



ISLAMISM AS SOCIAL MOVEMENT

I

Thomas Olesen

**Social Movement Theory and
Radical Islamic Activism**

II

Farhad Khosrokhavar

**Jihadism in
Europe and the Middle East**

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Islamism and Radicalisation – *the Denmark School*

The ambition of the Denmark School is to remedy the fragmentation between different fields of research in Islamism. The Denmark School wants to explore the phenomena of 'Islamism' in its different manifestations and to highlight the mechanisms of radicalisation processes among Muslim youth in Europe. One of the innovative approaches is the linkage between 'soft security' and 'hard security'. While other projects mainly focus on terrorism, this project first of all focuses on Islamism. The identification of Islamism requires a distinction between three possible phases: 1) ideology, 2) movements and 3) political regimes.

The study of Islamism in international relations is usually limited to treating only one aspect of Islamism as a transnational actor, namely terrorism and the corresponding anti-terror measures. But Islamist ambitions and strategies are expressed through a number of other means, such as foreign policy, boycotts, crises, strategic alliances and perhaps even the acquisition of WMD. These must be mapped in order to provide an empirical basis for studying contemporary Islamist world views and conceptions of international relations.

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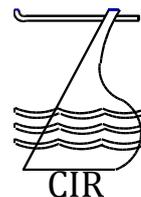
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SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND RADICAL ISLAMIC ACTIVISM

Thomas Olesen (*)

Abstract

The aim of this working paper is to demonstrate how theoretical tools from the social movement literature can contribute to the analysis of radical Islamic activism. Four types of explanations are suggested. First, an individual and socio-psychological explanation focusing on identity pressure and transformation at the individual and group levels. Second, a network and organization explanation with two main elements: the importance of personal networks in recruitment and the role played by existing institutions and organizations (e.g. mosques and prisons) in recruitment processes. Third, a structural and political environment explanation that considers two things: how radical activism is shaped through its interaction with authorities and by the public debate climate. Fourth, a media and communication explanation with two emphases: the use of symbols in radical activist communication and the importance of communication technologies (the Internet) and a new and more complex global media infrastructure.

Introduction

A central concern in social movement research over the last 40 years has been to explain why some people choose to participate in activism while others – the majority – do not. This research has focused on secular red, green and rights activism; or to put it slightly provocatively, research has focused on the kinds of activism that scholars sympathize with. At the current juncture, however, there is growing interest in Islamic activism within the movement field (e.g. Koopmans et al. 2005; Lindekilde 2008; McDonald 2006; Olesen 2007a, b; Snow and Byrd 2007; Sutton and Vertigans 2005; Tarrow 2005; Wiktorowicz 2004).

Developments in the social movement field have always been inspired by real-life events. For example, it was the growth of civil society activism in the 1960s in Europe and the United States that gave birth to modern social movement theory. More recently, the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 unleashed an avalanche of works on globalization and activism. The present surge of interest in radical Islamic activism within social movement studies is clearly inspired by 9/11 and the subsequent sequence of terrorist acts. This means that movement scholars are relative newcomers to a debate with much deeper academic and historical roots than 9/11. Kurzman (2004: 295), for example, points to the Iranian revolution in 1979 as a key instigator of interest in the political aspects of Islam. The debate about political Islam, on the other hand, has developed more or less in isolation from social movement theory, although there are increasing signs that the students of political Islam (this category also includes policy advisors and intelligence services) outside the movement field are beginning to engage with this body of theory (e.g. Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008).

Social movement scholars enjoy a strong theoretical foundation from which to address the debate about radical Islamic activism in this new situation. Despite the fact that the field's theories have been developed in relation to other forms of activism, this paper argues that they have substantial insights to offer to the study of radical Islamic activism.

Consequently, the aim of the paper is to provide an overview of the existing social movement theory with relevance for the study of Islamic activism in general and Islamic radicalization processes in particular. It is hoped that a review of this kind could serve as a toolbox for future studies of radical Islamic activism wishing to engage with social movement theory.¹

The paper identifies four types of explanations of recruitment and radicalization: 1) individual and socio-psychological explanations; 2) organization and network explanations; 3) structural and political environment explanations; and 4) media and communication explanations. This distinction structures the paper and serves to provide the broadest possible view of recruitment and radicalization in Islamic activism (see the following section for a more detailed discussion of the paper's scope and understanding of the research object). Each of the four sections has two parts. The first provides a presentation of the theoretical foundations in social movement theory. The second discusses how these theoretical insights might benefit the study of Islamic recruitment and radicalization. This latter discussion will be based primarily on secondary evidence from a variety of sources.² Before proceeding, clarifying a number of definitional points is necessary.

Definitions and Scope

This section addresses the following definitional issues: 1) defining recruitment and radicalization; 2) distinguishing between Islamic activism and radicalized Islamic activism; 3) viewing political Islam as a multifaceted phenomenon.

Recruitment and Radicalization

The independent variables discussed in the paper are recruitment and radicalization. Recruitment is the process through which individuals become part of a collective and come to share the views and goals of this collective. The paper uses the terms "organization" and "network" to refer to such collectives.³ Recruitment to activism is a voluntary decision on the part of the individual. The individual, however, can be more or less proactive in the process. At least three ideal-typical pathways to recruitment can be specified: 1) individuals identify an organization they sympathize with and approach it; 2) organizations actively seek out potential recruits; 3) individuals are recruited through friendship and family networks (these pathways are discussed in greater detail below). Recruitment is a general process occurring in all forms of collective activism. Radicalization, on the other hand, is the process through which individuals and organizations adopt violent strategies – or threaten to do so – in order to achieve political goals. Radicalization can occur on both the individual and organizational levels. In some cases, only some individuals within an organization will opt for a radical approach (typically creating inter-organizational conflict). In other cases, an entire organization can develop a radical approach. Radicalization therefore primarily occurs within organizations, i.e. after recruitment has taken place (though there are examples of individuals committing radical acts without being part of an organization; see below).

The term violence can cover various political expressions (e.g. property damage). In the context of this paper, the term is used mainly to identify actions designed to physically harm or kill people. There is an important analytical (not moral!) distinction to be made here between violent actions aimed at political opponents and actions aimed at random individuals. The latter has been the standard in most terrorist acts since 9/11, although these individuals may not be "random" from the terrorists' perspective. In the 2002 Bali bombings, for example, bombs were used to harm Western tourists viewed as symbols of

unwanted influences on Islam and Muslim countries. Legitimizing violence as a political strategy often functions through a classification of “the enemy” as unworthy and outside the remit of humane treatment. Humanity is divided between “them” and “us”; and in the case of religiously inspired violence, between true believers and infidels (see below).

Islamic Activism vs. Radicalized Islamic Activism

It is of utmost importance to underline that only a small minority of what we could term Islamic activism is in fact radical in the sense proposed above. Islamic activism can be defined as activism where Islam forms the ideological basis of an organization. In such organizations, Islam structures the organization’s diagnosis and critique of society and its visions for social, cultural and political change. Due to the contested nature of Islam itself, the Islamic component can assume a variety of expressions. As with all religious complexes, differing and conflicting interpretations exist and clash with each other (see e.g. Wiktorowicz 2004). Some organizations and ideologues thus use Islam to legitimize violence against infidels (which can also include Muslims of other denominations), while others – the majority – find no basis for violence in religious texts. In fact, radicalization processes often involve an increasingly violent interpretation of Islam and Islamic texts on the part of individuals and/or organizations. The paper focuses on the radicalization processes that are typically referred to as homegrown. “Homegrown radicalization” involves individuals born and raised in the West.

The Multifaceted Nature of Radical Islamic Activism

While there are arguably common traits among radical Islamic organizations, we should be careful to treat the phenomenon as multifaceted. As suggested above, for example, there are important struggles over definitions and interpretations within and between Islamic organizations. A one-dimensional perspective can have undesirable consequences on at least two levels. First, the aim of research must be to identify and analyze social complexity. This is potentially hampered if we adopt an a priori understanding of the phenomena we are studying. One of the strengths of social movement theory is a fine-grained theoretical apparatus enabling researchers to identify and analyze a variety of factors affecting recruitment and radicalization. The four sets of factors presented in the introduction are precisely meant to offer a multidimensional view of recruitment and activism, with explanatory factors ranging from the individual to the structural levels. Explanations of recruitment and radicalization must consequently be sought in the interplay between these factors. This interplay is never static, but varies over time and space and between individual cases of recruitment and radicalization. The paper thus discards any ambition to propose a general theory or mechanistic pattern of recruitment and radicalization in Islamic activism. The second problem with a one-dimensional perspective is the potential political consequences. If we overly reduce the complexity of the phenomenon being studied, we risk creating a weak basis for political decisions and, perhaps worse, further fueling political conflict.⁴

Explaining Recruitment and Radicalization in Islamic Activism

The remainder of the paper draws on insights from social movement theory to shed light on and develop propositions about recruitment and radicalization in Islamic activism. Four types of explanations are identified (see Figure 1). None of these explanations, as already suggested, can stand alone in the analysis of recruitment and radicalization. The following discussion therefore offers a toolbox of theories and explanations that can be combined in various ways in empirical analyses of recruitment and radicalization.

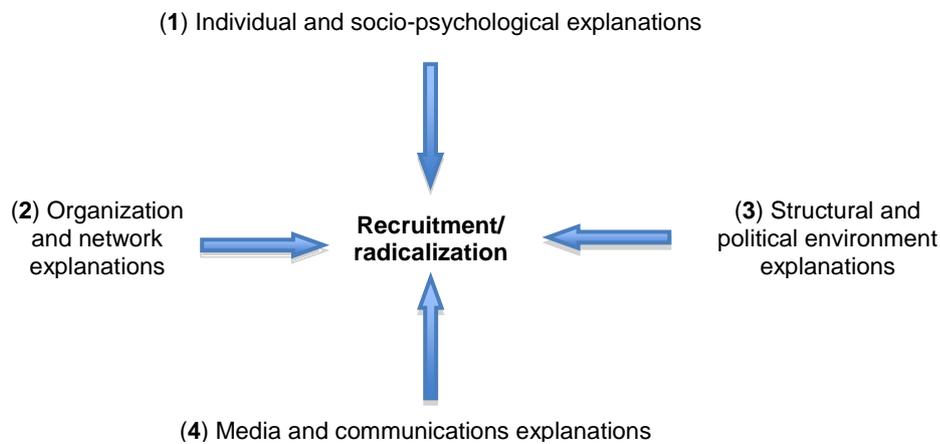


Figure 1. Explanation types in relation to radical Islamic activism.

1. Individual and Socio-psychological Explanations

This type of explanation focuses on the identity characteristics and transformations of the activists who turn to radical Islam. It is important to avoid psychological reductionism by noting that such a perspective does not suggest that we can identify a certain radical psychology shared by all individuals engaged in radical Islamic activism. In particular, we should avoid equating radical or terrorist activism with mental illness (Crenshaw 1992: 30). Recent studies based on profiles of radical Islamists found no tendency towards mental illness (Bakker 2006: 47; Sageman 2004: 80-91). Rather, the section focuses on the interaction between the social environment, individual choice and identity formation. Thus, even if the perspective is decidedly socio-psychological, it can never in itself explain radicalization; socio-psychological explanations must always be used in theoretical combination with non-psychological explanations

Insights from Social Movement Research

The following discussion has four parts: first, it is discussed whether some social groups are more available to (radical) activism than others; second, it brings attention to the importance of personal experiences with state repression; third, it addresses the role of social and cultural strain in relation to activism and radicalization; fourth, it examines the identity transformations occurring in the process towards radicalization.

Biographical availability. It is difficult to find patterns of commonality among activists in modern societies. However, there appears to be some agreement that many activists are recruited from the group that McAdam (1986) refers to as the biographically available and Snow et al. (1980) the structurally available. Biographical and structural availability points to the fact that activism requires the investment of substantial time resources. As will be discussed below, since radical activism is especially demanding in this regard, such observations are probably even more pertinent for this type of activism. According to McAdam (1986: 70), biographical availability “can be defined as the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage and family responsibilities”. Consequently, “some individuals will be more available for movement exploration and

participation” (Snow et al. 1980: 793) than others. Individuals possessing these characteristics are primarily found among the young.

Personal experiences and grievances. In her study of leftwing radicalism in Italy and Germany in the 1960s-1980s, della Porta (1995) points out the importance of personal experiences and grievances as a precursor for radicalization. The biographies of these activists reveal that early personal experiences with police brutality and a general sense of disillusionment with the legitimacy of the state gradually nudged them towards a radical outlook (della Porta 1995: 139, 143). The path to radicalization thus involves a rejection of the political order. Many of the activists in della Porta’s (1995: 168-169) study decided to join underground organizations following the arrests or deaths of friends and other activists.

Strain and deprivation. The sociology of activism redefined itself in the 1970s. Earlier approaches were criticized for adopting a functional and non-rationalist perspective on activism. These approaches were broadly labelled “collective behaviour” (e.g. Blumer 1951; Turner and Killian 1987; Smelser 1962). They generally perceived activism as a result of social breakdown and/or experiences of strain and deprivation at the individual or group level.⁵ Conversely, the new focus was on activists as rational actors pursuing well-defined goals through cost-benefit calculations (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978). Activism was increasingly viewed as a normal aspect of politics in modern democracies, not a sign of social disorder and imbalance. While this “clash” between perspectives certainly paved the way for new and more modern understandings of activism, it may also have discredited strain and deprivation approaches beyond the theoretically defensible.⁶

In particular, it could be argued that the growing cultural complexity of many Western societies is creating a situation of heightened feelings of cultural strain. Strain theories emphasize how activism results from social breakdown, i.e. a disruption of social and/or everyday routines and expectations. Deprivation and strain can occur, for example, when a group is deprived of certain benefits it has come to expect. This also means that these processes often have a socio-economic dimension. However, strain can also have a cultural dimension when a cultural minority group (e.g. Muslims in Western countries) encounters pressures regarding their rights and/or a hostile public climate. As discussed below, this pressure can be unevenly distributed across generations.

Identity transformation processes. Radical activists and organizations usually have a tense relationship with authorities. Depending on their character and the society in which they are active, they may be subject to a range of measures spanning from surveillance to outright repression and persecution. Consequently, radical organizations and their activists exist in relative isolation from the outside world. This social isolation fosters a number of dynamics that could be seen as conducive to radicalization processes (della Porta 1995: 110-116). In her research on radical leftwing organizations, della Porta (1995: 136) describes the identity and worldview transformations occurring on the path towards radical activism: “Conversion to violence requires a specific redefinition of reality, which the individual arrives at by adopting new beliefs and values”. The emergence of such countercultures involve, among other things, a dichotomous view of the world in which the organization is increasingly seen as a harbour of truth and the good, while the rest of society is evil and misled (della Porta 1995: 133, 172-173). In its most extreme versions, such transformations also involve what della Porta refers to as the depersonalization or dehumanization of the organization’s enemies (see Bandura (1990) for an extended treatment of the dehumanization processes in terrorist organizations). The enemy is placed in a different moral category, which legitimates the use of violent actions against individuals and groups considered to belong to this category (della Porta

1995: 173). As suggested above, such processes are allowed to occur partly due to the social isolation of the organization. In other words, the development of alternative worldviews and the dissolution of mainstream moral standards is not questioned by exposure to different views. The organization becomes a closed moral and political circuit (della Porta 1995: 180). In this environment, the social pressure towards conformity to the organization's analyses and goals is obviously strong. The life of the activist becomes increasingly subordinated to the organization's demands: "Once having joined an underground group, the activists would be required to participate at increasingly demanding levels of activity, whether in terms of the risk or the time involved" (della Porta 1995: 179). Activism consequently absorbs all of the activist's energy and encompasses almost all life aspects (della Porta 1995: 149-150).

The transformations described above are socio-psychological in the sense that they manifest themselves both at the individual and group levels. They are, in other words, personal changes; but personal changes taking place within a group. Consequently, some of these themes will also be taken up in the section on organization and networks.

Implications for the Study of Recruitment and Radicalization in Islamic Activism

In line with the structure of the section above, the following discussion focuses on 1) age, family and education/employment characteristics, 2) personal experiences and grievances, 3) cultural strain, and 4) the identity transformation processes in radical organizations.

Age, family and education/employment characteristics. Radical Islamic activism seems to conform to the pattern of biographical availability described in the preceding section in that the majority of activists are young. Bakker (2006: 48) for example, reports an average age of 27.3 years in his sample of Islamic terrorists, while Sageman (2004: 92) finds an average of 25.69 years. The two studies, however, also provide inconclusive evidence in relation to the theory of biographical availability. Sageman's (2004: 79) study thus finds that most of the radical Islamists in his study were married. This stands in some contrast to Bakker (2006: 47), who reports a lower number.⁷ In terms of educational and job status, results are not conclusive either. A rather large number of the individuals in the Bakker (2006: 47) and Sageman (2004: 94-95) samples were unemployed (about 15% in Bakker's study), but most had either full-time or part-time jobs. With family and job responsibilities characterizing many of the samples, the biographically availability of the individuals studied by Bakker and Sageman was limited.

Proposition 1.1. The theory of biographical availability may only offer a partial explanation of recruitment in relation to radical Islamic activism.

Personal experiences and grievances. The evidence regarding this factor also appears to be inconclusive. In a study partly supporting some of the della Porta findings reported in the theoretical section, Kushner (1996), for example, finds that potential suicide bombers have usually had friends and/or relatives killed or injured by authorities. In contrast, Sageman's study (2004) paints a picture of radical Islamists involved in terror activities as having lived rather peaceful and well-integrated lives until the point of radicalization and terrorism. This insight is based on some of the personal characteristics related to job

and family status reported above. On this basis, it is difficult to conclude that radicalization presupposes direct or indirect experiences of state repression.

Proposition 1.2. Direct or indirect experiences with state repression as an explanation of recruitment to radical Islamic activism only finds inconclusive support.

Cultural strain. The young generation of Muslims in Western countries often has a particularly complex cultural and identity position. The ICSR (2007: 29) report thus identifies “a widening gulf between the younger generation and the generation which initially settled in Europe”. The younger generation, born and raised in a different country than their parents, do not share the same attachment to the country of origin and therefore often experience a distance to the cultural and religious beliefs of their parents and the cultural institutions established by the first generations (AIVD 2006: 30-32). At the same time, they often feel only partly integrated in the “new” country. They are, in popular terms, split between two worlds, experiencing what was referred to in the literature review as cultural strain: “This places individuals in a position where they risk becoming more susceptible to extremist messages or getting involved with extremist groups, who offer to fill the identity void by providing the purpose and the role within their group” (ICSR 2007: 30). According to the AIVD (2006: 36), the search for identity thus becomes “dominated by feelings of resentment and wounded pride”, feelings further exacerbated by “integration and discrimination-related problems”. This identity void is often filled using references to the ummah (Precht 2007: 43; Taarnby 2005: 33). The ummah is a universal category uniting all true believers across national differences. The idea of the ummah thus allows the individual to find identity beyond both the country and culture of their parents and the country and culture in which they have been born and raised (ICSR 2007: 41, 46) (the concept of the ummah is further discussed in the section on media and communication).

Proposition 1.3. Experiences of cultural strain and identity crisis may make some individuals more susceptible to Islamic activism and radicalization.

The experience of cultural strain is evidently not in itself a cause of radicalization. As emphasized in the section on networks below, a limited segment of any given population turns to activism, and an even smaller segment to radical activism. Cultural strain therefore always works in combination with some of the factors described in the following sections.

Group processes and identity transformation. The strong socialization tendencies detected by della Porta (1995) in leftwing radical organizations also appear to be central in radical Islamic organizations. Moreover, they seem to work in combination with some of the factors described in relation to cultural strain. For individuals suffering an identity and integration crisis of the type outlined above, the radical organization thus offers to quench “the material and immaterial longings of the individual” and provide new self-esteem (ICSR 2007: 42). In this manner, the organization becomes a second family, especially for those who have severed ties with their family on the path towards radicalization.

Proposition 1.4. Radical organizations embrace most aspects of activists' lives and provide their primary social bonds in a situation of cultural strain.

These group dynamics also involve an increasing isolation from general society: “[T]he nature of the religious ideology and practices that are being embraced forces recruits to...isolate themselves from the society in which they live” (ICSR 2007: 44). The isolation rests on a division between the organization’s “true” interpretation of Islam and the infidel. From this perspective, “close interaction with society at large not only makes no sense, it is negative and potentially dangerous” (ICSR 2007: 44-45). In the case of Islamic radicalism, the category of the infidel not only includes persons belonging to other religions, but also Muslims with conflicting interpretations of Islam. It seems as though the sense that Islam is under threat and pressure is an important element in the world views being developed in radical Islamic organizations. Radical and violent responses are therefore presented as defensive (ICSR 2007: 45). As in the case of the leftwing organizations studied by della Porta, radical Islamic organizations thus develop alternative worldviews resting on sharp divisions between right and wrong and between those possessing true insight (the group) and the infidels with distorted understandings (everyone else). These processes are exacerbated by the pressures that authorities direct towards radical organizations. In other words, the existence of threats leads to increasing isolation and more closed-circuit social processes (the question of outside threat and authority response is discussed in greater detail in the section on structure and political environment).⁸

Proposition 1.5. The organizational dynamics in radical Islamic activism involves social isolation and a division of the world between true believers (the organization) and infidels.

2. Organization and Network Explanations

This type of explanation focuses on the collective and relational aspects of recruitment and radicalization. The guiding idea is that people are primarily recruited to activism through already-existing networks, organizations and institutions. The perspective marks an important step beyond the individual and socio-psychological explanation. In other words, even if the decision to become engaged in activism is an individual and voluntary act that might be facilitated by some of the personal traits and strains discussed in the preceding section, actual recruitment is a genuinely social and relational phenomenon.

Insights from Social Movement Research

Organizational and network factors in the explanation of recruitment are often referred to in the movement literature as mobilizing structures. McAdam and his colleagues (1996: 3) define mobilizing structures as “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action”. Two distinctions ought to be noted: one between the informal and formal character of mobilizing structures and the other between non-movement and movement aspects (McCarthy 1996: 145). In the following discussion, emphasis will be on 1) informal networks and 2) churches/mosques.

Informal personal networks. One of the established insights in movement research is that people are often recruited to activism through their networks of friends, family and

colleagues (e.g. della Porta 1992, 1995; Fernandez and McAdam 1988; Gerlach and Hine 1970; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; McAdam 1982, 1986; McCarthy 1996; Tilly 1978; Snow et al. 1980). As suggested above, network explanations are critical of individual and socio-psychological explanations of recruitment: “However reasonable the underlying assumption that some people are more susceptible than others to movement participation, that view deflects attention from the fact that recruitment cannot occur without prior contact with a recruitment agent” (Snow et al. 1980: 789). The insight here is that the pool of potential activists in a society is always much larger than the number of actual activists.

Klandermans and Oegema (1987) provide a view of the pathways between potential participants and actual participation. First, they speak of an organization’s mobilization potential, i.e. the entire part of a population potentially sympathetic towards the organization. Second, only some of these potential recruits become targets of recruitment attempts through personal relationships or via the media. Third, in the remaining group directly or indirectly targeted by the organization, only some will be inclined to actually participate. Fourth, even if a person is (a) positively inclined towards the organization, (b) targeted by it, and (c) willing to participate, this does not necessarily lead to participation: “Willingness is a necessary but insufficient condition of participation” (Klandermans and Oegema 1987: 520). In order to make the last step, the potential recruit must overcome what Klandermans and Oegema refer to as “barriers to participation”. These could be practical barriers such as family, work and education commitments.

In terms of the discussion about networks, the Klandermans and Oegema four-step model is particularly relevant on two points: The second step they identify (recruitment networks and mobilization attempts) involves the question of whether or not an individual comes into direct or indirect contact with an organization. In this context, direct contact is the most relevant (indirect contact is treated in greater detail in the section on media and communication explanations). This is so because an important – and perhaps most important – means of coming into contact with an organization is through one’s personal networks. Here, it becomes useful to draw a distinction between recruitment to activism in general and recruitment to high risk activism. As the term indicates, high risk activism involves risks for participants, such as for example physical injury or imprisonment (McAdam 1986: 67). In light of the paper’s focus on radicalization, this distinction is particularly pertinent. Because of its usually conflict-ridden relationship with authorities, radical activism involves considerable risks for participants. It also means that organizations of this kind cannot always recruit publicly in the same manner as non-radical organizations – at least not directly (as discussed later, however, they can do so indirectly through the media). Della Porta’s (1995) analysis of recruitment to the radical Left in Germany and Italy in the 1960s to 1980s offers an instructive case of high risk activism. In these cases, she says, “the decision to join an underground organization was rarely an individual one. For most of the militants, it involved cliques of friends. Like recruitment in religious sects, recruitment in political sects is facilitated by friendship ties” (della Porta 1995: 167). Her research on the Italian case thus shows that out of 1,214 participants, 843 had at least one already-participating friend. The lack of opportunities for public recruitment and the danger of repression and detection/capture by authorities require radical organizations to grant great consideration to security when recruiting. In turn, this calls for “strong confidence ties between recruiters and recruits” (della Porta 1992: 9). Such ties of confidence are primarily present and constructed in already-existing networks.

The above observation primarily views the problematique from the organization’s perspective. But the issue of high-risk activism and recruitment also points back to the

fourth step in the Klandermans-Oegema model: barriers to participation as seen from the perspective of the potential participant. High risk activism will typically require greater commitment from the participant than “normal” activism (e.g. participating in a legal demonstration or becoming a member of a legal and accepted organization). In other words, the costs of participating – and therefore also the barriers to participation – are potentially higher; especially in cases where activism must be clandestine in order to avoid repression or detection and capture by authorities. Barriers to participation can be tangible factors such as time and money, but they also involve a constructed dimension. As Klandermans and Oegema (1987: 520) observe: “The more people are motivated, the higher the barriers they can overcome”. The point to be made in continuation of this insight is that motivation can be strengthened by networks. McAdam’s study of recruitment to high-risk activism in the American Civil Rights movement confirms this tendency. McAdam investigated a group of volunteers being trained for activism in the American South. Out of an initial group of 1,068 volunteers, 239 eventually withdrew from participation. Based on questionnaires filled out by the volunteers, McAdam (1986: 79-80) was able to conclude that withdrawals had considerably fewer contacts with other volunteers in the group or other activists in general than had those who stayed to become part of the campaign. This observation suggests an identity aspect of recruitment. In other words, choosing not to participate when others in one’s friendship network do so can have undesirable effects on the non-participating individual’s identity. Being part of a network thus creates pressure towards participation by increasing the identity costs of non-participation (Friedman and McAdam 1992: 163-164). Choosing to participate under such circumstances thus represents a rational choice for the individual, but one shaped by their embeddedness in social networks.

Rather than risk losing a cherished identity by not participating, being part of a network with proximity to an organization can also create positive incentives for participation. In her interviews with radical leftwing activists, della Porta (1995: 177) found repeated mention of the affective rewards of participation. The organization was viewed as a second family or brotherhood. Because of the constant threat from authorities and the resulting clandestinity, these partly clandestine organizations gradually came to structure all aspects of the participant’s life (della Porta 1995: 179).⁹ Life was lived in and with the organization. For an outside observer with some access to the organization via personal networks, these affective rewards may appear attractive (this attraction may be particularly strong for individuals experiencing the cultural strains discussed earlier in the paper). If this is the case, the individual’s motivation for participation increases while the barrier for participation correspondingly decreases. In fact, and as suggested in the section on individual and socio-psychological factors, radicalization appears to occur in parallel with a substantial change in the individual’s perceptions and worldview. Such conversions are most likely to take place in relatively closed environments.

Organizations and institutions. In contrast to personal networks, organizations and institutions are a formal type of mobilizing structure. The guiding idea behind this argument is that activism is more likely to occur – or at least more likely to occur faster – in social settings with a dense organizational and institutional structure. Formal mobilizing structures can cover both movement and non-movement forms. Formal and movement types of mobilizing structures include all forms of civil society-based organizations in a specific setting or community. By stressing their location in a specific community, it is suggested that mobilizing structures in a society are highly diverse in the sense that they follow certain social, cultural and political identity cleavages. In his study of the mobilization of the American Civil Rights Movement, McAdam (1982) thus identified a set of central civil society organizations specific to the black community in the American South. Similarly, working class activism in the early 20th century also had its own distinct mobilizing structures (unions and clubs). This indicates that activism is a

social learning process. In other words, the existing mobilizing structures are the legacy of previous activism and mobilization. As organizational density in a society and/or community grows, the number of interaction and recruitment channels for potential activists increases.

For example, the formal and non-movement form of mobilizing structures includes churches. Again, McAdam's study of the American Civil Rights Movement is illuminating. McAdam describes how activists in the movement were often recruited through black churches. McAdam's (1982: 128) point is not that churchgoers had certain personal characteristics rendering them more prone to activism. Rather, the conversion from churchgoer to activist took place within the church: "Indeed, [...] it was not so much that movement participants were recruited from among the ranks of the churchgoers as it was a case of church membership being redefined to include movement participation as a primary requisite of the role" (McAdam 1982: 129). Such conversions require an active role to be played by religious leaders sympathetic to movement demands: "The actions of these leaders served to convey to their natural constituents the importance and legitimacy of the movement, thereby encouraging participation". In this way, McAdam says, movement leaders were able "to appropriate existing leader/follower relationships in the service of movement goals" (McAdam 1982: 132). Clearly, this type of recruitment is most likely to occur in communities where religious leaders enjoy considerable authority.

Implications for the Study of Recruitment and Radicalization in Islamic Activism

The insights from social movement theory presented above suggest a number of important points for students of radical Islamic activism. Following the structure of the preceding section, the focus will be, first, on the question of networks, and, second, on the role of organizational and institutional aspects of recruitment and radicalization.

The role of networks. Although the tracing of network relations in the case of Islamic recruitment and radicalization faces a number of methodological obstacles¹⁰, a deeper understanding of how people are recruited and eventually radicalized must deal with this aspect seriously. Even if it was possible to detect a number of personal socio-psychological traits in radicalized activists, it is not possible to elevate this to an explanation per se. This is not least so because radicalization is a minority phenomenon. As demonstrated by Klandermans and Oegema (1987) above, only a relatively small part of a given population engages in activism; moreover, only a fraction of this minority eventually choose radical activism. As suggested in the theoretical section, a network perspective is possibly even more relevant in the case of radical forms of activism. As a result of surveillance and persecution by authorities, organizations must be careful in their recruitment strategies and operate using inter-personal relations of confidence only found in networks. Bakker (2006: 49) and Sageman (2004: 107-113) find that kinship and friendship networks are the most important in relation to radical Islamic activism. It seems as though kinship ties play a relatively important role in radical Islamic activism. The ICSR (2007: 43) report thus finds that the organizational structure around the Madrid bombings in 2004 involved several groups of brothers.

Proposition 2.1. Due to the surveillance and/or persecution by authorities, recruitment to radical Islamic activism will tend to be based on existing interpersonal networks (especially friendship and kinship networks).

The most extreme form of radicalization is the process eventually resulting in acts of terrorism. A decision to opt for a terrorist strategy usually occurs in a small and relatively closed circle of close friends and/or relatives with an already-radicalized outlook (ICSR 2007: 43; Taarnby 2005: 24-25). This group will typically have split off from a larger network of people with radical views based in an organization or active in or around a mosque (see below for a discussion of the role of mosques). It seems plausible to expect that once such a close-knit group has formed, further recruitment is – for security reasons – no longer sought or accepted. The formation of such a group will also involve an intensification of the personal and collective worldview transformations described in the section on individual and socio-psychological factors (Taarnby 2005: 24).

Proposition 2.2. When the drive towards terrorism has been set in motion, the relevant group/organization becomes less open to recruitment.

This observation also marks a departure from the explanatory scope of the network approach. In fact, this phase could be seen as a form of “dropping out” from the social relationships inherent in networks. Seen from the perspective of authorities, it also becomes increasingly difficult to “detect” the group in this phase. According to Taarnby (2005: 24), however, the passage towards actual terrorism is not completed before the group comes into contact with what he calls a gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is someone with contacts to existing organizations (e.g. Al Qaeda) that are able to provide skills and resources for carrying out terrorist acts. However, the ICSR study suggests a different pattern, where terrorist groups do not spontaneously emerge out of radical networks; instead, they are the result of targeted recruitment efforts by an entrepreneur with already-existing ties to terrorist networks. On this basis, the entrepreneur begins “conscious efforts to recruit new members into the cell, such as by ‘spotting’ and ‘befriending’ people at mosques” (ICSR 2007: 37). The two studies thus indicate the possibility of distinguishing between top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

Proposition 2.3. Terrorist groups and activities can form in two ways: as a result of direct recruitment efforts by an entrepreneur with contacts to terrorist organizations (top-down) or through groups of friends who only make contact to terrorist organizations after a radical/terrorist outlook has developed and matured.

The above observations all have a group or organizational aspect. Even if still quite rare, recruitment can have a more individualized character. The ICSR (2007: 52) refers to this as virtual self-recruitment; virtual because the known instances of self-recruitment have occurred via the Internet. Thus, the focus on networks in recruitment and radicalization does not preclude individual acts of terrorism. The massive media attention to terrorism since 9/11 (see the section on media and communication explanations for a more detailed discussion of this aspect) and the availability of information about terrorism on the Internet provide many of the necessary resources, knowledge and inspiration to engage in terrorist acts on an individual level. Yet as the earlier discussions indicate, the decision to engage in terrorism or other radical forms of politics usually co-occurs with substantial transformations in the individual’s worldview. These transformations, in turn, develop through interaction with other people. Self-radicalization on the Internet is consequently unlikely (Precht 2007: 58). The AIVD (2006: 49) report, however, mentions a Dutch case where an individual had apparently “gone through the entire process of radicalization and

recruitment seated in front of the virtual world of his pc screen”. The individual had made threats against Hirsi Ali, a Dutch MP and world-renowned critic of Islam, and was found to be in possession of homemade explosives assembled using information found on the Internet (see also ICSR 2007: 52-54).

Proposition 2.4. Self-recruitment to terrorism via the Internet is possible, but rare; however, it may increase with the growing attention to and information flow related to terrorism.

Internet-based recruitment can also have a more social aspect. The social movement literature seems to be primarily concerned with already-existing personal networks as channels for recruitment. Nevertheless, the Internet may also offer a means to creating networks that might push the individual towards radicalization. Through chatrooms, discussion lists and different types of Web 2.0 applications (e.g. Facebook), individuals attracted to radical Islamic activism – but without already-existing personal or organizational contacts – may use the Internet to forge virtual relationships. What is interesting here is the potential for such virtual networks to also attain a physical dimension at a later point (ICSR 2007: 51; AIVD 2006: Ch. 4).

Proposition 2.5. Radical networks created in cyberspace may eventually be transformed into physical relationships where radicalization processes can continue and evolve.

The role of organizations and institutions. McAdam’s discussion of the importance of black churches for the mobilization of the American Civil Rights Movement has a relevant parallel in the role played by mosques in recruitment to radical Islamic activism. There are also a number of notable differences, however, which are discussed below.

The mosque plays an integral role in Muslim communities: “They are not just centres for worship and spiritual enrichment, but they also host educational activities, perform welfare functions, and serve as a gathering place for different generations” (ICSR 2007: 19). This makes mosques an ideal recruiting ground for activist entrepreneurs and an obvious place for the formation of radical groups and networks. As noted by the ICSR report (2007: 19), the mosques attract the segment of the Muslim population who are most likely to “be open to the religiously framed political message which Islamic militants hope to convey”. Evidence concerning the Hamburg group that was central in the 9/11 attacks on New York also suggest that the group’s core members embarked on a radical/terrorist path after beginning to attend the radical Al Quds mosque in Hamburg (Taarnby 2005: 21). Mosques are largely defined by their imams and, as noted in McAdam’s study of the black churches, leadership therefore plays a crucial role in the extent to which a mosque becomes a hub for radicalization processes (ICSR 2007: 33-36). The ICSR study mentions Al Quds in Hamburg, the Islamic Cultural Centre in Milan, and the Finsbury Park Mosque in London as radicalized mosques at the European level (ICSR 2007: 20). Societies and cities with radical mosques are hence more likely to experience patterns of radicalization (however, as will be discussed in the next section on the structural and political environment, authorities are increasingly aware of this role and therefore practice surveillance and infiltration that may render mosques less attractive for recruitment and radical development (ICSR 2007: 22; Precht 2007: 63-66)).

Proposition 2.6. Radical mosques provide a conducive social environment for recruitment to Islamic activism and radicalization.

However, most mosques are not radical. It is therefore useful to heed Taarnby's (2005: 40) advice that we do not view mosques as recruiting centres in any general sense. This obviously depends strongly on the extent to which the mosque and its imams preach a radical version of Islam. For example, a Danish study found that radical interpretations were in fact very rare in the 115 mosques studied (Kühle 2006). Precht (2007: 63-64) notes that mosques are often controlled by the older generation and therefore rarely open to radical interpretations of Islam. Radical interpretations thus typically emerge at the fringes of the traditional structures of the mosque and often on the basis of intense conflict with the mosque leadership. In other words, it may not be the mosque as such that provides a mobilizing structure for radicalization, but rather the competing groups and interpretations existing in and around it.

Proposition 2.7. The majority of mosques are not radical, but radical groups and interpretations may emerge around and in opposition to them.

There is an obvious interaction here between the network perspective and the organizational/institutional perspective on mobilizing structures. It might thus be argued that the very networks serving as channels for recruitment often emerge in and around the mosques. Networks, in other words, do not emerge of the blue, but often in certain institutional settings (though they may also develop in cyberspace, as discussed above). For an individual attracted to radicalism at some level, mosques provide a particularly conspicuous location to attend if they are interested in pursuing a radical path (ICSR 2007: 20). This suggests a somewhat different perspective from that expounded by McAdam, which seems to indicate that recruitment occurred among those who already attended the church regularly. The process described in the ICSR report, where individuals with a developing radical outlook approach specific mosques, outlines a different dynamic.

Proposition 2.8. Radical mosques may serve a recruiting function by providing potential activists with clearly visible locations in which to pursue a radical path.

The ICSR report (2007) and Precht (2007) mention a type of mobilizing structure not usually covered by the movement literature: prisons. According to the ICSR report (2007: 23), "prisons are unsettling environments in which individuals are confronted with existential questions in particularly intensive ways". For this reason, "the rate of religious conversions in prison is higher than among the general population". Precht (2007: 61) further notes that young individuals may be particularly vulnerable to this kind of influence. Of course conversions do not necessarily involve radicalization, but it seems as though the interpretations of Islam practiced in prisons tend to attain a radical character (ICSR 2007: 23). With the increasing surveillance of and crackdown on Islamic activism by authorities in Western countries, this tendency is likely to become more pronounced in the future.

Proposition 2.9. Prisons are conducive settings for religious conversions and, to some extent, radicalization.

Apart from mosques and prisons, the mobilizing structures for recruitment and radicalization also include the civil society organizational environment. While such organizations may not necessarily be radical or only partly so, they can serve as what the ICSR report (2007: 35) calls a conveyor belt for the priming of radical processes. They mention Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is currently active in a number of European countries (including Denmark). As with the discussion of mosques, it seems apparent that societies with a dense organizational environment provide a large contact surface for potential activists and a conducive setting for the development of networks and groups with a radical outlook. Again, it is important to avoid such observations leading to a catch-all assessment of Islamic organizations as potential hotbeds for radicalization.

Proposition 2.10. The larger the Islamic organizational density in a society, the larger the contact surface between potential radical activists and radical networks.

3. Structural and Political Environment Explanations

This explanatory factor shifts the focus from the individual and organizational levels to a structural or political environment level. This perspective is particularly interested in the interplay between radical organizations and activists, on the one hand, and authorities on the other. How authorities view and respond to radical Islamic activism is crucial in determining the chances of success and the form assumed by actions and strategies.

Insights from Social Movement Research

Structural theories in social movement research are generally referred to as political opportunity theories. This approach has become a staple of social movement research since the 1970s (e.g. Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982). The basic premise is that the timing and shape of activism is somewhat determined by the opening and closing of political opportunities. The concept has been operationalized in numerous ways (see McAdam 1996; Meyer 2004; and Tarrow 1998 for reviews). Two variables will be emphasized in this paper: access and the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam 1996).

Access. This variable refers to the openness of the institutional political system to civil society organizations (McAdam 1996: 27; Tarrow 1998: 77). Of interest here are the formal and informal channels through which activists can attempt to influence the political system. The degree of access obviously varies considerably across countries (e.g. Kriesi et al. 1992, 1995). Consequently, the degree of access results from a country's political historical traditions and the character of the political system in general. Important features here are the degree of centralization and the inclusion of civil society organizations in committees and other forums that establish contacts between civil society and the formal political system. An important insight from studies focusing on the character of political systems is that countries with a high degree of centralization and relatively few access points for activists appear to experience more disruptive forms of protest. In the Kriesi et al. study (1992: 228), France, with its centralized political system and weak tradition of access, experienced more violent protests than for example the Netherlands, which is less politically centralized and has stronger traditions for access and inclusion.¹¹

The access variable also has a less stable dimension concerning the general attitude of the government towards civil society activism. For example, it is to be expected that a center-left government will be more receptive and open to certain activist demands (e.g. peace, environment, women's rights) (Kriesi et al. 1992: 233). Another perspective introducing an element of variation into political opportunity thinking is that the same set of objective opportunities may offer varying degrees of access depending on the type of civil society organization (Meyer 2004). In other words, some organizations and political expressions will be considered more legitimate and important by authorities than others.

As some authors have suggested, access is not simply a question of access to the formal political system. Koopmans (2004), for example, argues that opportunity structures also have a public dimension, which he refers to as the discursive opportunity structure. This concerns the extent to which certain types of arguments and actors are included in public debates and the extent to which these arguments find resonance in the public sphere.

The state's capacity and propensity for repression. Modern democratic states generally have high acceptance levels for activism. Consequently, the state's propensity for repression is rather low (e.g. in contrast to authoritarian states). Even in modern democratic states, however, some forms of activism can unleash repressive responses from authorities (this corresponds well with the point above that the same set of opportunities may be more open to some organizations than others). This will typically involve the police and intelligence services. In the della Porta study (1995: Ch. 3) of leftwing radicalism, she thus speaks about policing as an important indicator of the character of a country's political opportunities. As already suggested, policing not only includes police crackdowns on demonstrators or other forms of activism deemed to be disruptive, but also infiltration and surveillance efforts directed towards activists and organizations. The important aspect here is the dynamic and sometimes self-perpetuating interaction between authorities and activists. Authority responses to for example terrorism are obviously provoked by certain statements and/or actions. As noted by della Porta (1992: 15), however, antiterrorist policies may also generate further radicalization (this point may be linked with the argument made in the section on individual and socio-psychological explanations that radicalization can be motivated by negative personal experiences with police and authorities).

Implications for the Study of Recruitment and Radicalization in Islamic Activism

The question of access for Islamic activists underlines the variability and changing nature of political opportunities. In late 2008, a heated debate emerged among Danish politicians and authorities on whether authorities and the political system should engage in dialogue with radical Islamists. The debate caused serious rifts in the Danish government between Minister of Integration Birthe Rønn Hornbech and Minister of Welfare Karen Jespersen. Hornbech argued that it should be possible to engage in dialogue with representatives of all positions within the Muslim community, while Jespersen held that some positions are too extreme to be reachable through dialogue.

While these debates reveal opposing views on the question of dialogue and access, the general trend appears to be one of increasing skepticism towards (radical) Islamic activism. This is a development that must be located in the context of two defining events. First, at the global level, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 and the subsequent sequence of terrorist attacks around the world (Bali 2002, Madrid 2004, London 2005) created tension in Western societies towards Islam. Given the harsh reality of these events and the very real security threat experienced by citizens in Western countries, opposition to Islamic activism has become more politically

legitimate. Second, at the national level, the so-called Muhammed Cartoons Crisis in 2005-2006 (see Olesen 2007a, b and Ethnicities forthcoming for more detailed discussions) has profoundly changed perceptions of radical Islam in Denmark. The Cartoons Crisis started as a national conflict but escalated to the global level. The conflict exposed considerable differences in conceptions of democracy, publicity and freedom of expression between Western societies and Islam. While the conflict was seen by some as an indicator of a need for more dialogue addressing cultural-political rifts, others have referred to it as an example of an unbridgeable gap between Islam and the West.

In theoretical terms, this has led to a contraction of the access channels between radical Islamic activists and the political system as well as a contraction of the public space available to radical Islamic arguments. In order to draw out some of the subtleties in this argument, it is necessary to view Islamic activism on a continuum from moderate to radical. In the theoretical section, it was contended that the same set of opportunities could provide different degrees of access to civil society organizations (this point could also be expanded to the discussion of discursive opportunity structures). In other words, we should expect the degree of closure to increase as we move towards the outer (radical) pole of the continuum. To add another layer of complexity, the political system and public space are not monolithic units. The discussions above thus demonstrate the persistence of what we might term dialogical approaches in Danish society. This means that even as we near the outer pole, there will be some points of access to the political system and public space.

Proposition 3.1. The points of access between (radical) Islamic activists and the formal political system and the public space have diminished since 9/11. In the Danish case, contractions have also occurred since the Muhammed Cartoons Crisis.

In the preceding section on mobilizing structures, radical mosques were argued to create a conducive recruiting environment for radical Islamic activists. Since 9/11 and the Madrid 2004 and London 2005 terrorist attacks, authorities have directed considerable attention to mosques and other mobilizing structures for recruitment to radical Islamic activism. In theoretical terms, the state is mobilizing its surveillance capacities in a manner that reduces the opportunities for activism. According to Taarnby (2005: 40), this has led to a new role for radical clerics and mosques: “They are no longer able to recruit openly because of intense scrutiny by authorities...The ill-reputed radical institutions have been replaced by underground mosques often located in the very same cities as the former ones”. In effect, the radical clerics and mosques have been forced underground. According to the ICSR report (2007: 22), this does not mean that mosques have outplayed their role entirely: “Rather it seems as if extremists continue to take advantage of mosques for ‘talent-spotting’ and as points of first contact”. Nevertheless, after contact has been made, activities move to “closed locations, such as private flats and makeshift prayer halls” (see also Precht 2007: 65). This development, as suggested in the section on organization and network explanations, may in some cases also lead to shifts in power within mosques; as radicals are forced underground, moderates may be able to (re)gain control.

Proposition 3.2. Closer scrutiny and surveillance by authorities has increasingly closed public spaces for recruitment to radical activism (in particular, mosques).

An interesting point that lies in continuation of the discussion about mobilizing structures is that this contraction in political opportunities through increased state persecution and surveillance may somewhat explain many authors' observations of looser and less top-down oriented recruitment patterns since 9/11. Speaking specifically about Al Qaeda recruitment efforts since 9/11 and the "war on terror", the ICSR report (2007: 17) for example notes how the pressure on the organization and disruption of chains of command and organizational capacity has made top-down recruitment difficult and insecure. As a result, local radicalization processes and training must be conducted in a relatively autonomous fashion. It may, in other words, have become problematic for potential radical recruits and entrepreneurs at the local level to establish links with larger and more resourceful organizations at the global level.

Proposition 3.3. The increased scrutiny and surveillance by authorities is creating changes in the organizational form and recruitment and radicalization patterns of radical Islamic activism (towards looser and more networked forms of organization).

The political opportunity approach indicates the possibility that closed opportunity structures may generate forms of activism that are more disruptive and violent. The general closure of political access points and public space, as well as the strengthening of surveillance and counterterrorist policies described above, are both signs of a contracting opportunity space for radical Islamic activism in Western countries. It is useful to consider whether this situation may in fact lead to increased radicalization. There may be two dimensions to this process: On the one hand, counterterrorism policies and surveillance may dissuade a number of individuals to join radical Islamic activism or to abandon it as the personal costs increase; on the other hand, such policies may serve for some individuals as a confirmation of an entrenched conflict between Islam and the West. For activist leaders and recruiters, this becomes a useful component in the rhetoric arsenal. The situation at Guantanamo, to mention perhaps the most debated example of counterterrorist policy, has been widely used by radical Islamic recruiters as an illustration of how the West persecutes Islam in an unjust manner. Parts of this explanation, as suggested in the theoretical section, interact with some of the factors discussed in the section on individual and socio-psychological explanations. Here, it was described how individuals who underwent radicalization processes in some cases have had direct or indirect experiences with repression from authorities. As the opportunity space contracts due to a combination of decreasing access and repression, more individuals will experience repression (either personally or through "observation") which might fuel radicalization.

Proposition 3.4. The contraction of opportunities due to reduced formal and public access and increased counterterrorism measures may fuel radicalization processes.

4. Media and Communication Explanations

This section adopts a media and communication approach to the issue of recruitment and radicalization. In contrast to the network explanations discussed earlier, a media and communication approach indicates that recruitment and radicalization can be spurred and/or inspired through the individual's exposure to symbols and messages in their communicative and media environment. The assumption here is not that exposure to for example radical messages in itself will propel individuals towards recruitment and/or

radicalization. Nonetheless, such exposure may prime the individual in ways that can enforce and accelerate some of the factors described in the preceding sections of the paper.

Insights from Social Movement Research

Three factors related to the media and activist communication are particularly important in the context of this paper: (Master) frames, symbols and images together with the emergence of a global information space made possible by developments such as the Internet.

Frames and master frames. Political opportunity and mobilizing structures theory came under increasing criticism in the 1980s for not paying sufficient attention to the communicative and social constructivist aspects of activism (Snow et al. 1986, Snow and Benford 1988).¹² These authors suggested the concept of framing to capture the attempt by activists to persuade a broad public audience and recruit new individuals to the organization or network. Framing theory and analysis is concerned with how activists – activist leaders in particular – use language and symbols to maximize public resonance for their claims. Such claims will typically involve an identification of a perceived injustice or problem (Gamson et al. 1982). A key element in framing processes includes the reference to so-called master frames (Snow and Benford 1992) or what Gamson and Modigliani (1989) in a related approach call interpretive packages. Master frames or interpretive packages are ideational reservoirs existing at a structural or cultural level. They constitute already-existing ideas, values and norms. According to Snow and Benford (1988, 1992), the chances of frame resonance increase when an individual organization's frame is anchored in a master frame, i.e. when it is able to establish a link to social value and norm complexes. In the American Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King's success was, according to McAdam (2000: 126), partly a result of his ability to link the struggle of African Americans to deep-seated American values such as democracy and Christianity. In this manner, denying blacks their political rights effectively became a denial of the Christian and democratic values shared by most Americans.

In any society, as well as at the global level, there are several competing master frames (Adamson 2005) or interpretive packages. In the context of this paper, it is important to suggest the existence of a radical Islamic master frame in which the West and Islam is portrayed as fundamentally at odds with one another (this master frame, it should be noted, is also found in reverse, so to speak, in the West and represented mainly by the extreme or conservative right). In the radical Islamic version, the West is viewed, in a historic and contemporary perspective, as an aggressor against Muslims and Islam. As suggested in the section on political opportunities, this master frame is centered around globally available symbols of injustice and aggression against Muslims, such as for example the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the Guantanamo prison facilities.

Symbols and images in framing. Framing is typically seen in the literature as a verbal activity. Frame analyses, in other words, are analyses of texts and speeches. But activist communication and framing also have a symbolic dimension. This insight might be particularly important in a global perspective. As Waters (1995) noted in an early statement on globalization, symbols travel well across space and across social, cultural and political differences, because symbols condense meaning and identity in a manner that is not necessarily dependent on verbal explanation. Two aspects are worth mentioning here. First, the terrorist act in itself can be viewed as a form of symbolic communication (e.g. Dowling 1986; Weimann and Winn 1993). The terrorist organization sends a message through its choice of places and targets. Second, certain

events and situations can attain a symbolic character. Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo, for example, are of course very real events and situations, but they are also global symbols in the sense that references to them condense and illuminate a certain conception of injustice that is to some extent independent of the empirical realities. These events can also be seen as “moral shocks” (Jasper and Paulson 1995). Moral shocks are events and situations that inspire people to engage in activism. What is interesting in Jasper and Paulson’s perspective is that moral shocks can recruit people to activism who do not already have existing network ties to an organization; in other words, the concept indicates a different route to activism than as proposed in the section on organizational and network explanations (hence the Jasper and Paulson distinction in the title of the article between recruiting friends and strangers). Events including moral shocks will often gradually attain a symbolic character and thus become part of a society’s culture. In a global perspective, and following the arguments above, we could also say that they become part of the master frames that activists draw upon in their framing activities. Evidently, if an event including a possible moral shock shall become known to “strangers” (i.e. a large and relatively undefined audience), information about it must be diffused through the media (in a global perspective, this is facilitated by the global information space discussed in greater detail below).

A global information space. The presence of globally available master frames and symbols and the global circulation of terrorist images via the media suggest the existence of a global information space in which there is a constant flow of frames and images related to radical Islam. As already indicated, the presence of frames and images does not in itself increase recruitment and radicalization. On the other hand, it is also plausible that the availability of easily accessible information can prime individuals for radicalization and recruitment attempts by organization entrepreneurs or even inspire individuals without prior network contacts to actively approach radical milieus. The Internet appears to be of particular importance in this regard. While the mainstream media may readily diffuse images of terrorist acts, they will typically do so in a manner that is unsympathetic to the terrorists and their acts. The media thus serve as a filter and interpreter of the events. The Internet, in contrast, enables frames and images to bypass the filters of the traditional media (Reid and Chen 2007: 178). In this manner, the Internet facilitates the formation of a global counterpublic in which radical frames and images can circulate more or less freely and where radical and pre-radical individuals can exchange ideas (for a discussion of the concept of counterpublics, see Olesen 2005).

The global information space cannot be reduced to the Internet. The new media infrastructure created by transnational Arab and Muslim news channels, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya being the most prominent, suggests the emergence of a transnational Muslim public sphere (Lynch 2003). Seib (2005: 605) has described, for example, how transnational news channels with a pan-Arabic approach were preferred over national outlets during the Iraq war in 2003. These news sources are generally seen as more independent and reliable than the majority of national news media in the Muslim world, which in many cases are state-owned or under considerable state influence (Lynch 2003: 62). This infrastructure enables the rapid and extensive diffusion of news throughout the Arab world. What is particularly interesting is that Arabic news channels will typically frame events differently than Western news channels such as CNN. In a comparison of Al-Jazeera and CNN coverage of the war in Afghanistan, Jaspersen and el-Kikhia (2003) for example found that Al-Jazeera placed greater emphasis on the civilian suffering than CNN. Since media around the world carefully monitor each other and interact in the search for stories (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 258), a transnational media infrastructure in the Muslim world creates more points of visibility for Muslim issues and viewpoints in Europe and the USA; it adds a layer of complexity to the global information space.

Implications for the Study of Recruitment and Radicalization in Islamic Activism

In the section on individual and socio-psychological explanations, it was discussed how negative personal experiences with authorities could trigger radicalization processes. This explanation, however, found limited support in the context of radical Islamic activism. The concept of moral shocks presented in the theoretical section indicates that experiences with repression and injustice do not necessarily have to be experienced personally to motivate activism. Especially in media-saturated societies, people constantly acquire indirect experiences with injustice. For the potential recruits to radical Islamic activism, Precht (2007: 50) explains that the “[p]ictures from the Abu Ghraib prison, Guantanamo Bay and TV broadcasts from battle zones in Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, Chechnya, Kashmir, Gaza, Somalia, Sudan and other areas contribute to an image of violence, maltreatment and injustices towards Muslims”. Precht recounts how Shahzad Tanwer, one of the 2005 London suicide bombers, referred to Western injustices against Muslims in various places around the world as a main motivation for the London bombs (see also Taarnby 2005: 18-19 for a discussion of the importance of the Iraq war as a symbol of injustice).

Proposition 4.1. Moral shocks and global symbols of injustice related to Islam and Muslims provide indirect experiences with repression.

These symbols of injustice provide a master frame which radical organizations and recruiters can draw from in their framing and recruiting activities. The core idea of this master frame is a historic and irreconcilable conflict between the West and the Muslim world. Those drawing on this master frame consequently tend to universalize their frames by elevating concrete events and situations into symbols of injustice against all Muslims, not only those directly affected by the concrete situation or event. This universalization is linked to the idea of the ummah presented earlier. The ummah defines a religious-cultural community of Muslims that transcends national borders and socio-cultural differences. Part of the radicalization process often involves an increasing identification with the ummah: “As a result, recruits believe to have a stake in the conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims regardless of their geographical location” (ICSR 2007: 46). In radical interpretations of Islam, this involves a duty on the part of radical activists to defend Muslims and Muslim lands wherever they are attacked or occupied.

Proposition 4.2. Global symbols of injustice are part of a radical Islamic master frame with a focus on an irreconcilable conflict between the West and the Muslim world. Frames drawing on this master frame emphasize the existence of a global Muslim community (ummah) which has a responsibility to defend injustices against Muslims everywhere.

Information about these unjust events and situations are diffused globally via the media and often condensed in powerful images (this was perhaps especially evident in the case of the Abu Ghraib abuses). Because events of this type conform quite well to the media’s news criteria (drama, conflict and sensation), information about them is widely diffused on a global scale (it is to be expected, however, that they will receive more attention and be framed differently in the Arab media than is the case in Western media). While

images and information may initially be diffused and made available through the traditional media (e.g. news channels and newspapers), they can acquire a life of their own on the Internet. Potential recruits and radicals, inspired by what they see and read in the traditional media, can easily find additional information by searching the Internet. Through the Internet, an individual can thus “directly share in the emotions of suffering and struggling Muslims all over the world. This leads to emotional involvement and identification with victims and mujahedeen on the other side of the world” (AIVD 2006: 45). As the AIVD report suggests, Internet-based communication enables an engagement with distant others that is not possible in the same way through the traditional media. In this way, an individual with only indirect experiences of injustice can get “closer” to people with personal experiences. Recalling proposition 4.2, such border- and distance-crossing processes potentially strengthen the attachment to and identification with the ummah.

Proposition 4.3. The Internet enables the potential recruits to radical Islamic activism to come into contact with people and organizations who have personal and direct experiences with injustice and repression.

While the Internet thus facilitates the breaking down of time and space restraints, Internet-based communication also tends to become relatively isolated and self-affirmative (AIVD 2006: 43-44). As indicated in the theoretical section, Internet-based communication differs from the traditional media in that it is structured around already-established interest communities or counterpublics. Internet-based communication can thus acquire some of the traits that were suggested for isolated organizations in the section on individual and socio-psychological explanations. One of the main differences, however, is that access to Internet-based communities and counterpublics is relatively easier than is the case with informal and formal organizations. Consequently, the radicalizing dynamics observed for isolated organizations may affect a potentially larger number of people on the Internet.

Proposition 4.4. The Internet facilitates the creation of virtual counterpublics with an ideologically self-affirming character.

The most extreme radical activity is the terrorist act. In line with the emphasis in the theoretical section on images and symbols in framing activities, it is useful to think of terrorist acts as a form of symbolic communication. Through the circulation of images of terrorist acts, radical Islamists (and other terrorist groups) are able to reach an extremely large audience. This is possibly because terrorist acts fit perfectly into the media’s understanding of what is newsworthy. The dramatic and sensational element guarantees terrorists immediate and prominent media space and ensures the global diffusion of their “message”. As suggested, we are not dealing here with a message in a classical sense. Yet even if nobody claims responsibility for the terrorist act, the nature of the target in itself often sends a message. In the case of Islamic terrorism, the targets are typically either civilians in major Western cities (New York and Washington in 2001, Madrid in 2004, London in 2005) or symbols of Western presence and influence outside the West (a night club for Western tourists in Bali in 2002, a hotel and district with many Western visitors in Mumbai in 2008). The terrorist act could be thought of as a kind of reverse moral shock. Whereas symbols of injustice such as Afghanistan and Guantanamo

demonstrate the domination of Muslims, the terrorist acts carried out by radical Islamic activists demonstrate the ability to act and strike back. For individuals and organizations in a pre-radical or radicalizing phase, this may provide powerful inspiration for future activities.

Proposition 4.5. Through the symbolic character of the terrorist act and its dissemination in the media, radical Islamic messages are able to instantly reach a very large global audience. For some, the message will be decoded in a positive manner as a demonstration of strength and inspiration for future activities.

Conclusion

The aim of this working paper was to demonstrate how theoretical tools from the social movement literature can contribute to the analysis of radical Islamic activism. Four explanation types were suggested. First, an individual and socio-psychological explanation with a focus on identity pressure and transformation at the individual and group level. Second, a network and organization explanation with two main elements: the importance of personal networks in recruitment and the role played by existing institutions and organizations (e.g. mosques and prisons) in recruitment processes. Third, a structural and political environment explanation that considered two things: how radical activism is shaped through its interaction with authorities and by the public debate climate. Fourth, a media and communication explanation with two emphases: the use of symbols in radical activist communication and the importance of communication technologies (the Internet) and a new and more complex global media infrastructure.

The motivation for introducing these explanation types has not been to develop a general explanation for recruitment and radicalization in Islamic activism. Rather, the goal has been to provide a theoretical toolbox and source of inspiration for future studies. As suggested throughout the paper, none of the explanations can stand alone in the analysis of radical Islamic activism. The challenge for future students of radical Islamic activism is consequently to combine the explanations in new and fruitful ways. Possible combinations have been indicated at various points. For example, the discussion of symbols in the section on media and communication explanations argued that the personal experiences with injustice discussed in the section on individual and socio-psychological explanations need not necessarily be direct and personal; they can also be mediated and experienced at a distance. Furthermore, the discussion in the section on structural and political environment discussions suggested that changes in authorities' responses to radical Islamic activism may change the role played by mosques in the recruitment and radicalization process (the section on network and organization explanations).

Such a combination of various explanatory approaches is necessary to understand the complexity of radical Islamic activism. To reiterate what was argued in the introduction of the paper, radical Islamic activism cannot be analyzed and explained in the same manner across time and space. Here, it is of particular importance to consider cross-national differences. The concept of political opportunities, for example, provides a useful theoretical tool to employ comparative analyses. It is therefore imperative that we approach the phenomenon of radical Islamic activism with an open mind (at least in a scholarly sense!) and theoretical creativity. Hopefully, this working paper, with its multifaceted explanatory approach, can provide inspiration in this regard.

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Notes

- ¹ It is important to emphasize that the author approaches the subject from a background as a social movement scholar and not as an expert on Islamic activism.
- ² In particular, six sources have been used: AIVD 2006; Bakker 2006; ICSR 2007; Precht 2007; Sageman 2004; Taarnby 2005. These all provide substantial empirical evidence and insights and are considered serious and unbiased in their approach to the subject. It should be noted that three of the reports have been written by or for public authorities. The AIVD report is written by the Dutch Intelligence Services; the ICSR report is written for the European Commission; the Precht study is funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.
- ³ An organization is typically a formal collective with an identifiable leadership and declared objectives. Networks, on the other hand, are informal structures based on loose and fluid relationships between a number of individuals.
- ⁴ A similar view was recently voiced by the Danish Intelligence Service; PET (2008).
- ⁵ See Buechler (2004) and Useem (1998) for contemporary reviews of this literature.
- ⁶ This understanding may also have led to an overly rationalized view of activism. Later approaches have sought to bring concepts such as grievances, emotions and indignation back into social movement theory (e.g. Gamson 1995; Goodwin et al. 2001; Snow et al. 1986).
- ⁷ It is important to note that Bakker's study focuses on Europe, while the Sageman study covers several regions. This may explain some of the differences in the studies.
- ⁸ One of the crucial questions appears to be whether these socialization processes and intra-organizational dynamics are the outcome or cause of radicalization. Thus, the complexity of the dynamic escapes a simple cause-and-effect analysis.
- ⁹ Similar patterns have been found in religious sects (see e.g. Lofland 1968).
- ¹⁰ In practice, studies of this nature can probably best be carried out after the fact, i.e. through interviews with former activists (this is largely the procedure followed by della Porta (1995) in her study of radical leftist activism in Germany and Italy).
- ¹¹ The empirical basis for this study was primarily so-called new social movements (e.g. environmental, peace and women's movements).
- ¹² For reviews of the framing approach, see Benford and Snow (2000) and Noakes and Johnston (2005).

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II

FARHAD KHOSROKHAVAR
Jihadism in Europe and the Middle East

JIHADISM IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

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Europe has a tradition of terrorism based on extreme left ideology (Brigate Rosse in Italy, Action Directe in France, Roter Armee Fraktion in Germany) or nationalist-regionalist tenets (Basque movement in Spain, Corsican movement in France, Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland ...). The emergence of Islamist terrorism is a new phenomenon in this part of the world, but some of the converts believe in the utopian role of Islam in the same fashion as the middle-class leftist youth in the 1960's and 1970's believed in Marxism or communism. Islamic terrorism partially feeds on the exhaustion of leftist ideologies which mobilised part of the youth in Europe and which is not anymore convincing to the eyes of people in this part of the world¹.

The Middle East has a tradition of radical Islam as a minority phenomenon which has been revitalised in the last three decades through the war in Afghanistan against the former Soviet Union and other events in the Middle East (the Taliban, the war against them by the West after September 11th and the war in Iraq since 2003).

The Muslim Immigration to Europe

Terrorism is mostly related to the immigrant population from the Muslim world in Europe, their offspring and a minority of converts. In the 1960's and 1970's, Europe's industrialisation attracted many immigrant workers. The offshoots of this population, from the second and third generations, have many problems related to their integration within European countries.

In Europe, radical Islam has different origins, mainly related to the colonial background (France, England) or to the immigration of Muslims in the last few decades from the Muslim world (Germany, Spain). Still, each country has its specific history and its culture of "integration" and radicalisation is related to the local, regional history as well as to the global history.

The French and English Cases

In France, radical Islam has two different roots. The external one is mainly grounded in the Algerian extremist networks, the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé) directed by the military branch of FIS (Front Islamique de Salut) after it was denied power by the military in 1992 in spite of its gaining the majority of the votes for parliament. There was (and still is) animosity between the GIA and the French government due to the support given by the latter to the Algerian army against FIS. But the GIA would not have been able to operate in France without the Algerian diaspora and more generally, the Maghrebian disaffected youth in the French poor suburbs². Some 1.5 million people of Algerian descent, around 700,000 from Morocco and some 350,000 from Tunisia live in France and among them, a tiny minority has been active in the GIA. Some terrorist networks were set up in France in the 1990's and enrolled young people from the poor suburbs. Among them, some people like Khaled Kelkal³ who was exposed to racism and a few Muslim converts were involved. Some cells from the GIA were in contact with al-Qaeda and in this way found connections within France. Otherwise, autonomous al-Qaeda networks have been exceptional in France.

Radicalism has been enhanced through links with England much more than other European countries. Religious radicalism has had a tinge of post-colonialism marked by the rancour against the former colonizers by the children of those colonized, residing in France. The people who take part in radical Islam are mostly recruited among those young people who feel themselves as belonging neither to the country of their parents (North Africans) nor to France where they are rejected as “Arabs”. They have a deeply ambivalent attitude towards themselves: They believe they are hated and despised by the French and for this reason, consider themselves as free to oppose this indignity with their own violence⁴. Islam gives them the opportunity to legitimize their feeling of rejection by canalizing it into a sacred cause. In this way, they take their revenge on society and at the same time, gain access to the salvation of their soul. They attain a twofold goal by engaging under the banner of radical Islam: They fight against a society which has never accepted them as such and they fight for Islam against the entire West. This fight raises them in their own view and provides them with a dignity they were denied in their daily life before adhering to radical Islam. Through their engagement, they gain salvation (they become martyrs if they die), they achieve a new honour and dignity and they find meaning and purpose in their life which was, previously, meaningless and without any end.

Another factor that encourages the advent of this effect is the way this population feels despised by society as such. Racism is strongly felt, particularly through the advent of the extreme right⁵ (Le Pen group and dissident ones). This is reinforced by the restrictions imposed through the concept of laïcité which bans Islamic signs in the public sphere and holds the communities as the moral negation of true and genuine citizenship. The feeling of victimization is quite strong among many young men in the French poor suburbs who believe that they have no future. The radical Islamic groups benefit from this predisposition of the young people (overwhelmingly male) of North African origin who consider themselves stigmatized by society and banned by it. In this way, they are open to radicalization and if any network succeeds in getting in touch with them, some overstep their fears of repression and accept to act against those whom they hate and who, they think, are against Islam because they have reduced them to misery and on the international scene, defend Israel and all the anti-Islamic forces. The conjunction of identity problems, racism and economic exclusion creates a fertile ground for radicalization and violence among a tiny minority of this disaffected group of young people. Islamisation brings a sense of existence to them and radicalization gives them a new dignity as warriors of a just cause against a corrupt and ruthless society. This generation of inhabitants of poor suburbs, mostly of North African origin, can be easily manipulated. Paradoxically the media are the major source of their inspiration. The tragic spectacle of Palestinians dying under the attacks of the Israeli army and the indifference of public opinion to the fate of Chechnyans and other Muslims in the world easily convince them that the West in general is against Islam. The antagonistic attitude of some French political groups (the extreme right) towards them is easily generalized, through the images of TV, to the entire Western world. The deduction is peremptory: the West is against Islam and genuine Muslims should fight against it in order to recover their dignity and honour.

Police repression and infiltration among terrorist groups since the 1990's have brought a halt to their acts within French borders. Some of these groups went to Great Britain and the presence of a Maghrebian diaspora there (around some 40,000 Algerians among them) helped for a while to build up the new groups. But since September 11th 2001, the situation has changed and these groups are under police scrutiny.

Islamic radicalism is partially rooted in the disaffected youth of North African origin or converts mostly belonging to the same “Banlieues”, although the networks are of

Algerian (and through a branch of the GIA related to al-Qaeda) and more generally North African origin⁶. This makes the French case a unique one. The English one is much more marginal. It involves members of radical Muslim groups belonging to the association al-Mohajirun or affiliated to other networks suspected of having ties with al-Qaeda. But these people form a tiny minority and up to now, only a dozen of them have been put under arrest. The French case, with the high number of people imprisoned, preserves its peculiarity concerning radical Islam so far.

In Holland, one might think of some kind of “hyper-fundamentalist” Islam in the case of the Moroccan who killed Theo van Gogh and who was affiliated with a group of Muslims with no proven direct ties to al-Qaeda or any transnational Muslim organisation. This type of group who allegedly belongs to al-Qaeda has not so much to do with the real organisation which has been destroyed in its real capacity to act directly in its former structure. This new type of al-Qaeda may be called a “metaphoric al-Qaeda”: the mere fact that radical Muslims refer to it shows the prestige it enjoys within the radicalized youth in Western European countries.

Some 1.6 million Muslims live in Britain and among them the Pakistanis are the majority. Their case is not unlike the North Africans in France who came there after independence, in order to promote industrialisation there. The English model of integration is totally different from the French model: recognition of communities, acceptance of a degree of cultural heterogeneity which is much higher than in France where any citizen is supposed to be part of society individually and without the interference of any community. The only legitimate community is the French nation where every citizen is a full member. This theoretical stance is of course far from being real in daily life. In the same fashion, the recognition of communities in Britain does not mean respect for different ways of lives. In practice, racism in both countries feeds on the otherness of the Muslim migrants and their inability to become full-fledged citizens. Frustration in both countries is high on the part of many Muslims who feel stigmatized and rejected, even though they have British or French citizenship.

In England, the July 2005 terrorism was perpetrated by four people who were British citizens: three of Pakistani origin and one, a convert from Catholicism of Jamaican roots. All four were raised in Britain and none them immigrants. The Pakistanis are like the Algerians in France the target of racism and although part of their community is successful in business or in the public sector (in the same way as part of the North African population, called in France the “*Beurgeoisie*”⁷, is successful), still most of them feel segregated and exposed to racism and contempt by other citizens. The rate of unemployment, like with the North Africans in France, is much higher than the average in Britain. The culture of tolerance in Britain allowed many radical Muslims from North Africa, but also from other parts of the Muslim world to migrate to England and gather in some famous mosques (the Finsbury Park mosque among others) and spread the message of radical Islam. The gentleman’s agreement between the British authorities and the radical community in Britain was broken after September 11th and with the arrest of some of its members and the promulgation of the anti-terrorist laws the next year, a situation of antagonism similar to the one that prevails in France emerged. The new generation of radical Muslims had in the Muslim middle classes some roots, through organisations like Hizbu Tahrir whose leaders professed an anti-Israel and a pro-Palestine stance. Radicalisation was fed by some links with al-Qaeda (Khan, the leader of the group which committed the terrorist act in July 2005 in London had ties with al-Qaeda leaders through his journeys in Pakistan), but the main breeding ground for it was England and the simmering discontent among part of the Muslim youth, due to social conditions, racism and the involvement of the British troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In England, repression did not exist until 2001 and the anti-terrorist laws with their complementary laws in 2004 and 2005 have been late comers. England and particularly London were looked upon as “Londonistan”⁸ by the Islamic radicals and up to September 11th attacks against the US, Great Britain was considered a safe haven against pursuit in France or elsewhere. This implicit agreement was torn apart after the promulgation of anti-terrorist laws in 2001, but British police was not in a situation to infiltrate Islamic radicals in the same fashion as the French. The terrorist attack on London in July 2005 rang the bell of the last “mutual understanding” between the government and the Islamic radicals. The fight against Islamic radicalism became the same almost all over Europe and the judicial framework for it is being promulgated in many countries.

The major problem in Britain as well as France is that both have populations of the former colonies who suffer from racism and the de facto inequality between them and other ordinary citizens. The suspicion towards terrorism has also caused a new wave of intolerance and this feeds in its turn radicalisation of a minority within their Muslim communities in the long run.

Two major problems arise: one is related to globalisation and the emergence of networks which are flexible enough to be built quickly by people who do not act within rigid hierarchies and who are therefore able to hide themselves from police scrutiny in many cases. On the other hand, the simmering discontent among part of the Muslim youth makes England and France fertile grounds for recruitment of future terrorists. Repressive policies in the short run and social policies in order to fight racism and to promote, through affirmative action, Muslims in Europe are necessary to prevent the push towards radicalisation on the part of the European Muslims.

In countries like Germany, Islamic radicalisation seems, up to now, mainly directed towards the country of origin of the most important Muslim community, the Turks. Turkey seems to be the target rather than Germany, but with the advent of a new generation of Germans with Turkish origin, this situation might change in the future.

Jihadism in a Globalized World

One major factor, besides the discontent of part of the Muslim youth in Europe for social reasons, is the crisis of the Muslim countries which is reported in real time by television and the utopia of a neo-umma carried out by it⁹. Two distinct groups appear on the scene. The first is made up by a new Muslim middle class which is a minority among the immigrants from Muslim countries in Europe. This new middle class has everything to lose if radicalisation occurs among Muslims in Europe and a more negative image of Islam and Muslims becomes widespread among the people. Still, a tiny minority of its members opt for radicalisation and separate from the mainstream Muslim middle class in Europe. The main reason is their identification with the neo-umma in the world at large and in Europe in particular. Seeing their fellow Muslim people downtrodden and stigmatized through racism in Europe and seeing on TV the faith of Muslims in the world at large and the crisis of Muslim societies, they come to the firm belief that Islam is being repressed as much within Europe as without it and in both cases, the oppressors are the “white” Europeans and more generally, the wicked West, mainly America. Compassion, in this situation goes to this imaginary neo-umma rather than to their compatriots: Their sufferings in connection with terrorist attacks are minimized in comparison to the plight of Muslims all over the world. In a way, the identification with this imaginary neo-umma (which does not exist in the way radical Muslims describe it) prevents their moral attitude towards their fellow citizens whom they reject and gives them justification for terrorist acts in the name of a radicalized representation of Islam.

For the excluded and “disaffected” youth in Europe, the combination of economic deprivation and cultural stigmas makes it much easier for them to become radicalized in the name of Allah. In this case, they come to the conclusion that their sufferings and those of the Muslims in other parts of the world, Palestine, Bosnia, Iraq or Chechnya have the same roots: the western fight against Islam. Their enrolment in terrorist networks is based on a strong feeling of victimization which is rooted in their dramatic situation in Europe: In France in the so-called “banlieues” (poor suburbs), in England in poor districts and in many European countries, their segregation in enclaves or ghettos (or perceived as such by many of them) and the absence of any prospect for a brighter future. All these factors go hand in hand to make this population a fertile ground for radicalisation and in a few cases, terrorism. Even though many do not get involved in terrorist activities due to the renewed vigilance of the police and the secret services, still their world outlook is that of deep victimisation and a negative perception of the “white” man.

The two groups, either from the middle classes or from the excluded categories of people, find a common language through networks and their opposition to the West. The military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Palestinian and Chechnyan problems are reminders of the West’s involvement in the fight against Muslim countries.

The predicament of Muslims all over the world is seen through the looking glass of this neo-umma: In countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and elsewhere, the governments are considered as the “puppets” of the West and should be fought against. In the West itself, the struggle should go on in order to punish both, the Western governments and their “lackeys” in Muslim countries. The globalized neo-umma, unlike the real Muslim communities, does not recognize either frontiers or nations and the ideal is not so much to topple a specific government in a particular country, but to set ablaze the entire world in order to promote the neo-caliphate and bring about the neo-umma within this institution.

In the same fashion as the leftists of the 1970’s were the self-proclaimed avant-garde of the proletariat, the new radicalized Muslims believe to be the vanguard of the Muslim umma (community), but this creed is not grounded in reality and is simply a mental and imaginary construction with no support in the real world. Therefore the majority of the Muslims who suffer from terrorist acts like the Egyptians (terrorism in Sharm el Sheikh in August 2005) reject these acts to the utmost, but the terrorist groups are a tiny minority who do not follow the majority of Muslims.

Another category of people who become Jihadists in Europe are the converts. Most of the converts adopt a spiritualist Islam which has nothing to do with terrorism. But a tiny minority of them espouses radical Islam and engages in terrorist activities in order to be part of the neo-umma at war with the perfidious and depraved West. To these people, the West is treacherous and anti-islamic in essence. Their new identity as Muslims is offended by the lot of many Muslims all over the world and the partial and antagonistic attitude of Western countries towards the plight of Muslims. They have to prove to themselves and to others the sincerity of their faith by opposing their former societies and by declaring war on the very same countries where they were born and raised. The chasm between their new faith and the societies into which they were born finds a sacred legitimacy through their identification with the neo-umma. By fighting an impious West, they underline their rupture with it and their ties to a new imaginary Islamic community for which they are ready to sacrifice their life and to put to death their fellow countrymen.

Jihadism in the Middle East and their Ideology

Contrary to Europe where most of the Jihadists are from the lower and lower-middle classes and are marked by cultural uprootedness, in the Muslim world, most of the Jihadists are from the modernized middle classes and their adherence to Jihadism translates their deep disappointment towards Muslim governments which are seen as the "lackeys of the West", corrupt, and unable to cope with Muslims' pride (mainly Arab, but more and more Muslim as the Pakistani case pinpoints) and submitted to humiliation by the West, mainly America who is perceived as the main culprit in the Arab mistreatment by Israel.

These modernized middle classes mostly belong to the scientific and engineering circles, among them one finds doctors, scientists, engineers and all those who have a modern scientific education. These new Jihadists are impatient with the political elites in the Muslim countries and they combine the rejection of the Islamic governments (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan...) and the opposition to the West, mainly the United States. Their motto is change, the fight against the close (Muslim governments) and far enemies (America, the West) and the establishment of Muslim rule and law all over the Muslim world in the name of a radicalized version of Islam.

Terrorism marked by Marxist or Communist ideologies had a set of tenets that claimed direct bearing on economics. Right or wrong, this ideology could be expressed in a rationalised way by its proponents. The wave of anarchist terrorism originating in Russia and spreading throughout Europe and America had also a corpus of ideological schemes that could be argued and exposed in a "rational" manner. The extreme left ideologies of the 1970's were also marked by mental constructions based on the denunciation of imperialism and the fight for the proletariat and the praise of anarchy as the best type of government on earth. All these ideologies claimed roots in social, political and economic sciences. The fact that they were tendentious and non-rational did not prevent them from having a corpus of ideological "evidence" that claimed the Enlightenment's fatherhood or the utopias of Progress as their core material. The Jihadist ideology is the least developed among the three radical currents already mentioned. There are three major "ideas" which underline its ideological construction. The first one is the idea of the "neo-umma" already underscored. This is not a factual entity but a cultural construction based on a mythical Islamic community. The second ideological tenet is a demonic West¹⁰. This idea has a dual origin. The first is in the leftist ideology of imperialism. The second goes back to the "dar ul kufri" as opposed to "dar ul islam" (respectively the House of Impiety and the House of Islam). According to jihadist interpretation, Muslims should endeavour to convert the non-Muslims and spread Islam all over the world. The countries that are populated by non-Muslims are in a state of war with Islam and every Muslim should contribute, directly or indirectly to their forced or peaceful conversion to the religion of Allah. This is the root of the third major idea, Jihad. In Islam it is traditional to distinguish between two types of duties: If Islam is in danger, every Muslim has to engage in the fight to preserve it (fardh al ayn). If the fight is to spread Islam, Muslims should contribute to it through financial means or otherwise, without having to be involved directly (fardh al kifayah). For the Jihadists, Islam is the only valid religion and one has to go to the extreme to establish its rule all over the world. In the same vein, Islamic radicals believe that Islam is in danger through the malevolent action of the West (particularly the United States) and therefore, Muslims should accept even martyrdom in order to fight against an enemy who is militarily and economically the most potent.

These three sets of ideas are connected to a utopian world order which is not explicit. The Palestinian, Chechnyan and other radical actions are based on an explicit national project, whose realisation means the recourse to martyrdom. The new al-Qaeda-type ideology is

not fighting for an explicit goal. The Palestinian, Chechnyan or Iraqi predicaments are mentioned as reasons to engage in war against the West, but the ultimate goal is not explicitly political. The neo-caliphate is everything but clearly delineated. The fight against an impious and “arrogant” West seems to be the only tangible motive which mobilizes the sympathizers of Jihadism.

The way Islam is instrumentalised also shows the “modernity” of this type of movement¹¹. It is much less the reproduction of tradition than a regressive and oppressive form of modern action based on new technologies (the internet, networks...) and a religious ideology which finds some precedents in the past, but which, in its logic of action and its ways of challenging the West, is directly related to the modern world. European youth which gets involved in this ideological enterprise has itself a dual root. It considers itself as non-European and non-Pakistani or non-Algerian... The generation which becomes the spearhead of Jihad is doubly stigmatized: In Europe it is rejected and considered as non-European. In the country of the parents (North Africa for the French Muslims, Pakistan or India and Bangladesh for the British Muslims) it is as well considered at best as foreigner. In both cases, this generation is denied a clear identity, doubly marginalized, doubly rejected. Islam in its radical version allows this generation to take revenge against the host society where it is born or raised and against the society of the parents, ruled mostly by non-Islamic governments. The simultaneous opposition to the West and to the East gives a sense of a new dignity to the proponents of radical Islam. In this way, the disaffected youth of the poor suburbs in France or poor urban districts in Britain feels a new honour against the background of their rejection by European societies. They become heroes of a sacred cause and break up the ties with their past when they were nothing and no one. They inspire fear and this is revenge against their indignity and their insignificance in the past. Thus, they recover a new identity in which they believe to act as the heroes of a new age. The middle class Muslims who join the radical Islamic groups become the messengers of the neo-umma to which they believe to belong, the new identity taking precedence over their being members of the European middle classes. Compassion for their fellow Muslims in the Islamic countries and the excluded downtrodden Islamic youth in Europe become more potent than their sympathy for the societies in which they live. Islam becomes a new sacred identity that overshadows all the past identities to which they belonged: that of immigrant families, that of European citizens and that of middle-class people.

Contrary to the Muslims in the United States who are mainly from the middle and upper middle classes and who identify with the “American dream”, Muslims in Europe and in the Middle East have solid reasons for discontent. Victimization, in both cases, operates in different fashions to produce a deep sense of frustration and dissatisfaction with the prevailing situation. Jihadist networks take advantage of this feeling to promote the cause of Jihad in an extremist fashion.

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Notes

¹ In Latin America, the leftist-marxist ideology is still of some import in a few countries where trafficking and terrorism go hand in hand in the name of communist tenets.

- ² See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *L'islam des jeunes*, Flammarion, 1997.
- ³ See Dietmar Loch, "Moi, Khaled Kelkal" (the interview was made on October 3, 1992), *Le Monde*, October 7, 1995. In this interview, the social roots of Kelkal's Islamic radicalism are spelled out by himself. In our own interviews, many young boys of the poor Paris suburb (Argenteuil in 1997) pretend to be treated like "insects" by the French people.
- ⁴ For more detailed information, see Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers : New Martyrs of Allah*, Pluto Press (distributed in the US by Michigan Press University), 2005.
- ⁵ See Michel Wieviorka (ed.), *Violences en France*, Seuil, Paris, 1999.
- ⁶ See Omar Guendouz, *Les soldats perdus de l'islam, les réseaux français de Ben Laden*, Editions Ramsay, 2002.
- ⁷ See Rémi Laveau & Withold de Wenden, *La Beurgeoisie*, Paris, Editions du CNRS, 2001. (Note by CIR: 'Beur' is a pejorative term for a young disadvantaged Frenchman of North African descent or a second-generation North African living in the cities and suburbs in France. However, in this particular case (*La Beurgeoisie*), it means the rise of a new Muslim middle class in France).
- ⁸ See Dominique Thomas, *Londonistan, la voix du djihad*, Michalon, 2003.
- ⁹ See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Les nouveaux martyrs d'Allah*, Flammarion, Collection Champs, 2003; Olivier Roy, *L'islam mondialisé*, Seuil, 2002; Gilles Kepel, *Fitna, Guerre au cœur de l'islam*, Gallimard, 2004 .
- ¹⁰ See Ian Buruma & Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: A Short history of Anti-Westernism*, Atlantic Books, 2004.
- ¹¹ See Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.