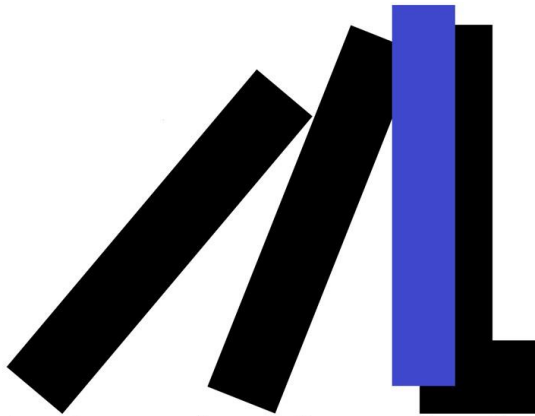




**AFFECT**



IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF BELGIAN DE-RADICALISATION POLICIES UPON  
SOCIAL COHESION AND LIBERTIES

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# **RADICAL, RADICALISM, RADICALISATION: FROM WORDS TO DEEDS?**

*A LITERATURE OVERVIEW*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There has been considerable **political and academic interest** recently in studying 'radicalisation' and a multiplicity of research programmes aimed at developing alternative ways of engaging with the issue, evaluating strategies and suggesting policy directions. Very often, radical, radicalism and radicalisation are used as inseparable concepts, coherent entities and eloquent words. Yet, the threshold between holding 'radical' views and becoming violent is **still the subject of many academic debates** and it is not entirely certain that the notions of radical, radicalism and radicalisation really help to clarify and may even have contributed to obscure the scope of the debate. The term radicalisation is an unhelpful concept to understand the context, contents and mechanisms of recruitment, activism, violence and escalation.

**There is little hard evidence** that proves interaction with violent and extreme content (videos and/or discourses) leads to participation in violent and extreme activities. People who become involved in violent activities are not suddenly converted to this path and then inherently stuck with a single-minded line of action. This **process is gradual and it is an incremental dynamic full of uncertainty about what might be next.**

The unfortunately commonly-shared idea that extremism is nothing but the fatal conclusion of an ineluctable linear process is a **crucial misunderstanding of the realities of violence**. When besieged with emotional appeals, evocative imagery and threatening news, it is certainly not easy to disrupt this **taken-for-granted assumption** that violence and warfare are appropriate responses to violence. The question of whether such measures could contribute to increasing the risk of escalation of violence and the further exclusion of an already disenfranchised population seems almost forgotten.



## INTRODUCTION

Radical has had a strange semantic journey if one considers that not so long ago the term was commonly used to describe artistic innovations going against the grain of good taste and morals: any artist with avant-garde or agitprop tendencies sought to be called “radical”<sup>1</sup>. In the midst of the 1970s, at a time of polarisation of political positions and when the language of scholarly journals was increasingly polemical, Becker and Horowitz were saying that “good sociology is often radical”, before claiming that one should easily agree with the idea that a key feature of any radical political program is the reduction and eventual removal of inequalities in society, whether the inequality is of power, economic resources, life chances, or knowledge<sup>2</sup>.

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1. BROWN, T., and L. ANTON, eds. *Between the Avant-Garde and the Everyday. Subversive Politics in Europe from 1957 to the Present*. Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011. WALKER, John A. *Left Shift. Radical Art in 1970s Britain*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2002. PLANT, Sadie, *The most radical gesture. The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*, London, Routledge, 1992. See also McCalman fine-grained research in *Radical Underworld* that revealed London’s shadowy network of revolutionaries and pornographers at the end of the long eighteenth century: MCCALMAN, Iain, *Radical underworld: prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London, 1795-1840*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

2. BECKER, Howard S., and Irving Louis HOROWITZ. Radical politics and sociological research: Observations on methodology and ideology.

For scholars, radicalisation is hardly a recent term, as is demonstrated by the many studies on conflict escalation and in the fight between “reformers” (who are open to discussion and compromise) and “radicals” (who adopt uncompromising positions and actions) in both the official political arena and within clandestine organisations<sup>3</sup>.

It is remarkable just how quickly the Anglo-American concept of radicalisation was able to spread to continental European decision-making bodies and professional security spaces<sup>4</sup>. The unfortunate conjunction of the 2005 London terrorist attack with the British presidency of the Council of the European Union was a major turning point in disseminating the British vocabulary of

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*American Journal of Sociology* 78(1), 1972, pp.48-66

3. BOSI, L. DEMETRIOU, C. & S. MALTHANER (Eds.). *Dynamics of Political Violence. A process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014. CROSS, Remy and SNOW, David A. Radicalization within the Context of Social Movements: Processes and Types, *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4(4), 2011, pp. 115-129. ALIMI, Eitan Y. Relational Dynamics in Factional Adoption of Terrorist Tactics: A Comparative Perspective, *Theory and Society*, 40 (1), 2011, pp.95-119.

4. COOLSAET, Rik. "All radicalisation is local." *The Genesis and Drawbacks of an Elusive Concept*. Brussels: Egmont Paper 84, 2016. HEATH-KELLY, Charlotte. Counter-terrorism and the counterfactual: Producing the ‘radicalisation’ discourse and the UK PREVENT strategy. *The British journal of politics and international relations* 15(3), 2013, pp. 394-415. RICHARDS, Anthony. "The problem with ‘radicalization’: the remit of ‘Prevent’ and the need to refocus on terrorism in the UK." *International Affairs* 87(1), 2011, pp. 143-152.



radicalisation throughout the EU as a whole<sup>5</sup>.

Radicalisation has become durably established as the ultimate signifier and the key term in explaining the causes and dealing with the consequences of what is seen as an essentially religious violence that is total, disproportionate and devoid of any other strategic function than the complete annihilation of the enemy<sup>6</sup>.

This spectacular rise of the term “radicalisation” is related to current events as well. Not only globalised and de-territorialised, violence also springs in furious, uncontrollable outbursts of fanatical and sacrificial rage. Yet the spread of the term is also related to the profound transformation of the ways of thinking and acting that structure the rules of behavior and the prospects of today’s “risk societies”<sup>7</sup>.

As a term, radicalisation has been all the more enthusiastically embraced because of its easy fit with the principles of

preventive risk management, the targeting policies and calculations of inductive probabilities that are the bedrock of public safety policies and their way of conceptualizing vulnerability, order, vigilance and protection<sup>8</sup>.

Although *radicalisation* is not a recent term, the current context of fear and powerlessness has given it a new dimension.

The violence threatening society today is seen as the material result of individual histories in which precarity, petty crime, family and emotional instability meet a powerfully attractive but deadly ideology. The current debate on radicalisation is almost entirely focused on the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism, the propagation of apocalyptic representations within contemporary Islam, the development of aggressive religious doctrines, and the fascination that jihad and its supposed rewards seem to hold for some people<sup>9</sup>.

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5. The 2005 EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy consists of four strands: prevent, protect, pursue and respond (see Doc. 14469/4/05 of 30 November 2005).

6. KHOSROKHAVAR, Farhad. The new European Jihadism and its avatars. *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*, 2(2), 2016, pp. 1-29. RAFLIK, Jenny. *Terrorisme et mondialisation. Approches historiques*, Paris, Gallimard, 2016. L'HEUILLET, Helene. *Aux sources du terrorisme. De la petite guerre aux attentats-suicides*, Paris, Fayard, 2009. SOFSKY, Wolfgang. *L'ère de l'épouvante. Folie meurtrière, terreur, guerre*, Paris, Gallimard, 2002.

7. EKLUNDH, Emmy, Andreja ZEVNIK and Emmanuel-Pierre GUITTET, Eds., *Politics of Anxiety*, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017. FOESSEL, Michael. *Etat de vigilance. Critique de la banalité sécuritaire*. Paris, Seuil, 2016. ARADAU, Claudia, VAN MUNSTER, Rens. *Politics of Catastrophe: Genealogies of the Unknown*. London, Routledge, 2011.

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8. WILSON, Dean, and Jude McCULLOCH. *Pre-crime: Pre-emption, precaution and the future*. London, Routledge, 2015. HARCOURT, Bernard E. *Against prediction: Profiling, policing, and punishing in an actuarial age*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008. LYON, David. *Surveillance Society. Monitoring everyday life*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 2001.

9. KHOSROKHAVAR, Farhad, *Le nouveau Jihad en Occident*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2018. GALLAND, Olivier and Anne MUXEL (eds.), *La tentation radicale. Enquête auprès des lycéens*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2018. HEGGHAMMER, Thomas. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia. Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010. FILIU, Jean-Pierre. *L'apocalypse dans l'Islam*, Paris, Fayard, 2008. BRISARD, J.-C. and D. MARTINEZ, *Zarkaoui, le nouveau visage d'al-Qaida*, Paris, Fayard, 2005. KEPEL, Gilles et al. *Al-Qaida dans le texte*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2005.



## THE PECULIAR TROPES OF RADICALISATION

Is there any link between inequality (social, economic and educational) and a terrain favorable for radicalisation? Does the watching of Islamic State videos on social media serve as unhappy prerequisite to leaving for Syria? How can the social and psychological attraction of jihad be explained? Are there any specific predispositions which make it possible to understand the actions of those who march to their own death with the intention of killing others? Who are those individuals who seemingly move joyously from life to death? What individual processes and group dynamics lead someone to turn to actual violence, and how can this be prevented before it is too late?<sup>10</sup>

At no point in their history have the social sciences and humanities been more solicited (and generously funded) to answer such questions, which both stem from anxiety and fuel it further<sup>11</sup>.

Combating radicalisation has become a universal imperative, a compulsory and

structuring operation whose main objective consists of looking for the first revealed intention, the different points of reference and the key steps when protest and the will to act meet a deadly ideology pushing the “candidates” to a point of no-return. Each and every actor in the “fight against radicalisation” is required to participate in an exercise that takes on cartographical dimensions by mapping out the “dangerous roads” and “slippery slopes” that lead to inevitable violence<sup>12</sup>.

In a flurry of public financing and partnerships with intelligence and law enforcement agencies, the social sciences and humanities now have to map out and delineate those roads, pathways, and tunnels or whatever cartographical tropes best describe isolation and the prohibited, the convergence and cutting edges, both here and far away, of a deadly landscape characterized by a rise in extremism and a descent into hell.

Within this cartography of journeys leading to unyielding and voluntary self-sacrifice, the scale is plotted with reference to the individual psyche while the compass points towards security and the necessity of anticipating future terrorist attacks. In this exercise of “post-mortem cartography,” one looks for the places, paths and biographical cut-off points that *a priori* constitute the gradual clues both of the imminence of a move into violent action and its logical explanation. There is a series of irreversible steps: the signs of pre-radicalisation are followed by the proofs

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10. BENSLAMA, F. & F. KHOSROKHAVAR, *Le jihadisme des femmes. Pourquoi ont-elles choisi Daech ?* Paris, Editions du Seuil, 2017. BENSLAMA, F. *Un furieux désir de sacrifice. Le surmusulman*, Paris, Seuil, 2016. VAN CAMPENHOUDT, L. *Comment en sont-ils arrivés là ? Les clefs pour comprendre les parcours des djihadistes*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2017.

11. Baker-Beall, C., Heath-Kelly, C. et L. Jarvis (dir.). *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2014.

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12. McCauley, C et S. Moskalenko. Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20(3), 2008. Moghaddam, F. The staircase to terrorism: a psychological exploration, *American Psychologist* 60(2), 2005.



of indoctrination, which constitute the next steps in a sort of psychological escalator that gradually takes the individual to the conclusion of his or her own determined and definitive commitment to violent action and deadly sacrifice.

Forensic clues, psychological profiles and life events are scrutinised, as are all forms of social and psychological vulnerability as well as the points of rupture in the individual's journey before the commission of the act – all in the hope of unearthing clues and establishing a timeline for a fateful conclusion that a suicide attack or a departure for Syria had made obvious. Yet nothing is ever completely obvious and actors in the field are puzzled by the increasingly pressing demands for results: *“A minor who shouts out ‘Long live Salah Abdeslam’ may well be acting out. But how can one distinguish between a teenager acting out and a sign of active radicalisation?”*<sup>13</sup>

Despite its imprecision and multiple meanings<sup>14</sup>, “radicalisation” has become the keyword for this reverse progression, a causal, negative incrementation defined by the inevitable wherein the radicalised individual's personality and individual trajectory prove the reality of radicalisation. This type of circular reasoning is the anxiety-provoking

substrate for a large part of the scholarly literature and, more importantly, for most of the public policies combating radicalisation.

These public policies all share the same concern in the face of a “feeling” or an “idea” that might become a certainty and, in turn, of a certainty that might gradually intensify to the point that it would *de facto* lead to militant actions with irreversible consequences. If a feeling of discomfort, injustice, frustration, or shame constitutes the “first step” in the move towards physical violence, then the world of the individuals likely to be targeted by these policies is indeed as vast as it is frightening.

Yet the nature, variations, triggers and mental or social effects of shame and humiliation, to consider just two of these feelings, are anything but simplistic or systematic. The feeling of being ill-judged, ignored, or humiliated does not automatically lead to people voluntarily undertaking jihad or other violent action. Likewise, the experience of poverty and social precarity does not in and of itself explain commitment to violent actions. Finally, there is a whole physical space and a series of temporal distances between virulent, bold or radical discourse and “intentions,” and, in turn, between those “intentions” and acting on them. Voicing a radical discourse or strong feelings of hostility does not make one a surefire candidate to actual violent action<sup>15</sup>.

Nothing is more unfortunate than those storytelling efforts in which feelings of humiliation, despair, hatred or rage (and

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13. BRION, Fabienne, GUITTET, Emmanuel-Pierre & Foued BELLALI. *Prévenir la radicalisation – attentes, résultats et perspectives*, Rapport intermédiaire pour le Collège des échevins de la commune de Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, mars 2018.

14. DALGAARD-NIELSEN, Anja. Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33(9), 2010, pp. 797-814. SEDGWICK M., ‘The concept of radicalization as a source of confusion’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22 (4), 2010

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15. BONELLI, Laurent and Fabien CARRIE. *La fabrique de la radicalité. Sociologie des jeunes djihadistes français*, Paris, Seuil, 2018





their verbal expressions) are presented as the logical increments of a journey of no-return or as the pawns in a mechanical chain that pushes the wannabe-terrorist to rush forward to his or her tragic demise.

## RETRIEVING THE CONTEXT

To make sense of someone moving from the realm of discourse to violent action and to understand the different registers of radicality, one must first stop considering religious fundamentalism as the prime (or only) subject. One must take a long look into everything that is known and that is still being investigated about these situations, considering as well the experiences and actors of other armed struggles and violent clandestine action in history<sup>16</sup>.

It would be careless to bury the far-left and far-right repertoires of revolutionary violence, armed struggle and separatism, or to consider that they only epitomised a bygone era. Just because the present is dominated by messianic, apocalyptic violence does not mean that these older forms of violent subversion are totally obsolete. Religious fundamentalism has

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16. CRETTEZ, Xavier and Laurent MUCCHIELLI (eds.) *Les violences Politiques en Europe. Un état des lieux*, Paris, La découverte, 2010. VARON, Jeremy. *Bringing the War home. The Weather underground, the Red Army Faction, and revolutionary violence in the sixties and seventies*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004. SOMMIER, Isabelle. *La violence politique et son deuil. L'après 68 en France et en Italie*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998.

indeed become a major concern, yet it does not constitute the only potential outlet for ideological violence.

While it is true that the use of force never originates in a vacuum, it only constitutes one possible option, not a certainty. There are social, historical and individual circumstances to consider when trying to understand the quest for religious salvation that a number of Muslim youths undertake, just as similar circumstances had to be considered for understanding the commitment to armed insurrection that Basque or Irish youths made a few decades ago<sup>17</sup>.

Thinking and analysing the shift to violent action implies considering the plurality of historical and political contexts and of ideological and cultural incentives, as well as the opportunities for action, that each individual met, accepted or rejected at given times and in given contexts<sup>18</sup>. Thinking and analysing the shift to violent action also implies understanding how and in which circumstances experiences ranging from the intimate to the social and the political, as well as experiences of violent socialisation, occur and become meaningful for those who undergo them.

The first difficulty in understanding and analysing violence is to avoid construing the actors of violence as pure byproducts of a logic of vulnerability who are moved mechanically, as it were, by psychological and social processes. The other extreme – considering them in a purely voluntaristic fashion, so that the motivations to act

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17. REINARES, Fernando. *Patriotas de la muerte: por qué han militado en ETA y cuándo abandonan*. Taurus, 2011.

18. MAC ADAM, D. Recruitment to High risk Activism. The case of Freedom Summer. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(1), 1986, pp. 64-90.



dictate the tempo of the action itself, also has to be avoided.

The second difficulty is avoiding both excessive psychologisation (which leads to over-representing the facts and effects of subjectivity) and an overly sociological approach (which completely obliterates subjectivity). Based on his long and exhaustive investigation into the individual journeys of youths in a hotbed of radical Islam (the Paris *banlieue* of Grigny), Truong rightfully notes that the individual trajectories are not at all similar despite sharing similar social circumstances and experiences of social alienation and disappointment<sup>19</sup>.

In a very different context, one could also remember that while all Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland had to deal with daily disturbances and a good measure of British contempt, not all of them joined the ranks of the IRA. Even when anger and outrage are shared by all members of a community, convergence towards action does not stem from a single set of motivations, nor for that matter, towards one single type of action.

The intellectual difficulty lies in articulating the relationship between analysing the contexts in which violence occurs and analysing the organisations that use violence and the trajectories of their members<sup>20</sup>. This constitutes a complex approach for research, one that combines questions related to individuals (their perceptions and value systems)

with questions related to the organisational structures of the groups in question, the power relations within these groups, the background or social environment in which these groups exist, as well as the more general factors that lead to violence<sup>21</sup>.

Taking all these elements into account makes it possible to question to assumption that motivation is the *primum movens* for violence. Committing oneself to violent action is not always selfless. Joining the ranks of the IRA or the UVF in Northern Ireland or becoming the local representative for the Corsican *Front de Libération National Corse* is not just a matter of acting on behalf of one's political belief; sometimes it also constitutes a very concrete way to make ends meet for individuals lacking material resources or social prospects<sup>22</sup>.

Commitment can be much more random and confused than it seems even in the upsetting case of suicide missions, where it seems very difficult to escape the mixture of horror and fascination at the idea of a human being willing to sacrifice his or her life for a cause. One cannot imply that there is no such thing as a "sacrificial state of mind," but one should avoid the excess emphasis that is often put on the voluntary part of these situations of programmed death. By distancing oneself from violence and by enriching the understanding of violence with the relationships it bears with specific individuals, times and places, one can

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19. TRUONG, Fabien. *Loyautés radicales. L'islam et les « mauvais garçons » de la Nation*, Paris, La Découverte, 2017

20. DELLA PORTA, Donatella. *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

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21. KALYVAS, S. *The logic of violence in civil war*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006. CRENSHAW, Martha Ed. *Terrorism in context*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

22. REF



avoid essentialising a specific state of mind<sup>23</sup>.

Rather than readings focusing on a single cause (frustration, despondency, a fragile sense of identity), a relational analysis of violence and what pushes one to take violent action reintroduces complexity where it is needed instead of the current approach, which oversimplifies complex matters. Analysis that focuses more on a host of factors and the relationships between these factors shows that radicality as an enhanced propensity to resort to violence is not inherent within some cultural groups or the bedrock of some specific ideologies; rather, it is the product of processes that need to be contextualised.

The conditions of existence and perpetuation of the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, RAF) in 1970s West Germany cannot be reduced to the subversive attraction of the criticism of the shrinking of human experience and the economic and technical uniformisation of modern society that Marcuse analyzed in *One-Dimensional Man*. The emergence of the RAF cannot be reduced to one specific ideology or group; rather, it is the result of cross-fertilisations between deep changes in German society as it moved from resource shortages to hyper-consumption and from collective obedience under the Nazi regime to a progressive rediscovery of political

protest<sup>24</sup>, including in its most playful forms (*Spaßguerilla*)<sup>25</sup>. Another cross-fertilisation involved the two German states. In East Germany as in West Germany, national politics was very much determined by the imperatives of the Cold War, and both sides were trying to put their best foot forward by opening the doors of their universities to students hailing from the “Third World.” Universities, it turned out, were the site of the third cross-fertilisation, the result of the encounter between foreign students already passionate about decolonization struggles in their countries of origin and German students eager to support these struggles and change political mores in order to contribute to the radical anti-imperialistic ideology of the time. While the RAF undoubtedly owes a lot to student movements, only a tiny part of the student population went from producing radical discourses glorifying AK-47s to actually firing Kalashnikovs. The same context not only led to the emergence of a far-left terrorist army at war with bourgeois values but also to the emergence of ideologies like the New Right (*Neue Rechte*) and an alternative environmental movement, whose main agenda was ecology and welfare<sup>26</sup>.

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23. BLOM, A. « Les « martyrs » jihadistes veulent-ils forcément mourir ? Une approche éminemment de la radicalisation autosacrificielle au Pakistan », *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 61, no. 5, 2011, pp. 867-891. GAMBETTA, Diego (Ed.), *Making sense of suicide missions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005

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24. SEDLMAIER, A. *Consumption and Violence: Radical Protest in Cold-War West Germany*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014.

25. GUITTET, Emmanuel-Pierre. Joke as a weapon: five theses on Fun Guerrilla, *Explosive Politics*, May 2015. <http://explosivepolitics.com/archive/joke-as-a-weapon-five-theses-on-fun-guerrilla/>

26. GUITTET, Emmanuel-Pierre. West German Radical Protest in the long 1960s, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 9(1), 2016, pp. 150-159



## RETRIEVING THE MUNDANE

Contextualising the transition to political violence is a necessary process, even if it can prove impossible. It is impractical because there are no archives to speak of and because fieldwork is difficult or even dangerous, with subjects who are by definition hard to observe in action. It is also illogical, because it is impossible to thoroughly analyse a context without omitting some elements. Contextualising how individuals transition from ideology to violence is therefore a necessary but limited operation that often takes place in a context of collective intellectual inertia where one often merely looks for a biographical turning point, a key event or place.

The reason for this inertia is that it is much easier to think of violence within a matrix of voluntary action, couched within a register of motivation and decisions, rather than as contingency, bifurcation, or another mundane matter.

There are undoubtedly biographical tendencies and conditions leading to political violence, but they constitute only one of the dimensions to interrogate – they need to be placed in context with the places, circumstances, and chance elements that make up all different temporalities<sup>27</sup>.

In order to try and make sense of the conditions and trajectories of high-risk

political commitment, the recent works dedicated to the history of French Resistance are extremely helpful. By stepping away from the memorialist demands and the simplified, heroic fantasy of a whole nation driven by a unanimous will to resist German occupation, these recent studies give a nuanced picture of the complexity and multitude of parameters involved in understanding the decisions of a handful of men and women from different backgrounds. Some fought with machine guns, others by doing charity work for refugees. Their actions were not driven by a universal mechanism or timeless evidence or a single, compelling urge, but by a whole series of embedded personal histories, previous experiences and knowledge of subversive or illicit activities, military training, unique or ordinary emotions, favorable family, friendships and professional conditions, favorable circumstances and chance<sup>28</sup>.

The analytical value of this re-energised historiography of the French Resistance resides in its close attention to the multiple modes of action, to the variety of convictions, objectives, experiences, and, in the final analysis, the silent encroachment of the daily-life via memory, the unpredictable and fortuitous entailed in taking up arms and violence.


Even the most finely detailed thesis on the contexts of actions and biographical tendencies to act cannot explain, much less predict, the passage to violence or its place or time. There is no homogeneity or uniformity in how everyone or single individuals speak or act. When it comes to

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27. PIERSON, Paul. *Politics in Time. History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004

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28. GILDEA, R. *Comment sont-ils devenus résistants? Une nouvelle histoire de la résistance (1940-1945)*, Paris, Les Arènes, 2017



the processes of socialisation, behavior, and practices, the social world is simply made up of too many folds and bifurcations, accidents and the unexpected<sup>29</sup>.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

One of the fundamental problems with the variegated enterprises attempting to decipher what radicalisation means is that they conflate different historical, social and political situations and varied or even contradictory personal or collective experiences into a single framework or unity without considering divergences and the dynamics, temporalities, and unevenness among them.

The use of the term ‘radicalisation’ leads us to thinking of the passage to political violence in a linear manner, following successive and catastrophic stages. Rather than these *a posteriori* reconstructions which create the illusion that it could not be any other way, the intellectual challenge is to discern how the passage to political violence, from words to deeds, is the possible result of the unpredictable conjunctions of multiple series of determinate events, causal chains which are heterogeneous and in many cases independent of one another.

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29. LAHIRE, B. *Dans les plis singulier du social*, Paris, La Découverte, 2013. BESSIN, M., BIDART, C. & M. GROSSETTI (Eds.). *Bifurcations. Les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l'évènement*, Paris, La découverte, 2009. DOBRY, M. *Sociologie des crises politiques. La dynamique des mobilisations multisectorielles*, Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 2009.

This point can be illustrated by considering the work of Mariot on the sacrifice made by Robert Hertz in the trenches of World War I<sup>30</sup>. How can one explain the spirit of sacrifice of a young and brilliant intellectual, a disciple of Emile Durkheim? Firstly, one must not read Hertz's trajectory in a linear manner, with his sad end as the point to which everything must lead. Secondly, one must avoid any kind of social, affective, political or historical determinism. Far from being the history of an inevitable death, Mariot's "history of sacrifice" brings out the tests, the possible non-happenings, the bifurcations, which opened up but were not taken, tensions, doubts, hesitations.

Rather than reducing the living to a simplistic and obscene necrological note, any serious analysis of the passage to political violence should be aware of the "thickness" of biographical trajectories, of the weight of more or less voluntary and more or less conscious decisions to the experiences and affective, social and historical temporalities which collide against one another<sup>31</sup>.

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30. MARIOT, Nicolas. *Histoire d'un sacrifice. Robert, Alice et la guerre*, Paris, Seuil, 2017

31. BONELLI, Laurent (Ed.). *Le passage par la violence en politique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011



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