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Islamic Radicalization in France – New Features of the Familiar Phenomenon?

Abstract: This article focuses on the phenomenon of Islamic radicalization in present-day France. The first part of the paper discusses the notion of radicalization in a larger context. For this purpose, the existing theories on radicalization were presented, emphasizing that the phenomenon does not concern only radical Islam. Furthermore, the question of religion and the role of the Salafist movement are described. The second part of the article focuses on the new characteristics of the phenomenon in contemporary France. Firstly, the conflict between the adherents of the theory of radicalization of Islam and the Islamization of radicalism is outlined. Secondly, the diachronic dimension of the phenomenon is sketched by presenting the thesis of three generations of French jihadists. Last, but not least, the paper describes the phenomenon of female radicalization.

Keywords: Islamic radicalization, radicalization theories, Salafist movement, France, female radicalization

Introduction

The notion of radicalization has become more present in the field of social sciences, since 2001, which is connected with transferring the subject of academic study to the issues concerning terrorism motivated by Islamic ideology¹. This term, often used intuitively², requires a few words of explanation. The aim of this article

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¹ F. Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, Éditions MSH, Paris 2015.

² R. Borum, *Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories*, "Journal of Strategic Security", 2011, no. 4, p. 7.

is to characterize the phenomenon of Islamic radicalization in France, which – contrary to what could be concluded on the basis of media coverage – is not a new phenomenon in this country. The first part of the article outlines the notion of radicalization: the most important definitions of the phenomenon are presented therein as well as the issues of religion, and the role that the Salafist movement might perform in Islamic radicalization are discussed. The second part of the article focuses on Islamic radicalization in France, firstly, raising the issue of a dispute between the advocates of the theory of radicalization of Islam on the one hand, and the adherents of the claim of the Islamization of radicalism on the other hand. Secondly, the concept of the existence of three generations of French jihadists is presented and discussed. Finally, the article focuses on the phenomenon of female radicalization.

The notion of radicalization

The notion of radicalization is sometimes used as a synonym of the word “terrorism”. The incorrect nature of such reasoning might be observed already by analysing the grammatical forms of both terms. While “radicalization” is a causal noun and refers to the processual dimension, “terrorism” denotes a certain state. Therefore, radicalization is a process (which might result in the fact that a given person becomes “radicalized” or “radical”), whereas “terrorism”, from the grammatical perspective, refers to an already existing phenomenon (for instance, terrorist activity might be a result of the radicalization of a given individual). Highlighting a clear difference between these two notions seems to be vital, for instance in the context of research on the phenomenon of terrorism and radicalization. While the study on terrorism is included in geopolitics, where the main interest lies in the political and social dimensions of the phenomenon, the research on radicalization, generally speaking, concerns individuals as well as social and singular determinants of their behaviours³.

Alex P. Schmid points out that according to the simplest, most intuitive definition of this term, radicalization denotes the extremization of views of an individual connected with a specific ideology or faith⁴. The aforementioned definition refers to two essential dimensions of this phenomenon: on the one hand it is an idea of transition, a certain process, but on the other hand this process assumes a change towards extremism. This double dimension of radicalization finds its reflection in academic papers, which, regardless of the definition, are in step with two main

³ F. Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, op. cit.

⁴ A. P. Schmid, *Radicalization, De-Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review*, ICT Research Paper, 2013.

components of the phenomenon: Referring to an extreme ideology as well as choosing solutions that advocate resorting to violence. It is especially worth mentioning that in order to speak of radicalization, a usual co-occurrence of these two elements is not sufficient enough, but the processual aspect of the phenomenon is crucial.

For a long time, social sciences have been dominated by trends focusing on research into the causes of terrorism first of all understood as a phenomenon embedded in the scope of studies on security. Such a causalistic approach to the process of radicalization posed the question “why” in the centre, concentrating on the search for factors which drive individuals to commit terrorist acts. At present the questions on radicalization in the field of social sciences are not only restricted to the question “why?” or “in what circumstances?”, but also take into consideration the internal dynamics of the process itself. Emphasizing the temporal aspect of the phenomenon of radicalization is essential to the phases of the phenomenon, but also makes it possible to highlight the different paths of fate among terrorists. The transition from “why?” to “how?” is identical with the change of trends in social sciences, which in turn results from the need to face new questions. The diversity of terrorists’ biographies as well as the fact that structural factors only partially explain this phenomenon (for example, only a minor part of the economically and socially excluded young people in France who settled there due to emigration from the countries of North Africa decide to resort to violence as well as motivate their actions based on the ideology of radical Islam) and to an ever decreasing extent (according to the research by the French anthropologist specializing in the discourse of radical Islam as well as deradicalization, Douni Bouzar, a substantial majority of the radicalized are individuals who do not come from families with Islamic traditions⁵). The French sociologist who specializes in the subject of radicalization, Farhad Khosrokhavar, has explained the term “radicalization” as “a process, in which an individual or a group adopts a violent form of action, directly connected with an extremist ideology with a political, social or religious content, which defies the existing order on a political, social or cultural plane”⁶. Another definition, by Clark McCauley and Sophie Moskalenko, explains radicalization as an “increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings and behaviours in the direction which justifies violence across groups”⁷. Both definitions emphasize the importance of one aspect of radicalization, namely resorting to violence. However, it should be pointed out that speaking of radicalization while not assuming a turn to violence is also possible (this phenomenon is described in English literature as the so-called *non-violent radicalization*). It is worth remarking also that the link between the two aforementioned dimensions of the

⁵ D. Bouzar, 2014, *Désamorcer l’islam radical: Ces dérives sectaires qui défigurent l’islam*, Edition l’Atelier, Paris 2014.

⁶ F. Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, op. cit. p. 7.

⁷ C. McCauley, S. Moskalenko, *Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism*, “Terrorism and Political Violence”, 2008, vol. 20:3, pp. 415-433.

phenomenon is significant: Engaging in violence and referring to extreme ideologies. The necessity of the co-occurrence of the two elements makes radicalization a very rare phenomenon (many people sympathize with radical ideologies or resort to violence, although few of them combine these two factors in their actions).

Another issue which requires an explanation is that quite often Islamic radicalization and radicalization in general are treated almost synonymously. Although the interest of social sciences and mediatic discourse have been focused on radical Islam for several years, it should be remembered that this process might concern also other ideological orientations. Sociological literature includes examples of Catholic, Zionist⁸, neo-Nazi⁹, ecological¹⁰, anarchist or political radicalization (for example such organizations as ETA, IRA, the Kurdistan Workers' Party to name a few), etc.

The theories of radicalization

First of all, the social theories concerning radicalization include, on the one hand, those which highlight the role of individual psychological factors, but on the other hand, theories which emphasize the structural context, linked with social reality experienced by an individual. Randy Borum points out that since the 1960s, the research revolving its analysis around the phenomenon of radicalization has been based on the study of terrorist activity on various levels: Individual, group, network, organizational, and mass movements, in the socio-cultural as well as international context¹¹. The American researcher turns our attention to three main theoretical trends which have served as theoretical frames for the analysis of the process of radicalization. Firstly, that it is the achievement of the theories of social movements, secondly – that of social psychology, and thirdly – the theory of conversion.

In his article with a review of theories on radicalization, Farhad Khosrokhavar enumerates six main orientations¹². They are specified not so much in order to present an in-depth typology of possible perspectives, but first, as an outline of the theories used at present in the research on radicalization. The concept of the so-called *leaderless jihad*, or jihad without leaders, has gained popularity following the works of an American psychiatrist and CIA employee of Polish descent, Marc Sageman¹³.

⁸ G. Kepel, *Zemsta boga. Religijna rekonkwista świata*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warsaw 2010.

⁹ D. Koehler, *The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet*, "Journal for Deradicalization", 2014, Winter, vol. 15, no. 1.

¹⁰ N. Deshpande, H. Ernst, *Countering Eco-Terrorism in the United States: The Case of 'Operation Backfire'*, Final Report to Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, MD: START, College Park, 2012.

¹¹ R. Borum, *Radicalization into Violent Extremism ...*, op. cit.

¹² F. Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, op. cit.

¹³ M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad. Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Pennsylvania 2008.

The perspective he promotes emphasizes the weakening of the role of leaders in closed groups, linked with an increase in the popularity of the Internet, in favour of the establishment of decentralized groups, in which it is difficult to distinguish the figure of a leader¹⁴. Such an approach coincides to a certain extent with the trend observed in the French research on radicalization (formerly focused on the perspective emphasizing the development of new forms of radicalization in prisons or on the streets), which is based on a decline in the importance of penitentiary radicalization in favour of highlighting the role of the Internet. The third of the theories mentioned by Khosrokhavar lies in a three-stage model, according to which the process of radicalization is an interaction between the decisive process on the part of the terrorist elites, the motivation of individuals, and the problems connected with recruitment as well as socialization of the latter¹⁵. An approach pointing out the role of culture emphasizes the existence of a certain kind of culture or subculture of violence within society. It was supposed to have its source in a sense of victimization of the excluded and stigmatized groups within society. The fifth type of approach, revolving around religious ideologies, seeks the causes of radicalization in religious doctrines. However, its weak point is that it does not explain why extremist versions of some religions do not aim to wage holy war. The theories of rational choice perceive the phenomenon of radicalization as a result of groups or individuals adopting the most efficient strategy to achieve set goals (especially when the opponent – either real or symbolic – has a significant military advantage, which does not leave high hopes for victory in a more conventional war).

Pierre Conesa, a lecturer at the Paris Institute of Political Studies and an adviser to the government in the matters of security, distinguishes between three main theoretical trends in the studies on radicalization¹⁶:

The trend linked with studies on security and the discourse of the police, in which radicalization and terrorism are perceived as a deviation. Such a perspective does not emphasize the understanding of the ideological or intellectual background, which are connected with radicalization. To some extent the kinds of approach, which explain terrorist activity through the rational choice theories, might be regarded as being in opposition to that trend. According to them, terrorist activity is a solution chosen by an individual to achieve specific goals.

The neo-Orientalist approach assumes the existence of a connection between the radicalization of a part of young people in Europe who come from the countries of Islamic tradition with immanent features of Sunni Islam. Such an approach is

¹⁴ D. Al Raffi, *Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora*, "Journal of Strategic Security", 2013, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 67-91.

¹⁵ F. Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, op. cit.

¹⁶ P. Conesa, *Quelle politique de contre-radicalisation en France?*, The report was prepared for the Foundation providing help to the victims of terrorism, 2014.

regarded by researchers as irrelevant to social reality¹⁷, *inter alia* due to the stereotypical perception of Muslim communities as incapable of living according to the norms characteristic of Western democracies, or treating violence as if it were justified in Islam (which would not apply to the other so-called Religions of the Book). Pierre Conesa also points out that there is no ideological continuity between the writings of the theologians of Islam from the Middle Ages and the idea of today's jihadists¹⁸. This criticism should also include the fact that the neo-Orientalist approach does not take into account a substantial and continually increasing number of converts among terrorists.

The sociological approach assumes that Islamic radicalization is an expression of a specific political identity, which is not restricted only to terrorism. Conesa emphasizes that sociological research on radicalization should take into consideration the links between quietist Salafism, which is a kind of ideological background for radical Islamism and jihadist-Salafism (which in many aspects overlaps with the ideology propagated by the representatives of the terrorist organization known as the "Islamic State").

The issue of religion and the role of Salafism

According to what was emphasized above, radicalization is a phenomenon which in its simplest definition denotes a shift in the ideological orientation of a given individual or group in the direction which justifies the use of violence in order to change the current social order. Radicalization thus defined does not necessarily have to be linked with Islamic ideology, but can concern other denominations or aspects of politics, ethnicity and the like. Although this article is trying to turn our attention to the broad definition of this phenomenon, it seems relevant to make an attempt to briefly refer the described phenomenon to Islam itself due to focusing on Islamic radicalization in France.

Malise Ruthven points out that "the religious revival in modern Islam is a reflection of the pace of social and technological change in the Muslim world, particularly the disruptive effects of a rapid increase in urbanization"¹⁹.

Modernization, combined with the postcolonial heritage, was to contribute to the appearance of a spiritual gap, which results from weakening the traditional sources of a religious authority²⁰. It is accompanied by the "political ideologization of Islam" – creating political ideology with the use of symbols taken exclusively

¹⁷ *Recherches sur les radicalisations, les formes de violence qui en résultent et la manière dont les sociétés les préviennent et s'en protègent. État des lieux, propositions, actions*, Rapport ATHENA, 2016,

¹⁸ P. Conesa, *Quelle politique de contre-radicalisation en France?*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁹ M. Ruthven, *Islam – bardzo krótkie wprowadzenie*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warsaw 1998.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

from the Muslim historical repertoire. This ideology – sometimes also defined as “Islamic fundamentalism” – was called “Islamism”.

Speaking of Islamic radicalization in the context of present-day France refers to the establishment and activity of the terrorist organization known as the “Islamic State”. The latter, occupying a part of the territories of Syria and Iraq since June 2014, derives its ideological principles from a radical version of Islam, adapted to its own needs, which is Salafism (in turn falling within one of the most rigoristic Sunni traditions). According to Gilles Kepel²¹, the “Islamic State” is an example of the so-called third generation jihadism, which – contrary to terrorist organizations preceding its existence, especially Al-Ka’ida – aims at creating a real state (called the “caliphate” by its members), functioning on the basis of Islamic law (Sharia). In order to fulfil its plan, the “Islamic State” needs to attract new followers, who would be brought to the territories controlled by the organization, which in turn justifies the importance attached to the propaganda industry²². A special unit of the organization, called *al-Hayat Media Center*, is responsible for producing, as well as spreading, the propaganda. The fact that the activity of the “Islamic State” is based on its extremely complicated propaganda industry is connected with another feature, which distinguishes this organization from Al-Ka’ida. While the latter placed emphasis on an in-depth study on the exegesis of the Quran (thus being regarded as an elite organization), *Daesh* does not require an extended religious knowledge or the expertise in the holy texts from its members, but puts its emphasis on absolute obedience to strict, albeit simple rules. Among the latter there are *inter alia* the necessity to complete the Hegira, that is emigration to the “land of Islam” (interpreted in a very specific way), or the willingness to wage war with the widely interpreted “unbelievers”, which is referred to as jihad.

Despite the fact that according to experts the ideology which serves as motivation to the activity of the “Islamic State” does not represent Islam, but rather its modified and simplified version²³, the organization itself derives its ideological inspirations from one of its trends. Pierre Conesa claims that “Islamic radicalism in France coincides with jihadist-Salafism, supported by Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia with the aim of fighting the Muslim Brotherhood”²⁴. According to the sociologist²⁵, the affiliation with this trend should be perceived not as a synonym of radicalization, but its potential source (although the simple causal link should be excluded).

The main characteristic features of Salafism are; attaching great significance to rigoristic religious practices, including all spheres of life; millenarianism (that is

²¹ G. Kepel, A. Jardin, *Terreur dans l’Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français*, Gallimard, Paris 2015.

²² Ibidem.

²³ C. Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, “The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World”, 2015, no. 19,

²⁴ P. Conesa, *Comment tarir les sources du recrutement salafiste armé*, “Le Monde Diplomatique”, 2015, pp. 14-15.

²⁵ Ibidem.

the belief that the end of the world is near, together with the war in Syria as a sign auguring it); claiming the right to represent the whole Muslim community (ummah) as well as a very strong polarization with the outside world²⁶. These features define the specificity of Salafism as well as incline its followers to cut ties with the outside world.

The presence of Salafism not linked with jihadism (the so-called quietist Salafism) in France has been organizing itself since the beginnings of the 1990s and originally it was characterized by "political apathy"²⁷. Adherents to the rigid reading of the Quran initially kept well away from Islamic practices in mosques. The first presence of Salafists in Muslim houses of worship might be dated to the beginning of the new millennium²⁸. The aim of the movement is to return to Islam from the era of the Prophet, through discovering anew the rigid interpretation of the Quran as well as imposing strict moral rules. According to Bernard Godard, the fact that Salafists search for meaning by striving for the ideal of purity might attract individuals excluded from society²⁹ as well as representatives of the middle class. However, Olivier Roy points out that the lack of presence of religion passed down culturally from the second to the third generation of immigrants might explain the rebellion of radicalized young people who come from immigrant families³⁰. The political scientist claims that Islamic radicalization assumes the use of violence results first of all from the search for identity and not necessarily for example from the in-depth knowledge of the Quran.

Radicalization in France

The radicalization of Islam or Islamization of radicalism?

Islamic radicalization which assumes the use of violence is often described by the media as a phenomenon connected with the presence of Islam in France. Following that line, after many years of its presence in France, Islam would be capable of developing a version adequate to the norms of European societies, built on the basis of the heritage of the Enlightenment. The above culturalist³¹ or neo-Orientalist³² explanation suggests that the reason for the radicalization of a part

²⁶ C. Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate...*, op.cit.

²⁷ G. Kepel, A. Jardin, *Terreur dans l'Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français*, op.cit., p. 120.

²⁸ P. Conesa, *Comment tarir les sources...*, op.cit., p.15.

²⁹ B. Godard, *La question musulmane en France*, Fayard, Paris 2015.

³⁰ O. Roy, *Les jeunes djihadistes sont des suicidaires*, 2014, the article is available at: http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/proche-moyen-orient/olivier-roy-lesjeunes-djihadistes-sont-des-suicidaires_1616584.html [retrieved on: 20.11.2017].

³¹ O. Roy, *Ces terroristes sont des pieds nickelés, les mettre sur le même pied que la nation française est une insulte à cette dernière*, 2015.

³² P. Conesa, *Quelle politique de contre-radicalisation en France?*, op.cit.

of French society would be certain features characteristic of the culture of Islam, which according to the once famous thesis of an American political scientist, Samuel Huntington, would not be able to exist in the conditions of European democracies³³.

In accordance with the above perspective, it is Islam which is becoming more and more radical, both in the countries of Western democracy, as well as in the circle of the Muslim culture³⁴. The second hypothesis concerning the reasons for radicalization in France, promoted *inter alia* by Olivier Roy³⁵, emphasizes the diachronic perspective, trying to place this phenomenon in a broader temporal context. By studying the history of radical movements in Europe (and especially in France), the changes in the political scene (first of all concerning left-wing movements and political parties) as well as in the depth of the so-called “difficult suburbs” (*banlieues*) in France, you may observe that the roots of radicalization date back several decades.

Since radicalization is a phenomenon concerning mainly the so-called *cités* (although at present it also applies to the representatives of the middle-class, who are not immigrants from the countries of the Maghreb), it seems relevant to study closely the changes, which have been taking place there for a few decades. First of all, it should be emphasized that the suburbs are inhabited mainly by populations with immigrant roots. According to Gilles Kepel³⁶, the situation characteristic of the descendants of migrants from the countries of North Africa living in France is based *inter alia* on being isolated from the labour market as well as having unsteady employment. The residents of “sensitive urban zones” (*zone d’urbanisation sensible*), renamed in 2014 to the “urban-policy neighbourhoods” (*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*) usually work in the secondary sector of the economy (involving industry and construction), while the fact that public transport does not reach the suburbs where they live, results in spatial exclusion of the residents. The lack of possibility to articulate their own political claims needs to be added to the aforementioned characteristics. In his publication “Terror in the Hexagon”³⁷, Kepel points out that all the enumerated issues were once present in the discourse of the Left, which on the eve of the second millennium lost its mobilizing power among the residents of the French suburbs. The political scientist also emphasizes that despite his victory in the presidential election in 2012, which François Hollande owes to a large degree to the votes of the young generation of French Muslims, the suburbs are still excluded areas. The “missed appointment” between the Left and the French suburbs³⁸, described by Olivier Masclet, gave room for the mobilization

³³ S. Huntington, 2006. *Zderzenie cywilizacji*, Wydawnictwo MUZA S.A, Warsaw 2006.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ O. Roy, *Les jeunes djihadistes sont des suicidaires*, op. cit.

³⁶ G. Kepel, A. Jardin, *Terreur dans l’Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français*, op. cit.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ O. Masclet, *Comment exister politiquement ? Des candidats noirs et arabes en quête de légitimation partisane*, “Diversité Ville-Ecole-Intégration”, n°168, April 2012, pp. 12-20.

of the working class (as well as post-working class) population to other players (this time using identity or religious discourses).

The changes connected with the organization of work as well as transformations of the capitalist economy (*inter alia* the implantation of neoliberalism), which took place in France within the last decades, have resulted in the disappearance of solidarity connected with the functioning of the labour market. Instead of the discourse referring to class struggle, which was used earlier by the Left, narratives of identity began to appear, referring to radical Islam (connected for example with the Salafist movement or the Takfirism). In the face of socio-structural transformations, which have affected the French suburbs, the answer to problems hitherto solved by the Left, comes from radical Islam.

According to Olivier Roy, the phenomenon which occurs at present in France is linked with Islamization of radicalism rather than with the radicalization of Islam itself. In accordance with the viewpoint proposed by the French researcher on Islam, the reasons for radicalization in France would be mainly of structural origin, connected with the economic situation and demographic profile of the population affected by the phenomenon. Olivier Roy, in his famous article entitled "Jihadism: A Generational and Nihilist Revolt"³⁹, problematizes his concept in detail. According to the political scientist, it is not possible to speak of generations of French jihadists (contrary to what for instance Gilles Kepel wrote in his book *Terror in the Hexagon*, together with Antoine Jardin) since this phenomenon concerns a relatively stable demographic group. On the one hand they represent the second generation of immigrants from the countries of the Maghreb, but on the other hand they are converts to Islam, who are "ancestral" French (the controversial French discourse category "*français de souche*") and come from small towns, where there are no large Muslim communities. The explanations presented in the media most often indicate the sources of the phenomenon. In line with the aforementioned culturalist theories, Islam is perceived as a denomination "incapable of integration" (mainly due to its theoretical background). The second logic, called "third-worldist" (*tiers-mondialiste*) by Roy, is the result of post-colonial heritage and the sense of injustice connected with it would lie at the origin of Islamic radicalization of a particular demographic of young people in France. However, both explanations do not take into consideration the fact that the majority of terrorists who carried out attacks in France have a criminal past (almost all of them belonged to the "*fiché S*" category, which means that they were observed by the French services) or that this phenomenon concerns only a small percentage of both categories. In consequence, instead of focusing on the frequency of committing terrorist acts by some French citizens, it would be better to focus on their rarity. Olivier Roy includes

³⁹ O. Roy, *Le djihadisme est une révolte générationnelle et nihiliste*, 2015, the article is available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2015/11/24/le-djihadisme-une-revolte-generationnelle-et-nihiliste_4815992_3232.html [retrieved on: 20.07.2017].

yet another feature, which would describe the radicalized French. The groups from which jihadists recruit new followers are also characterized by a specific lack of cultural continuity with the generation of their own parents.

To sum up, Islamic radicalization in France should be regarded not only as a phenomenon linked with the transformations of Islam itself in this country (which is undoubtedly justified – for instance the changes described above within the Salafi movement, which have been taking place since the beginning of the 2000s), but also as a structural phenomenon, which does not seem to be solved only by the neutralization or destruction of the organization known as the “Islamic State”. The same part of young people in France, who fight in Syria under the flag of *Daesh* might change their orientation tomorrow in favour of another radical idea. The phenomenon seems to be unsolved as long as the younger part of the population of the Hexagon will persistently search for a new grand narrative.

Three generations of French jihadists

Although the present radicalization of a group of young people in France is linked with the existence of the terrorist organization known as the “Islamic State”, some researchers of this subject matter⁴⁰ emphasize the continuity of the phenomenon, even speaking of the so-called generations of French jihadists. Though this thesis is sometimes questioned⁴¹, its popularity, especially in the media, as well as the fact that it turns attention to the terrorist attacks motivated by radical Islam in France already at the beginning of the 1990s contribute to the need for their brief description.

According to Gilles Kepel, the history of jihad dates back to the 1990s and the civil war in Algeria. The actions of jihadists from that period were aimed first of all at Algeria, where they intended to introduce the Islamic state. The context of the time was affected by the conflicts of memory and the heritage of the colonial past, because of which Algeria struggled⁴². France, as the former colonizer as well as a country supporting democratic Algerian authorities, became one of the main enemies of jihadists from that period. The actions of Khaled Kelkal, one of the main organizers of the bomb attacks in Paris in the summer of 1995, were the first manifestation of international jihadism in France, while the activity of the so-called Gang de Roubaix turned to the war in Bosnia⁴³.

⁴⁰ G. Kepel, A. Jardin, *Terreur dans l'Hexagone. Genèse du djihad français*, op.cit.

⁴¹ O. Roy, *Les jeunes djihadistes sont des suicidaires*, op. cit.

⁴² F. Thomasset, *Trois générations des djihadistes français*, 2015, the article is available at: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/France/Trois-generations-de-djihadistesfrancais-2015-11-18-1382050> [retrieved on: 21.11.2017].

⁴³ M. Rigouste, *Les représentations de « l'immigration maghrébine » dans la presse française, de 1995 à 2002*, “NAQD”, 2009, vol. 1, N° 26-27, p. 203.

The second generation of French jihadists was inspired by Al-Ka'ida, turning against the co-called "distant enemy", that is the United States of America. Kepel dates the activity of the second generation to the year 2003. It might be useful to mention that due to the poor organization of the persons carrying out the attacks, the members of terrorist groups from the 2000s are called the "cowboys of jihad" in France (referring to the improvised nature of their action). Their activity might be associated with the Buttes-Chaumont group (disbanded in 2005) or the so-called scooter assassin (Mohammed Merah, the initiator of attacks in Toulouse and Montauban in March 2012). The latter is sometimes regarded as the representative of the second – or now and again – the third generation of jihadists. According to Kepel, the second generation of jihadists has never left its mark in France, which is also reflected in the fact that its activity did not often appear in media discourse.

The third generation of the French jihad, connected with the existence of the so-called "Islamic State", as the first one holds real territory, which significantly influences its nature. The organization annexed part of territories that belonged to Syria and Iraq (mainly since 2013) as well as resulting from the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring, which due to the fall of the government in many countries of North Africa, also created an opportunity for the development and expansion of the movements referring to radical Islam.

The fact that only the third generation of French jihadists managed to recruit new members on a "mass" scale distinguishes it from the first and the second one. A multitude of means and channels of propaganda, which has repeatedly proposed a very diverse ideological offer, allowed the organization known as the "Islamic State" to attract plenty of new members. This in turn is consistent with one of its main assumptions: To become a mass movement. As the author of the report "Radical Generation" („*Génération radicale*"), Malek Boutih, emphasizes, the data concerning radicalization from the 1990s is incomparable with the scale of the phenomenon at present⁴⁴. What is more, the third-generation jihad has its own theoretician. Mustafa Setmariam Nasar (also known as Abu Musab al-Suri) is the author of a specific manifesto of new jihadists, according to which, the main target of the attacks is to be Europe (and not the United States of America, as it was the case so far)⁴⁵.

It is worth pointing out that a closer observation of biographies of European jihadists, regardless of their generation, impels us to draw conclusions concerning common features of their life histories (for instance, all of them decided to experience a kind of "spiritual" as well as military formation at some stage in their life in the countries of the Middle East). The matter looks altogether different when it comes to "radicalized" persons, namely a significantly broader category than terrorists.

⁴⁴ M. Boutih, *Génération radicale*, 2015, the report is available at: https://f-origin.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/2204/files/2015/07/generation_radical_rapport_de_malek_boutih_sur_le_djihadisme.pdf [retrieved on: 22.06.2017]

⁴⁵ L. Brynjar, *Architect of Global Jihad*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.

The French anthropologist of religion, actively working towards deradicalization, Dounia Bouzar, points out that the multitude of profiles of radicalized persons and the fact that these individuals were not hitherto known to the police, is undoubtedly one of the “successes” of the organization⁴⁶. The presence of individuals from a middle-class background, “well integrated”, for whom the “hatred towards society is not the main reason of their journey to Syria”⁴⁷ is especially surprising. Another novelty concerns the percentage of women and converts. In her book entitled “Defusing Radical Islam” (*„Désamorcer l’islam radical: ces dérives sectaires qui défigurent l’islam”*), published in 2014, Dounia Bouzar states that the discourse connected with the ideology of radical Islam first of all concerned young people from predisposed backgrounds: from broken families, with direct experience of poverty etc. However, nowadays there is no clear-cut profile. According to the statistics kept by the Centre for the Prevention of Sectarian Excesses Connected with Islam (*Centre de prévention contre les dérives sectaires liés à l’islam*), which provides help to families whose members were recruited by the “Islamic State”, 90% of the persons affected by the phenomenon have French grandparents, while 80% of the families declare themselves to be atheistic (only 20% of the families regard themselves as believers, regardless of the denomination). Of course, we should take into consideration the fact that the contact with the organization is voluntary and the aforementioned statistics first of all reflect the profile of the families which decide to seek institutionalized help, though also data collected by other researchers confirms the presence of converts and mass recruitment of women⁴⁸.

Female radicalization

The phenomenon of female radicalization remains marginal against the background of the whole population, but according to the data collected by the French Ministry of Internal Affairs, the percentage of women among the “radicalized” has been continually increasing (some data confirmed that women might constitute even 40% of this group)⁴⁹. The involvement of women in the “matter of jihad” often meets

⁴⁶ D. Bouzar, Ch. Caupenne, S. Valsan, *La métamorphose opérée chez le jeune par les nouveaux discours terroristes*, 2014, The report is available at: <http://www.cpdsl.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LA-METAMORPHOSE-OPEREE-CHEZ-LE-JEUNE-PAR-LES-NOUVEAUX-DISOURS-TERRORISTES-DEF.pdf> [retrieved on: 22.06.2017].

⁴⁷ F. Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴⁸ S. Pietrasanta, *La déradicalisation, outil de lutte contre le terrorisme*, 2015, the report is available at: <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/154000455.pdf> [retrieved on: 17.06.2017].

⁴⁹ A.-A. Durand, « Stop djihadisme » 40 % de femmes parmi les radicalisations signalées, 2015, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/11/24/stop-djihadisme-40-de-femmes-parmi-les-radicalisations-signalées_4816710_4355770.html#zLsKdyWQCJeIlPv6.99 [retrieved on: 30.11.2017].

with astonishment and outrage, to a much larger degree than in the case of male radicalization. A few factors are involved in this state of affairs.

First of all, numerous statistics confirm⁵⁰ that women who undergo radicalization, contrary to men, most often come from a middle class background and families in which religion does not play a significant role (unlike men, who usually grew up in poor suburbs, in Muslim families, have a criminal past and were the victims of discrimination).

Another important factor which contributes to the fact that female radicalization tends to provoke outrage is that women are often associated with qualities such as passivity, calmness or "natural" pacifism (which might be observed *inter alia* by the attention devoted by the media to women, who defining themselves as jihadists, declare for example the willingness to bring death to "unbelievers", or their predilection for guns).

Treating female involvement in radical Islam with a specific amazement and fear are also connected with the very nature of the ideological offer of the so-called "Islamic State", namely with its specific "reactionary attitude" in comparison with what the countries of Western Europe offer women. According to the analytic part of this article, women in the official content of this organization are treated first of all as passive actresses of jihad, while their role in the area of the "caliphate" comes down to being mothers as well as housekeepers. They are deprived of the freedom to move in the public sphere on their own, they cannot participate in military actions, while their main aim is to get married as well as give birth to children. In view of such a model of femininity proposed by the "Islamic State", it is all the more surprising what motivates women who decide to join the organization – whether by sympathizing with it in a country of Western Europe of which they are citizens, or by migrating to the areas occupied by the organization.

Female radicalization within radical Islam is a relatively new phenomenon in European countries. Among the explanations offered by specialists dealing with this subject matter, there are such issues as being disappointed with the achievements of the feminist movement, the willingness to provide children in Syria with humanitarian aid, the search for identity, or the desire for adventure⁵¹. Islamic radicalism is also supposed to be the only extremist ideology currently present in the European "ideological market"⁵². While the earlier generations of young people in Europe sympathized *inter alia* with the radical Left, at present the rebellion channels in the Islamic ideology. The aforementioned need for rebellion as well as the ideological

⁵⁰ D. Bouzar, Ch. Caupenne, S. Valsan, *La métamorphose opérée chez le jeune par les nouveaux discours*, op. cit.

⁵¹ R. Obe Briggs, T. Silverman, *Western Foreign Fighters. Innovations to Responding to the Threat*, "Institute for Strategic Dialogue", 2014, p. 15.

⁵² O. Roy, *Le djihadisme est une révolte générationnelle et nihiliste*, op. cit.

affiliation are cunningly used by the members of the organization known as the “Islamic State”.

In the media discourse the women who become radical are presented as the victims of propaganda, recruited in a “treacherous” way or thoughtlessly following a man – a family member (usually their partner). In the majority of narratives presented by the French media, the women who decide to become involved in the activity motivated by radical Islam (which is usually connected with emigration to territories temporarily occupied by *Daesh*), are described as lost, passive and unaware of the potential consequences of their own actions. To sum up, they are depicted as “jihadists’ women” rather than “female jihadists”.