Radicalization and Jihadization:
the case of Belgo-Syrian Jihadism

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I. <u>Definitions</u>

1. <u>Radicalization</u>:
 a). a decreasing moral legitimacy of democratic society due to an idea or utopia
    that should take the place of democratic society.
 b). with the conviction that the utopia should be actively realized through practices;
 c). with the conviction that even illegal means and violence can be used for it.
(democratic society here: a society where human law, as a compromise between
a plurality of faiths and ideologies, dominates public life)

2. <u>Salafism</u>, a source reducing form of Islam (based only on Qur'an and Hadith)
a). Apolitical Salafism: democratic society is godless, but one stays aloof of it;
b). Political Salafism: democratic society is godless, but one uses it to change society;
c). Jihadist Salafism (in the sense of 'small jihaad')/Islamism:
    democratic society is godless and one combats it,also with violent and illegal
    instruments.

3. <u>Jihadization</u>:
a). Passive jihadization: a combination of 1.b., and with sympathy for 2.c.
b). Active jihadization: a combination of 1.c. and 2.c.
b.1: territorial jihadism, limited to dar al harb (e.g. Sham)
b.2: global jihadism, worldwide.

II. Periodization and generations

(France: Kelkal, 1995, GIA).

In Belgium:

-1999-2003: Malika El-Aroud, Nizar Trabelsi, Ayaachi Bassam.

- 2004 and later: Fouad Belkacem (Boom, Antwerp)

-2004-2011: (Meininger in Germany, Denmark,…)

-2012-2014/15:

- The 'older' Sharia4Belgium guys (often 'small' criminals) (2012)

- The ones who look for an adventure (2013), no doctrine, only "you will be important there", "you will have a future there', …

- Boys and girls (2014-…): in search of a life in a caliphate… and e.g. girls wanting to marry a Jihadist fighter there.

III. Characteristics 2012-2014

- 40% are younger than 18.
- Most have a week economic position,
but don't feel financially responsible for their family. (cf. Mohssin El Ghabri & Soufian Gharbaouin (2014). Qui sont les Belges partis combattre en Syrie ? Etopia, April 2014.)
- Most have no contacts with a mosque, or if they go to a mosque it is to make appointments outside of it. In most cases knowledge about Islam is very limited.
- 1/3 have "antecedents with the police" (surely among the guys who left between 2012 and 2013)…

IV. A hermeneutic "three-fields" theory

4.1. Macro-horizon: Sunnism in regression, Caliphate, End of the world, Sham

a. Historical developments to a Caliphate (Sayyid 2014, Allam 2014)
Afghanistan (from 1979 on), Iraq, Somalia, and currently, finally:
   Sham!
A jihadist mix of mysticism, politics and war...
supported by Hadith and narratives.
However:
Roy (2009): 'narratives', not an 'ideology' (Sayyid Qutb)
Roy (1987): with post-modern, very subjective developments…
Sayyid (2014): the caliphate? a 'metaphor'

b. <u>Narratives</u>

- Attractiveness of End of the world: Apocalyptic vision

the narrative of the Mahdi appearing together
with Dajjal (false Messiah) and Isa',
the true one (not the Jesus of the christians)

- in Sham: signs of Fitna:
the horn of Shaitan
about Jesus: http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/19/1
about Dabiq: http://sunnah.com/muslim/54/44

+ Martyrdom: special place among the
mujahidin for the *shahidin* (martyrs)...
(Cook 2005; Furnish 2005; Filiu 2008).

4.2. Micro-horizon: Islamist counter/youth culture and Salafisms

a. Counter-culture: in opposition to the mainstream culture,
also in islam (legitimacy of authority in Sunni islam is problematic)
(objective and/or subjective reasons/feelings) + conspiracy theories

Hemmingsen Ann-Sophie (2007), on Denmark, makes a relation
between 'identity' and 'counterculture';
on (non islamic) countercultures: Kaplan & Lööw 2002; Roszak 1995.

b. Youth culture: language, body, tools, 'mise en scène', expectations,...

c. Source of credibility: opposition to mainstram culture.
. own way of decoding social and political realities;
. "theologically" supported by 'literary' understanding of Qur'an.

4.3. Personal agency: sectarization to Salafiyya Jihadiyya

A. Radicalization

1. Identitarian confusion + no contact with mosques

2. Deeply traumatized by pictures about massacres of Muslims by Bashar Assad in Syria. (you tube) (and EU did not support Syrian Spring…) + Abu Ghraib + Gaza…

3. They don't feel bound by strong material and financial responsibilities vis-à-vis their family.
(There is however recently a tendency that also more young women start leaving, with focus on making a future family 'there'…)

Experience: de-radicalization here is possible and realistic.
Important task for 'teachers', school context. Marker: friendships.

B. Jihadization/Sectarization

1. A process of mental (and physical) <u>self-isolation,</u> meaning: <u>des-affiliation</u>
   (vis-à-vis family and friends) with a <u>new affiliation</u> (i.e. with new 'similarly
   minded' friends and imaginary identifications: see you tube + other internet).

2. 'Very repetitive' meetings outside the mosques (for men), promoted by fb
   invitations, "watching continuously you tube films" (for women),
   discussing "being a good Muslim" and the others (mostly Muslims) as *kufar.*

3. Continuously <u>on the internet</u>: preachers ("savants"), recruitment films:
   . Muslims who dominate (see content and quality of movies) and even have the
   successful courage to provoke the existing powers;
   . a (Western) welfare for who lives in the caliphate.

4. A <u>new, sure identity </u> + a Takfiri discourse (cf. Saïd Qutb). One loses multiple
   identifications and one assimilates with only 1 very reductive identity, dividing
   the world among 'good ones' and 'bad ones'. (Takfir: declaring another
   Muslim an 'infidel').

*Experience: deradicalization still possible during B.1 (also B.2-3). (but no time to
   be lost!) Advice: green number!*

C. Leaving for territorial jihaad.

1. Demand for 'commitment' (among peers, also through fb). The 'new friends'
   ask a commitment:
   'go to Syria' + and they refer to a <u>new identity</u> for the next future
   (i.e. living in an Islamic caliphate).

2. Contact with recruiters: stimulating further self-isolation and offering a model
   for preparation of departure to Syria;
   the candidates receive messages on-line not to take contact anymore with
   'others'.

3. Break with mother (and family). The candidate Jihadists split/re-formatting
   their emotions. In their eyes, the Shariah asks not to be influenced by
   human emotions. A first 'cut' to the emotions is given when the candidate
   'breaks' with his family and mother. The candidate enters in an <u>apocalyptic</u>
   vision, with the idea of Paradise (also for his mother and family, who are
   kufar and will enter Paradise thanks to him/her).

*Remark: the macro-horizon is only fully at work at the very end of the
   process…* This is a continuation of the process of sectarization-conversion.
   Very difficult to change anymore…

4.4. Addendum

In Syria, territorial jihaad for them may change in global jihaad
(surely from September 2014 on),
first: Sham becomes Syria/Libanon + Iraq + Jordan + Israel,
then: worldwide… (Lybia, Sinai), the West…

Concerning returnees:
The most dangerous ones will be the ones who were
already criminals before leaving.
2 difficult categories:
a. Former criminals, since 'conversion' and going to Syria =
   continuation of former 'habitus' empowered by new ideology;
b. The completely sectarized ones.
For others, more simple.
One may not generalize for all returnees…

V. Counter-strategies/Questions

1. The approach by theatre as done by Ismael Saidi
in 'Djihad' is surely an interesting initiative for general conscientization,
however… if the hypothesis is correct that the concerned youngsters
adhere at a counter-culture with a profound diffidence
vis-à-vis the 'establishment', what may be efficient counter-narratives
at youtube and who has to bring them?
- 2. If the hypothesis is correct, that there is also a
sectarization process at work,
a. which are the trigger moments in the process of sectarization?
and what to do at such moments?
b. what to do at the end if some returning sectarized youngsters are
deceived about their involvement in IS?
- 3. Do we have a strategy to help youngsters in Syria
who want to leave Syria and come back because they want to leave IS?
- 4. Islam (see: teaching of Islam at school) needs a profound reflection on
a. the relation between 'literary' text and
metaphoric language in religious texts;
b. the status of Hadiths…   Thanks