviers cell of January 2015 (at the headquarters of Charlie Hebdo) and suspected of being one of the tactical and operational organizers of the attacks in Paris on November 13 of the same year. He has been suspected of having indoctrinated the Abdeslam brothers.



Credits: Attentats de Paris: CNN diffuse une vidéo des frères Abdeslam en discothèque.
CNN screenshot of LeParisien <https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/attentats-de-paris-cnn-diffuse-une-video-des-freres-abdeslam-en-discotheque-29-03-2016-5669793.php>

In this photo it is possible to see the brothers in a club having fun a few months after the attacks of November 13, 2015, attacks in which Brahim will blow himself up causing the death of 130 people.

In this regard, Oliver Roy addresses the issue of youth culture, criminality, and revolt in his book “*Generation Isis*”. The author argues that most of the radicalized are deeply immersed in the contemporary youth culture and this does not concern only the development of new communication technologies. In fact, it is well known that the new radicalized, just like the Abdeslam brothers in the picture above, go to the disco, pick up girls, drink, and smoke. More than 50⁵¹ per cent of the profiles analyzed by the author regarding the French case, have a past of petty crime. Another relevant aspect that we can find in the brothers in question, concerns their way of dressing, that is the way of young people of our time: brands, caps, sweatshirts, in essence prevails street wear obviously not declined in Islamic

⁵¹ Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p. 38

version⁵². Also of importance are the musical tastes of the radicalized that he defines as those of their time, they love rap and go to the disco.

2.3.1 *Explosion at the Stade de France*

The first explosion of the 2015 Paris attacks occurred outside the Stade de France, the massive 81,000-seat stadium located on the northern suburbs of the city, in the Saint-Denis neighborhood, during an international friendly soccer match between France and Germany, here a night of terror began. Around 9:20 p.m., the first of several huge bangs reverberated throughout the stadium. The Iraqi suicide bomber, who was trying to sneak in, blew himself up outside Gate D because the terrorist with the suicide belt has been prevented from entering the stadium because during security checks have been detected explosives that he was wearing, murdering one other person, according to the security guard. Later, a doctored Syrian passport bearing the fictitious name of Ahmad al Mohammad was discovered among the remains of his right foot. The game ended about 10:30 p.m., while information of the attacks had already spread throughout the city, after 90 minutes, with France winning 2-0. Almost no one inside the stadium was aware of what was going on; among those who were aware were the two coaches, who chose not to inform their players.

Bilal Hadfi, a young Belgian member of the stadium assault squad, was still on the phone with Abaaoud, the plan ringleader, who was impatiently navigating his Seat rental vehicle through the traffic on Rue Bichat to get to the café district at the time of the first bomb. Brahim Abdeslam and Chakib Akrouh, two of his childhood buddies, were also in the car. A few minutes later, the black sedan came to a halt in front of two restaurants in the 12th arrondissement, where the attackers exited and opened fire indiscriminately at the Carillon and Petit Cambodge eateries, killing 15 people and badly injuring ten more. A minute later, a second explosion occurred near Gate H of the stadium. Five more people died in France's dark night

⁵² Roy Oliver, *Generazione Isis*, cit., p.39

at the Bonne Biere, the second stage of the Black Seat. Shortly later, in the Bonne Biere, the third stage of the terror, 19 more innocent people died.

2.3.2 *Comptoir Voltaire Cafe attack*

On 13 November 2015 at 9.40pm, the terrorist Brahim detonated his suicide belt inside the Voltaire restaurant. There, on the terrace of this neighborhood bar, he blew himself up without killing anyone. Overshadowed by the debauchery elsewhere, the attack nevertheless left some 20 people injured, four of them seriously.

The reported photo shows the moments before the death of the bomber.



Credits: GRAPHIC CONTENT: Moment Paris attacker detonates suicide bomb caught on CCTV.

Picture of Daily Star <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/paris-attacks-brahim-abdeslam-blows-17074021>

The suicide bomber's attack inside the café was captured by the café's surveillance cameras, which show Brahim entering the café with a leisurely gait. Once in the

middle of the café, amidst the tables full of people, he stops and triggers the explosive belt. No deaths were recorded in that attack, other than the suicide bomber.

2.3.3 *The Bataclan massacre*

The most fatal attack during the night of November 13, 2015, occurred at a concert venue on Boulevard Voltaire in the Bataclan theater where the California rock band Eagles of Death Metal was playing. The individuals responsible for the attack were three armed men dressed in black with no more than 25 years old. Eighty-nine people died that night as the men were shooting at the crowd with assault rifles and, at least ninety-nine others were taken to the hospital in critical condition. That evening, testimony heard among the gunfire the repeating of the phrase “Allahu Akbar”⁵³ (God is the greatest).

In this regard Roy stated that the second half of the 1990s had become a turning point for modern terrorism in the West, as terrorist organizations from abroad would attract young French second-generation immigrants convinced of acting for an Islamic cause. As a result, the link between Arab lands and jihadists was dissolved a while ago, since today there isn't any longer any link between organizations and individuals; instead, individuals volunteer for them. Therefore, Islamist radicalization occurs in cultural outcasts, in the Middle Eastern homelands of their relatives and in the West but with secular and non-religious lifestyles, not concerned about the Middle East, which is why Roy excludes both political and religious motivations from violent radicalization. It is possible to find what has been stated in the analysis of the individuals involved in plots or attacks against the West, indeed they are Islamic converts or born again, distant from their families and origins, therefore disaffected from society. Based on this, the 2015 massacre that occurred in the Jewish-owned Bataclan concert hall, did not occur by Palestinians

⁵³ Boffey Daniel, Zeffman Heffman, *How the terrorist attacks in Paris unfolded*. The Guardian, 15 November 2015,

but rather by outsiders watching visual media of the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

2.4 The Jack Roche Case

The last case analyzed is the one of the first Australian terrorist condemned, Jack Roche, faced by Anne Aly and Jason-Leigh Striegher in their article “*Examine the role of religion in the radicalization of violent Islamic extremism*” thanks to the four-step radicalization model proposed by Silber⁵⁴ and Bhatt⁵⁵. The four-step radicalization model consists in analyzing a radicalization process by following the stages of: pre-radicalization, identification/self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization. This case brings out how religion plays a minor role in radicalization, a concept akin to the thought of Oliver Roy.

Jack Roche was born on 31 October 1953 into a military family in the United Kingdom, which is why he enlisted at the age of 18, but this was short-lived as he was discharged after 18 months due to a personal indiscretion. Following this Roy began travelling around Europe. The young man married and moved to Sydney where he began his downward spiral and began to suffer from alcoholism and his marriage ended. In 1992, Roche converted to Islam. In 1997, Roche joined JI⁵⁶ in Australia and left for Afghanistan in 2000 to meet with senior al-Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, and began military training, including an explosives course. Roche was assigned to conduct surveillance exercises on Israeli interests in Australia and, upon his return, informed Australian authorities of a planned attack. Shortly afterwards, Roche was arrested on suspicion of attempting to bomb the

⁵⁴ He is a professional global political risk, intelligence and security analyst and the former director of intelligence analysis at the New York City Police Department (NYPD). He is a regular commentator on political risk and terrorism related issues for both print and broadcast news outlets.

⁵⁵ Author. presented on the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) perspective of the threat of Islamist terrorism to New York City.

⁵⁶ Jemaah Islamiyah was first listed as a terrorist organization by the Australian Government on 27 October 2002. Is a Sunni Islamist religiously motivated violent extremist (RMVE) group, which is inspired by the anti-Western jihadist ideology of al-Qaeda and supports the use of terrorism to advance its political objectives.

Israeli embassy in Canberra in 2000 and, in 2004, was sentenced to nine years from the date of his arrest and was released on 7 May 2007. The present case will be analyzed following the four steps of the model of Silber and Bhatt undertaken by Anne Aly and Jason-Leigh Striegheer in their article.

Pre-Radicalization

Silber and Bhatt in their article describe the pre-radicalization phase in the period before Roche's conversion to Islam, i.e., the period after his divorce. In this phase, the individual is not exposed to Salafi-jihadi ideologies and therefore there is no obvious change in his religious views. Roche states that until the moment of socialization with the Muslim community he felt a void in his life, a void amplified by his alcohol problems. In this situation, embracing a new faith and ideology led him down the road to radicalization as a vulnerable person. Roche says that those close to him were not interested in his conversion to Islam but were rather concerned about his well-being. On 4 March 1992, Roche embraced Islam. Silber and Bhatt's model, which defines the pre-radicalization phase on the basis of environmental characteristics, effectively marks conversion as the point of origin of the radicalization process.

Identification/Self-Identification

At this stage Roche realizes that although he found a sense of security within Islam he had failed to find answers to his personal problems and, due to his second divorce, he searched for a new direction in his life, a direction that would take him on a radical path towards Afghanistan. Scholars Silber and Bhatt describe this phase as one in which Roche began to explore Salafist Islam, gradually moving away from his previous identity. This phase, therefore, brings out the personal crisis of the individual as the trigger of the religious search. Lastly, it is relevant to note Roche's friendship with JI member Abdur Rahim Ayub. Rahim's support in a difficult time for Roche pushed him to move closer to him. Thus, Roche's new contacts were extremely important to him and led him to internalize their religious and ideological views as part of the socialization of a group.

Indoctrination

The phase under analysis is described by Silber and Bhatt as “the stage in which an individual progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology and concludes, without question, that the conditions and circumstances exist where action [militant jihad] is required to support and further the Salafist cause⁵⁷.”

Thus, this stage refers to the moment in which Roche travelled to Indonesia where he met Osama bin Laden and when it has been decided that he would have to travel to Afghanistan in order to undertake the training. While in Afghanistan he has been interrogated on Israeli interests in Australia.

Jihadization

Roche, once returned to Australia claims to have doubts about the validity of his job, he claims to have felt that he was unable to withdraw his commitment while at the same time he felt supervised by JI members in Australia. In this situation, out of fear, Roche continued to carry out his assignment, but tried to attract the attention of the government to his plans without receiving a positive outcome. This is the phase in which friendship with Rahim begins to break down. Roche ends his mandate to carry out surveillance activities on Jewish interests in Australia and disengages from JI therefore without having undertaken any violent activity.

The case of Jack Roche highlights some important elements of radicalization also offering insights into the role that religion occupies during the four phases of radicalization described by Silber and Bhatt. Roche never completed the task set for him by his "peers" in Al Qaeda or JI. Indeed, during the final stages of its radicalization, he began to disengage from his post. The political response to terrorism attributes a primary role to religion and ideology. The analysis of this case reveals how a prolonged exposure to extremist ideologies and a relationship with other radicalized individuals are fundamental in the process of radicalization. What led Roche to radicalization was the close friendship with JI members in Australia.

⁵⁷ Anne Aly & Jason-Leigh Striegler, *Examining the Role of Religion in Radicalization to Violent Islamist Extremism*, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 849-862, 2012, p.856

This case as anticipated brings out how religion plays a minor role in radicalization, a concept akin to the thought of Oliver Roy. In fact, the role of religion in the radicalization of individuals to commit violent acts emerges. The case in question states that religion is not necessarily the primary motivation for individuals to join extremist cases. For Roche, Islam at first and then the radical ideologies of JI served more than an ontological and social function of a religious purpose. While this case is specifically about terrorism and Islamist ideologies, it can help us understand the role of religion in other cases of religious terrorism.

2.5 The DRIA model

This section will be devoted to Alessandro Orsini's study on the lives of all individuals involved in plots or attacks in the West. As already anticipated in the first chapter, the scholar of terrorism, after having studied the biographies of terrorists, has discovered that they possess a "mental universe" which presents five fundamental characteristics.

Orsini in *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli* argues that it is not difficult to understand how it is possible that some individuals become purifiers of the world in many countries of the Middle East but, on the contrary, it is more difficult to understand how it is possible that some individuals become purifiers of the world in Western societies, where jihadist education is opposed by law as well as rejected by the totality of people. The academic responds by stating that in Italy as in France, in England as in the United States, one becomes a purifier of the world through a socio-psychological path that leads to detachment from the values of the surrounding environment. Once this distinction is made, the individual finds himself in an existential condition in which he is willing to embrace a new conception of the world, that is, a system of values that transforms the "old" person into a "new" one⁵⁸. Orsini's thesis is contained in

⁵⁸ Alessandro Orsini, *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli*. Rizzoli, Milano, 2016, p.143

the DRIA model elaborated by him. The model deals only with terrorist by vocation and to every letter corresponds a phase of the happened jihadist⁵⁹:

D: disintegration of social identity

Stage in which an individual falls into social marginality for a variety of reasons and this produces in him an existential disorientation (Orsini, 2016).

R: reconstruction of the social identity

In this phase, individuals redefine their characteristics based on the radical ideology they have acquired (Orsini, 2016)

I: integration in a revolutionary sect

The individual's focus here is on finding other people who share the same ideas as him/her.

A: alienation from the surrounding world

In this last phase individuals take distance from the westerners, therefore they are excluded, and they self-exclude themselves.

The model's author concludes that, first and foremost, terrorists are not insane, but ordinary people, and that the stages they go through represent those of many other people who do not become terrorists. Second, al-Qaeda and ISIS are ideological phenomena in the sense that before being beheadings or gunshots they are thoughts, representations of the world (Orsini, 2016).

2.5.1 *The case of Michael Bibeau*

The first case under analysis concerns the Islamic fundamentalist Michael Bibeau who killed soldier Nathan Cirillo while mounting a guard at the National War

See also: Alessandro Orsini, *What everybody should know about radicalization and the DRIA Model*, in "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism", March/2020

⁵⁹ Alessandro Orsini, *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli*, cit., p.173

Memorial in Ottawa on October 22, 2014. The bomber then stormed into Parliament, where he was killed by security officers following a shootout.

Orsini, through his DRIA model, reconstructed the process of disintegration of Michael Bibeau's social identity through a series of testimonies that his close friends gave to journalists (Orsini, 2016). So, the news about the terrorist's adolescence is scarce, Michael was entrusted to his mother after the disintegration of the original family unit and, in that period, he began to assume a rebellious behavior, in contrast with the education received from his parents. This phase began to become increasingly acute as he began high school. Between 2001 and 2005 (Orsini, 2016) Michael Bibeau was arrested several times for petty crimes such as marijuana possession. Subsequently there was the arrival of his heaviest sentence, leading him to spend two years in prison for being found in possession of a gun with which a robbery had been carried out. Released before his time, he was then re-incarcerated for other crimes. This turbulent phase of his life in which he goes from one trauma to another makes Michael a marginal individual (Orsini, 2016). In 2011 a completely anomalous behavior on the part of the terrorist is recorded, Michael in fact enters a police station in a Canadian town and asks to be arrested for an armed robbery committed years earlier. The cops find no evidence of the robbery and let him go, but the next day, the terrorist attempts to rob McDonald's. Therefore, the individual identifies prison as a place where he can escape from society and where he can have a social role, that of a prisoner (Orsini, 2016).

The terrorist is therefore during an existential crisis and is looking for a way out that he will find with the jihadist culture through which he manages to give meaning to his days. Thus, Bibeau once embraced the Islamist ideology began to look for people like him consequently distancing himself from the surrounding society and this is when he found Isis (Orsini, 2016), he came into contact with Isis through the internet concluding his radicalization process.

2.5.2 The case of Mohamed Merah

Mohamed Merah was born in 1988 in France from Algerian parents who divorced and failed to provide him with a happy childhood; his mother grew him in a disadvantaged neighborhood full of North African immigrants. Merah on March 19, 2012, stepped off his Yamaha Tmax scooter and opened fire towards the courtyard of a Jewish school Ozar Hatorah in Toulouse where children were entering the classroom accompanied by their parents⁶⁰. On March 11, the terrorist had already killed a soldier in Toulouse and on March 15, he killed two others in Montauban exclaiming “Allahu Akbar”, or “God is great”, in Arabic as he attacked paratroopers. On March 21 the policemen laid siege to him giving him several chances to surrender but Merah always shot to kill and when the authorities took the decision to use grenades to raid the house, he again refused to surrender jumping from the balcony on the second floor and continuing to shoot at the policemen entering the building until a sniper shot him in the head killing him on March 22, 2012. The journalist Ebba Kalondo had been the last person the terrorist spoke to before the police arrived. Merah explained to her that his actions were rightful because he had taken on the mission of defending the honor of Islam (Orsini, 2016).

Merah did not have a quiet childhood, he was in fact involved in acts of violence as a minor several times and, like many other radicalized in those years, began to enter and exit from prison at a young age. He was in fact arrested for the first time in 2005 as a minor and spent at least two periods in prison in 2007 and 2009, he was arrested and released as many as eighteen times during his life (Orsini, 2016). He found a different identity in radical Islam while in prison, and a psychiatrist said he was mentally stable but antisocial after a suicide attempt in 2008. (Orsini, 2016). Jihadist ideology gave his life significance; in fact, it opened the doors to Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he traveled (Orsini, 2016). Following his DRIA model, Orsini deduces that the individual had no value in life, which is why jihadist ideology made him feel like a member of society by providing him with the affection he had never received, as well as a mental discipline and a universal goal to complete.

⁶⁰ Alessandro Orsini, *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli*, cit., p.226

2.5.3 *The case of Germaine Lindsay*

Germaine Lindsay was one of four suicide bombers to blow themselves up on the London Underground on July 7, 2005. Lindsay went to the United Kingdom with his mother in 1986 after spending his first year of life in Jamaica. His family situation was tumultuous. His biological father stayed in Jamaica and appeared to have played a little part in her life. Lindsay's mother moved in with another guy, who was a strict stepfather. Lindsay's mother moved in with another guy when their relationship ended in 1990.

In this case we can also find a story similar to the Kouachi brothers and other jihadists, which is the story of a childhood and adolescence lived without the love of parents, or in uncomfortable family contexts, and without strong points of reference (Orsini, 2016). The boy's mother, Maryam McLeod Ismaiyl concluded her last relationship and faced a spiritual crisis that led her to convert to Islam in 2000. The boy, without reference points followed his mother in this conversion and, after the attack of the Twin Towers went around bare-faced to distribute leaflets in favor of al-Qaeda. Lindsay, however, in 2002 suffered a profound trauma or the abandonment of her mother to go and live with another man and her two children from her previous relationship in the United States. It is precisely this phase in which the boy begins to live without points of reference until he meets via the internet an English girl called Samantha Lewthwaite, a girl converted to Islam at the age of 15 years and fanatic of Islam (Orsini, 2016). The two get married and have a daughter and, the boy finally gets to have the love he had never received in his life.

Orsini engages in an analysis of the so-called “jihadist trap” that demands life at the very moment it is given. Germaine in fact, at the time he is in the London Underground was unemployed and his wife was seven months pregnant with their second child⁶¹.

⁶¹ Orsini, Alessandro, *ISIS: I terroristi più fortunati del mondo e tutto ciò che è stato fatto per favorirli*, cit., p.235

CHAPTER III

3. Case studies supporting Gilles Kepel's theory

The third chapter of my thesis, to prove the validity of Gilles Kepel's theory, will analyze several specific cases of people involved in terrorism in the last 20 years from his point of view. In the cases that will be analyzed, it can be noted that the author focuses on the fact that Salafism reached its peak in France between 2005 and 2015, when Muslims were leaving for Muslim lands to satisfy their religious needs. Thus, as argued by the French scholar, it emerges strongly the importance of the internet in the mobilization of young Muslims, which led them to join the "third wave of jihadism".

3.1 Nemmouche Case

Mehdi Nemmouche is known for being the author of the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014. He grew up in the district of Trois-Ponts, and never knew his father. Because his mother was in need, he and his two sisters were placed in foster homes from the age of three months. At the age of 17, he was placed in the care of his grandmother in Tourcoing, in the sensitive district of La Bourgogne, and in September 2006, he enrolled at university to attempt a law degree. Nemmouche grew up in the deprived neighborhood of Roubaix which is the home of the Harkis⁶², to whom he belonged.

⁶² Harki is the term used to describe Muslim Algerians who served as auxiliaries in the French army during the Algerian War from 1954 to 1962. In France the term is also used to refer to all French Muslims of Algerian birth repatriated to France after 1962 and their French-born descendants. Once in France, Harkis were typically ostracized by other Algerian immigrants. Many Harkis unable to leave Algeria for France after the war of independence were slaughtered by pro-independence forces.

3.1.1 Nemmouche's Radicalization

Mehdi Nemmouche, who was incarcerated in Toulon-La Farlède, a penitentiary in the southeast of France on the Mediterranean, where he was serving his sixth sentence, requested a television set to watch the drama of the killer on a scooter "with jubilation," according to the guards. Incredibly, Nemmouche's most recent conviction was for attempting to steal at gunpoint from a Yamaha vendor in Sain-Laurent-du-Var on the French Riviera in December 2007. He was still only an awkward petty delinquent at the time of the heist, having been born in Roubaix, a once-famous mill town on the Belgian border that was now the weakest of all French cities. His father was unknown; he was placed in numerous daycare centers before being introduced to his mother's family in La Bourgogne. He, like many other terrorist attackers, grew up in a damaged household environment with no father figure. He had shown little interest in religion before his last theft, which earned him five years in prison from December 2007 to December 2012⁶³. He had been the subject of repeated arrests, indictments, and prison terms for stealing and assault. According to Gilles Kepel, Unlike Mohamed Merah, for whom prison sentences served only to strengthen a radicalization that had begun in his family setting and in the Midi-Pyrénées Salafist environment, it did not appear that Mehdi Nommouche had been contacted by the Salafist movement in Roubaix, which was nevertheless very operative in a city that had become a seedbed for Syrian jihad volunteers, based on the information available before the trial.

Between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-seven, Nemmouche spent five years in the prison incubator, where he was Islamized. He stayed isolated in the southern French prisons because he had no family links that could have offered him with moral assistance during his confinement. It is very uncommon for an individual condemned for being to a minority or other deviant group to turn this

⁶³ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit., p. 98

stigma into a source of religious pride in a jail where Islam predominates, if only to overcome the pressure brought to press by fellow inmates. A scrupulous adherence to all the outward signs and rituals of Salafism served as a source of pride for some young people from Harki backgrounds whose parents were viewed as "traitors" by the children of other Algerian immigrants, as well as a way to delegitimize the children of activists for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), whom they associated with the "apostate" state in Algiers. Harki adolescents are disproportionately represented in the associative network in Nemmouche's hometown of Roubaix in particular. As a Harki son who was further stigmatized by the disadvantaged banlieues' honor codes as a child of sin because his father was unknown, Nommouche may easily have sought to exorcise his demons through an intensive kind of Islamization during his last sentence. In any case, he was Islamized in the company of other militant prisoners, beginning in 2009 at the detention center in Salon-de-Provence, where he was identified as a radical Islamist by the Department of Corrections intelligence service, and then in particular at the detention center in Toulon, where he was held from March 2011 until his release in early 2012. Nemmouche got closer to a support system for Muslim detainees called Salsabil⁶⁴ (Ear of Wheat), eager for information about the most stringent injunctions in order to immerse himself headfirst into a newly discovered faith. This organization was created in 2010, but the French Ministry of Interior abolished it in November 2016 because it was suspected of serving as a network for terrorist inmates. He grew a beard rapidly, began wearing a djellaba⁶⁵, and began zealously proselytizing among the other inmates. However, because of his hostile behavior toward the guards, who he pelted with objects, he was placed in a disciplinary area and subsequently solitary confinement until the end of his term. Following his release, Nommouche relocated to Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, a jihadist hotbed on the outskirts of Brussels where the November 2015 Paris and Saint-Denis massacres

⁶⁴ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit., p. 99

⁶⁵ The djellaba is a long, loose-fitting unisex outer robe with full sleeves that is worn in the Maghreb region of North Africa. The presence of this garment can be dated as far back as the ancient times when it was worn by the Numidian cavalry.

were plotted. He flew out of Brussels on New Year's Eve 2012, going through the United Kingdom, Lebanon, and Turkey before eventually joining ISIS in Syria. With his lack of foreign travel expertise and meager money from his previous job as a burglar, the ex-con Nommouche could not have managed the complicated logistics and costs of this itinerary, as well as his return trip across Malaysia and Thailand. He obviously needed assistance—specifically, a platform of contacts and funding. According to Gilles Kepel, Nommouche's travel is reminiscent of Mohamed Merah's similarly complicated journeys between Algeria and Tajikistan. However, whereas Merah's jihadist weapons training ended abruptly in a Taliban camp in Pakistan in autumn 2011, the same year as the Arab uprisings erupted, Nommouche was able to fully benefit from warfare training in Syria a year and a half later, when the Islamists had begun to regulate a vast area in which they imposed strict sharia law. We have personal accounts from his experience in Syria. The ex-con was changed into a jailer after five years in prison and was sent to guard detainees kept in the cellars of a military hospital in Aleppo that had fallen under ISIS hands. Four French hostages, including journalist Didier François and Nicolas Hénin⁶⁶, were kidnapped in June 2013 and would be released in late April 2014, albeit not without suffering mistreatment at the hands of a particularly vicious French guard of North African ancestry. Didier François, a former head of the Communist Revolutionary League, was not only one of the founding members of SOS Racisme in 1983, but also the creator of the movement's catchphrase, *Touche pas à mon pote*⁶⁷, which was always accompanied by an illustration of a small yellow hand that combined the shape of the North African hamsa of Fatima's hand amulet and the color of the infamous yellow star that European Jews were forced to wear under the Nazi yoke. The horrifying paradox that thirty years after *Touche pas à mon pote*, the slogan's creator was kidnapped and tormented by one of the children of the same "buddies" whose guardian he had been sheds an especially brutal light on the last quarter-century. Nicolas Hénin, a fellow captive of Didier François, revealed publicly in September 2014 that he had recognized Nommouche, who had been captured in Marseille the previous May, as his jailer. As he tormented

⁶⁶ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit., p. 99

⁶⁷ *Touche pas à mon pote*: Hand of my body

the Syrian hostages, the radicalized neo-Salafist sung French hit songs. Furthermore, Nemmouche mocked his compatriots François and Hénin by discussing his love for the popular television series *Faites entrer l'accusé*, which portrays the story of numerous notable criminals. Even though he refused to watch infidel television while in detention, this petty thief who had become an Islamist predicted himself onto these negative role models, combining the political grammar of third generation jihadism with the mental lexicon of a French youth brought up on music television culture.

In both his accomplishments and weaknesses, Nemmouche personifies the ideal third-generation jihadist. Furthermore, ongoing judicial proceedings reported in the press indicate that Nemmouche, far from fitting the "lone wolf" model emphasized by some superficial analysts, is unlikely to have been sent to the Aleppo jail on the orders of Salim Benghalem⁶⁸, one of ISIS's highest-ranking French jihadists. Benghalem got closer to the jihadist organization located in Buttes-Chaumont Park in the northeast of Paris before being arrested, where he met the Kouachi brothers, drawing the attention of the French intelligence service. He was in the same prison cell as Mohamed al-Ayouni, who had been detained on his return from the jihad, during which he had lost an eye and an arm in 2004 during the assault of Fallujah against coalition soldiers led by the US.

3.1.2 The attack at the Jewish Museum

Mehdi Nemmouche opened fire at the city's Jewish Museum with a Kalashnikov assault rifle and a pistol, killing three people on the spot and one more later in hospital. Nemmouche fought for the Islamic State in Syria for a year before coming to Europe to carry out the attack. Nacer Bendrer, a guy who helped plot the attack and provided weapons, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. The attack occurred on May 24, 2014, at the Belgian Jewish Museum in Brussels. A man with what seemed

⁶⁸ Salim Benghalem, known as Abou Mohamed al-Faransi, then Mohamed Ali, is a French jihadist, born on 6 July 1980 in Bourg-la-Reine in France and died in November 2017 in Boukamal in Syria. He is a 'figure of French jihadism'. who became "responsible for welcoming French and French-speaking people into the Islamic State.

to be a handgun fired from the roadway into the museum's atrium, aiming at two tourists. He circled their bodies and then opened fire from the atrium, this time at two additional persons working at the museum's registration desk, with an AKM Kalashnikov. He then leaves the building and flees. On the location, three persons were slain. They were a French woman who volunteered at the museum and an Israeli tourist couple. A Belgian person who worked at the museum's registration desk was the fourth victim. Mehdi Nemmouche has been arrested in possession of weapons similar to those seen in video surveillance of the shooting at the Jewish Museum in Belgium, as well as a cap similar to the one worn by the murderer, during an unannounced customs check carried out on board a bus coming from Amsterdam via Brussels on Friday 30 May 2014. In connection with a terrorist attack, the youngster was arrested for murder, attempted murder, weapon possession, and transportation. Belgian authorities believe he is the first European extremist to return from Syria's civil war to carry out terrorist strikes in Europe. He had already done five years in prison for robbery and was known to the French authorities. While in prison, he is said to have met his collaborator Bendrer. Both were labeled as "radicalized" inmates. Nacer Bendrer, who was already serving a 15-year term for supplying weapons to Mehdi Nemmouche, was given an extra three years for separate crimes of possessing weapons, including a Kalashnikov, two semi-automatic pistols, and a rifle, all of which were loaded and ready to fire. Nacer Bendrer, who wore a grey pullover and shaved his temples, was at the helm and admitted the facts. This punishment was accompanied by a remand order, and the criminal court in Marseille ordered that it would not be confused with the prior ones. It follows a final 15-year term imposed by Belgian courts for his role in the attack that murdered four people in 2014, as well as a five-year sentence imposed by French judges last year in another case.

3.2 The Islamist group Forsane Alizza

In France, Forsane Alizza is better recognized for its controversial speeches and propaganda videos than for any violent acts. The group has advocated for the implementation of Islamic Sharia⁶⁹ law throughout the world, as well as the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in France. Forsane Alizza has organized protests on issues such as the restriction on wearing the veil in public since its establishment in 2010. Interior Minister Claude Gueant banned the group in February after a government investigation, he accused it of becoming an armed militia, violating the French Republic's principles. The group had in fact sent out a message seeking new members “above all soldiers”, who were already adept at “combat sports”⁷⁰. The members of the organization call themselves extreme Islamists and use vocabulary borrowed from jihadist Salafism (which combines Salafism and jihadism). Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda-affiliated organizations are their heroes. They consider anyone who judges using laws other than Allah's written laws to be a *tâghoût*⁷¹. They attempt to pit Muslims against the ostensibly hostile French society. Infidels and unbelievers were defined as French citizens.

Mohamed Achamlane debuted in the clandestine field of protest fundamentalism in early 2010. In his adolescence, this French native with a Moroccan father was superficially immersed in Islam. He was 35 years old at the time, and he lived in the southwest of France on welfare with his converted wife and two children. He operated through the nicknames Cortex and Sheikh Abou Hamza, and he was a self-proclaimed imam who had no religious affiliations but managed to attract around him 15 or so admirers thanks to his garrulous magnetism.

⁶⁹ In Islam, Sharia is the set of rules of life and behavior dictated by God for the moral, religious and legal conduct of his believers. It is commonly referred to as Islamic law, in reality it is a set of precepts derived from the Qur'an, the holy book for Muslims, and from the accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's life - the Sunna, the sayings, teachings and practices of the Prophet - which act as a code of conduct to which Muslims must adhere. Sharia may be the basis for the establishment of a code of laws, but the interpretation of scholars, religious, political, and armed groups intervene in this process.

⁷⁰ 30 March 2012, “*Profile: French Islamist group Forsane Alizza*”. BBC News

⁷¹ Taghut is an Islamic term for a place of worship other than God. The phrase is frequently associated with idols or demons lured to the blood of pagan sacrifices in traditional theology. As mentioned in surah An-Nisa verse 60, the phrase is also applied to earthly dictatorial rule in current times.

Sirat Alizza was the name given to the group (the path to Pride)⁷². His supporters stormed a Mc Donald's restaurant in Limoges on June 10, 2010, to expose the links between the American fast-food chain and Jewish financial groups.

The formation of the Forsane Alizza organization was a second stage on this path during this first step in the media sector. It was founded on June 25, 2010, with the goal of “denouncing the oppressions against the real Muslims, whether in France or in the world”⁷³. According to the statutes, Mohamed Achamlane was to be the principal man in command of this institution, and he was to pursue a strategy to gradually come to power by acting on two fronts. On the one hand, he was everywhere on the internet and on social media to grow the number of his followers, and on the other, he staged unauthorized rallies, further disrupting the peace, in order to outrage public opinion and be extremely prominent, allowing him to depict himself as a symbol of Islamophobia. The group quickly created a website, www.forsanealizza.com, which attracted media attention due to its exceptionally hateful speech. On its website, Forsane Alizza encouraged the public to reject the legislation prohibiting religious signs from being shown in public spaces on September 13, 2010. “Let's talk about this 9/11: the relatives of the dead were the first to oppose these charges”⁷⁴, Mohamed Achamlane said in an interview broadcast on France-Maghreb radio on September 20, 2010, denying Al Qaida's involvement in any way in 9/11 and criticizing an American anti-Muslim plot. It was claimed that Muslims were the perpetrators of these atrocities, but no one believes this, none at all. This topic piqued the curiosity of certain scientists, who discovered proof. However, we must accept that media insist on turning it into propaganda and disseminating lies." Following his first radio stunt, Mohamed Achamlane pulled off a second, uploading on his website a portion of the conversation that was not broadcast and in which the journalist agreed with him, while also stating that he could not publicly express himself in this manner at work.

⁷² Migaux, Philippe, “*Forsane Alizza: From radical demonstration to the preparation of terrorist action*”. Al Mesbar Studies & Research Center, 2016

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

According to the article published by Philippe Migaux “*Forsane Alizza: From radical demonstration to the preparation of terrorist action*” the topics on this site can be examined in four distinct ways. The first reading view was that it was a publicity ploy or a tactic similar to that of the far-right parties he claimed to be criticizing. As a result, he gave links to external websites, used a lot of video, let people discuss his philosophy, and consistently solicited cash donations. Kepel duly noted in 2012: “we observe a kind of mimetic rivalry as each camp strengthens the other in its fantasy representation”. The second reading interpretation emphasized the strengthening of a sense of belonging to a radical umma, based on the constant denunciation of sanctions abroad against fundamentalist organizations, causing French Muslims to feel collectively susceptible to such penalties.

3.2.1 Mohamed Achamlane

Mohamed Achamlane was born in Nantes, France in 1977 and was at the head of Forsane Alizza organization and was one of 15 members of the group on trial for plotting terrorist attacks. He affirmed that he had founded the group in 2010 to combat rising anti-Muslim sentiment in France, claiming a wish to channel the energy of young Muslims away from violence. Achamlane’s intention was clear: he was planning assaults on persons and locations in response to what he saw as rising “Islamophobia” in France. The eventual result would be the establishment of a Caliphate in France and the application of sharia law.

The attacks that he planned with the organization were mostly targeting Jewish targets in France. The first was the assassination of an investigator who had indicted one of the group's leaders, Baroudi Bouzid, for abusing both of his children. A planned kidnapping of a member of the Jewish Defense League was another action. The most notable incident occurred on August 6, 2011, in Aulnay-sous-Bois, when Achamlane burned fire to a penal code to protest the execution of the rule prohibiting the wearing of a complete headscarf. Following these violent attacks, the founder and leader of the Islamist group was sentenced to nine years in prison by the Paris Criminal Court for criminal conspiracy in relation to a terrorist enterprise and illegal possession of weapons a few months after making it known

that the group was physically preparing for possible attacks. Police discovered three Kalashnikov assault rifles, a grenade, and a Glock pistol in his home. He was detained and sentenced at the conclusion of the trial. The attacker has been released from Vezin-le-Coquet prison on January 1, five years after his conviction. As a result, Achamlane, claiming to be radical Islamists who follow the concept of jihadist Salafism, denounces the West's bad principles, and asks for a boycott of Zionist products.

3.2.2 Social networks and Cyber-jihad

The web favors the global digitally, or cyber-media, amplification of terror today, which is strategically determined by the self-proclaimed Islamic State, increasing the perception of insecurity related to citizens' ability to freely determine themselves in their everyday socio-cultural environment, both in the individual and collective dimensions. Due to its digital nature, speed of use, mobility, and the digital nomadism of hyper-connection, contemporary jihadist terrorism converts the medium itself into a weapon. In this context, terrorism resorts to the increasing use of dissemination through various aggregators and socio-media platforms, including the best-known Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Vine, implementing a cyber-media campaign of progressive web saturation and massive targeting of audiences, especially through the creation and dissemination carried out by the two official communication organs of the terrorist organization, al-Hayat Media Center and al-Furqan Media Foundation, exploiting cyberspace as a multiplier of interest and propaganda, to the point of targeting the most distant users from the centrality of the terrorist infosphere, in a broader sense, i.e. including in it also the considerable amount of contents more or less directly referable to other terrorist-jihadist entities such as al-Qaeda and/or in any case to the so-called "jihadisphere", the complex of (cyber-) media products and of their semiotic interactions that dynamically build and re-construct the cognitive, perceptive and social universe of the young self-styled "Lions" of the web. These represent the proto jihadists who support and/or follow in the close and continuous interconnection digital, the

"Soldiers of Truth", the combatants at the front, projecting onto them expectations, drives, desires and justifications.

In this sense, some important aspects are briefly highlighted, even if they are worthy of long-term observation, such as high-level jihadist construction and post, particularly with regard to the cyber-media narrative sophistication that has allowed terrorist organizations to strong objectification of their own brand-symbol, of their own critical mass stimulated by glossy magazines with layouts and communicative tenor very similar to Western ones. They emphasize a careful audience targeting effort, which includes, for example, the release of the jihadist magazine *Dabiq*, which celebrates the myth of the fighter, his virality, the machismo of mujahedism, as well as the centrality of Islamist doctrine for the foreign fighter and the strategic-religious foundations of the 'State.' At the same time, the same organizations publish *Daral-Islam*, a magazine with a clear European connotation and background, in which they promote the reaction of young people from the suburbs, emphasizing the importance of women in promoting the (neo) Caliphate. The spontaneously determined establishment of a communicative platform, the web, capable of joining conceptually distant terrorist entities and/or functioning on separate continents is another element of innovation and substantial worry within the cyber-jihad phenomena. It is important to note that this does not occur through a direct and explicit communication channel/flow, but rather through media 'bounces,' shares, and followers' feedback gained via the internet, particularly through Twitter. This indicates that, through induction, the actors' awareness, branding, strategies, and communicative capacity, as well as their relative motivation in growing their audience, can all improve, especially in the Western setting.

The organization has been more involved in the virtual war on the Internet, which Kepel refers to as cyber-jihad. The videos show *kufar* and *Tâghoût* clashing, straining the legal limits¹³ and dreaming of a trial to build a platform. The method is similar to that used by Al-Qaeda. The only difference is that the organization refuses to act on the virtual. The group immediately created its own website, which garnered media notice due to its extremely virulent speech. On its homepage, the

Shahada⁷⁵ was framed by galloping horsemen with raised swords, giving it a combative tone.

On behalf of people who had been victims of Islamophobic assault, Forsane Alizza sought to exercise its right to legitimate self-defense. The organization took its inspiration and manner of action from a number of sources; however, it exemplified the radical avant-garde that al-Suri called for in its own way. The website's Salafist references and illustrative videos of militant jihad in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine were paired with propaganda and attacks reminiscent of the Gauche Proletarian's ultra-leftism in the 1970s. Forsane Alizza also specialized in battling its right-wing counterparts, anti-Islamist organizations of French nationals, by organizing counter-demonstrations at anti-Islamist gatherings such as the Assises de l'Islamisation in Paris in December 2010. Forsane Alizza's acts are reminiscent of those of leftists combating the far right in previous decades. Some of these activities, which were designed to terrify "infidels" in the name of self-defense, often featured violence mostly verbal, but also physical violence. They were frequently videotaped and subsequently shared on social media. Forsane Alizza was the first French Islamist group to promote violence on the Internet, methodically rationalize it, and constantly threaten to inflict it, but never did. Forsane Alizza was a key figure in the transition from the jihadism of the 1990s to the decade in which the Algerian civil war spilled over into France under the leadership of Khaled Kelkal.

As Gilles Kepel argues, there have been numerous warning signals that a certain sort of Salafist discourse in the public realm and on the web and social media was leaning towards violence since 2010, accompanying the establishment of clandestine jihadist networks that hardened a vanguard of militants. In that year, the rise of identity politics boosted the prominence of Islamization indicators in the banlieues. The goal was to radicalize people on the outskirts of religion by

⁷⁵ The Shahada is the testimony of faith by which a Muslim declares his belief in one and only God (Allah) and the prophetic mission of Muhammad. It is part of the five pillars of Islam.

energizing them with denunciations of the oppression that Islam will face in France, dubbed “Islamophobia”⁷⁶.

3.3 Omar Omsen

Omar Diaby, known as Omar Omsen, because he came from Senegal, became the principal cyber-recruiter for French jihadists; his incredibly famous videos featured an elaborated variation on the theme created by Forsane Alizza, to which they pay ringing homage, making the group's “persecution” by the infidel French government a major argument for shifting the jihad to Syria.

Omar Omsen was a delinquent adolescent who migrated from Senegal to Nice with his family when he was seven years old in the late 1970s. Omar Omsen gained a lot of renown in the underworld and spent several years in prison for armed robberies in Monte Carlo. And it was there that he, like so many others, combined Salafist ideology with his criminal history in an Islamist radicalization that retrospectively justified his illegal activity by reorienting it toward the pious purpose of jihad. When he was released in 2011, he tightened his ties with Forsane Alizza, whose followers shared many of his characteristics.

He began to piece together a series of videos aimed to tell the true history of humanity, using this group's audiovisual productions as a model. The Syrian jihad, according to this narrative, leads to universal salvation through history. As evidenced by court cases and interviews with the families of jihadists and those at risk conducted by Gilles Kepel, as well as journalists and organizations responsible for preventing such departures, he posted it on the Internet, where it became a very important tool for recruiting French youths.

However, Syria was not yet the attraction it would become the subsequent year, when a massive civil conflict broke out. Mohamed Merah had to complete his

⁷⁶ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit., p. 78

military training in Pakistan tribal areas controlled by the Taliban due to a lack of possibilities in Syria. A small group of fans of Omar Omsen's early films resolved to make their imaginary world a reality and convened in Nice for that purpose two months after Omsen took part in the Givors meeting with Forsane Alizza. They came from all around France to prepare for the jihad, which at the time was primarily limited to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and Yemen. The purpose of the gathering was to explain the biblical justification for this hejira, or migration, to the Islamic territory and to examine practical problems. The majority of the Islamists in Nice, like the majority of Muslims in Alpes-Maritimes, were Tunisians with extensive links there. Omsen was apprehended by police at the Nice railway station after Friday prayers, where he had gone to meet "brothers," and detained on the pretense of a seven-year-old criminal charge. He was tried right away and given a two-year sentence, which he had been still serving when Forsane Alizza arrived. He was freed from jail a year later, in 2013, and deported to Senegal the later that month.

The surveillance of Islamist sites that summoned people to assemble in Nice was the source of the police operation that brought the plan for a communal hejira to an end. The small quantity of these forums made this work possible in 2011. Later, the proliferation of dedicated Facebook pages changed the situation, hampering intelligence services' capabilities. Omsen joined the Syrian fight in 2013, after finishing the movies and putting them online, and departing Tunis on a ship heading for Instabul.

Omar Omsen's death was reported on social media in 2015, but this was debunked by Omsen's appearance on a televised program in June 2016, during which he criticized ISIS's policy. The deadly fights between the al-Nusra Front, to which he had pledged support, and its opponents in ISIS, who had drawn the largest contingent of French recruits, had obscured the original charisma of the jihad's main film producer after two years in the area. He was known, however, for his outstanding ability as an internet propagandist, a critical vector for comprehending the reasoning of the French jihadist dedication, for which he had created the founding narrative.

3.4 Nicolas and Jean-Daniel Bons

The two brothers, Nicolas and Jean-Daniel Bons, who converted to Islam and launched an Internet call to join the jihad. They set off from Toulouse with one objective in mind: to wage jihad in Syria with Islamist insurgents opposed to Bashar al-Assad's regime. They converted to Islam and began appearing in various videos on the internet, such as a YouTube video in which they asked Muslims to join them. Nicolas was the most unstable and troublesome of the two brothers. He smoked hashish and was convicted of drug trafficking and sentenced to six months of wearing an electronic bracelet. The boy's behaviors and lifestyle have drastically changed since his detention. He began to adopt typical convert habits, such as watching what he ate, always talking about his faith, getting up early to go to the mosque to pray, growing a beard, and wearing the djellaba. Concerned about his conversion, his family denounced him to the police in 2012, who had just missed Mohamed Merah from the same Izards neighborhood in Toulouse. Nicolas was thus placed under year-long surveillance.

During one of his vacations in Toulouse in 2011⁷⁷, his half-brother Jean-Daniel paid him a visit, during which Nicolas attempted to convert him. Jean-Daniel was a boy who did a lot of sports, didn't smoke, and didn't go out much, so he was very different from his brother. The youngster also opted to go to Toulouse, where he began working as French errand boy for a post office subcontractor and grew close to his brother during this period. Thus, Jean-moment Daniel's arrived in 2012, when he announced his conversion to Islam. Nicolas, making use of the media, released an Islamist propaganda video in which he invited French President Francois Hollande to convert to Islam.

⁷⁷ Escarnot Jean-Manuel, Tourancheau Patricia, 19 July 2013, *La croisade syrienne de deux Toulousains*. Libération



Credits: Escarnot Jean-Manuel, Tourancheau Patricia, 19 July 2013, *La croisade syrienne de deux Toulousains*. Libération.

Available at https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/07/19/la-croisade-syrienne-de-deux-toulousains_919605/

Nicolas Bons wears a red and white striped keffiyeh knotted at the back of his neck in the French-language video released by Isis. His beard is practically blond due to his trimming. Mohammed Merah, the radical Islamist who killed seven people in and around Toulouse in 2012, was born in the city. However, local clergy have denied claims that Nicolas developed his interest in jihad at the mosque, claiming that the Internet was a more likely source of his unusual turnaround. Nicolas, also known as Abu Abdel Rahman⁷⁸, the older of the Bons brothers, was raised by his mother. He grew up in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in both the towns where his mother was stationed and in a quiet suburb on the outskirts of Toulouse. However, despite a secure childhood interrupted by trips to Guyana with his father and half-brother Jean-Daniel, he was unable to secure a stable job due to poor

⁷⁸ Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, cit., p. 104

school results. He converted to Islam in 2009, seeking an identity, through interaction with North African friends in Toulouse, where Islamic proselytizing was particularly widespread. Jean-Daniel Bons relocated to Toulouse to live with their biological grandmother and converted under the persuasion of his elder brother soon before they both flew to Syria via Spain in March 2013, after telling their friends and relatives they were going to Thailand for a vacation.

The two brothers began spending time in prayer together. They were critical of women who walked out with their arms and faces exposed, drank, and ate swine. They got interested in the situation in Palestine and Afghanistan, as well as US and European politics. So, in 2013, the major concern arose. The two brothers travel to Tunisia by boat before entering Syria. Nicolas is the first French terrorist to die in a suicide bombing in Syria. On 2 January 2014, his father, Gérard, heard from a text message received from Syria that Nicolas had blown himself up in the name of Allah in the Homs region. Nicolas had declared his brother's death five months before. Gérard Bons will never forget Nicolas' call: "Dad? Jean-Daniel is gone..."⁷⁹ Nicolas explained that his brother had been shot in the chest the day before during an offensive in Aleppo. The two brothers, before leaving, wrote to their father "We will never see each other again in this world. But if you convert, we will meet in paradise"⁸⁰.

Mehdi Nemmouche and Nicolas Bons have quite different profiles, demonstrating the wide range of activists ISIS manages to capture in its trap. Both are looking for an absolute in different ways and were drawn to Salafism through the internet. It provided them with the warmth of a peer group that ended their loneliness, a precondition for the exaltation of an ideal destined to change their lives through participation in the jihad to destroy Evil and establish the reign of Good, especially in the environment of intense Islamist proselytism that marked Toulouse.

⁷⁹ Bendavid Rose-Laure, Byrka Delphine, 16 January 2014, *Les enfants perdus de la famille Bons-Djihadistes français*. Société.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The studies undertaken for the writing of this document highlight how, in the context of Islamist terrorism, we are facing an Islamization of radicalism, and this theory confirms the thesis supported by the scholar Oliver Roy. In fact, Roy believes that the phenomenon of terrorism is a generational phenomenon, in which those who decide to radicalize do so as a sign of rebellion without a specific underlying cause, but they find their motivation in radical Islam. These young people therefore decide to turn to these organizations to experience their own personal accomplishment.

The classic extremist is a young immigrant or second-generation convert with little religious background and a rapid and recent conversion/reconversion trajectory, more commonly in the setting of a bunch of friends or on the Internet than in the environment of a mosque. Religion is rarely hidden, but rather displayed, but this does not always imply religious practice. Simultaneously time, it is obvious that radicals' determination to identify with jihad and claim membership in a radical Islamic organization is not purely opportunistic: the connection to Islam distinguishes jihad from other forms of violence perpetrated by young people. It is not the same as 'exonerating' Islam by highlighting the endemic culture of violence. The fact that these young people chose Islam as a foundation for thought and action is critical, and we must endeavor to understand how radicalism has become Islamized.

Studying the lives of these young terrorists shows that they are not religious, the problem is therefore not in Islam as a religion but in the phenomenon of terrorism that embraces the vulnerability of young people. The terrorist attacks that have struck the West also demonstrate how the terrorists behind these attacks were born and raised in the West. Furthermore, the fact that while today's radicalized individuals swear allegiance to ISIS, they would have declared allegiance to Al Qaeda a few years ago, and the Red Brigades in the 1960s, justifies the

“Islamization of radicalism.” The fact that the DRIA model suits all sorts of radicalization, regardless of history or ideology, suggests this.

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SINTESI

Lo scopo di questo elaborato è quello di rispondere alla seguente domanda: quale dei concetti “radicalizzazione dell'Islam” o “islamizzazione del radicalismo” indica l'effetto del terrorismo islamista in Occidente? Questa tesi ruota intorno al dibattito sorto nel 2005, tra Oliver Roy e Gilles Kepel. Kepel interpreta gli attacchi del 2005 come la dimostrazione di una comunità musulmana che fatica ad integrarsi nella società francese. Dunque, egli parla di un processo di “radicalizzazione dell'Islam” in grado di trasformare la religione, tramite l'ideologia salafita, in attentati terroristici. Al contrario, Roy parla di un “islamizzazione del radicalismo”, incentrando la sua tesi sul concetto di rivolta generazionale in cui la violenza di matrice islamica va approfondita con altre forme di violenza diffuse tra i giovani.

Questa tesi intende dimostrare quale dei due autori del dibattito sia il più adatto nell'esaminare la questione. È necessario sottolineare che vengono utilizzate diverse risorse a sostegno di ciascuna di queste opinioni, poiché la radicalizzazione rappresenta un fenomeno molto complesso ed esistono numerosi metodi affinché un individuo si radicalizzi. La mia teoria è che stiamo vivendo un'islamizzazione del radicalismo. I recenti attacchi terroristici dimostrano che la teoria di Roy sia sempre più efficace. Credo che la radicalizzazione non sia basata solamente sulla religione e che i violenti attacchi compiuti dai sedicenni jihadisti non siano alimentati dalla loro affiliazione all'Islam.

L'elaborato si articola in tre capitoli. Il primo capitolo analizza nel dettaglio gli aspetti fondamentali del fenomeno della radicalizzazione. Inizia con un'introduzione generale del fenomeno attraverso il libro di Sophia Moskalenko e Clark McCauley *Radicalization to Terrorism*, in cui la radicalizzazione viene identificata come un processo attraverso il quale gli individui accettano sempre più la violenza per una determinata causa. Successivamente verranno descritte le quattro fasi del fenomeno: pre-radicalizzazione, identificazione, indottrinamento e manifestazione. Gli studiosi, al fine di comprendere le ragioni della radicalizzazione di un individuo, hanno sviluppato modelli di analisi e, in questo capitolo, verrà analizzata la “scalinata verso il terrorismo” di Fathali Moghaddam.

A seguire, verrà fornito un background sul terrorismo per comprendere meglio questo fenomeno e, in particolare, il dibattito tra Roy e Kepel. In questa sezione verranno affrontate le posizioni dei due studiosi. Kepel sostiene che una forma radicale di neo-salafismo sia emersa attraverso i predicatori finanziari sauditi, la cui penetrazione va vista nel contesto della crescita dell'estremismo islamico e del terrorismo jihadista negli anni '90 e 2000. Roy definisce i giovani radicalizzati come “credenti sinceri” che, una volta entrati nelle organizzazioni terroristiche, si trovano a condividere dottrine specifiche come la convinzione di andare in paradiso dopo determinate azioni. Roy ritiene che non abbia senso distinguere tra l'Islam buono, che fornisce un'interpretazione spirituale della jihad, e l'Islam radicale, visto come incubatore del terrorismo. Alessandro Orsini ha portato il suo contributo al dibattito con *“La radicalization des terroristes de vocation”*, un articolo pubblicato su Commentaire, che tratta di una specifica classe antropologica di terroristi per i quali la morte personale è il mezzo per la loro necessità spirituale. Orsini spiega che essi possiedono un “universo mentale” che presenta cinque caratteristiche fondamentali: catastrofismo radicale, aspettativa della fine, ossessione per la purezza, identificazione del male, ossessione per la purificazione. Queste fasi spiegano come il terrorismo consista in una “narrazione”, un modo particolare di riportare i fatti che assomiglia a questo: il mondo è caduto in un abisso di sofferenze e disgrazie (catastrofismo radicale) e si sta dirigendo verso una catastrofe imminente (aspettativa della fine), di cui è responsabile una categoria di uomini (identificazione del male) e che deve quindi essere liberata (ossessione della purificazione) da un manipolo di uomini moralmente superiori (ossessione della purezza).

Il capitolo, infine, si concluderà con l'importanza dell'ideologia nel dibattito tra i due studiosi francesi. L'argomento principale è se l'ideologia sia una causa di radicalizzazione. Roy privilegia un approccio trasversale alla comprensione della violenza islamica moderna, paragonandola ad altri tipi di violenza e di radicalismo con caratteristiche simili, come una rivolta generazionale. L'esperto ritiene che troppo spesso si trascuri il fatto che il terrorismo suicida, così come gruppi come Al-Qaeda e ISIS, sono nuovi nella storia musulmana e quindi non possono essere spiegati con l'emergere del fondamentalismo. Di conseguenza, Roy conclude che il

terrorismo è causato dall'islamizzazione del radicalismo piuttosto che dalla radicalizzazione dell'Islam. Questa argomentazione non cerca di assolvere l'Islam da qualsiasi colpa; piuttosto, cerca di capire perché i giovani disincantati hanno trovato nell'Islam il modello della loro rivolta totale. Lo studioso si dedica a dimostrare come il solo fanatismo religioso non sia sufficiente a creare violenza, ritenendo che gli individui siano motivati dal radicalismo piuttosto che dal fondamentalismo religioso o da obiettivi politici. Questo metodo ha ricevuto molte critiche, soprattutto da Gilles Kepel.

A questo proposito, Kepel accusa Roy di aver trascurato il legame tra la violenza terroristica e la radicalizzazione dell'Islam sotto forma di salafismo. Kepel ritiene che il salafismo abbia raggiunto il suo apice in Francia tra il 2005 e il 2015, periodo in cui i musulmani erano alla ricerca di sotto-società religiose. Lo studioso ritiene che l'ideologia di Abu Musab Al Suri sia un modello di riferimento per i jihadisti di terza generazione ed è questa ideologia che ha ispirato gli attacchi dal 2012 in poi. Egli ritiene che l'obiettivo di questa ideologia sia quello di provocare "guerre tra enclaves che porterebbero alla distruzione dell'Occidente" e questo attraverso attacchi terroristici, come abbiamo visto negli ultimi anni, nei Paesi europei per alimentare la discriminazione religiosa nei confronti di chi è di fede islamica. Kepel intende quindi il ruolo dell'ideologia salafita come collegamento tra generazioni di jihadisti, concentrandosi in particolare sull'ideologia di Al Suri e sull'importanza del compito dei mentori nel portare potenziali jihadisti alla radicalizzazione.

Il secondo capitolo del mio elaborato esaminerà una serie di casi di studio per dimostrare la validità della tesi sviluppata da Oliver Roy. Durante l'ondata di attentati del 1995, spicca la figura di Khaled Kelkal. Egli è arrivato al terrorismo passando prima per la piccola criminalità. Secondo Kelkal, il sistema giuridico non ama gli arabi, rendendo la giustizia ingiusta. Il suo estremismo sarà alimentato dai suoi sentimenti antiggiuridici. Egli rappresenta il primo terrorista islamico di casa nostra, nato dal sistema carcerario francese. Kelkal, infatti, all'inizio appare come uno dei tanti piccoli criminali della periferia di Lione, ben integrato e persino un ottimo studente. Nel periodo dell'adolescenza il giovane inizia a sentirsi diverso e a commettere i primi reati, come il furto, fino a quando nel 1990 viene arrestato e,

l'anno successivo, condannato a quattro anni di carcere. Durante i giorni di detenzione, Kelkal si trovò a condividere la cella con un musulmano che probabilmente fu la causa del suo reclutamento. Infatti, in carcere sembra che Kelkal sia stato richiamato alla religione da un islamista algerino. Infatti, non appena rilasciato, ebbe il desiderio di recarsi in Algeria per avvicinarsi a quello che riteneva essere il vero Islam.

Sulla base della teoria di Oliver Roy, secondo cui il fondamentalismo non è la causa principale della radicalizzazione perché ritiene che non sia sufficiente a produrre violenza, possiamo vedere come, nel caso analizzato di Kelkal, questa teoria venga messa in pratica. I radicalizzati di seconda generazione sono cresciuti in quartieri residenziali proprio come Kelkal e, in una fase successiva, hanno iniziato a commettere piccoli reati. Questo dimostra, come sostiene Roy, che i rivoluzionari non provengono mai da classi oppresse. Il terrorista in analisi, dopo essere stato ammesso in un'ottima scuola superiore del quartiere, ha iniziato a non sentirsi più accettato, dando così inizio alla sua ribellione che lo ha portato in prigione. È stato attraverso il piccolo crimine che è entrato nella porta principale del terrorismo, iniziando il suo processo di radicalizzazione in carcere. All'epoca, infatti, gli islamisti arrivarono massicciamente nelle carceri francesi e cominciarono a convertire al jihadismo i criminali con cui erano detenuti, tuttavia Kelkal rappresenta esattamente quello che è successo. Il terrorista si sentiva parte di una società che riteneva lo avesse rifiutato e il suo obiettivo era quello di tornare nel suo Paese per vivere la sua vera vita. In definitiva, l'esame di questo caso ci permette di avere una maggiore comprensione dei fattori osservabili che possono portare alla radicalizzazione. Come risultato della tesi di Oliver Roy, è chiaro che i radicali cercano di realizzare il loro ideale di coraggio patologico piuttosto che islamizzare le civiltà. In questo scenario, si riferiscono a un equipaggiamento islamico che fornisce soluzioni alle loro domande. Secondo l'approccio di Kelkal, l'Islam sarebbe solo un'opportunità presentata in uno scenario instabile, piuttosto che il fondamento che porterebbe alla radicalizzazione.

Studierò il caso dei fratelli Kouachi, responsabili dell'attentato a Charlie Hebdo; il caso dei fratelli Abdeslam responsabili di una serie di attacchi tra cui il massacro di Bataclan e, infine l'ultimo paragrafo del capitolo si concentrerà sul

modello DRIA elaborato da Alessandro Orsini, fornendo diversi esempi di individui radicalizzati tra cui Michael Bibeau e Mohamed Merah. Dunque, come sostiene lo studioso francese Roy, dallo studio di questi casi emerge che non esiste un profilo terroristico standard, ma ci sono elementi comuni, e i casi dimostrati lo dimostrano.

Infine, il terzo capitolo della mia tesi si focalizzerà sui casi di studio per dimostrare la validità della teoria di Gilles Kepel. Ho analizzato diversi casi specifici di persone coinvolte nel terrorismo negli ultimi 20 anni dal suo punto di vista. Nei casi che verranno analizzati, si può notare che l'autore si concentra sul fatto che il salafismo ha raggiunto il suo picco in Francia tra il 2005 e il 2015, quando i musulmani partivano per le terre musulmane per soddisfare i loro bisogni religiosi. Così, come sostenuto dallo studioso francese, emerge con forza l'importanza di internet nella mobilitazione dei giovani musulmani, che li ha portati a aderire alla "terza ondata di jihadismo". Analizzerò casi come, per esempio, quello del terrorista Mehdi Nemmouche, l'autore dell'attacco al museo ebraico di Bruxelles del 2014, fino al gruppo di Forsane Alizza. In Francia, Forsane Alizza è più conosciuta per i suoi discorsi controversi e i video di propaganda che per gli atti di violenza. Il gruppo ha sostenuto l'attuazione della sharia islamica in tutto il mondo e l'istituzione di un califfato islamico in Francia. Dalla sua fondazione nel 2010, Forsane Alizza ha organizzato proteste su questioni come la restrizione di indossare il velo in pubblico. I membri dell'organizzazione si definiscono islamisti estremi e utilizzano un vocabolario mutuato dal salafismo jihadista (che unisce salafismo e jihadismo). Osama bin Laden e le organizzazioni affiliate ad Al Qaeda sono i loro eroi. Mohamed Achamlane ha esordito nel campo clandestino del fondamentalismo di protesta all'inizio del 2010. Durante l'adolescenza, questo francese di padre marocchino si è immerso superficialmente nell'Islam. Di fondamentale rilievo il ruolo di internet e dei social network, il gruppo ha rapidamente creato un sito web, www.forsanealizza.com, che ha attirato l'attenzione dei media per il suo discorso eccezionalmente odioso. Sul suo sito web, Forsane Alizza ha incoraggiato il pubblico a respingere la legislazione che vieta di esporre segni religiosi negli spazi pubblici il 13 settembre 2010.

L'organizzazione è stata maggiormente coinvolta nella guerra virtuale su Internet, che Kepel definisce cyber-jihad. Forsane Alizza è stato il primo gruppo

islamista francese a promuovere la violenza su Internet, a razionalizzarla metodicamente e a minacciare costantemente di infliggerla, senza mai farlo. Forsane Alizza è stata una figura chiave nella transizione dal jihadismo degli anni '90 al decennio in cui la guerra civile algerina si è riversata in Francia sotto la guida di Khaled Kelkal. Come sostiene Gilles Kepel, dal 2010 sono stati lanciati numerosi segnali d'allarme che indicavano che un certo tipo di discorso salafita nella sfera pubblica, sul web e sui social media stava tendendo verso la violenza, accompagnando la creazione di reti jihadiste clandestine che hanno temprato un'avanguardia di militanti. In quell'anno, l'ascesa della politica dell'identità ha dato impulso alla prominenza degli indicatori di islamizzazione nelle banlieues. L'obiettivo era quello di radicalizzare le persone ai margini della religione, eccitandole con denunce dell'oppressione che l'Islam dovrà affrontare in Francia, soprannominata "islamofobia".

In definitiva, gli studi intrapresi per la stesura di questo documento evidenziano come, nel contesto del terrorismo islamista, ci troviamo di fronte a un'islamizzazione del radicalismo, e questa teoria conferma la tesi sostenuta dallo studioso Oliver Roy. Roy ritiene infatti che il fenomeno del terrorismo sia un fenomeno generazionale, in cui chi decide di radicalizzarsi lo fa come segno di ribellione senza una specifica causa di fondo, ma trova la sua motivazione nell'Islam radicale. Questi giovani decidono quindi di rivolgersi a queste organizzazioni per sperimentare la propria realizzazione personale. L'estremista classico è un giovane immigrato o un convertito di seconda generazione con scarsa formazione religiosa e una traiettoria di conversione/riconversione rapida e recente, più comunemente nell'ambiente di un gruppo di amici o su Internet che nell'ambiente di una moschea. La religione è raramente nascosta, ma piuttosto esibita, ma questo non implica sempre la pratica religiosa. Allo stesso tempo, è evidente che la determinazione dei radicali a identificarsi con la jihad e a rivendicare l'appartenenza a un'organizzazione islamica radicale non è puramente opportunistica: il legame con l'Islam distingue la jihad da altre forme di violenza perpetrate dai giovani. Lo studio della vita di questi giovani terroristi dimostra che non sono religiosi, il problema non è quindi nell'Islam come religione, ma nel fenomeno del terrorismo che abbraccia la vulnerabilità dei giovani. Gli attacchi terroristici che hanno colpito

l'Occidente dimostrano anche come i terroristi dietro questi attacchi siano nati e cresciuti in Occidente.

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To the victims of terrorism, so that “it does not happen again”.