



A Discursive War on Terror: The Case of France

Maya Eyal, (Research Assistant, ICT)

October 2018

ABSTRACT

When looking at terrorist groups' narratives, one can notice that they define themselves in opposition to another group, usually the West and its values, that is declared to be the enemy. Likewise, the Western group perceives itself as diametrically opposed to "the terrorists", that represent all that is rejected in Western values. This opposition between us and them might be encouraged in Western countries, such as France, in the media and in public discourses, just like it is in the terrorists' discourse. Terrorism then creates this ideological confrontation, this war of symbols, where each side wants to show that it holds the one Truth. This can dehumanize the "enemy" and make it bigger than it is. In France specifically, the danger lies in a general suspicion towards Muslims, that constitute almost 10% of the population¹.

¹ "Europe's Growing Muslim Population," Pew Research Center, November 29, 2017, accessed July 8, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Framing the Issue	5
Defining terms	6
Methodology	8
The Terrorists’ Discourse	9
Definition of the Group and the Other	9
The Power of the Group.....	12
The French Discourse About Terror	15
Discourse Analysis	15
Media Coverage of Terror	15
1985-1986	16
2015-2016	17
Focus on the Word “Islamism”	19
Presidential Speeches Following Main Attacks	22
Speech by François Hollande after the Charlie Hebdo attacks.....	23
Speech by François Hollande after the Paris attacks	24
Speech by Emmanuel Macron after the Nice attack	25
Hypotheses about the Impact of this Discourse	26
Conclusion	28
Bibliography	29

Introduction

“Our way of speaking plays an active role in creating and changing our perception, our cognition and our emotions”, according to Richard Jackson that worked on the language used in the “war on terrorism”². Indeed, words are never neutral, and language is a major tool for conveying social representations and perceptions. Terrorism is generally discussed in the West in a different way than other situations of conflicts, as a very specific phenomenon. Here, it will be argued that in terrorism as well, there is a confrontation between groups that perceive each other as *the other*, as the enemy that represents all that needs to be fought, creating a Manichean battle between the *good guys* and the *bad guys*. This confrontation mostly takes place elsewhere than on the battlefield in the case of terrorism. Indeed, terrorism aims at producing fear, and therefore plays on the psychological ground. Likewise, the confrontation between the “terrorists” and the “West” occurs on the symbolical level, and words have become a crucial tool in this war of symbols, in this “battle of ideas”³. Those words often dehumanize *the other* by forgetting their individuality, by only considering *the group* as a whole. It is believed here that there is a real danger in dehumanizing *the other*, because, as Zimbardo puts it, “dehumanization is one of the central processes in the transformation of ordinary, normal people into indifferent or even wanton perpetrators of evil”⁴. The choice here was to focus on the discourse about terrorism in France. France has become one of the main targets of jihadists in the last years. Islam has also become a very controversial topic in France where the Muslim population has been increasing in the last decades.

This research takes on a multi-disciplinary approach through media analysis, discursive analysis and social psychology. It will examine two main questions: (1) can Western and terrorist discourses be compared in the way they create a radical opposition between “us” and “them”? (2) could those Western discourses, conveyed in public speeches and in the media, encourage more terrorist acts?

² Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism* (Manchester University Press, 2005), https://books.google.co.il/books?id=onUFTqkP7sAC&pg=PA18&lpg=PA18&dq=terrorism+war+of+symbols&source=bl&ots=kC4bGjWZfN&sig=6FsvXoL9XIT5I4MIPkFLOrFlpXl&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiCsP3p9v_bAhWLLIAKHwyBAXMQ6AEIYjAL#v=onepage&q=terrorism%20war%20of%20symbols&f=false

³ Martha Crenshaw, “Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of “Suicide Terrorism.” *Political Psychology* 30, no. 3 (2009): 359-364, <https://www-jstor-org/stable/25655399>

⁴ Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect - Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, (Random House, 2007), <https://ia800702.us.archive.org/15/items/TheLuciferEffectUnderstandingHowGoodPeopleTurnEvilISBN978140064113/The%20Lucifer%20Effect%20-%20Understanding%20How%20Good%20People%20Turn%20Evil%20%28ISBN-978-1-4000-6411-3%29.pdf>

The paper will first explore the terrorists' discourse, by focusing on the Islamic State (ISIS) discourse, because it has been the main group in the recent years to bring terrorism to France. However, it will look more broadly if the way this specific group defines itself and the enemy can be universalized to the way other terrorist groups define themselves, such as Palestinian terrorists.

Then, this paper will look at how, in parallel, Western discourses deal with terrorism and how their own group and the enemy group are described. It will look at the evolution of the discourse in the media about terrorism in France, and at some presidential speeches that convey an official discourse about terror.

Framing the Issue

Terrorism has been identified by some researchers such as Marc Sageman as a group phenomenon. Sageman showed that terrorism is mainly developed in local cells, through the contact with radicalized friends or relatives, that form a "bunch of guys"⁵. This confirms social psychology theories such as Zimbardo's "Lucifer Effect" about the desire for conformity, for being part of a group⁶. This will to be included could very well be one of the main factors of radicalization, since radicalized cells often offer a lot of support and a strong community to their members. This can be seen in the phenomenon of conversion in prisons in France for instance, where radicalizing can be a strategy for getting the protection of powerful leaders, as observed by sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar⁷. This shows the major role of group dynamics in the process of radicalization.

Some counter-terrorism researchers have used a social psychological approach. Moghaddam and Marsella⁸ talked about the importance of language and symbolism in groups' narratives, and the major role of the mass media in spreading fear and social representations. Bar-Tal and Labins showed the risk of negatively stereotyping the "other" group in the context of major

⁵ Sageman, Marc. "L'émergence du terrorisme," filmed November 2017, Canal-u Video, 139:00, posted by "FMSH", https://www.canal-u.tv/video/fmsh/l_emergence_du_terrorisme_marc_sageman.38609

⁶ Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect - Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, (Random House, 2007), <https://ia800702.us.archive.org/15/items/TheLuciferEffectUnderstandingHowGoodPeopleTurnEvilISBN9781400641113/The%20Lucifer%20Effect%20-%20Understanding%20How%20Good%20People%20Turn%20Evil%20%28ISBN-978-1-4000-6411-3%29.pdf>

⁷ Marie Crétenot and Barbara Liaras, "Radicalisation : « La prison est la pire des solutions »,» *Observatoire International des Prisons*, July 28, 2015, accessed July 9, 2018.

⁸ Fathali Moghaddam and Anthony Marsella, *Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004).

events such as terrorist attacks⁹. The danger is that this “other”, which refers initially to the terrorists, tends to expand to all Muslims in general. This has been concretely studied in some countries: there has been media analysis showing the “othering of Muslims” in the United States, Finland, Australia, and in the United Kingdom¹⁰. Some other studies have showed that “the fear of terrorism positively and significantly predicted hostile reactions toward Muslims”¹¹. It has also been proven that the American media cover significantly more terror attacks when they are committed by a Muslim¹². In France specifically, it has been showed that public speeches about terrorism have been building a figure of the enemy by using emotional language. The purpose is to strengthen the feeling of belonging to the group while othering the “enemy” and creating a moral dichotomy between the two groups¹³. However, there has been no research analyzing the coverage of terrorism by the media over the years, combined with an analysis of public speeches in France. This research aims to provide an overall critical vision of the way terrorism is discussed in France.

Defining terms

Since there is not one universal definition of terrorism, this paper will lean on some of the definitions that have been given, in line with its social approach explained above. “**Terrorism**” will be understood here as a group phenomenon in the way Marc Sageman has presented it, and as Martha Crenshaw defined it: its purpose is to “intimidate a watching popular audience by only harming a few”, it is “preeminently political and symbolic” and it is a “clandestine resistance to

⁹ Daniel Bar-Tal and Daniela Labins, “The effect of a major event on stereotyping: terrorist attacks in Israel and Israeli adolescents’ perceptions of Palestinians, Jordanians and Arabs,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31, no. 3 (2001), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ejsp.43>

¹⁰ Derek Silva, “The Othering of Muslims: Discourses of Radicalization in the New York Times, 1969-2014,” *Sociological forum* 31, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1111/sof.12321>

¹¹ Christian Von Sikorski, Désirée Schmuck, Jörg Matthes, and Alice Binder, ““Muslims are not Terrorists”: Islamic State Coverage, Journalistic Differentiation Between Terrorism and Islam, Fear Reactions, and Attitudes Toward Muslims,” *Mass Communication and Society* 20, no. 6 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1342131>

¹² Benjamin Kentish, “Terror attacks receive five times more media coverage if perpetrator is Muslim, study finds,” *The Independent*, July 3, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world-0/terror-attacks-media-coverage-muslim-islamist-white-racism-islamophobia-study-georgia-state-a7820726.html>

¹³ Julien Fragon, “Le discours antiterroriste : la gestion politique du 11 septembre en France,” *HAL* (2009), <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01447971/document>

authority”¹⁴. Terrorism is “essentially a form of communication” as Ginges puts it¹⁵. The symbolic side of terrorism will be highlighted here. “**Terrorist groups**” will refer to the groups recognized by “the West” as such, or at least by some of its members.

“**The West**” as defined in discourses such as the Islamic State’s one mainly refers to the United States, Israel, France, and their allies; because they are presented as the main attackers of the lands of Islam and as the main enemies of Islam.

A **discourse** is a “particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or aspect of the world)”¹⁶. Discourses and words can never be neutral, and necessarily reflect a view of the world¹⁷. They are composed of “discursive formations or constructions”, which refers to the meanings given to a group of statements about a specific topic and to their relationship to other discourses¹⁸. Discourses are an “exercise of power” because they are in competition with each other: every discourse aims at being hegemonic, to be as spread out as possible¹⁹. All languages are built with a basic binary structure: most words have a direct opposite²⁰. This can be seen in discourses about terrorism: when 9/11 was called an “assault on civilization”, it implicitly meant that “barbarians” were involved²¹.

There can be collectively accepted discourses, and those are **narratives**. A narrative is “a story about an event or events that has a plot with a clear starting point and an end point, providing sequential and causal coherence about the world and/or a group’s experience”²². All groups share narratives, because they are a main vehicle of common identity: the individuals of a group agree on a story about shared experiences which can make them a group. Each group builds itself against another, by defining what it is not: the “other”.

¹⁴ Martha Crenshaw, “The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century,” *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000), <https://www-jstor-org/stable/3791798>

¹⁵ Jeremy Ginges, “Deterring the terrorist: A psychological evaluation of different strategies for deterring terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 1 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559708427394>

¹⁶ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), chap. 1, <http://10.4135/9781849208871>

¹⁷ Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism* (Manchester University Press, 2005),

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=onUFTqkP7sAC&pg=PA18&lpg=PA18&dq=terrorism+war+of+symbols&source=bl&ots=kC4bGjWZfN&sig=6FsvXoL9XIT5l4MIPkFLOrFlpXl&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiCsP3p9v_bAhWLLIAKHwyBAXMQ6AEIYjAL#v=onepage&q=terrorism%20war%20of%20symbols&f=false

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Daniel Bar-Tal, Neta Oren, and Rafi Nets-Zehngut, “Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework,” *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 5 (2014), <https://www-jstor-org/stable/24557448>.

Emotional or emotive language is a choice of words that aim to evoke emotions in the reader. Emotional words are specifically more evocative than “colder” words: for instance, words like “love”, “hatred”, that carry a strong symbolic meaning. Such language is often used to persuade the reader or the audience in the news or in political speeches.

Methodology

In the first part, the terrorists’ propaganda will be analyzed through primary sources which are issues of the online magazines *Dabiq* and *Dar-al-Islam*, and by using secondary sources that are interviews of Palestinian terrorists. ISIS spreads its discourse through different means online; one major vehicle is its media, such as the magazines *Al Dabiq* in English, and *Dar-al-Islam* in French, that specifically aim at a Western audience that cannot read Arabic. That is why this paper will focus on these specific magazines that have a major influence in Western countries; *Dar-al-Islam* will be looked at more in details since it focuses on France. The extracts of the issues of *Dar-al-Islam*, originally in French, were translated by the author of this paper. Only four issues of these magazines were analyzed in detail, because it is enough to only look at a few of them to understand what the discourse of the group is. Indeed, the differences from one text to another are minor. This paper does not focus on the details, but rather tries to highlight main trends and dynamics of the group’s discourse. The choice has been made to look at the discourses of other “terrorist” groups such as Palestinian terrorists, because their discourse seems to be similar on many aspects.

The discourse analysis will be based on primary sources only: it will present an analysis of the media coverage of terrorism in France throughout the years using the software Europresse. Europresse is an online database of the French media, with archives going back to 1944. It is the most complete database that could be used for this paper, but it does not offer an access to absolutely all articles. This analysis does not aim to be extremely precise on figures, but rather to give a general idea of the way terrorism is covered, by comparing different periods but also different topics, and looking at the type of language used. The extracts from articles originally in French were translated to English by the author of this paper. Europresse offers a very good database for the newspaper *Le Monde*, which was the second most read online newspaper in 2018, after *Le Figaro*²³. Those two media are the main sources of the articles presented here. *Le Monde* is usually

²³ “ACPM CLASSEMENTS NUMERIQUES OJD SEPTEMBRE 2018,” Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias, accessed October 15, 2018, <http://www.acpm.fr/Actualites/Toutes-les-actualites/Actualites-numeriques/ACPM-Classements-Numeriques-OJD-septembre-2018>

considered politically center-left oriented, although it presents itself as neutral. On the other hand, *Le Figaro* is a center-right newspaper. This paper tries to show the general trends in the mainstream French media. Sources from all the political spectrum are presented, but the most read sources were used to a greater extent since they have the most impact on the population and they are the most able to spread one consistent discourse. Likewise, the choice here was to use only online newspapers because they are by far the most read today. The figures given do not discriminate between different political orientations of the media: they give an idea of how often a word is used in the media in general, knowing that some media will use them more than others. They simply aim to show the frequency of the use of a word in general across the different French media.

The second part of the discourse analysis will study three French presidential speeches that followed the main terrorist attacks in France in terms of the number of victims and the impact on the population: the Charlie Hebdo attack (07/01/2015), the Paris attacks (13/11/2015) and the Nice attacks (14/07/2016). The full original speeches in French were found online and translated in this paper by the author.

The final conclusions will be based on hypotheses drawn from the findings of the discourse analysis, and on some secondary sources such as recent surveys giving an idea of the perception of Muslims in France today and the links that are made between Islam in general and terrorism.

The Terrorists' Discourse

In this part, the focus will be put on how the main *terrorist* groups recognized as such by the West define themselves and *the other*, which is *the West*. The Islamic State's propaganda will be analyzed specifically because it was the main group targeting the West these last years including France, as well as Hamas because of the prevalence of *the group* for its members. The goal is to understand the importance of the collective in such groups, and how it influences the perception of *the other* by the members of the group.

Definition of the Group and the Other

The language used in the two magazines *Al Dabiq* and *Dar-al-Islam* published by ISIS is very binary: very positive words are used for the description of ISIS members and actions, and very negative ones for the description of the West and its actions:

*“The **crusaders**²⁴ claim to bear the standard of “liberty” and “justice” for all the oppressed peoples of the world, when in fact their **tyranny** knows no limits when directed **against the Muslim Ummah.**”²⁵*

The group of “the crusaders” refers to *the West*, the enemies of Islam and the Muslim community, the “Ummah”. It is described as an offensive enemy that attacks the Muslim community and spreads its “tyranny” over them. The language used in the different issues of these media has one main message: it is not possible to be a good Muslim and not to support the Islamic State. ISIS wants to convince the Muslims living in Western countries that they cannot be both Muslim and feel like they belong to their country. In issues of *Dar-Al-Islam*, those Muslims are named “the Muslims living in lands of infidelity”, and ISIS is presented as “the most powerful enemy of the West”²⁶. Martyrdom against these enemies of Islam is praised, and terrorist attacks presented as a necessary step in this binary war between Islam and the West:

*In a blessed attack facilitated by Allah, a group of believers among the soldiers of the Califate _may Allah bring it power and victory_ chose the capital of abominations and perversion as its target, the one carrying the cross in Europe: Paris. A group that divorced from life down under went to its enemy by looking for death in Allah’s path, by saving His religion, His prophet and His allies, and by wanting to humiliate **His enemies**. They were true to Allah and that is how we consider them. Allah conquered through their hands and **threw fear in the crusaders’ hearts** on their own land. [...] May Allah accept them among the martyrs and allow us to join them. France and the ones following its path need to know that they remain the main target of the Islamic State and that they will continue to smell the smell of death for leading the crusade, for having dared insulting our prophet, for having shown pride in **fighting Islam in France** and having attacked the Muslims in the lands of the Califate.²⁷*

The language used, apart from creating this clear dichotomy between the good and the bad path for Muslims in the West, martyrdom or betrayal, also uses guilt to pressure them to choose the right side:

*Will you let the infidel peacefully sleep in their house while the crusaders’ planes **terrorize**, night and day, the Muslims’ children and wives with their roar above their heads? How can you feel happy and*

²⁴ Bold words were an addition of the author to highlight some words

²⁵ The Islamic State, “The Murtadd Brotherhood,” *Dabiq* (Issue 14), April 2016, <https://clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf>

²⁶ The Islamic State, “LA CHARÎ’AH D’ALLÂH OU LA CHARÎ’AH DE L’HOMME,” *Dar-Al-Islam* (Issue 5), Sept 20, 2015, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/the-islamic-state-e2809cdc481r-al-isl481m-magazine-522.pdf>

²⁷ The Islamic State, “LA FRANCE A GENOUX,” *Dar-Al-Islam* (Issue 7), November 30, 2015, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/dc481r-al-isl481m-magazine-7.pdf>

*sleep rested when **you have not rescued your brothers**? When you have not brought fear into the hearts of the cross worshippers nor have you retaliated? Thus, you the muwahhid, wherever you are, should help your brothers and your State as much as you can, and the best you can do is to try as much as you can to **kill a French or an American infidel, or any of their allies**.*²⁸

It is interesting here to see how the ones called *terrorists* by the West return this word against them. To the Islamic State, the terrorists are the Westerners: they are the ones terrorizing and bombing the innocent Muslims, and the Islamic State's attacks are only a defensive measure. It is also interesting to note the importance of the group: the individual Muslim should not rest if his brothers are in danger. The group is the priority, and the fight against the West the only right path for Muslims all over the world. Concluding this logic, the article encourages these Muslims to put all their efforts and energy in trying to kill French and Americans. Those are the main targets, the main figures of the enemy: the United States and France. But any other Western country is perceived as their ally and therefore as the Islamic State's enemy.

The most important message for this paper in the Islamic State discourse is the one telling Muslims that there is no other true Islam but the one offered by ISIS:

*The only danger would be that the Muslims of Europe, if they are true to themselves, will realize that **they have been cheated on and manipulated** by their imams for years and that the **true Islam is the one of the Islamic State, not the one of the Republic!***²⁹

To sum up, there are only two possible paths for Muslims: integrate into the Western country in which they live, and therefore become an infidel and a traitor to Islam and to their brothers; or be a real Muslim true to his faith, join ISIS against the West, and be accepted as a full member of the Muslim community.

In the documentary *The Mind of Suicide Killers*, Pierre Rehov met Palestinians and interviewed them. Although the Palestinian discourse is different from the Islamic State's one in the sense that it is more focused on a nationalistic approach and has another main enemy, Israel, the content is actually very similar. One of the men interviewed said: "I wouldn't be a Muslim if I wouldn't want to become a martyr", and a woman: "when it deals with honor, the law doesn't exist"³⁰. Here as well, the meaning of a true Muslim is one that is ready to sacrifice his life on earth for the group. And here again, the group has been victim of humiliation from the West and needs

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The Islamic State, "ATTENTATS SUR LA VOIE PROPHETIQUE," *Dar-Al-Islam* (Issue 8), February 6, 2016, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/dacc84r-al-islacc84m-magazine-8.pdf>

³⁰ Pierre Rehov, "The Mind of the Suicide Killers," Documentary, 140:00, August 25, 2006, <https://documentaryheaven.com/suicide-killers/>

to get its revenge through the killing of the enemy. As a psychiatrist in Gaza puts it: “better to die in glory than live in humiliation”³¹. The ones who refuse to become martyrs take the risk of being perceived as “cowards or at least unpatriotic”³².

The blind hatred of the enemy is also a very important consequence of discourse and propaganda: in a study where 35 terrorists were interviewed, most of the Palestinians had never had any contact with an Israeli but would show a clear hostility towards them. One of them shared his thoughts about Israelis: “You Israelis are Nazis in your soul and in your conduct [...]. You smashed the skulls of innocent civilians”³³. The language used is extreme and emotional, and the dehumanization and generalization of all Israelis, who represent the enemy, clear. One same thing can be called very differently according to the perception: what the West sees as “suicide terrorism” is “istishad” to the terrorists, which means “martyrdom or self-sacrifice in the service of Allah”³⁴. It is interesting to see the universality of Muslim “terrorists” discourse. Similar techniques are used to persuade Muslims to commit attacks and similar group dynamics can be found. The war described is the one of the Muslim group against the West.

The Power of the Group

Number of studies have showed that most “terrorists” that commit terrorist attacks were initially balanced people psychologically, and not mentally ill³⁵. Psychiatrist Marc Sageman, on top of considering the young terrorists he interviewed “normal”, found them to be superior intellectually³⁶. As Andrew Silke puts it: “the most terrifying thing about suicide bombers is their

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ariel Merari, Jonathan Fighele, Boaz Ganor, Ephraim Lavie, Yohanan Tzoreff, and Arie Livne, “Making Palestinian “Martyrdom Operations”/“Suicide Attacks”: Interviews With Would-Be Perpetrators and Organizers,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1, no. 22 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550903409403>

³³ Jerrold Post, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny, “The terrorists in their own words: Interviews with 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 1 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550312331293007>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Stéphanie Trouillard, “FRANCE – Radicalisation : “Les terroristes ne sont pas des malades mentaux”,” *France 24*, August, 23, 2017, https://search-proquest-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/cv_1924784/docview/1938904403?pq-origsite=summon

³⁶ Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect - Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, (Random House, 2007), <https://ia800702.us.archive.org/15/items/TheLuciferEffectUnderstandingHowGoodPeopleTurnEvilISBN9781400064113/The%20Lucifer%20Effect%20->

sheer normality”³⁷. Many others have showed the importance of the peer group in leading those people into doing things they would not have done on their own. Zimbardo was a pioneer in showing this with his Stanford Prison Experiment, where mentally balanced students were randomly allocated the roles of either prison guards or inmates; and the ones having a position of authority, the prison guards, came to be very violent against the inmates. His conclusions stated the tendency of most people for conformity because of their “basic need to belong, to associate, and be accepted by others”³⁸, and the power of groups in making ordinary people behave in an “evil” way. This is what explains “the transformation of young Palestinians from students into suicide bombers intent on killing innocent Israeli civilians”³⁹.

Already in the late 19th century, Gustave Le Bon talked about *the soul of the crowds* and described the specific dynamics that occurred in groups only, in which individuals would unite to create this new entity with a life of its own. These crowds *accept or reject ideas as a whole*. When on top of the strength of the group there is a religious feeling in the crowd, it usually comes *with intolerance and fanaticism*⁴⁰. This can be clearly seen with terrorist groups such as ISIS or Hamas: their discourse shows an ideology stating what is good and what needs to be rejected, which is all that is not Muslim and that is fighting the Muslims in their opinion.

This strong community can create a collective identity that takes over the individual identity⁴¹. This mechanism is central in allowing violence to occur: the individuals go through a process of “deindividuation”, and therefore do not consider themselves as responsible of their own actions anymore⁴². What they do is for the group, in the name of the group. When an enemy is identified by the group, the ideology they fight for becomes destructive: they feel like they need to get rid of this obstacle that stops their group from succeeding⁴³. The narrative of the group justifies the choice of the enemy, the “them”, with references to history and past divisions. Terrorist groups create a narrative of common references for the Umma, the Muslim community, around a clear common enemy: the West, as it is taught in Islamic schools⁴⁴. There is a phenomenon of “natural learning” of

[%20Understanding%20How%20Good%20People%20Turn%20Evil%20%28ISBN-978-1-4000-6411-3%29.pdf](#)

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules*, (Presses Universitaires de France, 1895), preface, chap. IV, <https://www-cairn-info-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/psychologie-des-foules--9782130620624.htm>

⁴¹ Ervin Staub, *OVERCOMING EVIL: GENOCIDE, VIOLENT CONFLICT AND TERRORISM*, Oxford University Press, 2011, Chap. 5.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

this ideology through “natural socialization”, which is the imitation of behaviors that are common in one’s surrounding according to Bandura⁴⁵.

When this strong collective identity comes with a high self-esteem of the group, this can bring group narcissism. Just like in the case of individual narcissism, the feeling of victimization and shame of the group creates a need for revenge and aggression⁴⁶. Jessica Stern, who interviewed terrorists, found “a deep pool of perceived humiliation”. This perception of humiliation is combined with a deep love for their Muslim community, which brings about “a rage at those who would humiliate it”⁴⁷. These feelings contribute to “merge their individual identity with that of the organization in pursuit of their cause”, which leaves “no room for individual ideas, individual identity and individual decision-making”⁴⁸. The push factor is a “perceived social rejection” and a feeling of unfairness, according to Ginges: “the enemy is normally characterized as the ‘Goliath’ and the terrorist group as the ‘David’”⁴⁹. The victimized, oppressed terrorist groups as they perceive themselves, count on winning the battle thanks to the strength of their group.

The psychologist specialist in narcissism Sam Vaknin considers that terrorists suffer from a “shared psychotic disorder”⁵⁰. Although they can be individually balanced, something in their interaction with each other creates this mass psychosis, this anti-social behavior⁵¹. “If recurrently traumatized or abused by external or internal forces, a group of people may develop the mass equivalent of pathological narcissism as a defense or compensatory mechanism”, or group narcissism, Vaknin explains⁵². Terrorists suffer from a “grandiose gap”⁵³ or narcissistic injuries: their fantasies about the grandiosity of their group are painfully denied by reality, which creates humiliation and shame. Another important aspect of this group narcissism is the lack of empathy, which brings about violence and dehumanization of the enemy.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Scott Atran, “The moral logic and growth of suicide terrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1162/wash.2006.29.2.127>

⁴⁸ Jerrold Post, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny, “The terrorists in their own words: Interviews with 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 1 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550312331293007>

⁴⁹ Jeremy Ginges, “Deterring the terrorist: A psychological evaluation of different strategies for deterring terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 1 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559708427394>

⁵⁰ Sam Vaknin (professor in psychology), in discussion with the author, July 2018.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Sam Vaknin, “Narcissists, Group Behavior, and Terrorism,” accessed July 5, 2018, <http://samvak.tripod.com/12.html>

⁵³ Ibid.

The feeling of group humiliation is one of the main factors of political radicalization and violence⁵⁴. With it comes the will to punish indiscriminately “the whole out-group [...] to restore threatened in-group and self-image”⁵⁵. Group narcissism also creates paranoia, or “disproportionate intergroup hostility”, which leads to easily perceive threats against the group: this was the case of the Charlie Hebdo attack of 2015. Indeed, a caricature of the Muslim prophet Mohamed in a satirical newspaper was perceived as an insult to all Muslims and to Islam⁵⁶.

Therefore, one can notice that terrorists’ discourses encourage a group narcissism: they praise the grandiosity of the Muslim group, and accuse the enemy group, the West, of all its suffering. This group has been unfairly humiliated and attacked and therefore needs to defend itself and get its revenge. Militant Islamism is “the narrative of victimhood”⁵⁷.

This paper will now focus on the “other side” to examine if the way France talks about itself and its enemies, the “terrorists”, presents similarities to the terrorists’ discourse and might participate in increasing this group narcissism.

The French Discourse About Terror

Discourse Analysis

Media Coverage of Terror

This part of the paper looks at the evolution of the coverage of terrorism in the French media. Media have been found to have major impacts both on public opinion and policies⁵⁸. This media analysis is to be included into a broad range of studies that have been done in other countries regarding discourses about terrorism and radicalization, that found that Western media use “discursive

⁵⁴ Agnieszka Golec de Zavala, Mjude Peker, Rita Guerra, and Tomasz Baran, “Collective Narcissism Predicts Hypersensitivity to In- group Insult and Direct and Indirect Retaliatory Intergroup Hostility,” *European Journal of Personality* 30, no. 6 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2067>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalization - In Europe and Beyond,” European Policy Center, March 22, 2017, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_7510_thechallengeofjihadistradicalisation.pdf?doc_id=1833

⁵⁸ Derek Silva, “The Othering of Muslims: Discourses of Radicalization in the New York Times, 1969-2014,” *Sociological forum* 31, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12321>

strategies that contribute to conceptual distinctions that are used to construct Muslims as an “alien other” to the West”⁵⁹. Therefore, this media analysis will test these findings in the case of France. First, it focuses on the way the left-wing terrorist attacks were covered in the 1980s at the time it was the main internal threat in Europe. In France, the group Action Directe was very active in those years and was considered a terrorist group. The aim is to compare this media coverage with the one of Muslim terror attacks later in time.

1985-1986

The years 1985 and 1986 were specifically looked at, because it was the time of the biggest attacks by Action Directe. The group committed 12 attacks during these two years, killing in total 4 people and injuring 49 people. From 1st January 1985 to 31st December 1986, there was about **450 articles** about Action Directe in the French media (containing the exact phrase “Action Directe”). About **250 articles** made a link between Action Directe and terrorism: they included both the exact phrases “Action Directe” and “Terrorism”. These articles had a relatively objective way of covering the attacks of Action Directe: the language was not emotional, but rather cold, simply describing facts such as the evolution of this organization:

*This time, Action directe shifted. Very quickly claimed with a phone call to a journalist’s domicile, the killing of a great servant of the State, close partner of the Minister of defense, brought the French terrorist organization into the European family, historically composed of the German Red Army Faction and the Italian Red Brigades. This radicalization is the culmination of the evolution of their commitment during the year 1984.*⁶⁰

There are no negative words used to describe the attack of Action Directe. Even the word “killing” is the most neutral one that could be used, compared to words like “assassination” or “murder”. No adjective comes with the word “terrorist” used to describe Action Directe. The article is written in a straightforward descriptive way.

This contrasts with another article written about Action Directe in the same newspaper, *Le Monde*, only one month later. The main difference between the two articles was the approach: the previous one was called “the radicalization of Action Directe”, and simply described how this organization

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Edwy Plenel, “La radicalization d’Action Directe,” *Le Monde*, January 28, 1985, https://nouveaueuropresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Link/politique2T_1/news%c2%b719850128%c2%b7LM%c2%b72761736

came to commit more and more attacks. The next article, also about Action Directe, deals with the link between immigration and the attacks of Action Directe⁶¹:

Even though they dissociate themselves from it, Action Directe's criminal violence could change their situation. Indeed, in this organization there are at least fifteen known Italian activists: five of them, including Vincenzo Spano (twenty-six), were arrested and imprisoned in France, in 1984, and ten others, suspected of attacks, imprisoned in Italy. How, in these conditions, can we avoid confusion? Can the French population make the difference any longer between the "good" refugees, supporting a "political solution", and the "bad" ones, that are illegal and encourage French terrorism?

Voices can be heard everywhere in France in favor of a political change regarding refugees. To some, the Basques set an example. "The carelessness with which asylum is applied and the refusal of extradition favor the birth of terrorist networks in France", Jacques Toubon said, secretary general of the RPR and expert on security issues in his party.

This article uses a much different language: stronger words are used, such as "criminal violence". The tone is less neutral: the author of the paper, as well as the person interviewed, Jacques Toubon, seem to worry about the rise of terrorism in France, and to link it to the Italian immigration. It is therefore interesting to see that in the other articles about Action Directe, the language was factual. Action Directe was perceived as an internal French threat, and the attacks were described as committed by French citizens that were simply radical ones. As soon as the "enemy" is perceived as a stranger coming on the national territory, the danger seems much bigger, although the same events and topics are mentioned. Here, the Italian refugees are suspected to be a fifth column entering France in an uncontrolled way and attacking France from the inside. The word "terrorism" is here used in a very different way: it is a growing and uncontrolled danger threatening the French population coming from outside, whereas in the previous article it was an internal radical political behavior with external links.

2015-2016

The media analysis will now focus on the years 2015 and 2016, from 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2016, since these were the two most deadly years in France because of terrorism, that was Muslim this time. The table below shows the amount of terrorist attacks during these years, using the START database and definition of terrorism: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through

⁶¹ ""Bons" et "mauvais" réfugiés." *Le Monde*, February 4, 1985. <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/0>

fear, coercion, or intimidation”⁶². The attacks committed by mentally ill people or without clear claims were removed from the statistics. Here only two types of attacks, the main ones, were counted: jihadist and anti-Muslim attacks. Other types of attacks included anti-Semitic attacks that were often linked to jihadism. Anti-Muslim attacks were not always clearly anti-Muslim and some of them could have been personal clashes.

Data about “terrorist” attacks in France in 2015-2016

Attacks	“Terrorist” attacks	“Jihadist” attacks	“Anti-Muslim” attacks
Number of attacks	55	26 (47%)	18 (33%)
Number of people killed or injured	1153	1132 (98,18%)	4 (0,35%)
Number of articles covering the topic	466,609 ⁶³	466,593	7,963

The articles using the exact phrases “terrorism”, “terrorist” or “terrorists” were counted as articles covering “terrorist” attacks. Articles about “jihadist” attacks were counted by looking at the number of articles about terrorism that did not use the words “Muslim”, “jihadist”, “Islamist” or “Islam”. Only 16 articles did not make a connection between terrorism and at least one of these words on this period, which meant that the rest of articles about terrorism did. The methodology here is not about precise figures, because the software Europresse is not a very precise tool. The aim is to give estimations and general trends. This shows that most media coverage about terrorism links terrorism to Islam, and that the word “terrorism” is much less used for covering other attacks such as anti-Muslim attacks, even though they were also political attacks against civilians on a much smaller scale.

Very often, the language used was emotional: 366,614 articles about terrorism used the word “values”, 364,003 of them the word “hatred”, 360,577 the word “barbarian”, and 326,486 the phrase “the West”. Those gross figures show that the discourse about terrorism has become more and more symbolic, compared to the way it used to be treated in the 1980s. This evolution is logical: terrorism itself has grown and become an international phenomenon much more deadly and impressive compared to attacks by left-wing groups such as Action Directe. But the language has

⁶² START, “Global Terrorism Database,” <http://apps.start.umd.edu/gtd/using-gtd/>

⁶³ These figures were found on Europresse.

also become less cold and factual, and more biased in the way terrorists are described: terrorism used to be considered a political extreme tool, and it has now become the enemy's evil tool.

Focus on the Word "islamisme"

In comparing coverage of terrorism in France to other countries, one interesting element comes up: there is a word much more used in the French discourse on terror than in other countries, which is "islamisme", or "Islamism" in English. This word is interesting because it has become very widespread to talk about jihadist terrorism in France, and it makes a direct link between terrorism and Islam.

This word has been used for centuries in the French language, but its meaning has significantly changed. Its first usage, according to dictionaries such as *Le Robert*, dates to 1697⁶⁴. At the time, it was simply a synonym of "Islam". It was used to talk about the Muslim religion, the same way as the word "judaïsme" was used to talk about the Jewish religion. Technically, the suffix "iste" added to the word "Islam" to make "islamiste" means *a supporter of Islam*⁶⁵. It is only in 1993 that another meaning was given to the word "islamisme": "a political and religious movement praising the expansion or the respect of Islam"⁶⁶. This new meaning was added in accordance to the way the word was used in the media, according to lexicographer Edouard Trouillez⁶⁷. This meaning became broader and broader, including more and more groups in the "islamist" groups and became less and less clear and precise. Thomas Deltombe studied this evolution and noticed a breach in the usage of the word in the 1990s, when it became clearly linked to terrorism⁶⁸. To Deltombe, this word is a very powerful ideological tool because it makes Islam generally suspicious by linking it to terror. At the time this word started being used in the terrorist context exclusively, linguist Maxime Rodinson warned about this usage. Since "islamisme" was initially a synonym of "Islam" in the dictionary, using it as a synonym of "terrorism" meant that Islam and terrorism were one and the same⁶⁹. The word acquired a very negative connotation and became very tightly linked to fanaticism and violence.

⁶⁴ Frantz Durupt, "Vous avez dit « islamisme » ?," *Libération*, October 9, 2017, https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/09/vous-avez-dit-islamisme_1596640

⁶⁵ Geopolis, "Islam, islamique, islamisme, islamistes : le poids de ces mots-là," Accessed August 20, 2018, <http://geopolis.francetvinfo.fr/islam-islamique-islamisme-islamistes-le-poids-de-ces-mots-la-50743>

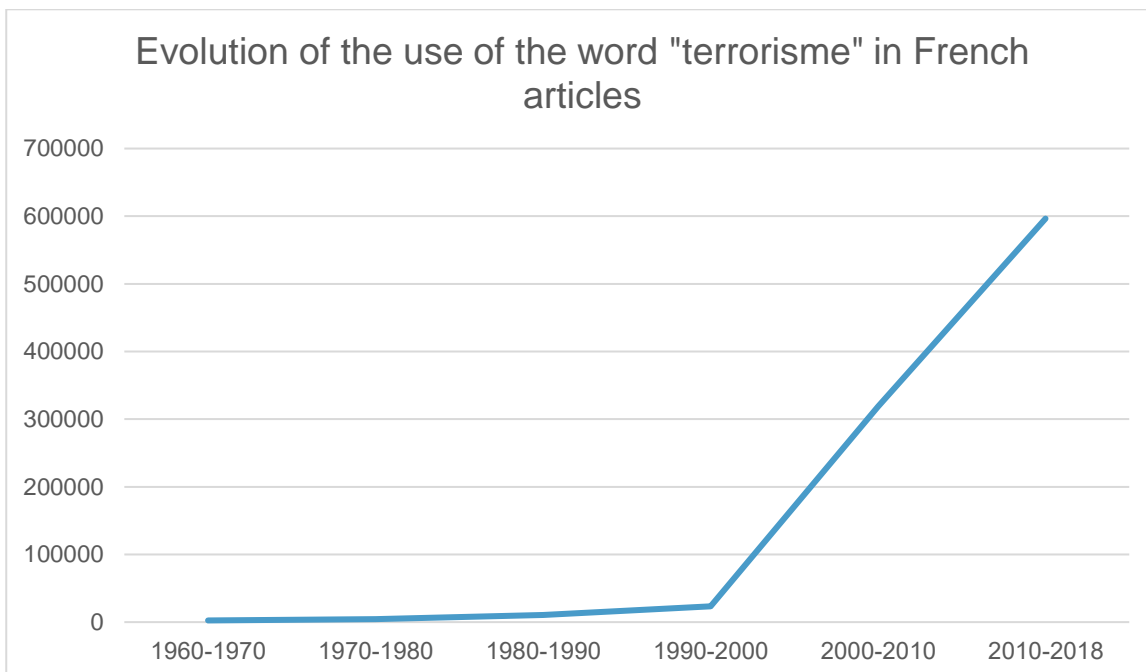
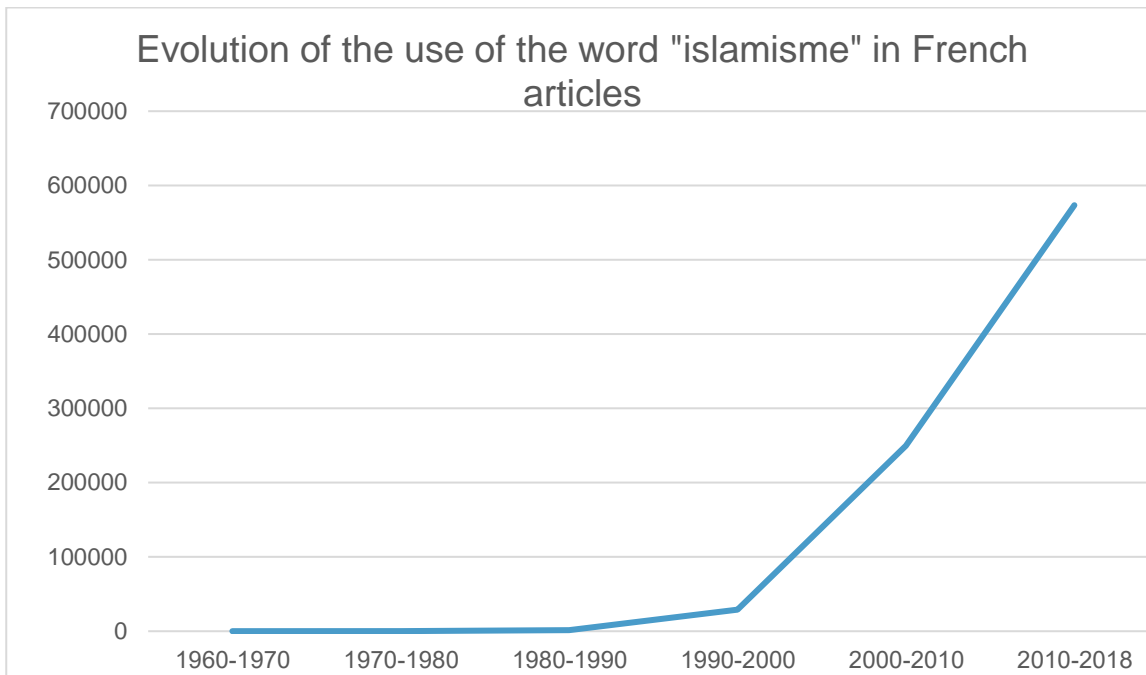
⁶⁶ Frantz Durupt, "Vous avez dit « islamisme » ?," *Libération*, October 9, 2017, https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/09/vous-avez-dit-islamisme_1596640

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

It is therefore interesting to look at the usage of this word in the media over the years, compared to the one of the word "terrorism". In the graphs below, the usage of these words was evaluated by decades starting from 1960 and up to the present days, by looking at the number of articles in which they were used for each period of time.



It is obvious that there is a clear correlation between the usage of the two words: when one started being much more used, the other did as well. The word "terrorisme" started being used on a big scale only a few years before "Islamisme" did.

In 1973-1974, there was great tensions in the French population in the context of Algerian terrorism and anti-Arabs attacks in France known as the “ratonnades”. During that time only **6 articles** used the word “islamisme”. They all dealt with foreign news talking about Muslim movements in Egypt or in Libya, except for one that mentioned tensions inside the Muslim community in France, where a Muslim representative that was interviewed used the word Islamism combined with the adjective delirious⁷⁰. The word already started being used in a pejorative way, even by Muslims themselves. In 1994-1995, period where Thomas Deltombe sees the shift in the meaning of “islamisme” and where there is a clear increase of its use in the media, the word became in some media associated with a background political ideology, seen as part of another civilization than *ours*, the Westerners, as it was in this article by *Les Echos*, a liberal newspaper:

*Can we accept a radical Islamism that is, to us, an incredible decline towards religious totalitarian regimes and that brings us back to a civilization dating to another time?*⁷¹

During this time the word Islamism was used in **620 articles**. There was a major increase of the use of this word in the media in only 20 years: it became about 100 times more used. It is interesting to notice how the *us* involves a *them*, an othering of this different and inferior civilization, and how the word Islamism is associated with an upcoming danger.

There is a very clear shift for the usage of both words, “islamisme” and “terrorisme”, in the early 2000s. This is of course linked to the 9/11 attacks, that radically changed Western discourses on terror. What used to be an internal issue suddenly became an international threat that attacked the very core of the Western world, the United States. Ever since, both words have been increasingly used and combined. The enemy became more symbolical and bigger in 2001, and Islam as such became suspicious. In 2001-2002, **2,598 articles** used the word Islamism. It is notable that even though this word has become used on a much larger scale, there has been an effort in the media to make a difference between *Islam* and *Islamism*, or to specify that Islamism is a small phenomenon in the Muslim community:

⁷⁰ “DES ASSOCIATIONS ISLAMIQUES DE FRANCE contestent le recteur de la Mosquée de Paris,” *Le Monde*, January 9, 1974, <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/4>

⁷¹ “Islamisme,” *Les Echos*, Sept 26, 1995, <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/0>

*Ethnic isolations reject **the West** and its Judeo-Christian values. This evolution probably remains a **minority** in the Arab-Muslim community. But it exists. It is increasing.*⁷²

It is visible here that although there is an effort not to make a confusion between Islam and Islamism, there is a description of a confrontation between groups that reject the West, and the West. A Muslim that criticizes the West would automatically be associated with the Islamists.

In 2017-2018, the word “islamisme” has been used in **211,309 articles** up to mid-August 2018. It is used in association with other issues such as immigration, to the terrorist threat, and to a civilizational crisis. According to the former Prime Minister Manuel Valls:

*We are confronting a **totalitarian ideology**, Islamism, that goes from Salafism to the Muslim brothers, that fights to impose its vision of the world no matter what the situation of our societies is, **that hates the West and the European values of the Enlightenment**. That is why this is the biggest challenge of the beginning of this century.*⁷³

This type of discourses shows this dialectic between two groups, *the Islamists* and *the West*. The tone is dramatic, grandiose, and Islamism is described as composed of all the Muslim groups that seem radical to the West, and that do not share the *Western values*.

Presidential Speeches Following Main Attacks

This section will analyze the presidential speeches that followed the main terrorist attacks in France to identify the *official* discourse on terror. Indeed, there is no need to prove how important are the words chosen by presidents, especially when they occupy a major role in the international community such as French presidents. Bush’s “war on terror” discourse was largely spread out after the 9/11 attacks. As Jackson puts it, “politicians, or more accurately, their propagandists or media relation officers, try to shape public perceptions through the strategic employment of certain words or grammatical formations”⁷⁴; and presidents have a much bigger impact because of their legitimacy and authority on the whole population.

⁷² Ivan Rioufol, “La France face à l’islamisme,” *Le Figaro*, April 4, 2002, <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/0>

⁷³ Judith Waintraub, “Manuel Valls : « l’islamisme, voilà l’ennemi »,” *Le Figaro*, Oct 6, 2017, <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/1>

⁷⁴ Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism* (Manchester University Press, 2005), https://books.google.co.il/books?id=onUFTqkP7sAC&pg=PA18&lpg=PA18&dq=terrorism+war+of+symbols&source=bl&ots=kC4bGjWZfN&sig=6FsvXoL9XIT5I4MIPkFLOrFlpXI&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiCsP3p9v_bAhWLLIAKHWyBAXMQ6AEIYjAL#v=onepage&q=terrorism%20war%20of%20symbols&f=false

Speech by François Hollande after the Charlie Hebdo attacks⁷⁵

This speech was given by François Hollande, the French president at the time, the same day of the attacks, on January 7th, 2015. Some interesting extracts will be analyzed here:

*Today, France was attacked **in its heart**, in Paris, in a newspapers' offices. [...] This **cowardly** attack also killed two policemen, those that were responsible for protecting CHARLIE HEBDO and the newspaper's editors, that have been threatened for years by **obscurantism** and that defended **freedom of speech**. [...] These men, this woman, died for their idea of what France is, meaning **liberty**. [...] Today they are **our heroes** and that is why tomorrow will be a day of national mourning. Today, **the Republic in its entirety** was attacked. The Republic is freedom of speech. The Republic is **culture, creation, pluralism, democracy**. That is what was targeted by the murderers. It is the ideal of justice and peace that France carries everywhere on the international scene and **this message of peace, tolerance that we also defend through our soldiers to fight terrorism and fundamentalism**. [...] **Liberty will always be stronger than barbarism**. France always won against its enemies when it knew precisely how **to unite around its values**.*

The dichotomy here is very clear: the coward, obscurantist, barbarian terrorists attacked Paris, center of the Enlightenment, freedom and peace and its brave heroes defending the positive values of France in face of the dark principles of the terrorists. Those strong emotional words refer to theoretical concepts that are very symbolic: concepts such as liberty, peace, obscurantism.

It is interesting to remember the discourse of the *terrorists* previously detailed: they also perceived themselves as defending their group against the Westerners, the "crusaders", that attacked their values and their lands. They also considered their martyrs to be heroes. And they also called for unification of all the Umma, the Muslim community, around their common fight.

Those French soldiers, that François Hollande describes as fighting terrorism and fundamentalism all around the world to defend their country, are perceived as the attackers in the terrorist groups' discourse. This shows how one same story can be told in a very different way in different narratives, by different groups. And it seems like *truth* lies somewhere in between those two discourses, that are both biased and one-sided.

⁷⁵ François Hollande, speech after the "Charlie Hebdo" attack, Paris, January 7, 2015, accessed from: <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/157000042.html>

Speech by François Hollande after the Paris attacks⁷⁶

The Paris attacks occurred the same year as the Charlie Hebdo attacks a few months later, on 13 November 2015. François Hollande gave the following speech three days later, on 16 November. Some relevant extracts will be looked at here:

***France is at war.** The acts committed Friday night in Paris and near the Stade de France are **acts of war**. They killed at least 129 people and injured many people. They are an **aggression against our country, its values, its youth, its way of life**. They were committed by a **jihadist army**, the ISIS group that is fighting us **because France is a country of liberty**, because we are the **home of human rights**. [...] Our country triumphed over much more fearsome adversaries, in reality, than those **coward murderers**. [...] Terrorists think that **the free peoples** get impressed by **horror**. That is not the case and the French Republic overcame numerous other challenges. It is still there, alive. [...] The French people is a **passionate, brave, courageous people that does not resign and stands up every time one of its children is on the ground**. [...] We are **not engaged in a war of civilization**, because these murderers do not represent any. [...] **The enemy** is using the most abject ways to try to kill. [...] **France that loves life, culture, sport, partying**. [...] Everywhere, the three colors of the French flag dressed the most famous sites as a reminder that France is always **a light for humanity**. And when France is injured, it is the world that finds itself in the **darkness**. [...] Today, **more strikes** are needed. [...] We know it, and it is cruel to say it, but **those are French people who killed French people**. [...] We need to be able to expel faster the **strangers** that represent a particularly **grave threat to public order and the Nation's security**.*

Here one can observe both a continuity with the previous speech but also significant changes in the discourse. The same dichotomy is described, but in more dramatic terms: France, the “home of human rights”, is the “light of humanity” standing against the darkness of the enemy of “life, culture, sport, partying”. Also in this speech war vocabulary was used, which was not the case previously; the French official discourse became much closer to Bush’s “war on terror” discourse. It became more aggressive: the solutions praised by the President are “more strikes” and expelling strangers that represent a threat. The enemy has now become this dangerous stranger attacking from the inside. This speech was given after the deadliest attack against France, that happened only a few

⁷⁶ François Hollande, speech after the attacks in Paris in front of the Parliament, Versailles: November 16, 2015, accessed from: <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/157002982.html>

months after the first major terrorist attack. It shows a change of perception of the enemy on the French side.

Speech by Emmanuel Macron after the Nice attack⁷⁷

This speech was given as a commemoration one year after the Nice attack that occurred on 14 July 2016, on the national day. Some extracts will be analyzed here.

*That is why **our fight** is also an everyday fight, [...] it is a **moral and civilizational fight** that we are leading. The atrocious death of our people needs to strengthen our certitude that **we need to fight without any indulgence**. Because Nice, this city anchored in the millennial Mediterranean Sea, this crossover of languages and cultures, this artistic city of writers, this city of beauty, showed through its population's reactions **what civilization can against barbarism**. [...] Your dead have become **our dead** and we will **fight for them** as much as we will cry for them. We will draw from them the strength to **fight for our values; they will be this light that refuses the victory of the darkness**. [...] This **liberty**, we now know what it costs, you know it in your flesh, in your lives and we know what **our enemies** are capable of to deprive us from it.*

A lot of similarities from one speech to another can be found, even when it is another president speaking. This shows a consistence of a “French discourse” about terror. Similar emotional words are used: France needs to aggressively fight for its values, for the light against the darkness. However, the speech is becoming more and more offensive over time: the word “fight” was used multiple times in this speech. Here this fight becomes even more symbolic: it is a “moral and civilizational fight” against “barbarism”. Unlike François Hollande that stated that these murderers do not represent any civilization, Emmanuel Macron sees a civilizational fight. The question is: what civilization do these terrorists represent, who are the *barbarians*, the enemies fighting against liberty? This type of phrases could easily be interpreted as going along Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations theory, which would be the fight of the *Western civilization* against the *Islamic civilization*. Indeed, groups like ISIS pretend to fight for Islam; if they do represent a civilization, it could only be the Islamic civilization.

⁷⁷ Emmanuel Macron, speech for the commemoration of the Nice attack. July 14, 2017, accessed from: <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-d-emmanuel-macron-lors-de-la-ceremonie-d-hommage-aux-victimes-de-l-attentat-de-nice/>

The analysis of extracts from presidential speeches, an *official* source compared to the media, shows that there is a consistent hegemonic French discourse on terror, where France is presented as fighting for the Western democratic values against the barbarian dark *other*. It also shows, together with the media analysis, that this discourse can be compared to the terrorist groups' discourse in the way it presents its own group and *the other* group.

Hypotheses about the Impact of this Discourse

As previously showed, this discourse creates an opposition between *us* and *them*: between the *Western block* and the group of *the terrorists*. Groups' perceptions of themselves and of *the other* are flexible; so are discourses and narratives. Studies have found that in the construction of *us* against *them*, the news highlighted the violence committed by *them* and tended to undermine the one coming from *us*⁷⁸. The danger lies in misunderstanding who the *enemy* is by oversimplifying and not making a clear difference between who is dangerous and who is not⁷⁹. And this differentiation needs to start in the discourse because of its major impact on people's perceptions. Sikorski, Schmuck, Matthes and Binder studied news coverage of Islamist terrorism and showed that undifferentiated news, meaning news that do not make a clear distinction between Muslims and Muslim terrorists, significantly encouraged negative perceptions of Muslims in general⁸⁰. Evidence was found that fear of terrorism often comes together with "hostile attitudes towards Muslims" and that media coverage of Muslims is generally done in a negative way⁸¹.

And the previous findings can be tested with surveys on the population's perceptions of Islam. In the most recent survey by Ifop of February 2018, 43% of the population considered that Islam was incompatible with French values⁸². These beliefs are mostly found among right-wing voters (about 60%). These numbers have decreased compared to September 2016: at the time 56% gave this answer. September 2016 was after the main terrorist attacks that happened in France: the

⁷⁸ Derek Silva, "The Othering of Muslims: Discourses of Radicalization in the New York Times, 1969-2014," *Sociological forum* 31, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1111/sof.12321>

⁷⁹ Daniel Bar-Tal (author and professor), in discussion with the author, September 2018.

⁸⁰ Shahira S. Fahmy, "Media, Terrorism, and Society: Perspectives and Trends in the Digital Age," *Mass Communication and Society* 20, no. 6 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1382285>

⁸¹ Christian Von Sikorski, Désirée Schmuck, Jörg Matthes, and Alice Binder, "'Muslims are not Terrorists': Islamic State Coverage, Journalistic Differentiation Between Terrorism and Islam, Fear Reactions, and Attitudes Toward Muslims," *Mass Communication and Society* 20, no. 6 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1342131>

⁸² "Pour 43% des Français, l'islam est incompatible avec la République," *Europe1*, Feb 11, 2018, <http://www.europe1.fr/societe/pour-43-des-francais-lislam-est-incompatible-avec-la-republique-3570917>

Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, the Paris attack in November 2015, and the Nice attack in July 2016. This change in perception confirms the findings of Bar-Tal and Labins about the impact of major traumatic events on negative stereotypes: to them, “stereotypes and attitudes towards outgroups are context-dependent”⁸³. This also shows that there is no such thing as absolute French values; the perception of the concept “French values” changes depending on the context and on the group dynamics. Islam is not incompatible with French values as such; it is perceived as being so when people that are thought to represent Islam are perceived as incompatible. That is why it is dangerous to make a confusion between Islam and Islamist terrorism: because the negative perception of terrorists becomes a negative perception of Muslims as a whole. Another survey of 2017 by Ipsos found higher figures: 60% answered that Islam was not compatible with the French values, and 65% estimated that there were too many foreigners in France⁸⁴. This shows the negative perception of *the other*, the foreigner with a different religion that comes to *our* country and takes too much space. Indeed, *the other* tends to be overestimated in its size. A survey by Ipsos Mori of 2016 showed that the French population perceived Muslims as being a much more important part of the population than they are in reality: they were thought to represent 31% of the population in 2016, whereas they were actually less than 10%. They were also thought to reach 40% of the population by 2020, whereas it was estimated that they will only represent 8.3%⁸⁵. Apart from being unfair to the Muslim population in France that is, in its big majority, peaceful, these perceptions can have more dangerous impacts.

Indeed, as seen previously, people tend to want to be part of a group, to be accepted by others, to conformity. Muslims particularly tend to be proud and attached to their religion and their community. However, in France, there is a clear discomfort around the *Islam issue*⁸⁶ that was translated in a number of laws that specifically targeted Muslim practices these last years, such as the 2004 law prohibiting wearing any visible religious sign⁸⁷. These tensions around Islam are visible

⁸³ Daniel Bar-Tal and Daniela Labins, “The effect of a major event on stereotyping: terrorist attacks in Israel and Israeli adolescents’ perceptions of Palestinians, Jordanians and Arabs,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31, no. 3 (2001), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ejsp.43>

⁸⁴ Esther Paolini, “L’immigration et l’islam crispent de plus en plus les Français,” *Le Figaro*, July 3, 2017, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2017/07/03/01016-20170703ARTFIG00256-l-immigration-et-l-islam-crispent-de-plus-en-plus-les-francais.php>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Wajdi Limam, “Le grand malentendu ? Laïcité, radicalisation et pratiques d’intervention sociale,” *Vie Sociale et Traitements* 4, no. 132 (2016): 41-48, <https://www-cairn-info-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/revue-vie-sociale-et-traitements-2016-4-page-41.htm>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

in the discourse about terrorism, that conveys a general suspicion towards Muslims: this was showed with the use of the word “islamisme” that slowly replaced or automatically came together with “terrorisme” in the French media. If Muslims are not integrated in the French group, some of them will look for another group that accepts them the way they are. According to Bar-Tal, if one group excludes another group, then the latter “will do the same and sharpen its own definition” of its group⁸⁸. In other words, exclusion brings inter-group tensions and bigger isolation of the excluded group. Indeed, in September 2018, a survey by The Montaigne Institute found that about one fourth of the Muslim population in France is hostile to the French values⁸⁹.

This seems like being the result of this vicious cycle: if the Muslims that grow up in France feel rejected by their fellow citizens and are assumed to not be compatible with the French values and therefore with the French group because of their religion, they will tend to look for a more inclusive group. Here lies the real danger: there is indeed another group that wants to include them, and that intends on playing on this failure of integration. And that group is the *terrorist* group, such as ISIS. As seen above, in its discourse, this group is very inclusive towards Muslims and very critical of the Islamophobic West. This group specifically targets European Muslims such as French Muslims: it even propagates its discourse in their language, it brings attention to them, to their problems. It brings them solutions as well: revenge against those who rejected them, who offended them and their culture. This very inclusive and friendly group to Muslims might be very attractive to fragile and isolated members of the Muslim community that are looking for support and a way to be freely Muslim. Therefore, the hypothesis of this paper is that the way terrorism is talked about in the French discourse could very well encourage more Muslims to join the *enemy* group, that might be much friendlier to them than the *French* group.

Conclusion

This paper found a clear hegemonic discourse in France about terror, conveyed by mainstream media and by official speeches, that has changed over time depending on the context. This discourse has a lot in common with the discourse of *terrorist* groups by presenting a binary and

⁸⁸ Daniel Bar-Tal (author and professor), in discussion with the author, September 2018.

⁸⁹ “Islam : ce que dit le rapport qui veut réformer la deuxième religion de France,” *Europe1*, Sept 10, 2018, <https://www.lejdd.fr/societe/islam-de-france-ce-que-dit-le-rapport-qui-veut-le-reformer-3752048>

simplistic view of the word that generalizes the understanding of the *enemy* to entire groups of people. The French discourse specifically tends to present Muslims as a whole as suspicious by making implicit links between terrorism and Islam.

The paper aims at warning about *our* behavior towards Muslims in the West, and specifically in France in the way *terrorism* is talked about. Indeed, Muslims are part of France like any other French citizen, and they are becoming a bigger part of the population. There is a real emergency to stop ignoring the tensions that exist in the population around Islam; and find solutions to solve them. And this starts with watching the way we talk about things, and about terrorism specifically. If the discourse changes, the actions will follow. This is a long-term process, but it should be launched as early as possible.

Long-term thinking needs to be combined with short-term reactions to threats. Terrorism is more than one organization or one specific threat: it is based on an ideology; and it is on the ideological ground that it can be fought. If Western countries, such as France, can make sure that their own Muslim population feels like they fully belong to their country instead of feeling like they are a *foreign* element in the French population, that would be a major and positive change. How can this be done? First by realizing the bias there is in *our* perception of Islam. Second, by differentiating in the discourse: Muslim terrorists are a radical part of Islam, but they do not represent all Muslims. Third: by realizing that terrorists are also part of the French population, and by stopping *othering* them and dehumanizing them in the discourse as well. A real reflection about why some French Muslims decide to attack their own country needs to be conducted. Policies should focus on an integration program of Muslims also in the discourse: rethink the use of words in laws or in speeches so they will not be discriminatory.

Further research could conduct specific surveys to better understand the European Muslims' feelings and the non-Muslim Europeans' perception of Islam. It could extend the analysis to other elected politicians' discourse apart from presidents, to show other sides of the *official* discourse. And it could try to identify more practical policy recommendations.

Bibliography

Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias. "ACPM CLASSEMENTS NUMERIQUES OJD SEPTEMBRE 2018." Accessed October 15, 2018. <http://www.acpm.fr/Actualites/Toutes-les-actualites/Actualites-numeriques/ACPM-Classements-Numeriques-OJD-septembre-2018>

Atran, Scott. "The moral logic and growth of suicide terrorism." *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006): 127-147. <https://doi.org/10.1162/wash.2006.29.2.127>

Bar-Tal, Daniel, and Daniela Labins. "The effect of a major event on stereotyping: terrorist attacks in Israel and Israeli adolescents' perceptions of Palestinians, Jordanians and Arabs." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31, no. 3 (2001): 265-280. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ejsp.43>

Bar-Tal, Daniel, Neta Oren, and Rafi Nets-Zehngut. "Sociopsychological analysis of conflict-supporting narratives: A general framework." *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 5 (2014): 662-675. <https://www-jstor-org/stable/24557448>.

Crenshaw, Martha. "Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of "Suicide Terrorism." *Political Psychology* 30, no. 3 (2009): 359-364. <https://www-jstor-org/stable/25655399>

Crenshaw, Martha. "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century." *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000): 405-420. <https://www-jstor-org/stable/3791798>

Crétenot, Marie, and Barbara Liaras. "Radicalisation : « La prison est la pire des solutions »". *Observatoire International des Prisons*, July 28, 2015. Accessed July 9, 2018

Durupt, Frantz. "Vous avez dit « islamisme » ?." *Libération*, October 9, 2017. https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/09/vous-avez-dit-islamisme_1596640

European Policy Center. "The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalization - In Europe and Beyond." March 22, 2017. http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_7510_thechallengeofjihadistradicalisation.pdf?doc_id=1833

Europe1. "Pour 43% des Français, l'islam est incompatible avec la République." Feb 11, 2018. <http://www.europe1.fr/societe/pour-43-des-francais-lislam-est-incompatible-avec-la-republique-3570917>

Europe1. "Islam : ce que dit le rapport qui veut réformer la deuxième religion de France." Sept 10, 2018. <https://www.lejdd.fr/societe/islam-de-france-ce-que-dit-le-rapport-qui-veut-le-reformer-3752048>

Fahmy, Shahira S. "Media, Terrorism, and Society: Perspectives and Trends in the Digital Age." *Mass Communication and Society* 20, no. 6 (2017): 735-739.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1382285>

Fragnon, Julien. "Le discours antiterroriste : la gestion politique du 11 septembre en France." *HAL* (2009). <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01447971/document>

Geopolis. "Islam, islamique, islamisme, islamistes : le poids de ces mots-là." Accessed August 20, 2018. <http://geopolis.francetvinfo.fr/islam-islamique-islamisme-islamistes-le-poids-de-ces-mots-la-50743>

Ginges, Jeremy. "Deterring the terrorist: A psychological evaluation of different strategies for deterring terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 1 (1997): 170-185.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559708427394>

Golec de Zavala, Agnieszka, Müjde Peker, Rita Guerra, and Tomasz Baran. "Collective Narcissism Predicts Hypersensitivity to In-group Insult and Direct and Indirect Retaliatory Intergroup Hostility." *European Journal of Personality* 30, no. 6 (2016): 532-551.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2067>

Hollande, François. Speech after the "Charlie Hebdo" attack. Paris, January 7, 2015. Accessed from: <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/157000042.html>

Hollande, François. Speech after the attacks in Paris in front of the Parliament. Versailles: November 16, 2015. Accessed from: <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/157002982.html>

Islamic State. "LA CHARÎ'AH D'ALLÂH OU LA CHARÎ'AH DE L'HOMME." *Dar-Al-Islam* (Issue 5), Sept 20, 2015. <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/the-islamic-state-e2809cdc481r-al-islc481m-magazine-522.pdf>

Islamic State. "LA FRANCE A GENOUX." *Dar-Al-Islam* (Issue 7), November 30, 2015.

<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/dc481r-al-islc481m-magazine-7.pdf>

Islamic State. "ATTENTATS SUR LA VOIE PROPHETIQUE." *Dar-Al-Islam* (Issue 8), February 6, 2016.

<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/dacc84r-al-islacc84m-magazine-8.pdf>

Islamic State. "The Murtadd Brotherhood." *Dabiq* (Issue 14), April 2016.

<https://clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf>

Jackson, Richard. *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism*. Manchester University Press, 2005.

https://books.google.co.il/books?id=onUFTqkP7sAC&pg=PA18&lpg=PA18&dq=terrorism+war+of+symbols&source=bl&ots=kC4bGjWZfN&sig=6FsvXoL9XIT5I4MIPkFLOrFlpXI&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiCsP3p9v_bAhWLLIAKHwyBAXMQ6AEIYjAL#v=onepage&q=terrorism%20war%20of%20symbols&f=false

Jørgensen, Marianne, and Louise J. Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: SAGE Publications, 2002. <http://10.4135/9781849208871>

Kentish, Benjamin. "Terror attacks receive five times more media coverage if perpetrator is Muslim, study finds." *The Independent*, July 3, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world-0/terror-attacks-media-coverage-muslim-islamist-white-racism-islamophobia-study-georgia-state-a7820726.html>

Le Bon, Gustave. *Psychologie des Foules*. Presses Universitaires de France, 1895. <https://www-cairn-info-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/psychologie-des-foules--9782130620624.htm>

Les Echos. "Islamisme." Sept 26, 1995. <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/0>

Le Monde. "DES ASSOCIATIONS ISLAMIQUES DE FRANCE contestent le recteur de la Mosquée de Paris." January 9, 1974. <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/4>

Le Monde. ""Bons" et "mauvais" réfugiés." February 4, 1985. <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/0>

Limam, Wajdi. "Le grand malentendu ? Laïcité, radicalisation et pratiques d'intervention sociale." *Vie Sociale et Traitements* 4, no. 132 (2016): 41-48. <https://www-cairn-info-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/revue-vie-sociale-et-traitements-2016-4-page-41.htm>

Macron, Emmanuel. Speech for the commemoration of the Nice attack. July 14, 2017. Accessed from: <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-d-emmanuel-macron-lors-de-la-ceremonie-d-hommage-aux-victimes-de-l-attentat-de-nice/>

Merari, Ariel, Jonathan Figchel, Boaz Ganor, Ephraim Lavie, Yohanan Tzoreff, and Arie Livne. "Making Palestinian "Martyrdom Operations"/"Suicide Attacks": Interviews With Would-Be Perpetrators and Organizers." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1, no. 22 (2009): 102-119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550903409403>

Moghaddam, Fathali, and Anthony Marsella. *Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions*. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004).

Paolini, Esther. "L'immigration et l'islam crispent de plus en plus les Français." *Le Figaro*, July 3, 2017. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2017/07/03/01016-20170703ARTFIG00256-l-immigration-et-l-islam-crispent-de-plus-en-plus-les-francais.php>

Pew Research Center. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population". November 29, 2017. Accessed July 8, 2018. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

Plenel, Edwy. "La radicalization d'Action Directe." *Le Monde*, January 28, 1985. https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Link/politique2T_1/news%c2%b719850128%c2%b7LM%c2%b72761736

Post, Jerrold, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny. "The terrorists in their own words: Interviews with 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 1 (2003): 171-184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550312331293007>

Rehov, Pierre. "The Mind of the Suicide Killers." Documentary, 140:00. August 25, 2006. <https://documentaryheaven.com/suicide-killers/>

Rioufol, Ivan. "La France face à l'islamisme." *Le Figaro*, April 4, 2002. <https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/0>

Sageman, Marc. "L'émergence du terrorisme." Filmed November 2017. Canal-u Video, 139:00. Posted by "FMSH". https://www.canal-u.tv/video/fmsh/l_emergence_du_terrorisme_marc_sageman.38609

Silva, Derek. "The Othering of Muslims: Discourses of Radicalization in the New York Times, 1969-2014." *Sociological forum* 31, no. 1 (2017): 138-161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sof.12321>

START. "Global Terrorism Database." <http://apps.start.umd.edu/gtd/using-gtd/>

Staub, Ervin. *OVERCOMING EVIL: GENOCIDE, VIOLENT CONFLICT AND TERRORISM*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Trouillard, Stéphanie. "FRANCE – Radicalisation : "Les terroristes ne sont pas des malades mentaux"." *France 24*, August, 23, 2017. https://search-proquest-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/cv_1924784/docview/1938904403?pq-origsite=summon

Vaknin, Sam. "Narcissists, Group Behavior, and Terrorism." Accessed July 5, 2018. <http://samvak.tripod.com/12.html>

Von Sikorski, Christian, Désirée Schmuck, Jörg Matthes, and Alice Binder. ““Muslims are not Terrorists”: Islamic State Coverage, Journalistic Differentiation Between Terrorism and Islam, Fear Reactions, and Attitudes Toward Muslims.” *Mass Communication and Society* 20, no. 6 (2017): 825-848. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1342131>

Waintraub, Judith. “Manuel Valls : « l’islamisme, voilà l’ennemi ».” *Le Figaro*, Oct 6, 2017.

<https://nouveau-europresse-com-s.acces-distant.sciences-po.fr/Search/ResultMobile/1>

Zimbardo, Philip. *The Lucifer Effect - Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. Random House, 2007.

<https://ia800702.us.archive.org/15/items/TheLuciferEffectUnderstandingHowGoodPeopleTurnEvil/ISBN9781400064113/The%20Lucifer%20Effect%20-%20Understanding%20How%20Good%20People%20Turn%20Evil%20%28ISBN-978-1-4000-6411-3%29.pdf>

ABOUT THE ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy.

ICT is a non-profit organization located at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel which relies exclusively on private donations and revenue from events, projects and programs.