Acts of the European Conference

Cult undue influence and the process of radicalisation, a question for debate

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Introduction and welcome

André Frédéric, President of AVISO, Member of the Belgian Federal Parliament

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is on a double base that I welcome you to this Federal Parliament, first as the first vice-president of the Chamber, a building that welcomes us today to reflect together on a problem of general interest. Mr. Crusnière, Member of the European Parliament and my Head of Group, Laurette Onkelinx. But I also welcome you as President of AVISO, one of the associations helping victims of cult undue influence in Belgium.

I will try to paint the background of the Belgian landscape on the theme of the day, starting with cultic undue influence, a branch of reflection and its possible links, for the question remains open, with the phenomena of radicalism and of radicalisation.

Some stages I wish to recall:

In Belgium, as early as 1996, a report by a parliamentary commission of inquiry into "sectarian aberrations" was launched. This commission was set up following the drama of the Order of the Solar Temple in the plains of the Vercors region in France where 3 minor children died.

This commission submitted a report and recommendations to the then Belgian Government, mainly for the creation of an Observatory of sectarian aberrations in Belgium: the CIAOSN. Other recommendations for implementing "terrorism and cult" cells within the federal police, have evolved mainly due to the present world situation into concerns almost exclusively centered on terrorism.

In 2006 in the Belgian Parliament, I was given the mission by the President of the Chamber at the time, to chair a working group on the development of the cultic phenomenon in Belgium. Incamera work lasted several months and a report was issued. On the number of motions or questions asked about sectarian aberrations, it is known that the commission of 1996 had heard 189 organisations and the CIAOSN had received about a thousand new requests (this does not mean that there were a thousand new cults in Belgium but questions about practices that provoked concern and undue influence by groups or individuals). It appeared that there was a diversification of the field of action of cultic groups: with humanitarian, personal development, training for professionals, institutes in the field of education but also in the field of public health, something which still challenges us daily because there is an "explosion" in the health sector on Belgian territory. But also with regard to the shape of organisations: it varies from large classical "apocalyptic" style organisations to more numerous smaller structures usually turning around a guru.

An important date was 2011, (541 days without a government but Parliament still sat) this is when the law on the abuse of weakness was passed. The abuse of weakness, "About-Picard law" in France, result of parliamentary work and from a collaboration with Catherine Picard, whom I met at conferences. Belgium included in its Penal Code the penalty for punishing someone who abuses the weakness of others. The French experience was taken into account to adapt the legislation to the reality of the effect of this law (In France 5 to 6 convictions per year on the basis of sectarian aberrations but also 500 to 600 for abuse of weakness of the elderly for example.)

The law was also voted in Luxembourg and debated in the Italian Parliament where it did not lead to a result.

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Note from translator: In English "sectarian" mainly concerns "inter-religious" strife. Cults are not only religious, they concern every walk of life. We prefer to use the word "cult" often refused by International organisations (i.e. ODHIR, COE...)

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On March 13, 2012, we note with several friends working in the field of sectarian aberrations that there are few structures able to receive requests and assist victims of cults. We therefore set up this voluntary structure which does not have the financial resources of the public sector.

On 22 March 2016, Belgium was hit in two places by terrorist attacks (Maelbeek and Zaventem) 34 dead and hundreds injured. Belgium is setting up a parliamentary commission of inquiry into these attacks with the task of measuring the extent of the events but above all of identifying legislative channels of action among others to try to avoid such a tragedy from repeating itself. I am a member of this committee with Mrs Onkelinx.

The work was divided into 4 subjects:

- Response of on-site rescue services
- Organisation of police and intelligence services
- Victims
- Radicalism component: We will try to see how an individual can come up with such an act. Are they victims of sectarian aberrations?

In my personal capacity I have always said that I do not want to use the terminology of "victim of cults" to justify unspeakable acts of terrorism. I agree that there is probably a small minority of people who are victims of a system set up with impressive technological means of communication in the techniques of recruitment.

In terms of sectarian aberrations related to terrorism, one terrorist act recognized for the moment is the "Sarin gas" affair.

Sectarian drift and radicalisation: an issue worthy of debate

Jean-Pierre Jougla, UNADFI, In charge of the Paris Descartes University Faculty of Medicine degree course on sectarianism, President of the FECRIS Scientific Committee

FECRIS was established in 1994 as an umbrella organisation bringing together associations working on sectarianism.

Well before terrorist attacks led the democratic world to become aware of the fact that the first steps on the path towards young people joining radical movements had many points in common with sectarianism, our support associations for victims of sects knew that, on the ground, the violent radicalism in the name of Islam had a lot to do with sectarianism.

Throughout this day, specialists will be describing to us the drivers of radicalisation – historical, economic, social, sociological causes, sometimes suicidal, sometimes villainous.

Others will describe government responses attempting to prevent radicalisation based on well-understandable repression and attempts at “de-radicalisation”.

Some will be looking at the psychological side, an aspect at the heart of what we have been discussing for decades with regard to sects. This psychological takeover, now well-studied, takes place gradually, insidiously, without apparent violence, following a defined clinically-identified process contested by the sects.

With reference to sects, the French government uses the legal term “sujétion”, i.e. putting someone in a state of subjection or servitude, within the context of a statutory offense, that of
“abusing the weakness of the subjected”. Application of this statute has led to some 30 prosecu-
tions since 2001.

For my part, and as today’s opening speaker, I would like to discuss a point of view that to a cer-
tain extent brings these various approaches together, putting them in a particular perspective, 
that of the aim of any sectarian or radical group: to take power over individuals and subse-
quently, in a crazy project, over all of humanity.

I am teaching this approach in the context of the one existing university degree course at the 
Faculty of Medicine of the Paris Descartes University. Several dozens of trained professionals 
form a competence network for helping sectarian victims (and for the last two years also victims 
of radicalisation). Coming from a wide range of sectors, they include doctors, psychologists and 
psychiatrists, lawyers, investigators, experts, ecclesiastics, sociologists, educators, etc.

While control over an individual is first and foremost a psychological issue, control over a group 
(collective control), both within a sect and versus the rest of the world, is a political issue in the 
sense that it involves the organisation and management of power (submission / domination) 
both within the group and vis-à-vis “secular” society. This is something that I have learned 
through supporting victims for the last 40 years.

While this political perspective, although very much present, is certainly not very visible in the 
 writings of the micro-groups accounting for the majority of contemporary sects, it is manifest in 
those of multinational sects (at a doctrinal level) and even more visible in the path towards ter-
rorist acts. One example of this is the Tokyo subway sarin attack perpetrated by the Aum Shinri-
kyo sect in 1995, the stated goal of which was to depose the Emperor via a terrorist attack.

But whatever the size of the group and its theoretical underpinning (health, personal develop-
ment, well-being, religious aspirations), the motor driving the group, its leader and, at a certain 
level of control, the individual members, has always something to do with power.

I would like to see my presentation helping you to understand first that this psychological con-
trol over group members has a lot to do with the sectarian structure of the group and how this 
shapes control. Secondly, I would like to demonstrate that it is the hegemonic design of the sec-
tarian (or radical) state to dominate the world which motivates, enthuses and galvanises mem-
bers. This identification with an ideal is what motivates members and “radicalisable” young peo-
ple, what defines their “mission” and what gives them a sense of belonging and the certainty of 
belonging to an elite. Turning their backs on the group, former members become aware of the 
process of gaining control associated with the particular and archaic form of internal power they 
have been subjected to, with the result that, at the end of the psychological de-radicalisation 
process, they can re-discover the lost citizen dimension.

It does not matter whether the group has religious roots or not. It is not the nature of the belief 
which leads to submission. It would be an error to oppose this belief, postulating that one belief 
is “truer”, more correct. This is the trap set by sects (and by radicalised groups), all of which have 
prepared in advance ready-made answers for use by members and future members.

The only way to get people to turn their backs on a sect is to undermine this ideal of identifica-
tion with a utopia via testimonials from former members. Such testimonials speak of the group’s 
esoteric dimension, a dimension hidden to the eye. The presentation to be given by Ms Roy is 
one such testimonial, allowing us to relive the drama in her family, the total breakdown of com-
 munications between her son Quentin and his parents engineered by the radical group! Simi-
larly, the testimonial of Sophie, victim of a university-trained psychotherapist and guru, will 
teach us the same lesson. We extend our thanks to both of them.
For the most part, the efforts of the secular analysts (sociologists, historians and others) only apply to a group's exoteric dimension, an ever-deceptive dimension as it merely constitutes the “appeal” to future recruits, camouflaging its real aims.

Two aspects: 1/ a group-based structure enabling control to be taken over individuals 2/ a motivating project

1/ a group-based structure enabling control to be taken over individuals

This is because contemporary sects represent a dangerous political model for democratic societies, beyond the individual danger for sect members and their families. This danger is not to be underestimated, and the study of how it functions (in its state-level dimension) is of major interest.

Certain unvarying aspects define the state-level dimension of these sectarian groups:

A sectarian or radical territory

The sect defines itself around a territory, most often virtual but more than just symbolic. This “virtuality” refers to a form of reality which often has a certain magic dimension to it, offering a replacement reality to people without any shares in our society, people overwhelmed by too much complexity or by an appropriation cutting them off from a course of action to which they legitimately aspire.

This territory of shared fantasised purity, this “vibrant” territory, constitutes the first building block towards the sect becoming a state-level structure. We just need to think of the role played by territory for the IS in the construction of the Uma, the community idea behind the political model of the Caliphate. In association with the IS, this territory has not just a virtual, but also a geographic dimension.

A frontier

This territory is surrounded by a frontier enabling the sect to separate the pure from the impure, to make sect members believe that they are coming from an external world full of impurity, with bad vibrations, with mistaken beliefs which they need to “clean”. Though unverifiable, such claims plunge members into a feeling of permanent guilt, the first step towards the sect gaining control over them.

A hostile, dangerous and toxic outside world

Portraying the outside world in such a way has many advantages for the sect: prompting its sympathisers and the radicalised to subscribe to a Manichaean vision and getting them to take up arms. They hence imagine themselves as heroes, as saviours invested with a mission. This outside world is bad and needs to be destroyed. While awaiting this final outcome, it has to be exploited.

Conspiracy theories are rooted in this inside/outside dichotomy.

A group

This besieged territory is destined to welcome the community. And the group will build up the leading role of its leader by mutual influences.

A guru

As with any social group, habitual “powers” are placed in the person of the leader, with the latter rising to become legislator, head of the executive and judge.
The legislating guru

He sets the group's norm and norms: a rule of law transcending that found in outside society and which legitimises transgressions and breaches of the law as these are rooted in the guru's superior law. Each sect has its own sharia and all members take refuge in this law, giving them a feeling of superiority. This constitutes the first step towards abandoning ordinary citizenship as there is no question of normal members taking part in defining the norm.

A guru as head of the executive

This internal norm is part of what may call the “sectarian executive”, just like in any state governed by the rule of law and in which various ministries cover specific fields. Each sect has its own rules governing the different fields of everyday life: health, the economy and finance, education, policing, etc.

But a sect will go one step further, giving each of its members a new name and thus creating a new affiliation beyond the civil status. It may even create an Orwellian “newspeak” to back up the elitist sentiment enclosing sect members and helping to quash any critical minds by a form of translation equivalent to brainwashing (the work soon to be presented by Frédéric Tomas shows how linguistic analysis can open up new scientific paths).

A guru as judge

Any infringement of the law set down by the guru becomes the subject of internal sanctions ranging from the assignment of guilt to (physical) punishment via “magical” interpretations of ordinary facts such as the meaning given to physical affections (interpreted in a logic of “false induced memories”).

The guru alone wields these three powers

Putting these three traditional powers in the hands of a single person, the guru, while fully accepted by sect members, is full of significance: in any democratic society, the separation of powers is a sine qua non, a gauge of the liberty given to citizens who participate in a system of checks and balances.

By contrast, because the guru (or the radical leader) is the only person to exercise all three powers, he is almighty in the eyes of his followers. It is this absolute power upon which the leader's legitimacy is founded. At the same time, all his subjects are deprived of all freedom, making them “happy slaves”!

Viewed from this angle, the hegemonic pretensions clearly voiced by the “Islamic State” and other Jihadist groups should shed particular light on the political model of substitution upheld by sects, even if it is more concealed in these organisations.

We thus again see an archaic form of power in which citizens become “subjects” and in which the person claiming to be invested with “spiritual” power (even without any religious dimension) claims the right to exercise political power.

This specific structure allows control to be gained over sect members without them being aware of it.

2/ a motivating project

The political project common to radicalised groups and sects is the will to recreate a fantasised humanity. This involves nothing less than the leaders of such groups (and this applies to every sect whatever its size, even if it shocks our logic) wanting to build a true utopia of a political nature, taking over the world by destabilising states and subjecting all humanity to the archaic sectarian model of exercising power.
In doing so, the citizen dimension is trodden on, with members viewing it as an attack on their dignity when victims try to say that they need help, though without really understanding the processes behind such. Ways of seizing power can vary: in certain cases, the group will “profit” from natural disasters which it interprets in an apocalyptic vision as nature helping prepare for the hoped-for political revolution (a sort of Noah’s syndrome in which the sect represents the mythical Ark), while in others terrorist attacks accelerate and concretise the process of seizing power.

The goal is the same for sects and for radicalised groups. It is only the means to achieve it that differ.

Understanding a person’s entry into a sect or his radicalisation is not limited to describing the psychological processes involved. Any analysis must also take account of the utopian ideal, as this is what motivates members, giving them the certainty that they are doing the right thing.

The archaic political model common to sects and radicalised groups, a model which gained added momentum from 20th-century totalitarian movements, is today enjoying the revival that we know because of the less legible character of our states of law and their fading contours.

Both sects and radicalised groups thus appear, to those attracted by them, as solutions for living in a society, alas in a society cut off from the real world.

Such phenomena of gaining control over people are thus symptoms of sick power.

It is our job to understand this so that we can explain it: to understand contagion as the “rhizome-driven” extension of this new form of totalitarianism; and to provide explanations with a view to promoting prevention and helping people rebuild their lives.

I hope that this short presentation has helped you distinguish between the different layers making up a sectarian and radical state, associating each layer with the different steps of gaining control over an individual.

The French approach to dealing with Salafist/Jihadist radicalisation

Anne Josso, Secretary General of MIVILUDES

The French government’s scheme for preventing and combating Jihadist radicalisation was introduced in April 2014. Having now been running for three years, I would like to draw a few conclusions on the way France is dealing with this phenomenon.

My first conclusion: we are dragging our heels and need to catch up

The limits to fighting anti-terrorism

The French authorities, aware of the threat presented by the spread of Salafist Jihadist ideology in France and of the terrorist strategy clearly stated by Abu Musab al-Suri in his 1500-page book The Global Islamic Resistance Call (published in London), are putting their trust in their surveillance and anti-terrorism services to prevent violence in the country. Indeed, France escaped Jihadist attacks between 1995 and 1996 and it was not until March 2012 that the murderous wave struck France, when a French-Algerian Islamic terrorist – i.e. a homegrown terrorist – went on a murderous rampage in South-West France, killing 7 people (including 3 Jewish children). This attack changed the French perception of the danger. But even before that date, many French citizens had already gone off to fight in Iraq and Syria.
Salafist/Jihadist radicalisation is being treated by the French authorities from an anti-terrorism perspective, negatively impacting implementation of the prevention side of the government’s policy.

**Departures to combat zones and despairing families**

Starting in 2012, Miviludes has been getting reports from parents describing situations where children break with their families, where there is a lack of understanding – situations very similar to those described by victims of sectarian movements. New profiles are emerging, including women, many of them very young, and there are many converts. In the face of this distress in the families and the large number of departures, the idea that people who have left will never return is no longer tenable.

Since 2012, more than 1800 French citizens have departed, and 200 have been killed fighting for the IS or the Al-Nusra Front. The defeats suffered by the IS in the past few months are highlighting the question of people returning to France. Some 400 children are involved, more than half of whom were born in the combat zones and are under 5 years’ old. The new strategy of the IS and other Jihadist movements, calling on their recruits to take up arms without travelling to the combat zones and receiving training there, is considerably increasing risks.

**Little focus on prevention and research**

In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon countries, little research into the question of radicalisation was done in France before 2014 and there is no prevention policy. The magnitude of the phenomenon has caught politicians and researchers off-guard.

Sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar, a specialist in the field of prisons, is the author of the definition of radicalisation used by the French authorities: “a **process** by which an individual or group adopts a **violent form of action** directly linked to an extremist ideology with a political, social or religious background and **contesting the established order** on a political, social or cultural level.”

Adoption of a common vocabulary is an important step: radicalisation allows us to influence the process that takes place before any terrorist act is committed; legitimisation of the inherent violence is not the prerogative of radical Islam, enabling us to consider a broad prevention policy.

**Second conclusion: the magnitude of the phenomenon and its specific features**

A figure showing the magnitude: 16,000 people are reported to be in the process of becoming radicalised in France in mid-2017. On top of these, we have 2,000 people under surveillance by the security services as proven radicals. In relation to the whole French population, the 15-25 age group or the importance of Islam in France, Salafist/Jihadist radicalisation affects just a very small minority, and of these only a very few will actually take up arms. However, the difficulty of preventing people taking up arms, combined with the mass of sympathisers, make the phenomenon a top priority.

**The figures highlight the diversity of profiles**

**The extreme diversity of profiles makes it difficult to find mono-causal explanations:**

- a large majority of adolescents (the 15 - 25 age bracket) and increasingly very young people (13 - 14 years’ old);

- the average age is around 26;

- 30% are women

- 38% are converts, of whom 25% come from families without no Islamic background
- different social and socio-economic categories: from working- to middle-class backgrounds, and even some with upper-class ones; – from people with hardly any school education to university graduates; - from people in good jobs to those with little chance on the labour market;
- isolated individuals, brothers and sisters or groups of friends, whole families;
- people with or without a criminal record;
- all regions of France are affected, though big cities are the main regions affected.

**Combination of factors**

Over and above specialist debates, those in charge agree on the necessity to look at an individual’s whole life, how he or she slowly becomes radicalised in a non-linear manner, understanding the interaction between a person’s individual problems and a defined social and historical context. Four major factors are put forward: the geopolitical situation in the Arab Islamic world; the country’s socio-economic and political difficulties; the evolution of the religious landscape marked by individualism and a return to fundamentalism; the development of the Salafist/Jihadist ideology which seeks to recruit new adherents, create a strong sense of identity and establish a divide between a “Muslim population” and a “Western population.” Going a bit deeper, local (withdrawal, integration problems, discrimination) and personal (family history, trauma, aggression, etc.) factors also play a role.

**The attraction of Salafist/Jihadist propaganda**

The authorities should not ignore another key to understanding the phenomenon: Salafist/Jihadist propaganda attracts a wide range of profiles, presenting itself as a counter-culture opposed to the dominant culture. It is characterised by:
- a politico-religious, moral and normative ideology based on a remodelled fundamentalism;
- an identity proposition playing on mobilising an individual within a vast transnational movement and an exclusive and hateful identity perception;
- a fantasy world drawing on many things at once: religious fantasy, eschatology and a mainstream or “young” culture;
- use of the Internet, a powerful medium in all its forms, whether as a traditional content supplier or as a socialising agent.

**Third conclusion: a rapidly structured government scheme and a resilient society**

**The main features of the government scheme**

The aim of the late but pro-active government scheme for preventing and combating radicalisation introduced from April 2014 onwards is to stop people departing for the combat zone and to prevent acts of terrorism on French soil. It involves: identifying risk situations, making arrangements to deal with them, using legal means to prevent people taking up arms, and a discourse countering the ideology.

A national hotline is available to families or any person wanting information. Trained listeners backed up by a psychologist perform a first analysis, sorting out situations presumed to involve radicalisation, while the security services provide further information. An individual file records the people reported via the hotline and the data of local security staff. All situations are passed on to the prefectures of the person’s place of residence. As the representative of the State in the French départements, the prefect is responsible for the local handling of the situation. Working in coordination with the courts, he mobilises all services (social, psycho-social, integration, education), as well as coordinating with local politicians.
At the same time, the judiciary and the administration (in particular the security services) have seen an upgrading of their prevention toolbox: criminal charges for vindicating terrorism or providing logistic support for planned terrorist activities; judicial or administrative measures such as banning people from leaving France, blocking bank accounts and websites. The state of emergency decreed after the attacks of 13 November 2015 has strengthened the administrative measures.

State of play after three years: a proactive administration, progress in detection

Over the past three years, some 20,000 officials, magistrates and people in charge of detecting or caring for people subject to radicalisation have been trained. Matrices for assessing situations have been established, as have radicalisation indicators. The identification and detection of risk situations now function well, as does the feedback of information. Reports are for the most part relevant, despite initial fears of misleading reports. Both families and those reporting situations do so in a responsible manner.

Societal resilience in the face of terrorist attacks

In the aftermath of the 2015-2016 attacks, the French sought to understand them, going beyond the idea that the jihadists were just mad. No increase in attacks against the Muslim community has been registered.

However, the potential terrorist seen in anyone starting to become more radical complicates any dealings with him/her. Professionals do not hide their concern and state that they do not have the resources to approach radicalised persons. They are now calling for concrete prevention instruments.

Fourth conclusion: our understanding of the phenomenon has progressed

The expertise found at Miviludes on sectarian phenomena has been a great benefit here, as certain characteristics are also to be found in Jihadist radicalisation: unconditional adherence to a set of beliefs: their pivotal role in establishing the group, in motivating the individual and legitimising his or her action (in contrast to other processes leading to violence); the “extreme” character of these beliefs.

The heterogeneity of the people reported, the magnitude of the phenomenon and its specific features have resulted in out-of-the-box thinking, not keeping to an established interpretation framework and thereby risking underestimating the role played by voluntary commitment, conversion, impulsive behaviour and solidarity with a group or a community. These distinctions are all the more important for dealing with the phenomenon, as a number of radicalised persons clearly express in their feedback and testimonials their refusal to be treated as victims.

Observation of the phenomenon shows that there are several paths leading to radicalisation. Some are slower, some are faster, not all lead to a person committing an act of violence, and backtracking is always possible.

The first steps are generally the result of meeting someone with links to the Jihadist movement, as well as a certain disposition towards radical thinking.

Engagement for the Jihadist cause takes place progressively. As time goes on, the beliefs and arguments pushed by the propaganda evolve. The person shuts himself out of the real world, instead upholding a new vision of the world and becoming deaf to any information or arguments going against it. The group, whether physical or virtual, to which the person belongs plays a role in strengthening convictions, as its members use it to share the same information and the same arguments without encountering any objections. Group dynamics lead to a hardening of positions. The doctrine itself encourages intellectual isolation through its totalitarian (there is just one truth) and all-encompassing character, able to explain everything and answering all
questions posed by the individual. It demands a break with all those who do not share the same vision of the world, on the basis of black-and-white choices: good/bad, pure/impure, them/us.

Intellectual mechanisms lose their unique role in the process, with very strong emotional mechanisms also joining in. Many radicalised people state having experienced a revelation, of being born again, of being given a second chance, or of being truly converted, The group plays a dominant role in this respect, giving a very warm welcome to every new arrival. Love bombing, a well-known feature of other sects, is the keyword here. The very strong feeling of belonging to the group is also part of the doctrine. It creates a generalised defiance, a new affiliation defined by a religious belonging which transcends all others (especially national belonging), and the feeling of belonging to an elite.

The individual’s moral values and aspirations similarly play a role in accepting violence as a legitimate form of action. Because the individual sees his cause as just, he is willing to commit himself to it. The sacrifice becomes acceptable because it is for the sake of higher values (a divine cause). Sensitivity to injustice makes people susceptible to revolt, just as sensitivity to frustration and humiliation gives rise to a desire for vengeance. But there are also more trivial motivations: material wishes, a need for recognition or a desire for adventure or to give free rein to urges of violence.

The path taken may be intentionally guided by recruiters or induced by polarisation phenomena within the group. These function as triggers of the ideological and emotional transformation of the individual and his system of values. Recruiters have the role of targeting people and getting them, via various manipulative techniques (non-stop pressure, change of habits, etc.), to serve the cause in line with their potential, especially for violence. The profiles of delinquents, violent individuals, passionate idealists or people with mental disorders are not all used the same way, and ways of serving the cause vary from providing logistic support to suicide attacks.

Fifth conclusion: the difficulty of defining objectives and assessing treatment

- De-commitment, de-indoctrination, but not de-radicalisation.

The goal of all treatment is to lead people away from the intrinsically violent Salafist/Jihadist movement, i.e. getting them to renounce violence and possibly to start a new life.

Though the specifically religious motivation and the extent of knowledge of the religious culture may vary from one person to the next, the religious dimension nevertheless remains an essential element in the process of radicalisation and is thus the most delicate aspect in any treatment.

It needs to be highlighted that Salafist Islam is very divided and that the strict practice of religion is often a bulwark against the violent sect and not the first step towards it. Nevertheless, the secularism enshrined in the French constitution stipulates freedom of religion, meaning that it is very dangerous to venture any interpretation of Islam. By contrast, while any questions related to religion are banned from the scope of public intervention, the treatment of radicalised people now includes taking account of this question on a case by case basis. Instruments used in philosophy, anthropology or sociology are suggested for initiating a debate on religion and its identity-giving, moral, political and epistemological dimensions. In the field of primary prevention, education fostering open-mindedness and the sense and place of religion in a secular society needs to be developed.

Consensus over individualised and multidisciplinary treatment

- an individualised approach covering a person’s whole life up to now;
- a multidisciplinary approach;
- the importance of the environment and not just personal vulnerabilities;
- proactive prevention measures;

**Possible levers:**

- family and emotional ties (the suffering of families, construction or reconstruction of family ties);
- reconnection with reality (group therapy, involvement in a concrete project)
- awareness of the harm caused (testimonials of victims and people returning from the combat zones)
- psychological support (and psychiatric support in certain cases)
- socio-economic integration and the offer of training.

**The question of dissimulation and evaluation tools**

Sophisticated methods of concealment, the theorisation of “religious” duty (taqiya), and people’s knowledge of how Western societies “function” constitute real difficulties for identifying and evaluating risks, but also for assessing treatment.

The other difficulty is the **absence of evaluation tools for the various treatment plans**. This requires the definition of exact goals, sufficient authority to assert oneself vis-à-vis the various stakeholders, and a comprehensive overview of practices. We are also too involved. Assessment is absolutely necessary, though it mustn’t discourage good intentions. Up to now the French authorities have tried to mobilise professionals as much as possible.

**Challenges to be overcome in the field of prevention:**

- The further development of research, cooperation and the sharing of experience between teams on the ground
- The question of sharing information must take account of individual freedoms and security aspects
- The anticipation of developments (recruitment strategies)
- The development of secondary prevention for young people: better protecting vulnerable families, educating young people to develop systems of intellectual defence against conspiracy theories.

**Young people going off to fight in Syria: an attempt to position this phenomenon within the history of terrorism linked to radical Islamism in our country**

Alain Grignard, lecturer at Liege University

(main lines of intervention)

Islam, the beneficiary of Muhammed’s prophecy of perfecting the so-called “book” religions, is considered a perfect religion. Muslims believe that God finally sent Muhammed as the last law-bearing prophet (Seal of the Prophets) to convey the divine message to the whole world (to sum up and finalize the word of God).

- In the prophetic gesture, Muhammed constructed politics (governance of the new universal community, the Ummah isamiyya) at the same time as religion (absolute monotheism, the culmination of all prophecy since Abraham), thereby creating total confusion between the spiritual
and the temporal in the minds of Muslims. God guided the prophet on both levels at once (the religious Koran of Mecca and the political Koran of Medina). The notion of secularism may thus appear unnatural in the collective subconscious of Muslims.

- Constituting the political instrumentalisation of Islam, radical Islam is rooted in prophetic teaching. Radicalisation can take place in the ideological/religious field (from “reformism” = adapting Islam to modern circumstances, to “Salafism” = a return to the strict observance of Islam as lived by the prophet and his disciples (*salafis*)).

This radicalisation of thought may go hand in hand with a radicalisation of the means used to achieve one’s goals. While “religious radicalism” does not always automatically involve violence and armed conflict, Salafists are - in our sense - naturally attracted to it. Indeed, the further away the ideal society is from the real world, the less it is attainable without the use of violence and armed conflict.

The conjunction of these forms of radicalisation (vision and means) leads to the movements we are currently faced with (violent Salafism: al-Qaida, the Islamic State (IS), etc.).

- We have spent the past three decades in Belgium dismantling “radical Islamic” networks. In the initial period, these armed groups were (in their words) ‘freedom-fighters’ battling against the deviant governments of their countries of origin (the ‘*Groupe islamique armé*’ (GIA) in Algeria, the ‘*groupe islamique combattant marocain*’ (GICM) in Morocco, the ‘*groupe islamique combattant tunisien*’ (GICT) in Tunisia, etc.).

- These groups merged in Afghanistan in the late 90’s (via London) in the melting pot of globalised Islam embodied by al-Qaida (Osama bin Laden’s declarations of war on the West in 1996 and 1998).

- After spectacular actions culminating in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre, we have seen Al-Qaida being pushed back by the US military and Western security forces, as well as a change of strategy theorised by Abu Musab al-Soury (a globalised Islam, a call to local militants to perpetrate actions inside enemy territories).

- The current phenomenon of large numbers of young people going off to fight in the Middle East is new, and constitutes a mix of a) these groups embodying resistance to the USA under the al-Qaida banner (which has since become the IS) and a generation of young people in search of something to hold on to and of redemption. The origin of this phenomenon is to be found in the Syrian popular uprising, hijacked by the Islamists in the face of general do-nothingness.

- As often stated, we are now dealing with “Islamised radicals” rather than “radical Islamists”, with these young people without the same knowledge as their older “brothers in arms”, whether on a religious or political level. They often have no idea of what Islam is all about, despite it being a powerful identity provider (sacred and, of course, irrational). These “Islamised radicals” are however bound at some stage to come up against “radical Islamists”, who may act as catalysts in their transition to the “new man” status (ironic analogy with the biblical “Road to Damascus” where Saul of Tarsus, a torturer in the pay of the Romans, was transformed into “Saint Paul”, only to become a martyr!).

- In the case of these young people, we posit that we are seeing the convergence between a “person” (a young person who has broken with a society to which he/she feels not/no longer to belong) and a “particular product” (“Salafist” Islam, a form of Islam not requiring any reflection and based on the servile imitation of conduct) in the “context” of the disastrous geopolitical situation of the Muslim countries (the externally imposed artificial construction of Syria and Iraq).
* However, we need to note that the process of constructing these various entities ("person", "product" and "context") have been observable (and observed) for many years and have often been theorised. For instance, the study of the rise of ghettos (e.g. the banlieues in Paris and Brussels), the home of the majority of these young people, began way back in the 1930's in the Chicago School (of Sociology). The “Salafisation” of Islam is also a process we have been seeing for the last 20 odd years in French-speaking Europe (rivalry within Muslim communities between adherents of the “Muslim Brothers” and disciples of the various Salafist fundamentalist currents, which the latter are winning!).

As for the feeling of frustration and the desire for revenge within the Islamic world, it seems to be omnipresent, especially in the area we are focused on and where the states were defined on the drawing board at the beginning of the 20th century by the colonial powers (the Sykes-Picot agreements) and the oil companies (the Acknakary and Ostend agreements in particular) without worrying about either religious (Shiites / Sunnis) or ethnic (Kurds ...) boundaries.

- Taking part in this struggle to defend the Islamic world renders the violence used legitimate but also redemptive since this new stance gives meaning to an earlier life seen as a failure.

- These young people detest our society so much that they are driven to depart for distant battlefields. Moreover, it induces them to bring this violence back to our countries and to use it to punish us ... and to take revenge!

- this stance is all the more natural as it is now seen as a response to the coalition attacks against attempts to create an “Islamic State”. Now with a defensive role, this jihad has syphoned off warriors from al-Qaida, the movement that originally attracted these young people. Following the logic of urban gangs, the IS is seen as a “super gang”, the mere mention of which sends a shiver down the spine of its adversaries (a subculture in which respect goes hand in hand with the fear one inspires!).

- We thus see three theories fuelling the debate, especially in France (the socio-economic causes upheld by Olivier ROY, the responsibility of religion/Salafism posited by Gilles KEPEL, and the geopolitical frustrations put forward by François BURGAT.

**The role of attachment in cults and radicalization**

Alexandra Stein

I would like to thank you very much for welcoming me to FECRIS and giving me this time to present my work.

I am an ex-member of a so-called “left-wing” political cult, which I was involved in for 10 years from 1981 to 1991. After I left I wrote my first book – a memoir of that experience – Inside Out. I went on to earn a PhD as a social psychologist, in 2007, from the University of Minnesota specializing in an attachment-based study of cults and totalitarianism. I now continue to lecture and write on this topic in London.

[SLIDE 2]. In December of this year Routledge published my second book, Terror, Love and Brainwashing, which is an extension and broadening of my PhD work.

This, along with my background, means I have naturally linked the processes of cult recruitment and retention with those of radicalization to extremist groups. many of us here, of course, see the same methods at work.
As I have a short amount of time, I will just give brief overview of the kernel of the theoretical approach I’m presenting. Then I will finish up with some suggestions for prevention.

Of course in this gathering we understand what a cult is. Here’s my definition. I believe that this also applies to many groups that engage in radicalization such as Islamists, Christian fundamentalists and left and right-wing extremist groups.

SLIDE 3
I think most of you will recognise this:

- Leadership is charismatic and authoritarian
- Structure is isolating, closed, with steep hierarchy
- Ideology is absolute, total, exclusive
- Process consists of techniques of brainwashing/coercive persuasion/thought reform
- Outcome is controllable (deployable), exploited followers

My focus today is on the process – point 4, and to a lesser degree the ideology.

I use attachment theory as a way to understand the lock that keeps people in these systems and that takes control of both their relationships and their thinking – that is, I focus on the indoctrination, rather than the recruitment aspect of the process, and in particular on the manipulation and control of close relationships as a key element of that.... Let’s have a really brief look at this. Please bear with me while I give the basic theoretical background.

Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby, a child psychiatrist whose work was based in evolutionary theory. Many thousands of studies have been done based on his foundational and groundbreaking work providing a rich evidence base.

SLIDE 4
His theory states that an evolutionary adaptation fundamental to humans is the drive to seek proximity to a safe other (initially as infants to caregivers) in order to gain protection from threat, thus improving chances of survival.

A child seeks its parent when ill, tired, frightened or in any other way under threat. The parent then functions as a safe haven – a source of protection and comfort. But, once comforted, the child eventually wishes to explore its world again, and now the parent functions as a secure base from which the child ventures out to explore their world and to which they can return when protection and comfort is again needed. Secure attachment is the optimal form of attachment, and is open, flexible and responsive. Similar dynamics occur in adults in their relationships with spouses, partners or very close friends.

There is a biochemical aspect to this. When we are exploring our worlds we experience a certain amount of stimulation and excitement – physiologically the levels of cortisol hormone in our bodies rises. But too much stimulation – what can become stress or threat: fatigue, hunger, fear, or any kind of stress – means our levels of cortisol rise beyond a manageable threshold. In persons with more or less secure attachment this is a signal to seek a safe haven (even if symbolically, or internally) to help calm this rise in cortisol. So think about infants and caregivers here: a toddler going to its parent for comfort when upset. The parent is acting as a safe haven. The safe haven helps to calm the stressed individual. In doing so the child or the person’s endogenous opioids rise and the level of excitatory cortisols reduce.
But after a certain amount of calming and recovery, the individual (or child) has enough opiodes in their system – now they are ready for some stimulation, to explore the world again, and for their cortisol levels to increase again. At this point we say that their attachment needs have been terminated, and they can now move away from the attachment figure and explore again. So this is normally a homeostatic system, ebbing and flowing between these two states in a flexible, balanced manner.

But attachment relationships do not always function well.

**SLIDE 5**

In particular, when the caregiver is not only the source of potential comfort but is also the source of threat, a relationship of *disorganised attachment* results. We might see this in a child’s relationship with a frightening parent, or in a violent or abusive adult relationship. The caregiver is the apparent safe haven. So when the person is stressed or frightened they will attempt to seek comfort from their perceived safe haven. But seeking comfort from the source of fear is a failing strategy: it not only brings the individual closer to the source of fear, it also fails to produce comfort, thus impeding the cycle of renewed exploration. In attachment terms we can say that the attempt to approach the comfort of the safe haven is in opposition to the need to escape from the threat.

If the person has no other available attachments to turn to (and this is key), then they will stay locked into that relationship trying to approach and get comfort, but never achieving it. Their attachment behaviour is never terminated – they never get enough opiodes in their system to manage the cortisol levels, so they stay in an anxious and fearful state. Thus they attempt to use the perceived attachment figure as a safe haven, but never are able to terminate that to explore their environment again – they are not able to use the attachment figure as a secure base.

If another safe attachment was available they might be able to escape this dynamic.

Disorganised attachment has both emotional and cognitive effects, which I will discuss in a moment.

My research indicates that the closed, fearful world within a cult is designed to promote a relationship of disorganised attachment to the leader or group: a combination of terror and supposed ‘love’ that is used to emotionally trap and cognitively disable followers.

**SLIDE 6**

Here we see someone first encountering a cultic or extremist group. They may have their own more or less healthy social connections. They are subject to a recruitment attempt.

I would like to say here, following Ben Zablocki’s view, that recruitment and retention – how we keep someone into such a group – are really two different (though related) processes. There are many, varied recruitment pathways: typical cult recruitment which we are familiar with, or being born or brought up in a group, or being kidnapped or press-ganged, and so on. But in this example I’m using the more typical view of an adult being recruited. But the core of what I am discussing, is really more relevant to the next stage, the retention, indoctrination – or brainwashing – aspect of cultic or extremist control.
SLIDE 7

... So here, the individual is pulled away from their current social network – intensification of isolation begins: we are the only group, the only answer. There is now isolation from prior networks, and engulfment in the new network.

SLIDE 8

Once isolated, the group positions itself as the only safe place, and then arouses fear. (This is not a linear process, but more or less like this). A variety of threats – dangers and enemies in the outside world, predictions of apocalyptic events, harsh criticism, punishment, or the threat of exclusion. Fear can also be aroused through emotional and physical means, such as guilt, exhaustion and physical punishment. But importantly the source of fear is actually the cult itself.

According to Bowlby – the originator of attachment theory: ‘Most people think of fear as running away from something. But there is another side to it. We run TO someone, usually a person.’ The cult leader makes sure he or she, and the group, is the only attachment, and thus the only source of relief from this fear. Like the infant, cult members develop a cult-induced disorganised, potentially harmful attachment to the leader or group.

Emotionally it can lead to disorganised or trauma bonding – a powerful, entangled bond – with the cult. As the need for comfort is never fully satisfied, they remain fearful, so they cannot move to the exploration phase. The cult becomes the only perceived safe haven to which the now-fearful person clings.

Now we have a person clinging to the source of threat. If the person has been successfully isolated (again, that is crucial), there is no escape. The only place to turn is the fear-arousing group. This is a situation of chronic trauma, or what attachment researchers call “fright without solution”.

What we know about trauma is that it can lead to cognitive dissociation in response to an unbearable situation of ‘fright without solution’. That is, in a situation of chronic trauma the link between the feeling and thinking parts of the brain fails. You cannot think about the traumatic situation. Where there is no escape – neither fight nor flight are possible, then a freeze response occurs. And this is a cognitive freezing in the brain’s ability to think clearly about the situation of trauma.

I believe this is what happens when a person is subjected to brainwashing processes. Here’s a picture of the brain...

SLIDE 9

Alan Schore’s studies of trauma discuss how the orbitofrontal cortex, which is the link – crudely put – between the feeling and the thinking brain, does not function adequately, if at all, when subject to trauma. Normally, if we have space and ability to act under stress or threat – i.e. fright with possible solution – we would experience the stress first in the lower part of the brain and our heart rate would increase and so forth, cortisols spike, then we would feel fear or worry or anxiety in the emotion centers of the brain – the mid-brain, and then, our orbitofrontal cortex, “the master regulator for the organization of the brain’s response to threat” and the “thinking part of the emotional brain”, decides whether further higher order thinking thought is required in prefrontal cortex. If so we would then consider how to act to attempt to resolve the threat.

But we cannot do this if we are locked into this isolating relationship that is causing the fear. The disorganized relationship is one of chronic trauma. And trauma essentially disables the orbi-
to frontal cortex responsible for this higher order thinking. (Other practices of the cult reinforce this inability to engage higher order thinking as well: sleep deprivation, lack of time, and other stresses.)

However, this disabling of higher order thinking happens only in terms of the cultic relationship – i.e. the fear-arousing relationship. The person might be able to think perfectly well about other topics. I know for myself during my cult tenure I was a rather highly skilled computer analyst. I could think clearly about my technical work. But I could not think about my relationship to the cult. I literally could not think about it. Until the moment I had support – another attachment where I felt safe, an escape hatch attachment – at which point my cognitive thinking about the cult sort of “exploded” into life. A quite extraordinary experience, looking back.

Emotionally locked into the cult, trying to manage the chronic hyperarousal of cortisols by seeking comfort from the group, and with one’s thinking impaired or frozen, the cult can now do the follower’s thinking for them and explain away the cult members feelings of distress and so forth through the cult’s ideology. The cultic ideology can now insert itself into the dissociated vacuum the cult has created – Satan, the khuffar, evil spirits, bad thoughts, your family, heathens, the approaching apocalypse, etc. are threatening you and that’s why you feel bad. Commit further, work harder, confess more, obey, obey, obey and everything will come right.

Of primary importance is the fact that if the follower had another truly safe and trusting attachment relationship to turn to then this disorganizing effect would not work.

This analysis can help us interpret what are the common themes in cultic and radicalizing ideologies. I deal with this at some length in my book, but in brief here we can see:

**SLIDE 10**

- Messages to discard “attachments” (isolation). For example, Masoud Banisadr reports how the Islamist Iranian Mojahedin’s leader said that one’s husband or wife was a “buffer” in the way of the relationship between followers and himself and reduced the “capacity for struggle”. The account of the child soldier Emmanuel Jal talks about how friendships with other boys were forbidden: “You have no family now” (except the group).

- Messages to give one’s all to the group, only look to the group – loyalty and commitment is only to the group or cause. The group is the only “safe haven”. (engulfment, perceived safe haven). The Iranian Mojahedin’s leader, Rajavi, was the only one with a line to God, and therefore had transcendent ideological qualifications. As a former Jehovah’s Witness said to me, there is no loyalty to family allowed, only to the JWs – the only way to guarantee happiness is to work harder for the cause. Child soldier Emmanuel Jal reported how the commanders said the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army was their mother and father, their family.

- Constant fear-arousing messages to keep fear levels high. Endless examples! Armageddon for many religious groups, your internal weakness – in my group “bourgeois world outlook”, or Satanic influences in other groups... Islamists would have fear of the khuffar – the outsiders.

- Messages that support followers’ cognitive dissociation:
  - Instructions not to think or feel, and certainly not to think about one’s feelings. Alternately, depending on the group, one might be told only to think or only to feel, but whichever angle the group takes the result is to discourage the follower’s own efforts to think about what is happening to them and what they
are experiencing in the group. Lyndon LaRouche says “Cognate everything and sense nothing” Spiritual cults often say “Be in your heart centre only, let go of thoughts”.

- Confusing, boring, or contradictory messages which also support dissociation.
  Long hours of theological or ideological lectures, etc

This is quite over-simplified of course!

Remember, that people are COERCED and manipulated into this, can be of any attachment status on first encountering the cult.

People growing up in these systems are similarly affected, as their parents are disorganized, and the cult interferes in family relationships in order to prevent any alternate primary attachments, including those to one’s children. And the environment in which they are growing up is supporting all I’ve said above.

In short:

**SLIDE 11**

**Cults and controlling extremist groups are fear-driven systems.**

A simple formula is: Isolation + engulfment + fear = controllable, exploited followers

I wanted to add a few thoughts on prevention.

**SLIDE 12**

Solomon Asch was a social psychologist who was one of the great scholars who studied group behaviour in order to understand what happened in the Holocaust and how to prevent it. He said:

“The greater man’s ignorance of the principles of his social surroundings, the more subject is he to their control; and the greater his knowledge of their operations and of their necessary consequences, the freer he can become with regard to them.”

There is general agreement among cultic studies scholars that prevention primarily involves EDUCATION. I believe this needs to be education at all levels, from primary to tertiary.

We must teach people not just critical thinking, but knowledge of specific manipulation and control mechanisms. **Prevention requires teaching people, in an ideologically neutral way, specifically about dangerous totalist groups/relationships: the methods, structures and likely outcomes.**

In particular what I would like to emphasize is that we teach people the dangers of becoming isolated within an engulfing, exclusive relationship – whether with a group or individual - that controls and monitors all other relationships. Of course there are many other danger signs of cultic or radicalizing relationships, but I think that isolation and control of close relationships perhaps tends not to get enough attention – particularly regarding radicalization when ideological concerns have taken most of the attention, and this leads to very difficult and confusing discussions around beliefs, censorship and so forth. I think some of this can be avoided by focusing on dangerous relationships and the patterns of isolating and controlling behaviours within those relationships.
I think we can learn much from movements such as that against domestic violence. A long struggle of activists and professionals – over 40 years. But certainly in the UK we now see this much more in the mainstream, with much less blaming of the victims.

SLIDE 13

Educate students about dangerous relationships and how to navigate the array of groups, ideas, relationships they will be faced with.
Provide resources – who to go to, what to access, where information is, etc.
Institutions to be aware of predatory groups and how to respond to them.

SLIDE 14

Universities and schools: Induction; undergraduate/graduate courses; required courses; sections of other courses; flyers and posters; invited speakers; film series; peer mentoring
Communities: Parents, social workers, doctors, police, teachers, etc.
Critical need: train the trainers

On a concluding note we of course have a problem of capacity – there are not enough people yet who are knowledgeable, skilled in this area, and in positions of influence. So I think the critical step is that of raising awareness and training the trainers – using the rich variety of scholarship that is available. To that end, I would like to see much more effort put in particularly at the university level of training in this area. I would certainly welcome the opportunity to contribute to developing programs in this area.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.
The Role of Attachment in Cults and Radicalization

Alexandra Stein Ph.D.
FEGRIS May 2017

Slide One

Definition of a cultic system

- Leadership: Charismatic and authoritarian
- Structure: Isolating, closed, with steep hierarchy
- Ideology: Absolute, total, exclusive
- Process: Techniques of brainwashing/coercive persuasion/thought reform
- Outcome: Controllable (deployable), exploited followers

Definition taken from Lifton (1999), Arendt (1948), Schein (1961)

Secure attachment: Open, flexible and responsive

Attachment figure provides: protection: a safe haven from situations of threat

After threat has passed, individual returns to exploration. Attachment figure is used as a secure base

The Attachment bond – Secure Attachment

Individual has attachment to perceived safe haven.

Safe haven (source of comfort) is also the source of threat.

Attachment bond is strengthened. Individual is disoriented, confused, may dissociate. Exploration phase is impaired due to continued presence of threat. Alternation of leniency and assault.

Disorganized Attachment or the Trauma Bond
Detachment of individual from remaining bonds

Formation of trauma bond, or disorganized attachment, to the totalist group

Threat emanates from the group. Alternate attachments have been stripped away. The group is the only safe haven available. The individual forms a strong, disorganized attachment bond to the group.

Knowledge is Key to Prevention

"The greater man's ignorance of the principles of his social surroundings, the more subject is he to their control; and the greater his knowledge of their operate ins and of their necessary consequences, the freer he can become with regard to them."

Solomon Asch 1952

The Role of Ideology
Isolation and Dissociation

• Discard attachment relationships
• Primary loyalty must be to the group
• Keep fear levels high
• Reinforce dissociation

The Control Process

Isolation + Enulfment + Fear arousal = Exploitation and control of follower
Prevention

Current focus on teaching general “academic” critical thinking skills is insufficient

Prevention requires teaching people, in an ideologically neutral way, specifically about totalist groups/relationships: the methods, structures and likely outcomes

Intervention Opportunities

Create a climate of awareness & knowledge in the university and community

• Educate students about dangerous relationships and how to navigate the array of groups, ideas, relationships they will be faced with.
• Provide resources – who to go to, what to access, where information is, etc.
• Institutions to be aware of predatory groups and how to respond to them.

Where/how to teach?

• Universities and schools: Induction; undergraduate/graduate courses; required courses; sections of other courses; flyers and posters; invited speakers; film series; peer mentoring
• Communities: Parents, social workers, doctors, police, teachers, etc.
• Critical need: train the trainers

Alexandra Stein

Alexandra Stein
I would like to start by thanking you for inviting me here today to give an account of the radicalisation of one of my sons, Quentin, who was converted in 2012, left to take up the Jihad in September 2014 and was reported dead in January 2016 at the age of just 23. There is nothing better than testimonials from people who have been through everything to help understand, repair and prevent this happening to others. His life and its tragic end, our unsuccessful attempt to stop him getting drowned, the family trauma and the fact that life goes on despite everything are told in my book “Quentin qu’ont-ils fait de toi?”

I didn’t choose the title by chance. It is meant to show how Quentin slowly became someone else, under the influence of friends – it is often the case that radicalisation begins within a trusted circle of close friends. In our particular case, we saw Quentin go down the slippery road, from his individual religious calling to enlistment, guided by fanaticism and superstition, by malicious Muslim friends and under the influence of an ideology.

While two specific friends played a dominant role, we still find it difficult to actually put our fingers on any specific date. We didn’t initially notice anything, or rather we didn’t understand because we were not warned and not influenced by the current climate of suspicion and vigilance.

The first friend, a French Muslim with Algerian roots, a friend of Quentin’s at the private Catholic school and who often came to our home, was the one who initiated him into Islam and into a quite literal interpretation of the Koran. Yes, he seemed to us to be very religious, quite retrograde, but it didn’t worry us that much. Yes, he seemed quite fundamentalist, and would complain that he was unable to pray at university. He had a beard, but would always give me a kiss. He came to discuss things at our home. We thought that this intellectual jousting was good even if we didn’t agree with what he said, that it was good to speak of spirituality and religion, of a vision of society with nothing better to do than debate marriage for all. He used to say to Quentin, “You’re lucky, you can speak out at home”. Too late, after Quentin had died, we learnt that he had conspiratorial and satanic leanings (music, comics, etc.) which must have influenced and frightened Quentin.

The second was a neighbourhood friend since Quentin’s teens, slightly older, a history student, also a French Muslim with Algerian roots. It was said that he became radicalised after returning from a trip to Mecca. He was reputed to have a certain aura, influencing young people, somewhat like a guru. In fact, he had quite a few converts. He showed no outward signs of fundamentalism (in fact, quite the opposite), and this deceived us. Too late, we learnt that he had been watched by the security forces (flagged “fiche S”) since 2013 until his arrest in November 2015; that he had lost his job as CPE (a college education counsellor) due to praying at work. It was not until afterwards that other young people told us that he stuck to Quentin like a leach at the end, accompanying him to his circumcision, and to the airport on the day he departed. At the same time, he constantly lied to us, feigning not to know anything.

Young Muslim associations watched Quentin become radicalised, but didn’t do anything, didn’t say anything. As if this was part of the risk of practising the religion. I would have liked someone to have come and told me what was happening – me, a person who knew nothing about Islam. But as I now understand it, “one does not judge a pious person, only God can judge” or “that has nothing to do with Islam”.

Quentin himself remained, at least to start with, a pleasant member of our family, with lots of social contacts, showing no signs of violence. When he got annoyed he apologized, saying that...
his religion did not allow it. “That is what the Jihad, the true Jihad, is all about, fighting one’s passions, fighting the evil and good in oneself”! We saw this as part of his personal development.

What I am telling you is the outcome of my experience, my investigations together with his father, testimonials from Quentin’s friends, things deducted from the many discussions we had with him right up to the very end.

Sectarian deviation is a subject that worries me, as there are currently many hypotheses, including those put forward by Donia BOUZAR in France, on the sectarian methods used by the Islamic State and its recruiters. It’s all very interesting. But, that said, has any way been found to de-radicalise people, a sort of “reverse brainwashing”? But it’s not that simple.

In the case of such sectarian methods, we can consider that an individual’s free will and the art of doubting have been erased. But when we look at the court rulings pertaining to radicalised young people, we see that judges sees them as being guilty of having joined the Islamic State and thus 100% responsible for their deeds. This is the whole paradox. While I am not saying that they shouldn’t be sentenced when they have committed an irreparable deed (often paid for by their death), can one be 100% responsible when one has been manipulated?

I would like to cite Aldous HUXLEY here: “The victim of mind-manipulation does not know that he is a victim. To him the walls of his prison are invisible, and he believes himself to be free.”

The difficulty is that a young person who slides into violent Islamic radicalisation does not leave the country in handcuffs. He leaves seemingly of his own free will, voluntarily. Moreover, he is convinced he is doing the right thing. And all this makes him seem guilty. In most cases, radicalisation is a gradual and insidious process, slowly breaking down a person’s resistance. Moreover, references to scholars and exegetes are numerous, and converts are taught that their path is prescribed in holy texts, by the prophet, in the name of God, that these texts cannot be disputed because they constitute the divine word.

The ideology on which everything is based shows in a reassuring way the road to take.

Even so-called moderate Muslims say that the texts are to be taken literally. But everything depends on their contextualisation, their interpretation. There are explicit verses, and verses which God alone can understand. In my opinion, this is one of the main problems: texts which, as they are vague, leave the door open to excessive interpretation – it is God speaking, the prophet said so, he did it. Enlightened Islam exists, but its opposite also exists. “God will be our judge”, the believers say.

Being a parent is very painful, especially when one sees that the recruiters did not leave the country to fight themselves, yet get light sentences compared to those they recruit; recruiting without leaving to fight is somehow proof of cowardice, hypocrisy and perversity, and I hope that court rulings will evolve to take account of this. The ensnaring recruiter, the Islamist ideologues who are not forbidden to speak, are very much responsible for the mental poison they spread.

- But who was Quentin?

A young and very handsome boy, a normal boy in a normal family, I would say. Our children were baptised as Catholics, but we left it up to them whether they actually practised. We brought them up open to the world and diversity.

Middle-class parents, running their own business. My husband, a Frenchman born in Haiti, from a well-off middle-class family, came to France at the age of 5 and is totally integrated. A brother, 4.5 years older and an engineer.
A life in the suburbs, Quentin lacked nothing, though was well aware of the meaning of effort, in line with strong family values.

Quentin was not an outperformer in his class, but nevertheless a good pupil, sociable though a bit shy, loved sports and music, played the piano, liked dancing, was good at making people laugh and had a nice girlfriend. By no means a delinquent’s profile, a sufferer – often the standard image of Jihadists. Instead empathetic, very sensitive and obviously questioning the world, something quite normal for a young kid.

The future held a lot of promise - he had passed his Bac (“A” levels”) and was getting ready to study sport at university.

How can one explain that this young man – a man who organised a party in the year of his Bac to raise money in the wake of the Haitian earthquake by selling cakes – was to depart, 4 years later, for Syria in support of Muslims who, in his eyes, had a monopoly in suffering.

How had he progressed from “Islam as the religion of love” to “God is kind to everyone except those who attract his wrath, the disbelievers and polytheists” (including musicians, voters, those who practise yoga like me, for example)?

Who started this downward slide and when? We will never know. He is the only person who could tell us. These are the questions that haunt us. We cannot be held responsible, we are not deficient parents, as certain people would have you think. The ideology was stronger.

Could we have done more than we’ve already done?

Should we have been worried, rejecting his conversion, despite the fact that he was no longer a minor and that conversion is not a crime? Not back in 2012. In hindsight, in 2017, we would most probably find this a lot more disturbing.

There were changes and signs, but we didn’t have the means to read them; today we understand a lot better.

We respected our child’s freedom of religion and conscience, not seeing and understanding that he had fallen into a trap impossible to get out of.

**How had Quentin changed? What signs were there of any sectarian deviation? Here are a few things we noticed.**

In autumn 2012, he announced, full of joy and pride, his conversion to Islam, presenting it as a personal decision and choice: “nothing will change between us”, he said, “it’s between me and God”, “I love you”.

I still can’t associate his conversion with his radicalisation, for me this was like a train derailment, caused by bad encounters and the influence of texts, distancing him from a desire for spirituality, instilling him with fear and guilt; he was also impressed by Roqia, a form of Islamic healing, a session of which he attended.

An avid reader, Quentin justified his choice of Islam, saying that it was a modern religion in the chronological sense of the word, which recognised all the prophets; a religion compatible with science. This also gave rise to long philosophical discussions between the four of us – us parents tending to be believers, our elder son an atheist with a scientific background and speaking more of the Big Bang and evolution rather than divine creation, while Quentin saw signs of God everywhere.

(impact of Maurice Bucaille’s book *The Bible, the Quran and Science* (published in 1976) - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Bucaille](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Bucaille))
Though we were surprised by his conversion, he reassured us. I did cry a bit though, as I would have liked him to have invited us to his conversion party; he did it with own mates - there is no such thing as baptism in Islam and a priori no accompaniment, something that I now regret.

Initially, there were no radical changes: he wore the same clothes, displayed the same behaviour, had no specific requirements, kept his girlfriend, his student job, carried on studying, taking part in sports competitions, in family life. But he did celebrate Ramadan, would only eat halal meat and stopped eating pork (something he used to love). He grew a small beard, something normal for a Muslim. He prayed five times a day in his room, and went to the mosque on Fridays. He spoke of meditation which did him good.

Our friends who knew him initially remarked that he had become more mature, that he was particularly calm and smiling.

But this turned out to be the tip of a treacherous iceberg!

In 2013, the first complications appeared, in hindsight understandable due to our knowledge of Salafism and its laws:

- no more playing the piano, something hard for his musician father to accept. In order not to put our backs up, Quentin didn’t say that it was forbidden, but just “it’s futile, it takes me away from God”. What could we say?

- April 2013: more disturbing was that he found it impossible to enter the church during the funeral of his paternal grandmother; he had gone away and we expected him to re-join us; his brother found him prostrate outside the church, in tears, unable to come in because “his religion forbade him to enter, due to the Holy Trinity, the images of the saints, etc.”

This was obviously quite a scene, the first step towards separation, but we forgave him, his grief was sincere. We ascribed this to religious fundamentalism. While we were obviously not pleased, nothing worse seemed to be in the offing. We thought that he would soon tone down his religious practice. We were unaware that all his deeds were the remote-controlled orders of his religious friends. Quentin explained his reasons to his father. Afterwards, he went to the graveyard with us ... and life carried on as normal, almost!!!

- A further episode in summer 2013: his cousin’s marriage. here again, he got up to his old trick. About to enter the church, he pretended he had stomach ache, and went off to the chemists. That evening, he didn’t dance, this time claiming he was tired from travelling.

The following day at the beach on the way back, he had a problem with putting on his swimming trunks and going for a swim with us; he kept his shorts and T-shirt on for modesty’s sake – he who had always been so proud of his bronzed body!

- We no longer saw his girlfriend, who previously often used to come and spend the night with him: Quentin told us that they had stopped going out with each other, but that they still saw each other. We felt sorry for her, but it’s not for parents to interfere in their children’s love affairs.

Much later, she told us that his fundamentalist friends had convinced him to stop seeing her because she was Haram, not allowed. At first, he had resisted, hesitated, had started seeing her again because he loved her. But then he had stopped, under the pressure of the group. But none of this happened in our presence. Quentin had arguments to reassure us.

- In September 2013 while we were having some work done on the house, Quentin had problems with the fact that we had taken out a loan and therefore had to pay interest. In his religion, this was not done. This was a rule set by fundamentalist Salafists, as we were to learn later!
November 2013: My husband organised a concert with his brothers and sister in a jazz club in memory of his mother. Quentin did not come because of the alcohol and the music. The next terrible cut! We were not at all happy and we told him so. But we didn’t want to antagonise him, wanting above all to maintain contact with him. He saw the family as not belonging to this “place of perdition”.

At Christmas 2013, Quentin decided to stop embracing his brother’s girlfriend and all other women apart from his mother and grandmother, as “this was not done in his religion”. His brother got worked up, telling him that he was wrong. But it was Christmas, and we didn’t want to start a dispute. But nevertheless, this worried us further. Such a lack of openness! Such intolerance on his part!

Quentin said that he didn’t want to join us for our Christmas dinner on 24 December, claiming that, as a Muslim, Christmas had nothing to do with him. We told him to stay, saying that it was not a case of going to church, but of taking part in a family meal. His father told him that the 24 December was originally the date of the feast of the winter solstice, and thus a Pagan and not a Christian feast. Quentin left to get advice, then came back saying “it’s OK, I’ve got the necessary authorisation; I owe it to my father and mother”. Was this true, or was it just a way of preventing our suspicions being awakened, of preventing us asking questions?

He refused to accept his Christmas present in front of everyone, but was happy to see his family and cousins spend the evening with us, though taking care not to touch any alcohol.

The next day, he was more disposed to talk with us, and we even spoke with one of my sisters about religious sects, about being careful not to fall for fanaticism and superstition. He listened.

January 2014: He also quit university, claiming that he no longer knew whether he liked what he was studying, that he wanted to be independent and go out and earn money. We were not at all happy with this. We discussed it with him, telling him that he would find himself in difficulties, but what can you do? How can you stop a young 22-year-old from wanting to go out and work? He also told me jokingly that “celibacy was hard”, and that he wanted to marry and start a family. We told him he could go out with girls, that’s what boys did at his age. That he first had to find someone and that he could think about marriage later.

He also quit his student job at Decathlon. As we found out much later, this was because of the music in the stores and because there were no prayer breaks.

He had never been idle, and he soon found another job in a Qamis boutique. We were not that pleased, as it was too confessional. To our great satisfaction, he quit a few months’ later, saying
that the boss didn’t seem to be honest and “that he had big plans for the future”. “’Ouf’” was all we could say! He bought a nice suit and started working as an Uber driver, together with someone else, on behalf of an employer. He drove a nice car and seemed happy, but he had to work long hours.

→ We thought that he was in the process of calming down, of getting back to “normal life”. Oh, we were so fatally wrong!

→ Throughout this period, I was looking for help, attending conferences on Islam and getting to know the different religious currents; violence wasn’t Quentin’s thing and I thought he was an adherent of Quietist Salafism, something not that bad, I thought. He replied that “I was just like all religious predecessors”. I asked the advice of a psychologist. Though unable to help me, he spoke of the possibility of a sectarian influence, telling me to do everything to maintain contact with him; I also requested the help of the main Paris mosque, but I had no precise details. All they said was “he’s ignorant, on edge, but it will soon pass by”. Quentin saw that I was trying to understand him, but for him what we had here was not true Islam, but French Islam.

He stopped working during Ramadan, didn’t want to go on holiday with us, saying that he would stay at home and look after the house. In September, he told us he wanted to learn Arabic and spoke of prestigious Egyptian universities; this was current practice (and legal), and a 1-month course cost €70, a sort of ERASMUS; together with him, we got hold of the necessary information. But we ended up dissuading him because of the Arab Spring and the associated risks. He had no problem accepting this, and we talked to him about French universities where one could learn Arabic and how useful it would be to speak Arabic in international trade.

At the end of September 2014, he told us he had to do a quick round trip to Frankfurt to pick up a car for his employer.

He set off, sending a few messages saying that he was off to learn Arabic. We tried to call him, but his mobile phone was turned off. He never came back. We issued a missing person’s declaration, and - too late - we discovered a Frankfurt-Istanbul plane ticket on his computer sent by a third party, his Uber partner, also now dead.

At the end of October, we learned that he was in Syria thanks to the dialling code on a message.

In his voice message, Quentin apologised for not having informed us of what he was doing, as that would have worried us. However, he was well, and had left France to help people. There were sobs in his voice and he hoped we would understand the truth he had gone to look for. He loved us.

He kept his promise, contacting us one month later from an Internet café, then at Christmas, and regularly via WhatsApp. The link was strong, there was a palpable feeling that he was missing us, but we also felt that disbelief was at work, with him inviting us “to read the Koran where you’ll find the truth”.

But this was all an illusion. Once they’ve gone, it’s too late. The longer they stay, the more they get brainwashed, condemned to choose between disbelieving and what God demands of them, i.e. defending Muslims who are suffering.

He was clearly missing us, but he said “I know that you are suffering while I’m away. I’m also suffering, but it is a sacrifice that God demands of me”. I could feel that he was suffering, ensnared, in two minds, but submissive.

He was sad, his face became empty – “how can loving God make you sad”, I would say to him.

What type of a God is it who makes him leave his family to which he is so attached, and whose values he will never give up.
I understand now that his leaving was the beginning of the end, but at that time we were still in a state of shock, still wanting to save him and to get him to come back, as the police weren’t going to go looking for him. Above all, we didn’t want to brusque him, we kept on telling him how much we trusted and loved him. We also shared family memories.

However, as time passed, we slowly lost hold of him. The group pressure was even greater down there than here. They were never alone, they were not allowed to show any sign of weakness for the sake of group cohesion and security.

Even if he had wanted to, he would not have been able to back-pedal. He was caught, destined to die for the Cause, for God or for fleeing (this would have made him a traitor); he was undoubtedly afraid to come back to France, as prison was waiting for him here. He had known this since November 2014 and he told us: “I don’t want to go to prison, I haven’t done anything wrong”.

He spoke to us in suras and verses, but we had no understanding of his religion and his religious references. We just spoke to him of love.

When I requested the main Paris mosque to help me reply in his words, to provoke a reaction from him, I got no answer.

In mid-November, after the Bataclan attacks, he told us: “I can understand that you are shocked”. This gave us a bit of hope, but it was immediately quashed by him saying “but they are attacking us, we’ve got to counter-attack, so watch out”. It was all terrible. They ordered him to flee, in vain. And then, no more news.

- In mid-January, an unknown person stating to be a friend of Quentin (or rather of “ABU Umar farensi” (the Frenchman)) sent us a WhatsApp message: “salam alikoum, the State built on the blood of martyrs “ herewith announces that he has fallen in battle, a martyr in the land of the Caliphate and that his body has been devoured by green birds”. He added: “read the Koran, that will make you feel better”. He affirmed that “Islam is a religion of love and of submission by the sabre”, “it is the religion of truth”.

I recognised Quentin’s handwriting in the attached letter; “If I receive it, it will be because he is dead”, it said. That resembled a will: “if I die, please give all worldly goods to my brothers”. Ironically, the one thing he owned was a Samsung tablet! And then this terrible undated text written for us, saying “that my parents know that I intend to die, for what is the good of living in a world of falsity and illusion; the truth is to be found in the Koran, and I hope that one day you will understand the Truth that I have gone to look for. We’ll see each other again in Paradise”.

That was the end. We had no proof, no body, no date, no certificate of death. He would have been 25 years’ old today. A life thrown away! Yet, despite the violence in his words, he had loved, that’s for sure. If he had hurt anyone (living in a war-torn country, he would very probably have had to fight), above all it would have been himself that he hurt. He had never shown us pictures of him carrying arms or in violent videos. He was considered guilty of having left France to fight, he had joined the Islamic State.

His two friends mentioned above who drove him to the airport hadn’t said anything, hadn’t tried to stop him. One is now in prison awaiting sentencing for having taken part in a recruiting and logistics operation for Syria. Quentin had left with his Uber partner, now also dead, together with some ten other young people from our district – Sevran, “a mini-Molenbeck”, the press said.

It is very difficult to trace his enlistment, his indoctrination which was both flagrant but also camouflaged. He seemed so convinced, so determined, persuaded to help.

The worst thing was when, one month after his departure, I rang up the French hotline “stop jihadisme”. On the basis of their questionnaire, they told me that “he was only 70% radical-
ised”. But he had still gone off to fight! Others are perhaps more radicalised, but don’t go off. And that’s the big difficulty and perhaps the danger.

Ex-jihadist David Vallat explains the process of radicalisation very well in his book “Terreur de jeunesse”, speaking of faith turned into exaltation:

“There I am, looking for the hidden meaning of life, and along comes someone with all the answers; ... I felt I was putting order back into my life, that Faith was encouraging me, supporting me; ... the Islamic movement has its own recipe for overcoming our gut fears: the figure of the martyr, offering his life in combat; ... for the Wahhabi Muslim Brothers, a disbeliever is nothing but a body needing to be eliminated”

Thank you for listening.

As I imagine you will now know, I have many questions associated with what I have gone through. I want to understand. And I have just one wish: that nobody else has to go through what we have been through.

But to achieve this, we need prevention, fighting the totalitarian, intolerant and death-bringing Wahhabi-Salafist ideology and having the courage to ban what is dangerous, to weaken or even ridicule the arrogant ideological recruiters, to have the ways and means to detect such movements and defend ourselves, and to learn the art of doubting, something which is completely erased in any sectarian deviation.

Testimonial of 12 years spent under the control of a “therapist”

and of winning my criminal trial

Sophie Poirot

In 1992, I became well and truly “hooked” by Benoît Yang-Ting (BYT), a man claiming to be a “therapist”. But my relations with BYT and his wife date back to 1987. I was 19 years’ old at the time and in an easily damaged state following the death of my mother three years previously. Moreover, my father had just married BYT’s younger sister.

Profiting from the trust linked to this family relationship, the Yang-Tings slowly brought me out of my shell.

In a phase of seduction, I experienced “love bombing” on arriving in Paris in summer 1991 (I had previously been a student in Le Havre), receiving presents (clothing, books, trinkets, etc.), invitations to restaurants, compliments. This ended up with me entering into a “derapeutic” relationship several months later (September 1992).

Indeed, before starting my university psychology course, I asked to meet BYT to help me choose my options ... (tells about the message left on the answering machine, then the call back that same evening ...)

BYT told me that there was a long waiting list –2 years – but that I could “take my place” in the “session”, provided that I showed determination and set about looking for money, and that I would get “on the waiting list” once I had available the minimum amount required (set at 150,000 FF (± €23,000)).
The process thus got under way, with me searching for the money, scrounging on my family, friends and relatives and even people not so close (friends of my parents, parents of my friends, etc.) – a total of at least 50 people.

Few were actually willing to lend me money, and the largest amount (60,000 FF) came from my sister-in-law, herself a longstanding patient of BYT. Other amounts, ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 FF also came from her family.

I had several face-to-face meetings with BYT, always without charge, and all with intention of getting me “hooked”.

I scraped together the 150,000 FF. The “session” was thus able to begin. That was in May 1993.

The first day of the “session”, at 7:30 in the morning, I found out that we were required to take part naked.

The same was required from all the other “patients”:

“I did not expect to have to take my clothes off”;

“He suggested that I take my clothes off before sitting down on the couch. I was a bit afraid as I had not been expecting this.

At the end of my first session, I thought that the “therapy” had finished. However, I found out that we had to continue to regularly write “reports” (they soon became chargeable) for BYT, i.e. to write “about one’s life” as often as possible (several times a week).

For me, this was the end of all private life.

And it was not just one “session” (although BYT had initially boasted to all future “patients” that they would only need one single “session”) that I needed, but several: three in fact: in 1993, 1996 and 2004.

At the same time, my circle of family and friends got smaller and smaller until none were left

This lasted 12 years, and cost me more than €238,000.

A whole range of things were used by the Yang-Tings to keep me under their control:

− demands for near-daily reports - at a fee of €50 a page [!]– to learn everything about my most private life;
− the requirement to present once a month (by the 4th at the latest), under penalty of a fine, a financial status report detailing income and expenses of the previous month;
− the duty to be reachable by the couple at all times, with my mobile phone always switched on and with me;
− the requirement to provide, on a weekly basis, a list of what would be happening in the coming week, so that the couple knew where to reach me and thus to “keep me on a leash”, able to permanently check my movements;
− to break with all my family and my “past” friends;
− to be “totally autarkic: leisure activities, mass, restaurant visits, weekends, holidays, family get-togethers, etc. all was to be done jointly;
− informing on other “patients”, “moral lessons”, requests for forgiveness;
− mutual appreciation and encouragement to continue with the “Yang-Ting therapy”;
− financial links between all of us, with the richer financing the less well-off,
The “session” principle

The “therapy” invented by BYT is called a “session”, or the “quest for truth” or “humanotherapy”: a 3-week intensive “therapy” (the richer a patient is and the more dependent he is on the “therapist”, the longer sessions last – up to 37 days for me in 2004), 7 days a week, 6 - 8 hours a day (sometimes even more), mornings spent with him, afternoons spent writing a report of the morning session, a short sleep and a night ‘vigil’ spent compiling “chains” (a document written by the “patient” detailing in inverse chronological order the titles of “scenes” mainly from when he/she was a child and associated with a feeling of pain: hate, fear of the future, separation anxiety, fear of being judged by others, etc.).

The theory expounded by BYT: “we need to find a person’s true self, eliminating all problems preventing such”; “At the end of three weeks or more, we will be able to understand, deep down, what is Truth, Life and Love”; reliving past traumas (mainly those occurring between the age of 0 and 5/6) with a view to getting rid of the suffering deep down inside us, weeding it out so that it no longer has any grip on our present life: “When an individual, via a long-term exercise like I went through, i.e. staggered over nearly 40 years, has succeeded in accessing certain areas that allow him to overcome and not just to prevent certain impulses, that person can enter into a living/loving relationship with another person and not have to fight against his own impulses”.

The tools used by BYT:

- Creating the expectation the feeling of being “exceptional”: “On the eve of the coming millennium, my wishes take the form of a prayer that the Holy Spirit will enlighten you and give you strength, enabling you to perhaps benefit from a still possible occasion in 2001”; “He (Mr Yang-Ting) told me that, insofar as I did everything possible to be honest with myself and to remain true to myself, I would have nothing to fear from life: I would remain at the top of his waiting list. I therefore had to continue making progress, working on myself to prepare for the session. But I still did not know when it would be taking place”.
- Sleep restrictions “to bring down the defences”
- Food restrictions: “we’re searching for suffering, not pleasure”.
- Deep breathing to hyper-oxygenate the brain with a view to “conjuring up scenes from one’s childhood”, sometimes with BYT putting pressure on the jaw to force people to breathe; painful: “You need to breathe very fast. He told me that oxygenation was good for the brain: ‘good, now you’re going to take 150 breaths’; in fact, this creates a state of inebriation which further weakens the individual.
- Nights spent working on the “chains” (see above) to relive painful episodes from the past.
- Nudity, with patients being invited, at the start of their 1st session, to take their clothes off, so as “not to hide behind one’s clothing”, and “not to risk losing one’s money”: “We take off everything that hides”; “You need to be completely naked. Take off your clothes (...). He was always saying: ‘When you are naked, face to face with the truth, everything is within you”.
- Compliance with a certain position: Stretched out, naked, body and palms pointing upwards, face aligned with the body, moving as little as possible. Ban on all contact with the outside world to “prevent distraction”; (apart from, where necessary, telephone calls or other forms of contact on the presence of BYT or with his authorisation and a subsequent report.
Fees:


Payments were in cash, with the exception of six cheques handed over to the couple during my third “therapy session” in June/July 2004 for a total of €52,320.

The cost of the “sessions” was so high that “patients” frequently found themselves short of money to continue their “session”. In such cases, BYT suggested that they borrow money from the other members of the “small group”.

BYT justified these extravagant fees as follows:

- “Of course, I’m expensive, no matter whether it’s an emergency or not. That’s true. But given the intensity and quality of my work, its complexity, my 24/7 availability throughout a session and the results obtained within such a short space of time! .... Believe me, the fees are by no means excessive”;
- “the amount spent is concentrated on three weeks, and not on a therapy lasting several years”;
- “my price is low compared to therapies lasting 5, 10 or 15 years”

Apart from the sessions, money was required for many other things:

Reports

Initially without charge, we very quickly had to start paying for these reports, the purpose of which was for patients “to consciously be aware of the time” spent with BYT, whereby it should be pointed out here that it was a member of the “small group” who insidiously got “patients” to pay for their reports. As for me, it was my cousin-in-law, similarly a member, who one day said to me: “but as you know, I’m paying for my reports”. A few days later, BYT also asked me to start paying for them ....

3444 pages up to May 2005; i.e. 20-30 pages per day written by me, virtually every day ....

If I reduced the frequency of my reports, BYT reacted by getting other members of the “small group”, those no longer needing my services (services rendered between members of the “small group” were paid for) to stop speaking to me. In this case, the Yang-Tings also stopped giving me presents or inviting me out, all with a view to making me understand that trying to save money by reducing the number of reports was not the right thing to do.

When I finally stopped writing the reports, one of the members of the “small group” – almost certainly prompted by the Yang-Tings – invited me to start writing them again: “don’t stop writing your reports”; “in my view there’s still time, and you URGENtLY need to get back onto the “school path”, the one which made you the beautiful person you were in December 04, January 05 and perhaps even into March”.

- In addition to the reports, I also had to list, right down to the very last cent, my **monthly budget** (for a charge of €50) detailing all my expenses and above all any income. Late submission again led to a fine ...

“Face to face meetings between sessions

Apart from the “sessions” and the “reports”, “patients” also had the opportunity to talk with BYT for several hours, as “you don’t disturb BXT just for an hour or two”, as otherwise “he would have someone else come who had been waiting a long time for a long talk”. These face-to-face meetings were “billed” at €320 an hour and €480 when Suzanne Yang-Ting was also present (i.e. €320 for BYT and €180 - half-price - for his wife). Sometimes the meetings
were free of charge, although it was seen as a good idea to note these down in the ex-post report “so as to be well aware that they were a present”.

**Telephone conversations**

BYT very regularly (most often daily) conversed with his “patients” on the phone. I was supposed to be reachable at all times. And when mobile phones hit the market, all hell broke loose.

**Joint activities and meetings**

As stated by Suzanne Yang-Ting in court, “my husband was not inconvenienced by seeing his patients in a friendly setting. In his method, there was no problem viewing his patients as friends”; moreover, “we would see each other once a week at mass, in a restaurant, at a concert...”.

Such get-togethers were an integral part of the BYT “therapy”: “we were a close-knit group. Everybody who met up with us and enjoyed a relationship with us remained in close touch with us”.

In a letter sent to Yang-Ting, I wrote: “All your moments of relaxation, all your free time is devoted to us, to the image of this past week and weekend: Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.”.

The presence of the Yang-Tings was so overwhelming that I felt lost in their absence; – “your absence is only acceptable, supportable, when it is just for a short time.

**The role of BYT’s wife:**

As highlighted by the public prosecutor in his appeal request: “BYT’s wife, by training a violoncellist, very opportuneely used to act as a front to gain patients’ trust, playing a key role in the Yang-Ting system, which could only function properly on account of its duality and the affective and reassuring feeling they were able to give to these often weak “patients” in search of help – help promised to them in the form of BYT therapies.”.

- Indeed, it was Suzanne Yang-Ting who ran the whole financial side of the business:
  - “After refusing to lend my sister the money for this 1st session, I had to spent a long time on the phone justifying my refusal to Ms Suzanne YANG-TING for this ‘mistake’ (...). Indeed, it was her - not her husband - who contacted me. Despite asking to speak to her husband, I never succeeded in getting him on the phone in this matter”.

- Suzanne Yang-Ting also played a crucial role in “retaining” “patients” (whom she called “her little babies”), or in giving added backing to her husband’s “therapeutic work”. She showed her appreciation of people who “had completed the session”;
  - “You’ve got a lot more love in your heart”;
  - “You’ve changed, I can feel it”;
  - “we’ve discussed this Benoît, you’re so extraordinary that Benoît can free up some time for you”;

  She was good at imposing her decisions on her husband’s “patients”: “OK, come on the 6th and 7th in the evening, and on the 9th, 14th, 16th, 18th, 20th, 22nd and 24th in the morning”. She would also encourage “patients” about to enter a session: “Listen to Suzanne’s message of encouragement and prayer on 23/06 at 23:57.”

- Though devoid of any psychological training, Suzanne Yang-Ting also intervened in the “therapeutic relationship”, reading our reports and even receiving letters and/or paid reports; she was sometimes present during the face-to-face meetings between her husband and a patient, charging half-rate (BYT fee: €320 an hour, Suzanne Yang-Ting’s rate: €160 an hour, for a
total of €480 an hour). She insisted on being present alongside her husband at the meeting
demanded by my father when I quit; she was involved in all discussions and decisions regarding
the lives of the patients, a fact she acknowledged in passing:

- “I was present at the paid face-to-face meetings, free of charge. When patients wanted
to thank me, they sometimes added something to the cheque given to my husband
instead of giving me a present”.

Suzanne Yang-Ting incited “patients” to take or retake a session, while at the same time
doing everything to get them to pursue their “personal development” with her husband,
tightening the latter’s control over them during the whole relationship and at the end of a
session, and sometimes even diagnosing “problems” requiring a therapy with her husband:

- “I fell for it, thanks to the discussions with B&S on the “large chunk” I needed to work
on. They said I needed a first session”;

- “I’m sure you’ll succeed, but you’ve got to keep your eyes set on the goal: the constant
development of your personality”

- “For Benoît, it was a truly colossal task! Nobody else would have been capable of loving
you that much, remaining at your side, even in turbulent times ... But I continued to pray ... just
as the suffering got into you, it could also get out of you”;

- Just like her husband, Suzanne Yang-Ting was adored by the “patients” – “You are
the person I love most in the world”. The couple had full control of me.

Suzanne Yang-Ting and her husband gave or lent us money, stood security for us, even
guided our investments:

- “25 years’ old: end of the 1st session. I was left without a cent. I paid for my last session by
cheque. S lent me 15,000 FF to repay my ‘bridging loans’”;

- “My husband and I lent her ten percent of the price to help them, her and Evelyne”;

- “Ms Yang-Ting once advised me to invest in property, a secure investment. She told me that
Benoît owned a magnificent plot of land for sale in the Var, for two million francs”;

- the Yang-Tings stood security for Armelle Rémy to pay her rent.

Creation of a state of fatigue and changes in eating habits

a. During the “therapy sessions”, i.e. for a minimum of three weeks (certain sessions could last for
four or even five weeks depending on how thick our wallets were), “patients” were only allowed
four hours of sleep a night, as BYT considered that lack of sleep was a good way of bringing down
the mind’s defences and facilitating the “recollection” of early childhood scenes which “needed
to be purged”.

b. In a similar manner, BYT forbade any drinking or eating during a “session” from midnight
onwards during vigils. According to him, this stopped his “patients” having to go to the toilet.

Finally, any meal taken during the session – i.e. one meal a day at 18/19 o’clock – had to be frugal,
“only what the body needed, nothing more”. Fruits full of vitamin C were forbidden as these
could artificially prevent people going to sleep.

As a way of keeping watch over us, BYT told us that we had to write down the menu of each
meal in the “report” written at night, which had to be handed over to him at the beginning of the
morning session.

As an example, here is all we ate the whole of the day:
• “16:00 1 banana; 18:00 1 apple; 19:00 100g herring filets, 150g grated carrots; 23:55 1 banana – 2 tsp. of 0% soft white cheese”;

c. These sleeping and eating restrictions had the desired effect on me: my health got worse, my resistance was broken and I became more vulnerable. This deterioration was noticed by my friends and relatives during our rare meetings:

- “we saw her during a stay on Martinique, at Christmas 1997, but it wasn’t the Sophie we used to know. We found her much thinner, with dark rings under her eyes, full of sadness rather than joie de vivre;
- “her bad looks, outdated clothes, lack of contact with the family gave rise to many questions”;

3. strengthening attachment to the group and urging patients to break their ties with family and friends

Unconditional attachment

Within the “small group”, “patients” had to do everything that BYT said, not because they were “dependent” – BYT banned the use of this term –, but because it was “best for them”.

BYT had me understand that, without this unconditional attachment, he would no longer be able to help me. And without the “small group”, now my “family”, I felt lost, without a family, abandoned, at sea, rejected.

Attempts at rebellion were pointless, for example refusing to pay for spelling mistakes

And then, what would this have left me with? Nothing, emptiness. So after a few hours, sometimes even days, of extreme solitude (the whole group was ordered not to speak with us), we gave in ...

Breaking with one’s family, friends, society

a. After the first “session”, BYT told us not to contact our past relations for “at least a few weeks or months, the time it takes for the cement to set”

BYT’s theory was as follows: “the work accomplished in a session is like building a wall; for it to become solid, we have to wait for the cement to set; if you throw water on cement that hasn’t yet set, it will never set properly”

According to BYT,

– patients’ past relations were like water, endangering the setting of the cement;
– friends and relatives would always want to see the “patients” as they had known them in the past. This could have the effect of putting the latter back into their previous state.
– Friends and relatives were not disposed towards accepting that “patients” had changed, as this might raise questions concerning their own selves or cause jealousy.

b. And this break with family and friends was easy to obtain through the use of induced false memories, and we all had the same memories ....

- regarding our conception: our fathers had their moment of pleasure without bothering about us, but we “still chose to live”;
- regarding our pre-natal life: each of us experienced abortion attempts, mainly through knitting needles: “it’s all these experiences (bleach, needles, etc.) in Mum’s womb that make
me say she still wants to kill me once and for all”; “Mum wanted to kill me, she stuck a needle into her belly”; “no, don’t come near me, don’t touch me with your needle”.

- This is also to be found in BYT’s own writings: “The patient whom I am currently treating found out that parts of his body had been torn off and thrown away. The bottom of the uterus had been lined with cotton wool to make sure that everything had been torn out; all that remained was a tiny cell, a tiny molecule. Finally, nothing was left. With this as the starting point, he has totally and fully reconstructed himself, not just once but twice. Once in the third week, once in the fifth week” and also in items communicated on his behalf: “THE ABORTION - I am quite calm, feel warm. Suddenly I feel pain in my arms: it’s you, my bloody mother, who’s trying to destroy me. But I’m not going to let you destroy me. I’m going to stop you. You’ve no right to destroy me. Stop hitting me with this ruler (red, green and two sides yellow). (...) Eight days later (1 month and 1 week), a burning feeling: it’s bleach”;

- regarding the actual birth: we were all “suffocated” in the uterus, abandoned by our mother and “afraid of dying”;

- after the birth: we all re-experienced the cutting of the umbilical cord and our mother’s disinterest in us: “I felt I was hanging in the air, my ankles held by the doctor, my head dangling down”; “you didn’t do anything to help me, Mum. You don’t love me”; “you’re not interested in me”; “the doctor lifted me up by my feet, my head dangling down”; “I was hanging from your hands, doctor, with my head dangling down”;

- regarding incestuous and violent (sexual) relations: all female members of the “small group” had been subjected to abuse, inter alia by their fathers, or sexually assaulted by their families.

One of the members, questioned at the Paris Criminal Court, had neither denied nor confirmed being a victim of incest, solely pointing out to the dumbfounded prosecutor and judges that what she had written down in her reports was a feeling and that it didn’t matter much to her whether it was true or false”.

- no love shown by parents: no member of the “small group” had been loved by his/her parents;

The hypothesis of an abusive parent was one of BYT’s main ideas: “The trauma resulting from a lie, for example when a child’s father enters the kitchen and finds that the jar of jam has been eaten. The child can’t say that it was him, because it wasn’t. The child is thrashed until he says it was him. But that’s a lie”.

Proselytising

Like all other “patients”, I was proselytised by the Yang-Ying therapy; “Benoît is the person who saved my life. Without him, I would have died of an overdose, jumped under a train or done something else (...). I wanted to tell you that right away because it’s a shame you don’t want to meet Benoît, just this one time; especially because Benoît has this feeling that you are also a person in search of something and holds you in high esteem. (...) But it’s up to you to take the first step ... I pray that you take the right step ... everything has a price (I am speaking of Life)”.

4. Making it impossible to turn back

When I deviated from the “right track”, i.e. when I did not hand in enough reports or when I put a bit of distance between us, BYT would say in a severe and strict tone:
• “There’s the door, you’re free to go”;
• “you’ll only have your eyes to cry with”;
• “they’ll write the following epitaph on your headstone: “what a waste”;

The Ying-Tangs required me to “make a list of everything I had gained thanks to my personal development” ...

They did everything to make sure that we took up new intensive therapy sessions, in addition to the near-daily reports, the face-to-face meetings, etc.

“They rang me up again and again for two years until I finally gave in. BYT had succeeded in convincing me that “I would never become free if I always avoided the problem” and that we needed to ‘get to the root of the problem in a session’”.

“At the end of this meeting, BYT suggested that I write a written report and mull over the possibility of doing a session”;

“he said that it would be stupid for me not to do a session. He also said that I should do a session to feel better afterwards”

Thanks to these reports, each group member was able to check on the other members and vice-versa. Everything was reported to the Yang-Tings, whose repressive power was feared

On managing to quit, one was faced, apart from the moral distress, with financial ruin: due to the loans taken out for my 3rd session (400,000 FF, i.e. €60,000), I was faced with bank repayments of more than €800 a month! How can you survive when the whole system collapses? How can you ever envisage a trial?

Financial control over members

Regarding spelling mistakes and pagination errors

There were fines for spelling mistakes in the reports: initially 50 FF for each mistake; then the cost of the mistake was made to match the page number of the report.

Pagination errors were also punished at the rate of €50 per error:

“3009 and 3010 (instead of 3007 and 3008 paginated twice) = €100

“Related experiences”

These refer to fines justified by BYT in the following manner: “In life, everything has to be paid for, sooner or later, especially errors, untruths, a lack of generosity, etc.; the later you pay, the more expensive it gets; i.e. if it is life that makes you pay, it can be serious, irremediable: a serious accident or illness, the loss of something or someone dear to you, etc.; it’s therefore better and less expensive to pay straight away (in cash handed over to BYT), than to wait for life to make you pay later and much more expensively; this can also serve as a lesson for not having tried to start again”.

A wide range of examples ... I was fined 8,000 FF for a “related experience”, i.e. for having opened my mail during a session.

Such fines were frequent.
Payments made between members of the “small group” on the orders of the Yang-Tings

The Ying-Tangs ordered their “patients” to stand in financially for other members of the “small group”. For example, I was ordered to pay more than €12,000 to Armelle Remy and more than €14,000 to Véronique Dagan.

This interfering between members of the “small group” also allowed the Ying-Yangs to gain a bit more control over members’ lives.

Informing on other members was a constant feature of the “small group”.

Through imposed interventions, each member of the group checked up on the others and vice-versa.

- “800 FF for your 2 symbolic hours”;
- “a 1.5-hour fee at the group rate, i.e. 600 FF”;
- “I would like to thank you for your generous investment in me through a symbolic hour”

Control over members’ behaviour

BYT did what he wanted with members of his “small group”.

He got them to eat less, sleep less, break with their families and friends, to endure certain painful situations, for instance when he got them to breathe in a special way by putting pressure on the jaw.

BYT did with me whatever he thought good, but always in the guise of his “therapy”.

I spent twelve years under the sexual hold of BYT. I was not allowed to have any normal loving relationship, especially because BYT had persuaded me that I was not at a level of love high enough to live with a partner and have children.

It was thus not until 2006, after managing to free myself from the control of the Yang-Tings, that I tried everything to have a child, alas unsuccessfully.

The trial:

January 2005: I meet my future husband
May 2005: my first “No”: “I’m going to stop submitting my reports”
July 2005: final break with the couple
Gendarmerie
Report written during the summer
Autumn 2005: meeting with Jean-Pierre JOGLA from ADPI, general information for my lawyer, the AFSI.
June 2007: the lawsuit is filed
June 2008: Benoît Yang Ting taken into custody
August 2010: submission of the public prosecutor
February 2011: referral to the criminal court
April 2012: first hearing
12 June 2012: judgment:
in first instance, the court pronounced BYT guilty of abusing my weakness.
The court sentenced him to one year in prison on the basis of Article 223-15-2 of the Criminal
Code, for wrongdoings committed between 1994 and 2004.
The court also condemned him to a €50,000 fine and €100,000 damages and compensation +
court fees.
His wife was pronounced not guilty.
They appealed against the verdict, as did the prosecutor and us.
It took nearly three years for the appeal to take place, following several procedural problems,
constitutional issues, requests for referral sine die, etc.
The appeal court handed down its ruling in February 2015: With regard to my person, BYT was
pronounced guilty for wrongdoings committed between 2001 and 2004, and this time his wife
was also convicted! BYT was sentenced to a fine of €50,000, his wife to €25,000.
€80,000 in damages and compensation for me + €15,000 fees
They again filed an appeal, but this was ultimately withdrawn!
Justice has been done and we have won!

The legal forms of the fight against extremist cult activity
in the Russian Federation

Alexander Korelov, lawyer of CRS, Moscow

It is with sincere pleasure that I accept the invitation to participate in your respected conference
to inform you of the real situation in the Russian Federation concerning the problem of combat-
ing religious extremism.
During the past year, questions regarding the struggle against religious extremism in Russia have
received extensive coverage around the world in connection with prominent lawsuits connected
with the closing two religious organizations: the “Moscow Church of Scientology” and “Jehovah's
 Witnesses”.
However, this problem has been urgent for many years.
I have been involved for more than fifteen years in rendering legal aid to people who have been
harmed by totalitarian cults.
In 2002, the Russian Federation adopted a federal law, "On counteracting extremist activity", which
initiated an organized struggle against extremism, including religious extremism.
This Law regulates the issue of counteracting extremist activities, the dissemination of extremist
literature and other products, which are sources of extremist information, the public exhibit of the
symbols of extremist organizations, and Nazi symbols.
The Law contains a procedure for counteracting extremist organizations, including religious
ones.

10 Centre Religious Studies, Moscow
The law regulates the institutional framework for counteracting extremist activities, the methods of preventing extremist activity, various methods of raising awareness of the inadmissibility of extremist activities, and the responsibility for violations of the law.

In accordance with this Law, a federal list of extremist materials has been established. The materials are listed on the basis of court decisions. To date, the list includes three thousand eight hundred ninety-five items.

The list is publicly available on the Internet at the website of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. Reports on the recognition of materials as extremist are published in official state media.

The same site also includes a list of non-profit and religious organizations for which the Court has adopted a legally binding decision on the ban or prohibition of activities on the grounds established by the Federal Law "On counteracting extremist activity".

To date, fifty-three organizations have been added to this list. Among these are several local Jehovah's Witnesses organizations, Neo-Pagan cults, Islamist cults, and a number of small destructive cults.

In 2006, a Federal Law on counteracting terrorism was adopted. It provided for a set of measures to counter terrorist threats, including those of destructive cults. The Act established a single Federal List of organizations, including foreign and international ones, recognized under the laws of the Russian Federation as terrorists. The list has been published on the site of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). Twenty-five organizations have been included. Most of them are Islamist organizations. There are also neo-Nazi organizations.

The site of the Federal Financial Monitoring Service contains a list of organizations and citizens recognized as terrorists and extremists. To date, it includes: Ninety-four foreign organizations, four hundred and fourteen foreign nationals, seven thousand one hundred and ninety citizens of the Russian Federation, eighty-five Russian organizations, including nine Jehovah's Witnesses organizations, multiple pagan cults, organizations of the devil's followers, the Aum Shinrikyo cult, and a number of small destructive cults.

Among the clear manifestations of religious extremism in Russia, we should point out a number of extremist crimes committed by members of neo-pagan cults. Neo-pagan cults occupy prominent places on the lists of extremist organizations and extremist materials. Some of them are just behind militant Islamist organizations. On the list of extremist materials alone, there are at least one hundred and sixty neo-pagan texts.

What is their danger?

In the Russian Federation, for example, some of the books of the pseudo-scientist and charlatan, Nikolai Levashov, were recognized as extremist. This person is the actual mastermind behind some of local neo-pagan cults. And for a long time he lived in the United States of America, as indeed, many other leaders of Russian neo-paganism who could have learned a lot from the leaders of the US Neo-Pagan movement.

The following facts speak volumes about the results of the pagan activity: In 2008, a bomb exploded in the Church of St. Nicholas in Moscow. The perpetrators of the crime were neo-pagans inspired by the books of Levashov. In 2009, a church in St. Petersburg was burned out. Again, the perpetrators were neo-pagans. In the same year, an arson attack on the church of SS. Cyril and Methodius was carried out in the city of Vladimir. In 2010, a church was burnt in the city of Oryol. And in 2013, the same crime was committed in St. Petersburg. In 2010, a serial killing of homeless people in St. Petersburg was solved. Homeless people were killed by young supporters of neo-paganism who believed they were cleaning their city from "garbage".
In 2014, an armed neo-pagan carried out a gun attack on people in the Orthodox cathedral church in the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, the island of Sakhalin. Two people were killed and another seven were wounded, some severely.

In 2015, the police found unregistered weapons and ammunition when conducting raids of some neo-pagan communities in Moscow.

I think these examples speak volumes about the extent of the dangers of neo-paganism, and Mr. Levashov is only one of these crooks to provide the theoretical basis for violent and hateful neo-pagan cults.

Let us now turn to Scientology.

In 2015, Moscow City Court ordered the Church of Scientology of Moscow to be closed. The reason for the closure was not extremism, but rather numerous violations of existing legislation of the Russian Federation and non-compliance with the declared status of a religious organization.

This had nothing to do with extremism at first glance. However, here’s the fact: several works by the founder of Scientology, Ron Hubbard, were ruled extremist.

The consequence of the use of Hubbard’s ideas and works has been the numerous crimes committed by Scientologists in our country.

The District Court of St. Petersburg is currently hearing a criminal case against Ekaterina Zaborskikh, who has been accused of committing fraud on an especially large scale. Ekaterina Zaborskikh was an active Scientology cult adept. Her criminal intent was to deceive people who wanted to purchase living quarters in St. Petersburg or its environs. Zaborskikh received money under co-investment agreements, but she neither handed the apartments over nor gave the money back. Ekaterina Zaborskikh transferred significant amounts of funds to the Church of Scientology.

Meanwhile, a similar crime was committed in Moscow by another Scientologist, Alexander Tkachenko. He has already been sentenced to a long prison term.

I am also aware of at least nine other similar criminal cases in different Russian regions. All of these crimes were committed using the same scheme. This shows that there was a criminal group engaged in housing fraud within the Church of Scientology.

During searches in the Church of Scientology in Moscow, numerous financial documents and pieces of prohibited extremist literature were found. But the most interesting fact is that there were an illegal wiretapping devices designed for covert audio and video recording, the destruction of information from computer media, and an extensive archive of personal information of Russian citizens. All these facts led to charges which have been pressed.

Since 2009, no less than 12 economic criminal cases have been initiated against structures of the Scientology cult. During the same period, at least seventeen Scientology organizations have been banned for various violations.

Analysis of the activities of the cult of Scientology has shown that this cult rightly can be characterized not only as totalitarian, but also as clearly extremist.

Total control of the private life of its adherents, the illegal taking of personal property, aggressive attempts to discredit its opponents, the application of illegal methods of mind control, and the numerous crimes committed in the territory of Russia – all this is the testimony of this danger. Therefore I hope that eventually all Scientology organizations in Russia will be closed.

I recall the case of a former cult member Alexandra Mityashina who later became anti-Scientology activist. Once Alexandra told me: “Thanks to Scientologists that they left me at least
my apartment". As a result of actions by members of the cult of Scientology, Mityashina's family has lost property worth about fifty million dollars. Scientologists organized illegal removal outside of Russia of the juvenile son of Mityashina. Only the courage of Mityashina herself and the help of her friends allowed this mother's child to be returned.

In connection with what I said, I think it necessary to clarify that the illegal export of minors outside of Russia is one of the most burning issues associated with various cults. Of particular concern is information on the use of minors in contemporary forms of slavery, including sexual, in prostitution and pornography.

Minors are victims of the activities of totalitarian cults on the Internet. Many cults actively use the Internet and social networks as instruments of recruitment. It is understandable that most often their victims are teenagers and young people. In the Russian segment of the worldwide network, the so-called "death groups" began to operate, using methods of mental manipulation to convince adolescents to commit suicide. According to Russian law enforcement agencies, at least 600 people were the victims of such groups.

Now, to Jehovah's Witnesses.

We are witnessing an attempt to portray the closure of the cult's parent organization as religious persecution. This is not true. What are the legal reasons for the closure of this organization?

The activities of this cult have long caused numerous complaints from citizens of Russia. Characteristic features of this organization are an aggressive alienation from society and the state, refusal to recognize the constitutional formation of Russia, incitement of hostility towards traditional religions of Russia, illegal possession of property, and hostility to the institution of the family.

This cult’s total control over the lives of its adepts, its demands to break social ties with people who are not supporters of this cult, its negative attitude towards secular education and access to cultural achievements are other aspects that testify to the numerous violations of human rights in this organization. The limited time of the report does not allow me to give numerous examples of how the adepts of this cult took and committed religiously motivated crimes.

Of particular concern is this sect's use of unethical and coercive methods of mental control. According to experts in psychiatry and psychology, this cult forms the same type of dependent personality, as, for example, terrorist organizations. I know of the opinions of famous psychiatrists who consider that most of the adepts of this cult exist in an altered state of consciousness. I think you all understand: this is completely incompatible with the principles of freedom of conscience.

One should also note the just claims of the state against this cult in connection with the refusal of blood transfusion. Within the territory of Russia, people have systematically perished as a result of this sect's unreasonable religious prohibition of this treatment. Cases in which this practice caused the death of children have received particular attention.

From February 8 to February 27, 2017, the Ministry of Justice of Russia conducted an unscheduled document audit of the religious organization "The Management Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia." The audit was intended to determine whether the Organization's actual activ-
ity adhered to the purposes and objectives were consistent with its Charter and the legislation of the Russian Federation.

The audit revealed that the activity of the Organization in question was carried out in violation of its statutory purposes and objectives, as well as the existing legislation of the Russian Federation, including the Federal Law “On counteracting extremist activity”.

Thus, ninety-five publications of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, imported and distributed by the Organization in the territory of the Russian Federation, were declared extremist by various courts from 2009 on. Since that year, eight local religious organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses have been declared extremist and closed.

Despite the ban, extremist literature was still being spread in organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses. Such facts were revealed in many parts of our country. Expert studies have shown that the literature of this cult is potentially harmful to readers because it contains hidden methods to manipulate people’s consciousness and will. Russian psychologists have reached an inevitable conclusion that the literature produced by Jehovah’s Witnesses is a part of mind control process that can change the behavior of a person as well as their will.

Therefore, on March 2, 2016, the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation issued a warning to the organization concerning the inadmissibility of extremist activities. The warning was appealed against by Jehovah's Witnesses but was found to be legitimate and justified.

On March 15, 2017, the Russian Ministry of Justice filed a statement of claim to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to recognize the organization as extremist, prohibit its activities, order it be closed, and remove its information from the Register of Companies.

On April 20, 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation accepted this claim.

At present, the Jehovah's Witnesses have the right to appeal against the court ruling. If the court of appeals confirms the decision of the court of first instance, Jehovah’s Witnesses will have six months to cease their activity. All the assets of the organization will be transferred to the state.

However, it is already evident that this organization does not wish to comply with Russian law. The activity aimed to conceal the property and transfer the rights to foreign legal entities is intense. Also, the subdivisions of this organization are actively withdrawing funds to the accounts of foreign organizations.

So far, we had two kinds of court proceedings against Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia: cases of closing the local organizations of the cult and cases against the functionaries of these organizations caught in dissemination of banned extremist materials. It should be emphasized that neither the Russian state nor the law enforcement agencies persecute ordinary followers of the cult. No illegal methods are being used in the closure of the organization. All Jehovah’s Witnesses organizations and their followers are provided with all safeguards stipulated by Russian law, including the right to defense and to appeal against court rulings. These opportunities are actively being used by the members of this Organization, and at times resolve their cases, which then end in exonerations. This confirms the objectivity of the courts in considering the evidence in each case related to this cult. It also should be noted that no single case has ended with prison sentence of the cult members even when they were found guilty.

Now all Jehovah’s Witnesses organizations in Russia are closed, but of course, the ordinary members of the cult are free to believe as they wish, to meet at their private territories, to pray together and to discuss their faith. The ruling concerns only the organization itself.

Therefore, all tales of alleged "harassment" against Jehovah’s Witnesses are nothing more than a primitive propaganda stroke. This information is not true.
In the end of this report I want to draw your attention to the fact that extremism has not only obvious manifestations in the form of terrorism, but also has a number of aspects that are expressed in inciting ethnic hatred, and in numerous violations of the inalienable rights and freedoms of citizens, exploitation of citizens, harming their health and endangering their lives. And these actions in their consequences are no less dangerous for the individual, the society, and the state, especially when it comes to multinational Russia.

I hope that this report will help you to understand objectively the current processes in Russia related to the problem of religious extremism.

Thank you! Merci!

Fifth: "Thou shalt not kill". The dark side of faith

Luigi Corvaglia, psychologist, President of CeSAP

You're walking along the railroad tracks when you see a a runaway trolley barreling down. It is about to hit five people standing on the track. You are next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a side track. However, you notice that there is one person on the side track.

You have two options:

1. Do nothing, and the trolley kills the five people on the main track.
2. Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person.

What should you do?

When we put this question, 90% all around the world say that they would pull the lever. That is because one is less than five. So it seems that the moral choice of the lesser evil is a matter of arithmetic. This is perfectly in line with Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism (“It is the greatest good to the greatest number of people which is the measure of right and wrong”). So, we can rewrite the Fifth Commandment as follows: You Shall Not Kill, unless killing fewer people will allow to save a greater number of people.

If it is so, if we want a human being to commit actions that involve the death of some individuals, we have just to convince him or her that this action will allow to save a greater number of people and his or her conscience will not be disturbed. In fact, many terrorist proclamations are based on the concept of the salvation of mistreated multitudes.

However, if we take a look at a different version of the same moral dilemma, things change.

Now there is the same runaway trolley and the same five people on the track about to be killed, but you are looking from above a footbridge. Next to you there is a huge man. You know that with his bulk he could stop the train and save those five people.

You have two options:

1. Do nothing, and the trolley kills the five people on the track.
2. Push the fat man off the bridge, so that he dies, but the five people are saved.

What should you do?

When we put the “trolley problem” this way, 95% of people say that they would not push the fat man over. Yet the arithmetic calculation is the same: 1 v 5!

The difference seems to be that in the first case the person dies because he is on the track by accident and his death is not necessary to save the other five, while in the other case killing the fat man is essential to save them. To refuse to kill the fat man is in line with Immanuel Kant's...
thought ("Act in such a way you always treat humanity, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end"). There is a moral necessity, absolute and forever valid, from which all other duties and obligations descend (Kantian *categorical imperative*). But Jihadist terrorism is comparable to the "fat man" case, not to the "side track" one. It is the difference between killing and letting die, the same difference we can find between “strategic bombing” (it is when we bomb military targets and public infrastructures to win a war, even if this makes many innocent victims) and “terror bombing” (an indiscriminate bombing to frighten a country into surrender). The first is in accordance with the *doctrine of the double effect* proposed by St. Thomas Aquinas (“If a bad effect is not the means by which one achieves a good effect, action is not reprehensible”).

The utilitarian calculus is no longer applicable to jihadist terrorism because the death of Western people is not a collateral damage but a means to the ultimate goal. Only individuals recognized as "psychopaths" believe that pushing down the fat man is a good deed, but terrorists are not psychopaths. (Silke, A., 2003).

Also admitted that the cold utilitarian calculus was always permissible, this does not take account of human sensitivity. In fact, let us examine another moral dilemma:

Jim finds himself in the central square of a small South American town. Tied up against the wall are a row of twenty Indians, most terrified, a few defiant, in front of them several armed men in uniform.

The captain in charge explains that the Indians are a random group of the inhabitants who, after recent acts of protest against the government, are just about to be killed to remind other possible protestors of the advantages of not protesting.

However, since Jim is an honoured visitor from another land, the captain is happy to offer him a guest’s privilege of killing one of the Indians himself.

If Jim accepts, then as a special mark of the occasion, the other Indians will be let off.

If Jim refuses, then there is no special occasion. Twenty Indians will be killed.

What should you do if you were Jim?

You probably would not be able to kill an innocent person, even if it is a good deed in an utilitarian sense. That is because there is a crucial moral distinction between a person killed by me and a person killed by someone else. We are "moral agents" who decide according to our own integrity and preserving our psychological identity. To kill an innocent person is not enough to do it because this is good, but we need something that preserves our integrity, that resolves our *Cognitive Dissonance*.

That is why many anthropological and sociological theories concerning Islamic terrorism are fallacious. Some readings of the phenomenon tend to minimize the role of religion and fideism in favour of explanations centered on psychological, political and social aspects, but to defuse the power of a categorical imperative we need another categorical imperative!

To kill innocent people believing we are right we need to be bearers of a world view that does not give equal dignity to "us" and to others. We need a faith!

We need an exclusive belief system that puts one and only Truth and makes us look at the outside world with suspicion, fear and hate. Denying this is only possible by acting like an ostrich or applying to that form of intellectual dishonesty what is called "politically correct".

So the explanations based on the concept of "superstructure" (globalization, cultural fragility, and so on) only contain part of the truth. Let us see an example:
According to Scott Atran [Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) France],
- Religion has little to do with Islamist terrorism
- Isis exploits the potential of suffering, indignity and humiliation in Muslim societies
- So what motivates participation in violent political action is a "parochial altruism"

So, this is the scheme:

But, as we know, jihadist terrorism is like the “fat man” case, and we cannot kill someone as a means. Parochial altruism does not explain the silence of the categorical imperative (fat man) and the overcoming of the "agent problem" (Jim’s dilemma). Unless the means, the victim, is not properly “human”...
This “dehumanization” is only possible thanks to the **moral disengagement** brought by that exclusive belief system we were talking about above.

When dehumanization operates, the victim is no longer viewed as a person with feelings, hopes and concerns, but objectified as a lesser sub-human. This is only one of the eight moves to achieve a moral disengagement described by **Albert Bandura** (1990). Fanaticism can activate each of the eight mechanisms.

Only a blind and fanatic faith can produce a moral disengagement that blows up the emotional servos selected by evolution (moral dumbfounding).

Before modern scholars of social sciences explained the processes of persuasion, before they tried to explain terrorism with complex theorizations (Drive-Theory, Social Learning Theory, and so on) and highlighted the systematic errors (bias) needed to fix an individual in his dysfunctional worldview, three thinkers had already explained the risks inherent in the lack of doubt produced by an exclusive and total belief system:

**Isaiah Berlin**: After a fable by Archoulis, he divided men into foxes and hedgehogs. The first are the expression of pluralism, the latter, of monism. For the monist, all genuine questions must have a true answer, and one only; all other responses are errors. Hedgehogs need borders, walls, landmarks. “The mass neurosis of our age – he said - is agoraphobia”. That is what we call **Need for Closure** (NFC). There is a strong relationship between "Need for Closure" (ie need for certainty), in measurable clinical scale, and extremism ([Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, Fishman and Orehek, 2009; Kruglanski, Belanger, Gelfand, Gunaratna, Hetiarachchi, Orehek, Sasota & Shavit, 2013; Orehek, Sasota, Kruglanski, Deschesne & Ridgeway, in press]).

This could be explained by the second thinker.

**Max Weber**: Berlin’s hedgehogs act in respect of Weber’s **ethics of principles**. It refers to absolute principles, without posing the problem of the consequences that will arise from them (the operation was successful but the patient died), making possible **moral disengagement**, while in the **ethics of responsibility** attention is paid to the relationship means / purpose and consequences. Foxes’ stuff.

Why does the ethics of the principles lead to those that **Paul Watzlawick** called **hyper solutions** (dangerous actions which is thought to have a salvific role)? The answer is in the third thinker.
Karl Popper: He said that “irrefutability is not a virtue of a theory (as people often think) but a vice.”. Faith and ideologies are not subjects of confutation, so those theories cannot be confirmed either.

We can euphemistically say that the ideas that are supported with more “enthusiasm” are those which are considered to be dogma and, as such, cannot be proven in their claim of absolute truth. The greatest example is religious ideas, but also political ideologies. Moreover, demonstrable concepts do not require great effort to be imposed; the effort is needed to convince others only of that which cannot be proved, which then is, usually, the fact that we are better than them. In fact, Voltaire said, there are no sects in Geometry.

Cult undue influence and the process of radicalization, a question for debate?

Simone Soulas, CCMM National Coordinator\(^\text{11}\) and Psychologist

Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the contribution we are proposing comes from the experience of the C.C.M.M. Involved in the care of young people enrolled in a process of radicalization and their families in several regions of the French national territory.

It is inspired by meetings and exchange of information with other actors who are also involved in the prevention of radicalization.

It is therefore above all a testimony of experience. As early as 2011, the CCMM was solicited by families concerned about the behavioral changes of their children because of their sudden and extreme religious beliefs. The rapid progression of the phenomenon and the tragic events led the French public authorities to imagine a system of prevention and follow-up of young people, on which I will comment:

- In 2014 the Ministry of the Interior created a Green Number, a telephone reporting platform available to families and friends (educators, relations, teachers ...) observing worrying and potentially dangerous behaviors in a young person.

For the fluidity of the presentation, I will speak of "radicalized youth", but the notion of youth covers minors and adults, and for the term "radicalized", it would be appropriate to substitute "engaged in a process of radicalization".

Thus, the young people are reported, and after an initial analysis by the telephone platform, each "case" is oriented to be taken over by the prefecture of their department of residence. The prefectures have progressively set up cells for the prevention of radicalization which, in collaboration with the Social Services, Internal Security, Justice and Associations, organize the monitoring of the young people concerned and their families.

- As of January 2015, the CCMM integrated this system on several parts of the land.

Moreover, a significant number of families, reluctant to report their children to the public authorities, address us directly. They fear stigmatization, but also are most often in denial of the potentially dangerous character of their young people: "My son cannot be capable of such violence." The main part of our mission is to convince them whenever this seems to be the case.

Some figures to date:

13,000 young people have been reported since the creation of the Green N°:

\(^\text{11}\) Centre Contre les Manipulations Mentales-Centre Roger Ikor
-4500 by the security forces.
-8500 on the telephone platform.

Of which 40 ° / ° are converts.

35 ° / ° are women.

25 ° / ° are under 20 years of age.

Although these figures are weak when compared to the national reference population, they are frightening as regards the collective risks they represent, but also dramatic for the young person whose future is permanently affected. Yet, even before 2010, historian Gilles Kepel, quoted the following statement: "In 2005, Syrian ideologist Abdou Moussab Al-Souri called for global Islamic resistance. Jihadism of the 3rd generation The first target is the West and its "soft belly" Europe, to be fought from within by its own citizens.

"From there on," Kepel stated, "underground actions would be carried out, especially in the prison system and through websites."

**RADICALIZATION.**

What do we consider under this term? We retain the three-point definition given by F. Khosrokhovar * (a sociologist of Iranian origin, a teacher at EHESS):

- A more or less long process, but with rare exceptions, the changes do not occur abruptly,
- adoption of a belief in an extremist ideology,
- legitimizing the use of violence.We are well placed here to know about the many religious radicalizations, although Islamic extremism may be considered above all as political radicalism. To point out their common points highlights the characteristics which echo cult undue influence:
  - they correspond with an exclusive identity search.
  - they induce belonging to a protective community of belief.
  - the object of belief is dogmatic truth unknown by outsiders.
  - It is therefore a "counter" identity, which reinforces social isolation and imposes codified behaviors.
  - "followers" feel invested with a mission.

The jihadist project is both religious and political, a globalist and eschatological ideology. It targets young people, men and women, Muslims and converts, many of who still have the vulnerabilities and dreams of youth: the search for the ideal, the exacerbated sensitivity to injustice, the attraction for rebellious models, nevertheless reassuring because binary....

Among the profiles of young people we encountered, social affiliation and a wide range of academic levels, we can distinguish common points by age group:

- Over 25, mainly masculine (but there are girls!) Politicized and violent. Followed by Internal Security, we do not know them.
- The few cases of 20-25 year olds are troubling; of the "immature idealists", many young people in failure of social integration, "petty" delinquents and some psychiatric cases not detected before.
• Young people between the ages of 14 and 20, including many young girls, without religious or political preoccupations before having unfortunate encounters. They are the majority of the situations we have followed and on which we highlight phases in the process of radicalization.

- In the majority of cases, the first contacts with "recruiters" take place in the usual places of socialization and for minors, often in schools. These first contacts, which provoke intimate debates among the young people, are then relayed by the social networks enrolling the young person in a new community of belonging.

- The objective is to adhere to the practice of Islam, and gradually to an Islam more and more fundamentalist. The demand by young people for their new belonging, their desire for conversion or for "reconversion", the breaks in their vision of relationships between men and women, and the cessation of their leisure activities, worries their family and friends who seek help... It took between 6 months and 1 year since the beginning of the recruitment, because the moment when the commitment is initialized remains invisible to those around the youth.

- Conflicts with family members multiply, external pressure from recruiters and the community is reinforced and becomes demanding and harassing.

Emotional distancing from the family is accentuated; It is at this moment that the risks of behavioral shift are the most abrupt, in the form of "unpredictable" or "duplicate" and legitimizing a totalitarian and violent political model.

This distancing may go as far as complete rupture, often preceded by a "pseudo" return to normal by concealment. The risks of acts of violence, whatever their form, are then major.

Without insisting on changes, signs, and indicators of rupture, we easily recognize the progression and mechanisms at work in mental manipulation:

- The progressive and pregnant tightening of the mesh around the young undertaken by physical or virtual "trained" recruiters, and charismatic speakers.

- The delays that elapse so that the passage from the early to final adhesion takes place without suspicion. Then the pace accelerates and the demand strengthens.

- The valuation of the new group of belonging ("the brothers, sisters"), the change of name, even identity, and the isolation of the usual referents.

- The new corpus of binary beliefs, against the rest of the world, but reassuring.

- The conspiracy theory and the untruths.

- Intellectual and quasi-physical harassment through websites.

- The assimilation of any critical attitude to a betrayal.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND?

Doubtless, by remembering that the jihadist project was conceived, organized and served by significant means (especially in communication) to constitute in our territory an "army of internal enemies".

There are also many factors to consider:

- Reflecting on the evolution of the global context and the end of ideologies.

- The gradual advent of what a French newspaper describes as the era of "post-truth" or that the President of the United States names the "alternative facts"; All reinforced by social networks where any affirmation is taken to its face value and where anything goes.
- Of course in France one cannot ignore our recent history, our relations with our ex-colonies and the feeling of injustice that prevails among many young people of immigrant origin.

- In addition to all these elements of context, it should be emphasized again that the target of the jidahists are young people in search, for whom Jihad can appear as an "idealized offer".

- Finally, for many of these young people, the family environment and its own dysfunctions may constitute an additional risk factor.

And yet none of this is systematic or mechanical. There is the part of chance, the wrong encounter at the wrong time.

Psychiatrist Serge Hefez cautiously submits a hypothesis that I quote:

"Adolescence is a questing process, the transition from being a member of the family to being a social subject, able to find in itself its own freedom. This separation of the family can be done in a progressive way or violently because otherwise impossible. Some dysfunctional families are like cults in fencing with the environment, which prevents the harmonious development of what the teenager looks for and what he finds The only way in which the adolescent finds himself is paradoxically by falling under another stronger hold."

According to S. Hefez, there is a prevalence of this phenomenon among radicalized young families.

HOW TO REACT?

The activities carried out by the CCMM vary according to the French Departments: local sociology, organization of the monitoring cells and the degree of implantation of the jihadist networks in the Department.

- First and foremost, support and advice to families, faced with contradictory injunctions: to remain the guarantors of authority and security in the family space, not break with the youth who opposes it and becomes gradually insensible to reasonable argument.

- With young people, and after finding a way that allows access, the difficulty lies in the fact that the propositions of the jihadists are totalizing and symbolically "reparative of the dysfunctions of the world". After assessing their degree of involvement in the process of radicalization, it is a matter of identifying the causes and motivations of the changeover. According to the established diagnosis the "counter-offer" may be:

  • Social monitoring in collaboration with the competent services, support for the youth in the resumption of a school or apprenticeship program with a view to professional integration ...

  • Therapeutic type follow-up, particularly family therapies.

The process of radicalization is often the expression or exacerbation of an important or minor family dysfunction in young people, although it cannot be reduced to that.

The results observed today call for caution.

In a process of recruitment which may extend for one or two years, therapeutic follow-up interrupts the progression which could lead to violence; But the radical group is never far away.

Whatever the context, it is often necessary to raise social awareness of the particularities of the process of radicalization and its rapid changes, but also to exchange, capitalize and refine our understanding.

The recent phenomenon of radicalization among young people does not allow us to refer to research, scientific studies or statistics at this stage.
Reactivity with young people is imperative.
Caution in diagnosis is required.
The exchanges of experience as proposed in this colloquium by FECRIS are a welcome initiative
Summary of Research on Radicalization in the U.S.

Janja Lalich, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita of Sociology
California State University, Chico

FECRIS International Conference
Brussels, Belgium
19 May 2017

Some Basics

• There is general agreement on the following:

Possible Motivations

• Unfortunately, per Marc Sageman (one of the best known in this field): these individuals are far from being brainwashed – his evidence: some have families and/or went to college or graduate school.

One View of Radicalization: Data from Americans Who Went to Syria or Iraq (Hughes)

Recruitment of Children
Brainwashing Children

Qu’ran 8:39 “Wage war on non-Muslims and kill them until they submit and the only religion is Islam.”

Radicalization via the Internet

Recruitment & Training: Examples

- Taliban Online: http://www.taliban.org
- English language
- “The Talibans told me that they can fight against Army of Disbelievers by the help of Almighty Allah, but they know that their position in media is so week [sic]. All over the world the Jewish controlled media is brainwashing Muslims and non-Muslims who want to know the truth. That’s why I am a Computer.”

Radicalization of U.S.-Foreign Fighters

Formerly C/VE
Recommended P/CVE
But no....
Now per Trump: Countering Radical Islam

Policy Notes for Trump Administration: Executive Summary (Wash. Inst. For Near East Policy)

Policy Notes, continued

- Recommend bn: Identify the extremist ideologies – from jihadism to white supremacism to leftist-inspired ethnocentric movements as a key driver of radicalization and mobilization to violence.

Policy Notes on Community Efforts

The best way to prevent violent extremism is to work with the Muslim American community.

- Source: Muslim American Community, Facebook.

- Facebook.com/extrmeism-muslimcommunity
Conclusion

WE HAVE MUCH WORK TO DO!

References


References, continued


Protection and intellectual self-defence:

A procedure targeting families of which a member has become an Islamic radical
and for supporting those who have turned their backs on Islamic radicalism

Duration of the procedure: 2 hours

GEMPPI uses this procedure for the families, friends and relatives, brothers and sisters of the radicalised person (in his absence) to avoid the often-observed contagious effect. This procedure can also be used for certain profiles of people who have their backs on Islamic radicalism.

The offer is naturally optional, especially because certain people, due to their religious sensitivities, may not feel at ease with this rational approach ignoring the sacredness of religions. Families, friends or relatives are first informed of the exact content of the approach. If they are not interested, the association Turquoise Freedom** takes them over without using this ideological protection procedure offered by GEMPPI.

What the procedure offers

29 years’ experience in observing and treating sectarianism, including various radical religious sects, allows us to affirm that when a family member converts to a sect or a radical religious movement, he will try to convert his friends and relatives. The first targets will be his brothers and sisters, and sometimes even his parents. In many cases, we have seen whole families or family members being dragged into a sectarian group by this means.

This experience has taught us the necessity of avoiding sectarian “contagion” among the convert’s friends and relatives.

Whom does this procedure target?

The radicalised person’s family and especially his brothers and sisters, cousins and close friends.

The nature of the procedure and the cultural background of the people concerned lead us to precisely describe what the approach involves before starting with it. This is particularly important in the case of minors or people over 18 still living with their parents. In such cases, we need to gain the support of the parents after they have been duly informed of the procedure.

Steps used

1) Exposing the general principles used in mental manipulation and indoctrination (seduction, indoctrination, a break with the past and mental confinement). Exchange of experiences in this field and in particular the concrete experience of meeting with a sect member or radicalised person.

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12 GEMPPI - Groupe d’Etude des Mouvements de Pensée en vue de la Protection de l’Individu. www.gemppi.org – Tel. 06 98 02 57 03 - gemppi@wanadoo.fr – Support and information on fighting sectarian movements
2) Presenting the religious texts used in seduction (Bible, Coran, Sunna): their positive, humanitarian and generous aspects.

This prepares the path to point 3, demonstrating how these positive religious texts are used as a springboard, via a specific (conspiratorial) interpretation of world political and social events, to get people to understand these same texts in an opposite manner (see below).

3) Presentation of the sacred texts (Bible, Koran, Sunna) used to provoke sectarian behaviour and a break with the past (rejection of non-believers, discrimination, incitement to violence, etc.)

After several tests, the method is proving to be promising.

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When families do not wish to go through this procedure, we pass them on directly to the Association of Victims of Radical Islam (Turquoise Freedom)

- Individual support for families, development of a strategy
- Individual support for young radicalised people by a specialist from Turquoise Freedom 13
- Support groups and group therapy sessions for families and/or friends and relatives with a radicalised person in their midst. Sessions are supervised by a specialist from Turquoise Freedom and in certain cases by a psychologist (in the absence of the radicalised persons).

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13 Turquoise Freedom – Association of Victims of radical Islam and Anachronistic Practices.
http://victim-islam-radical.monsite-orange.fr/ - Tél. 07 83 69 08 13 - turquoise.freedom@gmail.com
Procedure for protection and intellectual self-defense, targeting families of which a member has become an Islamic radical

This procedure can also be used for supporting those who have turned their backs on Islamic radicalism. The same principles can be applied to other types of radicalsation.

Whom does this procedure target?

GEMPPI uses this procedure for the families, friends and relatives, brothers and sisters of the radicalised person (in his absence) to avoid the often-observed contagious effect. This procedure can also be used for certain profiles of people who have turned their backs on Islamic radicalism.

Whom does this procedure target? (cont.)

29 year’s experience in observing and treating sectarianism, including various radical religious sects, allows us to affirm that when a family member converts to a sect or a radical religious movement, he will try to convert his friends and relatives. The first targets will be his brothers and sisters, and sometimes even his parents. In many cases, we have seen whole families or family members dragged into a sectarian group by this means.

This experience has taught us the necessity of avoiding sectarian „contagion” among the convert’s friends and relatives.

Conditions

• The offer is naturally optional, especially because certain people, due to their religious sensitivities, may not feel at ease with this rational approach ignoring the sacredness of religions. Families, friends or relatives are first informed of the exact content of the approach. If they are not interested, the association Turquoise Freedom takes them over without using this ideological protection offered by GEMPPI.

Steps used

1) Exposing the general principles used in mental manipulation and indoctrination

2) Presenting the religious texts used in seduction (Bible, Coran, Sunna): their positive, humanitarian and generous aspects ... Followed by the explication of the sliding toward the sectarian positions

3) Presentation of the sacred texts (Bible, Coran, Sunna) used to provoke sectarian behaviour and a break with the past

1) Exposing the general principles used in mental manipulation and indoctrination

• Define, characterise, describe the manipulation and undue influence
• Seduction
• Indoctrination
• Mental break down and confinement

Exchange of experiences in this field and in particular the concrete experience of meeting with a sect member or radicalised person.
2) Presenting the religious texts used for seduction (Bible, Koran, Sunna): their positive, humanitarian and generous aspects.

- Beginning with the Bible
- And then with the Koran and the Sunna (El Bokhari preferably)

Then, in transition to point 3, demonstration of the exploitation of these positive religious texts, used as a springboard through a particular reading of the world’s political and social events (plot, conspiracy ...) to slide towards their opposite in the same sacred texts (see below)

- Why use the 3 traditions?

Based on the fact that Saudi Arabia is an ally of the United States and that it has chosen Israel to build the border separation wall ... the Islamist makes the link with its sacred texts.

3) Presentation of the sacred texts (Bible, Koran, Sunna) used to provoke sectarian behavior and a break with the original environment

Phase of confrontation with the harshness of texts

(The sects and radicals of monotheistic religions rely mainly on ancient sacred texts to justify their ideologies, which often justify anarchistic behaviour.

- No religion is innocuous and harmless, it always contains radicality in its sacred texts, extreme thought because it was constituted as opposed to a predominant religion and its texts are also in the image of the often barbarous epoch that gave birth to it.

As a result, groups now become radical when their sectarian teachers interpret ancient sacred texts literally. They thus claim to return to the original purity of the religion, as opposed to the other religious movements which they accuse of having made compromises and concessions to this diabolical world or its defenders. Sectarians and gurus will justify their intolerant behaviour in the light of these anarchistic texts.

The sects and radicals of monotheistic religions rely mainly on ancient sacred texts to justify their ideologies, which often justify anarchistic behaviour.

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The literal, sacred text without comment
Some sectarian groups rely on these New Testment texts to justify a literal interpretation

- Revelation 22.18-20
- I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him he plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life ....

Creating awareness

In presenting the following themes in sacred books:

- Status of women, sexuality
- Statut des unbelievers and bad believers
- Holy war
- Advocating various kinds of violence, discrimination (slaves etc.)
- Underdemocratic social organisation, no freedom
- Assertions contrary to science (flat earth, geoentristism...)

A 2-hour session is usually sufficient to obtain very encouraging results (test on 3 groups from 12 to 18 years)

Punishment for illicit sexual relations in the Torah of Mose (A.T. Bible)

Deuteronomy 22.20: But if the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman, 20.21 then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father’s house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Penalties for illicit sexual relations in the Qur’an and the Sunna

Sourah 24 : An-Nur

2. The adulteress and the Adulterer: f kg each of them With a hundred stripes. And have no pity for them in the execution of the law of Allah – if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. And a group of believers should witness their punishment ...

Hadith: kill the adulterer and the apostate

Chapter 3: Los prophètes d’Allah qui disent: ‘Vive pour vie et mort pour mort’ (5:85)

217. Abdallah rapporte: Le Prophète (q) dit: “Le sang d’un musulman, qui témoigne qu’il n’y a pas de divinité autre qu’Allah et que je suis le Messager d’Allah, est purifiée.”

El. Le Livre du Prieur de Sang

D’Allah, ne peutonder que deux cas: vivre pour vivre, un homme marié qui comDet l’adultère et celui qui s’apostasie de l’Islam et abandonne sa communauté musulmane”.

The same method of promoting literal interpretations through the Koran is used by the Salafists and other fundamentalists

Hadith el Bokhari 96.28 “The Prophet said: kill those who change the religion ... The counselors of Omar were the readers of the Quran ... They always stuck to the letter of the Book of God”

Hadith el Bakhari 96.2 (3) Abdullah said: “the best of the Hadith is the book of God, the best way to behave is that of Muhammad, the worst are innovations ...”

ILMATIC ART

Muhammad Speaks
Meaning and purpose of the procedure

This process highlights the idea that it is not God who creates man in his image, but the reverse. (We observed on the groups that took part in the procedure that the results are at the rendez-vous: relativisation of texts and truths)

Hence the need to specifically inform families or close friends on the rational and desacralising contents of the approach. If they are not interested, especially because of their religious Sensibilities, the association of the victims of radical Islam, Turquoise Freedom supports them directly without using the ideological protection process proposed by GEMPPI

To implement the method

GEMPPI- Groupe d'Etude des Mouvements de Pensée en vue de la Protection de l'Individu.

Tél. +33 (0)6 98 02 57 03 - gemppi@wanadoo.fr

www.gemppi.org

Aide, information contre les dérives sectaires

If you want to deal with a problem of Islamic radicalism without using this procedure

Turquoise Freedom
Association des victimes de l'Islam radical et de pratiques anachroniques
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President's Closing remarks

I would like to thank all the speakers who, throughout this exceptional day, brought, each in its field of competence, additional insights into the complex phenomenon of cultic undue influence and radicalization in all its forms.

If, as Jean-Pierre Jouglar, President of our Scientific Committee, pointed out, the choice of today’s theme seemed to us to be irrefutably pertinent, it is because "our associations dedicated to helping cult victims knew, through their local and international experience, that the violent radicalism of Islamic pretense had to do with the cults."

The various speakers of different nationalities in Europe and beyond, who succeeded one another on this rostrum, each specialized in different disciplines, some spokesmen of governments, have developed, through their historical, legal, sociological, and psychological experience, an analysis of the causes and motivations that lead to radicalization and subjugation.

In particular, I would like to thank our two witnesses, Véronique Roy and Sophie Poirot, both who had the courage and generosity to come and expose their painful experience, one of them having lost her son in Syria, the other having lived enslaved for 12 years under intolerable conditions, but who won his trial against the guru.

This symposium was meant to show that "any radicalized cultic group carries a political project, that of seizing power, not only on the individual, not only on one group, but to impose an utopian and archaic ideology, on all mankind.

Danièle Muller-Tulli

Brussels, 19 May 2017