VIOLENT EXTREMISM
AND DEVELOPMENT
EXTRÉMISME VIOLENT
ET DÉVELOPPEMENT
التطرف العنيف والتنمية
VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND DEVELOPMENT
A multidisciplinary group of individuals from various countries, who have long been both protagonists and analysts of the culture of Muslim societies, have engaged in the study of a movement that for the past few years has led a growing number of young people from all around the Mediterranean to embrace violent extremism. This analysis, which lays bare the multiplicity of causes behind the movement, seeks to bring clarity to the often confused debate surrounding radicalization. This text seeks to go further, by exploring possible avenues of reflection on public policies directed at youth and that are intended to counter the causes of radicalization among some young people.

The term “radicalization” made a forceful entry on the political and media landscape beginning on September 11, 2001 in the United States and then in Europe, following the terrorist attacks in 2004 (Spain), 2005 (United Kingdom), 2012, 2013, and 2015 (France), and 2016 (Belgium). International organizations also use the expression “violent extremism” (because one can become radicalized without engaging in violence). This paper will use the most widely acknowledged definition, which associates an extremist ideology with violence.

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon, neither is it confined to one region or belief system. However, in view of the emergence of new and more violent groups and new methods of recruiting adherents within the Mediterranean region, this paper will analyze the origins and causes of radicalization in the South and North of this region.
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The growing belief in the need to defend and affirm Islam, born in the 19th century, was heightened by Arab independence and revolutions, and resulted in a number of profound changes in the societies of the South Mediterranean:

1. The delegitimization of the western model and, at the same time, the promotion of multiple ideological markers connected to political Islam;
2. The collapse of the traditional social pact of Arab societies at the ideological, political, and social levels;
3. The emergence of youth as political actors, against the backdrop of the emergence of the individual.

The causes of involvement in jihadist networks can be broken down into three types:

1. Identity-related;
2. Social, economic, geographic;
3. Political.

The Islamization of societies is a movement that is more identity-based than spiritual:

- Rise in demonstrative religiosity, sense of belonging to a group, affirmation of identity, against “others,” the elites;
- Seeds of revenge linked to a combination of identity-based and social factors.

This shows that the State has failed in its mission to renew the social contract, particularly in relation to:

- Corruption;
- Youth as the “lost generation”;
- Sense of injustice;
- The weakness of public services.
1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL HERITAGE

The “Arab-Muslim” peoples are united around a political heritage characterized by a set of historical and political reference points that mark their identity. These are, first and foremost, the power of preaching, the deeds of the Prophet, the reference to the just prince, and the history of emblematic caliphates - the first four, and the great Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman constructions. This heritage was subsequently transformed by the waves of independence and, later on, by Arab nationalism, which opened new horizons for societies in the throes of modernization. The failure of nationalist movements (particularly the case of Nasserism, which ended with defeat in the Six-Day War) together with the persistence of authoritarianism paved the way to radical Islam as a mythical alternative to the trauma of secularization, of which Nasser’s pan-Arabism was the archetype. In addition to a profound sense of unity and a conviction of a singular destiny, the Arab-Muslim mindset is to defend and affirm Islam, the ultimate revealed religion.

THE AL-NAHDA MOVEMENT

At the start of the 19th century, following a long period of stagnation, the Arab world, under Turkish domination at the time, entered into contact with an interventionist and aggressive West (Bonaparte campaign in Egypt, 1798). It spurred a realization among the Muslim elites of the backwardness of societies and the need for reforms. It is the al-Nahda (“Renaissance”) movement, which is the renaissance that inspired the Tanzimat reforms in Turkey and the policy of Mohamad Ali in Egypt. These reforms imported western technologies while rejecting the western model of society, and secularization in particular. These limited reforms proved insufficient to create States capable of resisting European colonization, even though al-Nahda’s ideas helped to foment anti-colonialist movements.

INDEPENDENCE

Independence was won at the cost of bloody resistance and coincided with a universal spirit of deep unity among liberated countries that held new political ideals. In the ancient societies that were colonized in this part of the world, these ideals were based on the affirmation of Muslim identity and on the reality of a patriotism that was forged in the struggle for independence. They were also founded on the commitment and participation of the new elites that emerged from the creation of modern States and the establishment of redistributive and just societies. In practice, the new States were constructed at the price of numerous excesses: populist, authoritarian, or brutal dictatorial regimes, rent-seeking oligarchs indifferent to the needs of wide swathes of peripheral population groups left to fend for themselves without representation or social policy, and abandonment of youth. The Iranian revolution and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets are two noteworthy events that have had an influence on the Arab-Muslim world: the first as a source of inspiration for Islamist groups; the second because it gave rise to the first politico-military formation of inter-Arab jihadists.

THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS

The revolutions since 2011 have exposed the stark reality of the deterioration of the powers of State and the decline of traditional rule (army, trade unions – with the exception of Tunisia, and official institutions of Islam). At the wider level, there are three marked changes in the societies of the South Mediterranean that can be attributed to these revolutions:

• The delegitimization of the western model and, at the same time, the promotion of multiple ideological markers of political Islam;
• The collapse of the traditional social pact of Arab societies at the ideological, political, and social levels;
• The emergence of youth as political actors, against the backdrop of the emergence of the individual.

The key milestones in the contemporary history of Arab societies also have a bearing on the current upsurge in radicalization. While the aim here is not to undertake an exhaustive exposé of the causes driving tens of thousands of young people from every continent to engage “body and soul” in a radical struggle, three related dimensions may be put forward:

• The first relates to identity. This cause has its roots in the history of relations between the Arab Muslim States of the East and Western States. It produces a deeply-felt sense of humiliation in the collective consciousness of the peoples of the southern shores of the Mediterranean, as well as among the emigrant population from this area now living on the northern shores of the Mediterranean.

Why was our country colonized? And in the North: why did our parents emigrate to the colonizer country once independence was achieved?... A humiliation that is widespread, vaguely-felt (history has not been transmitted within families), imposed, and inherited.

• A second dimension is social, economic, and geographic. It affects a section of young people that are excluded from propitious channels of opportunity and are condemned to a life of economic, social, and political marginalization.

• A third dimension is political. It is linked to the first two: the bonds of trust with authority, institutions, and the social elites are broken. Demonstrations of consideration and a commitment to cooperation are lacking. The social bonds have been undermined, particularly between young people and the rest of society.

Indeed, these three dimensions help shape a conflictual view of social life among large sections of society.

1.2 THE ISSUE OF THE STATE: FROM SOCIETAL MOVEMENTS TO THE CRISIS OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

One of the causes of the radicalization of a segment of young people in the South can be traced to the disruption of social relations. The policy of economic opening (infitah) being implemented since the 1980s has shattered the balance between society and State: society “put up with” authoritarianism in exchange for absorbing the middle class of modest means in the public sector; the civil service was bloated but provided jobs for young people. The liberalization policies applied in the 1980s had the unintended effect of strengthening the corrupt elites and widening inequalities at a time when the previously applied redistributive model had been terminated.

Radicalization can also be traced to the failure of pan-Arabism, particularly the defeat of Nasser and Arab countries by Israel in the Six-Day War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, two developments that redrew the map of the region.

Arab societies have therefore lived through the defeat of the Arab world by Israel, the collapse of communism two decades later, the discrediting of both secular nationalism and pan-Arabism on the one hand, and socialism and Communist Marxism, on the other. These failures created a void that has come to be filled by a new ideology/utopia — radical Islamism —
which seeks to breathe new life into social and political protest.

This alternative utopia involves and is fueled by a broader movement of Islamization—conflictual in nature—within societies of Muslim culture. The pressure toward “ever more religion,” the difficulty of resisting the proliferation of religious markers (from the power of the muezzin loud speakers that no one dares to defy, to modes of dress), creates an environment that promotes religious intolerance (“them” against “us,” the true Muslims). This plays out in the North in the form of the withdrawal of communities comprising population groups that migrated from the Southern Mediterranean region; and in the societies of the South, by an identity affirmation that is overtly proclaimed (since the Arab revolutions) in a complex social interplay that manifests in different forms in different countries.

This Islamization of societies is a recent phenomenon: after achieving independence, the Arab elites (apart from those of the Gulf) embarked on a movement to westernize/ secularize lifestyles. But this cultural, social “opening” did not lead to national development: it benefited only the partially westernized elites (largely supported by countries of the North) and excluded the vast majority of the population. And to make matters worse, the apparent secularization was accompanied in certain countries (Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey) by flagrant disdain toward believers and contempt for those holding prayers and wearing the veil… Most Arab governments used this religious thrust mainly to marginalize progressive movements, while Islamic NGOs replaced the State that had failed in its social proximity policies. These initiatives were funded for the most part by petroleum monarchies that also provided an ideological framework in the form of Wahhabism.

The failure of these partially westernized Arab elites to bring development to the majority of citizens and the alliance formed between political conservatism and religious traditionalism to block calls for the opening of the political system have, along with other factors such as education and economic and employment policies, helped give life to this powerful back-to-religion movement.

The Islamization movement of societies is a movement that is more identity-based than spiritual. Countries with Muslim culture are experiencing a religious invasion at the social level. However, the upsurge in religion is not characterized by an increase in spirituality, but by the growth of demonstrative religiosity, a religion of belonging to a group, of identity affirmation, against “the others,” against the national elites that dominate the corridors of power and wealth, and that shape the prevailing social norms.

Herein lie the seeds of revenge linked to a combination of identity-based and social factors. This perspective is held by broad swathes of societies with Muslim culture. These are the factors that account for the relative majorities held by Islamist parties in all countries where uncontested elections have been held since the Arab revolutions (Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and before them, Gaza and Turkey).

THE CRISIS OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

There is another factor that illustrates why a section of the youth have lost their bearings: the difficulty of giving real expression to the social contract.

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1. The social reforms led by President Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia bear witness to this. See also Egyptian cinema of the 1960s-1970s.

2. Unlike the case of the countries of East Asia.
and political contract that is supposed to unite all believers, in a scenario similar to the initial community of the Prophet.

In the Arab-Muslim world, the social contract is sometimes proclaimed (Morocco), sometimes shared emotionally (Nasser’s Egypt). It is presumed to exist everywhere, but rarely actually experienced. Believers regard each other as brothers. They believe in a just and redistributive State that is acknowledged as the seat of the nation’s sovereignty and seen, above all, as an authoritarian power and the untouchable symbol of unitary patriotism.

The social contract mechanism as conceived in the North, which is based on a level of balance among stakeholders, individual guarantees, and reliable redress mechanisms, is scarcely a factor: uncertain elections, arbitrary jurisdiction, the lines between political classes and power and wealth are blurred, controlled communications, marginal role of the individual. The State and its closely-aligned oligarchs preside over a populist discourse and practice, but accommodation is made only among insiders in the form of a dialogue between an unyielding power and clientelist oligarchies. This is the picture that the Arab revolutions are trying to shatter: the youth uprising heralds the affirmation of the individual in these societies. These are the individuals who turn out at the demonstrations in Tahrir Square, who are active in NGO movements in Tunisia and Egypt, and who participate in the most meaningful constitutional debates in Tunisia.

The pre-revolution State could press on, basically by virtue of the divine or continue ahead by necessity or force. The youth revolts mark the affirmation of the individual seeking the establishment of democratic societies. This desire for democratic opening is fragile and not necessarily shared by all strata of society, particularly by the most vulnerable who demand a greater level of security even at the price of restricting more freedoms. In the absence of a social or political contract, and despite appearances to the contrary, there are but few democratic mechanisms in place. The State is a state of order, a State that negotiates with rent-seeking structures or supine clientelists, a State that leaves a majority of its people but weakly represented, poorly integrated, hardly consulted. A population reduced to peasant revolts, to small-scale urban uprisings and repression. This does not mean that these States completely exclude compromise. They thrive on incomplete compromises that are profitable for only one sector of society, while “digesting,” each in their own way, the powerful movements that could threaten their hegemony.

For Arab societies are marked by significant differences among them that impact the policies needed to tackle the problem of youth radicalization. The reactions to the crisis of society have taken multiple forms: from the strengthening of authoritarianism to the failure of the State or to forms of accommodation between power and society that are more or less unstable. The recourse to authoritarianism based on an autocratic State propped up by the army and the neo-clientelism of the ruling classes is only a fleeting solution that, over the long term, could lead to heightened radicalization. Recourse to authoritarianism would not, therefore, represent a solution to the problem posed among a population that aspires for the kind of development that integrates the social and identity-related aspirations of civil society and the demands for order and stability. In this regard, Tunisia is the only country that can serve as a model as, despite its fragility, it holds out the promise of blending democracy and development.

At the same time, the socioeconomic and political conditions and the responses brought to bear to societal crises are profoundly
different in the South. The implementation of effective policies to tackle the phenomenon of radicalization requires a graduated and differentiated approach that should take account of specific, even local conditions, as well as the regional, national, and trans-regional context.

A social contract has to be the cornerstone of any public policy that is aimed particularly at Arab youth, who can be described as literally “unhinged.” In one way or another, civil society will have to become more involved in formulating the principles that will guide the construction or reconstruction of a social contract. However, there is a level of disquiet even in relation to civil society. It can give rise to the very best (struggle for democracy, freedom, oversight of political power…) or the very worst (radical Islamist parties may rely on the social actions led by the grassroots groups of religious organizations, filling the void left by the States…). The external support measures provided to civil society are based on its purported advantages over the State, which is seen as the source of all ills. This must be adjusted to introduce a level of balance between the two terms—State and Society.
The youth are a sacrificed generation, suffering from exclusion in terms of access to employment and opportunities to assume responsibilities. High levels of unemployment, informal work, gender disparities, high NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rates, limited participation in decision-making processes, lack of social mobility...are some of the indicators of this phenomenon.

The resulting frustration finds expression in:
• “Trabendism”;
• Departure for Europe, the West, and the Gulf States;
• Social protest;
• Violent protest (jihadism).

Since the 1960s, Arab countries have invested a large share of their resources in education. However, the democratization of education:
• Has been effected to the detriment of quality;
• Has not provided the young with the means to take decisions and act responsibly, owing to the absence of training in critical thinking or openness to differences;
• Has engendered massive unemployment among the young, as well as structural under-employment.

In other words, education has forfeited its role as the engine of social mobility, a role that is considered to be fair, as it is based on merit.

The following are some of the causes of radicalization:
• Social exclusion, a sense of injustice, the sense of humiliation, whether inherited or based on one’s personal experience;
• Rehabilitation, following a period of delinquency;
• Religious excesses;
• Belief in a revolutionary utopia;
• Family breakdown;
• Sexual frustration;
• The policies pursued by the authorities of the country from which radicalized youth leave to join jihad;
• Internal situations in conflict zones.
There are differences between the North and the South and one important similarity:

Differences:
- The radical Islamist has much deeper cultural historical and social roots in the South than in the North. In Europe, people from the Muslim culture account for less than 5 percent of the population.
- In the North, radicalization is unlikely to call into question the pluralistic political system, its institutions or the rule of law, even though it can disrupt the system by encouraging the forces of the extreme right.
- In the South, radicalization can neutralize the State, together with its set of rules and regulations.
- Still in the South, young people from the lower classes have few opportunities for education and training and no access to a complex set of youth-oriented institutions.

Similarity:
- The bleak employment outlook remains a common factor affecting the young both in the North and the South.

All in all, these factors make for an incomplete individual, who has acquired freedoms and rights but who has little notion of his own individual responsibilities or duties. This incomplete individual finds few social, economic, and cultural outlets or opportunities to develop his sense of citizenship or to realize his talents. His reasoning is binary and devoid of nuance.

2.1 THE YOUTH

In the North as well as the South, involvement in violent extremism primarily concerns the youth who comprise the “labor force” of the movement and who constitute the majority of those engaging in a violent struggle against an enemy. The leaders of the movement are between 30 and 60 years old, or even older, but the overwhelming majority consists of young men (and increasingly, young women) whose average age is around 25 years in the North (statistics for the South are less accessible) and includes adolescents and even children.

In the South, and to a lesser extent the North, the youth are a sacrificed generation in terms of employment and opportunities to assume responsibility. They receive little support from politicians or trade unions, either because they do not vote, or because, as occurs in the South, the system of clientelism and entrenched power is saturated and closed to outsiders.

"The economic exclusion of young people is the most significant social injustice in the region. The unemployment rate among young people in Southern Mediterranean countries is over 20 percent. The vast majority of young Arabs, who are very often graduates, can only find work in the informal sector [...] Young women face an even more difficult situation. The proportion of employment and opportunities to assume responsibility. They receive little support from politicians or trade unions, either because they do not vote, or because, as occurs in the South, the system of clientelism and entrenched power is saturated and closed to outsiders."
women in the labour force is 25 percent⁶ (the lowest rate in the world).⁷

The notion of youth encompasses disparate socioeconomic and cultural categories. There are three groups of young people who are among the most vulnerable:

1. **Young people who are excluded**, who “hold up the walls” (“The Hittists”), or are engaged in “trabendo,” or small-scale, often illegal trade, whether in drugs or items of basic necessity, especially from the North or from Turkey. These young people have not pursued their schooling as far as the baccalaureate or its equivalent. Public policies should be specifically formulated for this target group of young people, notably through educational and vocational courses that may provide them with employment. Young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET)⁸ are also massively affected by economic exclusion and demonstrate a lack of a vision for the future. There are currently few mechanisms in place to address the situation of these youths, who are in a state of heightened vulnerability.

2. **Young graduates** who have had access to higher education and are stuck in low-paying jobs that do not correspond to their qualifications, are unemployed, or else working in precarious jobs well below their level of education. The most qualified among this group leave for the West, taking their know-how to the countries of the North, whereas their education was provided and paid for by the countries of the South. Here again, specific public policies that favor promotion on the basis of merit should help to attenuate the practice of cronyism, which gives a significant advantage to the children of insiders.

3. **Young women** who are, paradoxically, increasingly integrated into all levels of the educational system,⁹ but who cannot find jobs commensurate with their abilities in the public or private sector owing to deeply entrenched patriarchal views within the society. Affirmative action measures that acknowledge the qualifications of these young women could help to attenuate this situation.

Countries of Muslim culture therefore find themselves with a large number of young people who are excluded from social, economic, and political life and who challenge authority (that of the father, the elders, the local leader, government, representatives of the established order, etc.), thus breaking with a centuries-old culture of submission and the authoritarian approach to governance of societies.¹⁰ They challenge authority but demand (depending on their social origin) the means of mobility (motorbikes, scooters, cars), of communication (mobile telephones, tablets etc.), the means to maintain their appearance (brand name clothing, etc.). At the same time, they often refuse to engage in physical work and instead remain economically dependent on their parents.

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⁸ According to data from the International Labor Organization (ILO), in 2013 the number of NEET individuals in the Mediterranean region was 12,020,300 in 2013 (European Union, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Tunisia. Data for Algeria and Lebanon not available).
⁹ They account for between 30 percent and 50 percent of the student population in schools as well as at University level, even though the so-called “noble” disciplines remain largely closed to young women.
A large proportion of the young population is therefore socially frustrated, in rebellion against authority, demanding consumer goods, but not learning the corresponding aspects of freedom: individual responsibility, autonomous thought, objective self-criticism, and a grasp of the complexity of issues and of compromise options. Young people experiencing a “feeling of malaise” are therefore vulnerable to the type of discourse without nuances that offers simplistic solutions to their unease and their vague feeling of revolt against “the others” and gives meaning to their lives.

There are four main, observable consequences of this phenomenon: i) “trabendism”: young people hang around, “holding up the walls,” or engage in illegal activities, notably trafficking of all types; ii) the attempt to leave for Europe and more generally, the West, or oil-producing Arab countries; iii) social protest (one of the reasons behind the Arab revolutions was the revolt of under-employed youth); and iv) violent protest (jihadism).

SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THE YOUNG JIHADISTS

Available information on the social origins of the young jihadists is still sketchy. In Europe, the situation and social class of young jihadists varies from country to country. In France and Belgium, despite some mobilization among young people from the middle class beginning in 2013, jihadists come predominantly from the lower classes (young, marginalized, and stigmatized people from the banlieues (suburbs) in France and neighborhoods such as Molenbeek in Belgium). However, the situation in the United Kingdom is less clear-cut, with a combination of middle and lower class youth with roots in the immigrant community.

The picture in the countries of the South Mediterranean is also nuanced: in Tunisia, young, socially marginalized youth are most attracted to jihadism while available statistics show that across much of the Middle East, modernized young people from the middle class, with a university education (often scientists and engineers) are the most likely to engage in jihad. In Egypt, following the coup d’état in 2013, there was an upsurge in jihadism in the Sinai, where impoverished tribes played a significant role.

THE GENDER DIMENSION

Over the past two or three decades, there has been a shift in the gender issue in the countries of the South, notably in countries with a Muslim culture. On the one hand, an increasing number of women have access to secondary, but also to higher education: with the exception of Yemen and Afghanistan, women make up between a third and a half of the student population in the universities. On the other hand, this improvement in levels of education and training is not reflected in the employment market, where women struggle to make their presence felt. More generally, owing to cultural as well as social reasons, women have a limited capacity for collective action. However, improved levels of education for women have had a significant effect: nuclear families with fewer children are now an overwhelming feature across the Muslim world, with a few exceptions (such as Yemen and Afghanistan).

Women played an important part in the social protest movements that led to the Arab Revolutions, but have had limited opportunity to express their opinions and organize themselves socially and politically.

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11. See Diego GAMBETTA, Robert S. LEIKEN, Marc SAGEMAN.
Similarly, few women in the South engage in jihadism (with the exception of the “black widows” of Chechnya), but there are more and more women adherents in the North (out of 5,000 Europeans who have left for Syria, 500 are women and girls).

RETURNEEs AND THE ISSUE OF DETAINED

Some foreign fighters and other radicalized detainees in maximum security detention centers abroad return to their country of origin and are incarcerated in the local penitentiary system. When faced with the choice of which country to return to, a number of those who have dual nationality will tend to opt for the country where conditions are more favorable, that is, the country that favors rehabilitation over punishment.

The question of how to deal with the returnees is one that arises in the North as much as in the South. Some countries have developed reintegration programs of proven effectiveness with even success stories of returnees who have become involved in the counter-radicalization and sensitization of young people at risk of falling into jihadism. These programs require constant and costly follow-up, and pose the risk of turning the treatment given to the returnees into a luxury that accentuates the gap between rich and middle-income countries.

2.2

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Since their independence, Arab countries have devoted a very large share of their budget to education. Literacy rates have risen everywhere (despite variations from country to country), and successive cohorts of young people have had access to secondary and higher education. There has been a certain degree of democratization of education, in a context where countries traditionally had a policy whereby anyone holding a tertiary level diploma automatically had the right to a job in the public sector. The structural adjustment plans of the 80s and 90s did away with this policy, but the idea that it is up to the State to provide jobs is one that remains firmly entrenched in the societies of the Southern Mediterranean.12

However, the quantitative expansion in the educational supply was not matched by an improvement in the quality of public education. This led to the development of private education, which is of no better quality, except for a very small number of private institutions charging the highest tuition rates.

Specifically, teaching methods that discourage critical thinking and employ rote learning have proved the limitations of a system that has produced individuals who use binary reasoning, where good and evil are juxtaposed without nuances, where choices that may appear rational on the surface are not questioned: for example, the choice of using violence to force “bad Muslims” to conform to an orthodox and “good” way of life. The most striking qualitative failings of the educational system are thus apparent: it does not teach students about individual and collective responsibility or the rights and duties of a citizen.

12. In Morocco, the concepts of “employee” and “public official” are so closely identified in the minds of the population that they are used interchangeably in everyday speech.
This false rationality, which is one of the reasons behind the use of violence, is one of several factors that explains the large number of engineers among the jihadists. Studies have shown that 45 percent of those radicalized in the Middle East came from engineering schools.13

A recent World Bank study has revealed a strong correlation between the unemployment rate among men in a given country and the likelihood of its citizens being recruited as foreign fighters for ISIS. Furthermore, the study noted that there is no direct causal relation between a low level of education and radicalization, and that individuals who have recourse to violence are far from ignorant or illiterate. Indeed, 69 percent of those recruited to ISIS say they have a secondary school diploma while a large number claim to have attended a university. Only 15 percent did not go on to secondary school and less than 2 percent are illiterate.14 This goes to show that the fight against violent extremism is not primarily to be waged by providing access to education.

The Islamization of school curriculums has also created a type of schizophrenia that, coupled with the absence of critical thought, has led to a crisis of civic values. The religious precepts contained in school textbooks do not, in certain cases, correspond to the secular rules of civic life that have been voted on by democratic parliaments. Such is the case, for example, of Family Law (including polygamy) in several countries.

Despite these qualitative shortcomings, an unprecedented number of young people are today able to let their voices be heard, to lay claim to their place in society…and these voices have now found their channels of expression in social media, through the use of digital devices. This tremendous increase in their capacity to express their ideas and to share them on social networks has not been met with a commensurate increase in social, economic, cultural, or civic opportunities.

Owing to the way the labor market is structured, a large share of the youth population, now armed with diplomas, are vulnerable to unemployment, dequalification, and structural under-employment. The phenomenon of “unemployed graduates” affects large numbers of young people in the South, and even a significant number in the North, though to a lesser degree.

The high number of unemployed graduates (with the exception of those who have graduated from elite schools or obtained their qualifications abroad), the fact that when they do find jobs, it is often below their level of qualification, the high NEET rates, the paucity of cultural outlets, their alienation from the world of politics, which they view as motivated by interests other than the common good—all of these factors mean that the abilities of the youth are left untapped. The vast majority are excluded from the middle class. The visible symbols of consumption (car, apartment, bank account, small families, etc.) are constantly before them and feed a sense of social frustration at a way of life that is inaccessible to them and which they perceive as a sign of Western modernity.

This means, most importantly, that education no longer fulfills the role of driver of upward social

Young people are led to take the step toward involvement in jihad for extremely diverse reasons. There is a whole array of causes, which vary according to the individuals, the countries, and the political situation in the countries of origin and destination.\(^{15}\) The following are some of the reasons mentioned in the literature on the subject (this list is not exhaustive, nor does it follow an order of priority):

- **Humiliation linked to one’s identity:** a perception of injustice, the sense of humiliation, whether based on personal experience or the inherited humiliation of one’s people vis-à-vis the West. At the level of the individual, this humiliation comes from being a citizen of a country beset by clientelism and exclusion (a theory behind the Islamization of radicalism).

- **Exclusion from political life** – lack of participation of young people in civic life.

- **Absence of critical thinking, little autonomous thought,** an inability to perceive and grasp the complexity of the world. These factors, which characterize the educational systems, make for the emergence of an individual, but one who is incomplete, a “quasi-individual” as a result of the increasing gap between his capacity to express himself and take action and his low level of education in matters of individual responsibility.

- **Social exclusion** with few social, economic, cultural, or civic outlets to develop the capacity acquired in the educational system, notwithstanding its shortcomings. It is striking to note that over the long term, there has been a convergence of the forces that have affected and continue to affect Arab societies (colonialism, nationalism born of independence, Islamism). All of these forces have stifled critical thought within societies.

- **Rehabilitation following a period of delinquency or a “shameless lifestyle.”**

- **Conversion to Islam** and the zealous commitment of a new convert eager to prove his allegiance.

- **Religious excesses,** from pious involvement in Wahhabi-inspired Salafist movements to jihad (a principle of radicalization in one part of Islam), and adherence to the revolutionary Utopia of building a world based on the four dreams that lie at the very heart of Arab-Muslim consciousness: 1) the dream of Khalifa, of Muslim unity (Sunnite ideal of Arab unity); 2) the dream of dignity in the face of social injustice (ideal of Arab socialism); 3) the dream of purity, whereby one finds a wife and starts a pure and undefiled family (the Salafist ideal); 4) the dream of redemption in the imminent end of the world (ideal of Sufism).\(^{16}\)

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\(^{15}\) In this regard, it is interesting to note the work done by the Center for the Prevention of Sectarian Excesses linked to Islam (CPDSI): D. BOUZAR, M. MARTIN. Why do the young engage in jihad? Infant and Adolescent Neuropsychiatry, 2016.

\(^{16}\) According to Ahmed ABBADI, Secretary General of the Rabita Mohammadia of Ulamas of Morocco.
• **Family histories** (breakdown in the transmission of values from elders to the young), based on the observation of the number of siblings engaged in jihad, notably in the terrorist attacks in France and Belgium.

• **Sexual frustration** caused by repressed homosexuality or the absence of an idealized relationship or marriage.

• **Humanitarian motives**: to go to the aid of the women and children in the line of fire in different conflict zones across the Arab world.

• **The policies pursued by the authorities of the country from which radicalized youth leave to join jihad**: domestic policy (for example, the sometimes very aggressive conception of secularity held by some currents of opinion in France and elsewhere); foreign policy (military involvement in the coalition fighting Isis in Syria and Iraq).

• In addition, there are the **internal situations within the conflict zones**: the conflicting modalities of radicalized opposition employed by Sunnites and Shiites in Iraq and Syria, as well as manipulation by external actors who form complex and changing alliances that affect the region, and which play into the hands of radical Islamist forces.

On the basis of these diverse currents, a discourse is developed, which opposes “them” (the perverted ones) and “us” (the true Muslims), in a **binary vision devoid of nuance**.

This host of diverse reasons must be taken into account in the Southern and Northern Mediterranean when developing policies of prevention aimed at vast numbers of youth, the potential targets of jihadist propaganda. Contrary to the views held by some academics, all these motives for joining jihad may be combined within one individual. Some motives have predominance over others, but may vary over time and in accordance with the prevailing situation in the battle fronts of Syria and Iraq.

**RADICALIZATION IN THE NORTH, RADICALIZATION IN THE SOUTH, DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES**

The main difference is that the principal type of radicalization—radical Islamism—is a phenomenon that has much deeper cultural, historical, and social roots in the South than in the North. Muslims make up less than 5 percent of the population in Europe, whereas they comprise the overwhelming majority in the South. Consequently, radicalization in the North is unlikely to undermine the pluralist political system, its institutions or the rule of law, even though it can cause disruptions by encouraging the rise of extreme right wing forces. In the South, on the other hand, radicalization can compromise the State, together with its set of social rules and regulations. The type of authoritarianism and the manifestations of failed States that apply to the South do not pose a threat to the North. This may be seen in the disintegration of the State (Syria, Yemen, Libya) or in the institutional crises linked to the influx of migrants, without the corresponding weakening of the State (Jordan, Lebanon), or also in neo-authoritarianism (Egypt).

In the South, the young people from the lower classes have few opportunities for education and training and no access to an extensive network of institutions that are specifically oriented to the youth (programs for youth in difficulty, culture, sport, etc.). In the North on the other hand, young people, even those from modest backgrounds, have had access to schooling and have had the benefit of public actions aimed at the youth (even though there has been a marked reduction in these over the past few years).

In the North as well as in the South, the unfavorable employment outlook remains a common factor affecting the young.

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17. The non-transitive nature of relationships ("the friend of my friend may be my worst enemy") adds to the complexity of the situation on the ground.
What public policies are needed to tackle radicalization? Broadly speaking, the essence of such policies is the reconstruction of a social contract that includes youth.

In the Mediterranean area, radicalization has become a State issue, a challenge for civil society, and a priority for international cooperation.

Roughly speaking, States adopt two different approaches to tackle the issue of radicalization:

- The first approach relates to security policies: it includes research, identification, and suppression of radicalization among a section of youth and the prevention of acts of violence. It falls under the security structures—army, police and intelligence services—that act in accordance with their own operating dynamic. This approach is not one that concerns us for the purpose of this paper.

- For the majority of our Mediterranean countries, the second approach should be based on youth policies. This approach is first of all preventative. Over and above the acts of suppression and the element of dissuasion that they represent, States have the obligation to prevent a section of youth of Muslim culture from adopting a conflictual view of life and engaging in violence. Over the long term, the aim is to denounce this ideological vision of a world solely in conflict, delegitimize recourse to violence, uphold other actions of young people, re-establish a social bond between youth and the rest of society, and engender a desire to live together. This social bond, based on family and religious reference points, is now in tatters. In a world of wounds, frustration, and denial, some Arab young people are left feeling that they belong to a category of mistreated youth. They strongly believe in the defense of an identity that is, of course, religious, but also societal, national, and regional. For a young Arab today, radicalization represents more than an ideology that has been buttressed by an acute consciousness of the tragic history of the Arabs; it is also a reaction of outrage and exasperation in the face of imbalances at the global level.

It is within the framework of this second approach that development actors can put in place measures to prevent radicalization. Such measures can take the form of program areas or program implementation conditions.

A youth policy must, first of all, be organized with a long-term vision. It should flow from a concerted decision of the principal authorities of State and society, and should also benefit from significant international cooperation.

Furthermore, a youth policy can also be based
on **affirmative action**, as is actually provided for in the Tunisian constitution. The extent of such actions and the forms they may take will be determined by the nature of the specific problems facing each society. This is no doubt one way to inculcate in youth who may be tempted to impetuous action, disruption, or perhaps engaging in terrorism the idea that society is concerned about making room for them and integrating them. These affirmative action steps (for example, youth quotas) should be seen as part of an active and voluntary policy of ensuring that youth have a voice in the decision-making process, and are present when it comes to information, culture, political life, etc.

Firstly, a youth policy should consider youth as *societal actors*. Today, a young person is a non-actor: a large number of jobs held by youth are informal (in the North African region and the Middle East, not including countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, 65 percent of the active population does not contribute to social security, with youth among the most affected). In the education sector, youth are more often than not passive; in the political and institutional spheres, they are absent. Public discourse makes no room for youth, except recently in some post-revolution Arab constitutions, albeit without any real effect on policy practice.

A youth policy can be applied at several different levels:

### A. EDUCATION

It should be the natural framework for civic education, encompassing a concept of citizenship that integrates the religious dimension but places it in a democratic perspective.

- Schools should play a role in **demystifying the discourse of violence**. They should promote an awareness of tolerance, dialogue, negotiation, and compromise. In this regard, it would be appropriate to support initiatives in both the North and the South that seek to promote the expression of **pluralist thinking** among youth, peaceful confrontation with others, between rural and urban dwellers, between the educated and the less learned, between boys and girls, between minorities and those who are not, between those who fast during the months of Ramadan and those who don’t, between believers of different faiths and non-believers, etc. Such initiatives should take account of the specific circumstances of the relevant societies and organizations. These measures would be one way of taking account of the diversity in the societies of the South. The existence of such diversity was laid bare by the popular movements since 2011 but societies have not learned to live together with these differences. Given the level of diversity that exists (particularly in the North), youth exchanges between the South and the North could be implemented as part of this activity and could serve to bring the youth of the North face to face with their multiple identities (learn to come to terms with the fact of being French while at the same time being of Arab or Berber culture, Muslim, “9-3,” European, Mediterranean, boy or girl, believer or not, etc.).

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19. Note the tremendous work done after the Second World War by the Franco-German Youth Office in easing tensions between the two societies after the conflict.
• On educational content: the first task is to harmonize the objectives of economic opening set forth and enshrined in various agreements and international exchanges (such as the lowering of trade barriers with Europe) on the one hand, with the need for the kind of creativity, accountability, innovation, and respect for diversity that economic opening requires, on the other. This first approach would help ensure that other social strata have access to the culture of openness (including in terms of foreign languages), which has been the exclusive province of children from privileged social backgrounds. At the same time, it is essential to review school programs to remove the contradictions between religious precepts and the civic regulations that emanated from democratic processes. In the context of the emergence of the individual, particularly among youth, each country needs to embark upon education reform. This paper does not aim to provide more specific details on this subject. In the final analysis, the issue of education content is pivotal, both within and outside of school. It must adopt an overarching approach and should take account of the multiple dimensions of the issue: by re-examining teaching in the educational system and looking anew at the social policies in place for youth in difficulty (including those returning from jihad); by employing policies of renewal in the field of religion to eliminate the most egregious dimensions of the discourse of exclusion, and by supporting vulnerable youth and families; and by providing targeted support to civil society organizations that seek to work effectively to promote social cohesion consistent with public policies. (The State cannot do it all but should remain engaged.)

• Schools should seek to provide each young person with the training and preparation for the acquisition of vocational skills and “employability” in keeping with the demands of the economy.

B. ACTIONS TO PREVENT DISCRIMINATION, EXCLUSION, MARGINALIZATION OF YOUTH

Youth are disproportionately excluded, owing particularly to geographical factors (remote regions or neglected zones), and have to contend with unfavorable economic conditions, marked essentially by high unemployment levels, job precariousness, and inadequate wages. Here again, schools have an essential role to play, but their efforts must be buttressed by economic action by the State to promote employment in the disadvantaged regions. In the same way, the State must encourage enterprises and international cooperation organizations to contribute to the development of these areas.

The issue of the economic and social integration of unemployed youth has been largely documented in studies on the region. Policies to promote youth employment must be seen against the backdrop of the larger issues concerning the State and the reform of its central machinery. Such reforms must assign priority to decentralization; take account of the territories and rural development through measures that line up with the demands of youth

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for expression and action... These guidelines are set forth clearly in the text produced by the Center for Mediterranean Integration in 2014.20

In addition, a policy to appoint responsible youth to serve in the State apparatus, in decentralized institutions, and in the communications machinery could be initiated as part of a policy that seeks to curb the traditional practice of appointment by seniority.

C. SUPPORT FOR THOSE WORKING WITH YOUTH

Initiatives targeting individuals responsible for different sectors of youth could be an area of study: teachers, educators, directors of social and medical services, etc. These individuals operate daily on the frontline of contact with youth and have strongly expressed their inability to meet today’s new demands: how to respond to the doubts of so many youth? How to react to the provocations, concerns, and misapprehensions? Every effort must be made to build the capacity of individuals that work with young people and to enable them to become “purveyors of modernity” for youth as they abandon the protective cloak of childhood and make the transition toward young adulthood, with the attendant rights and responsibilities.

D. SUPPORT TO YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Support to organizations of young people (as distinct from youth organizations staffed by adults) could also be undertaken, such as, for example, the implementation of “youth councils” at the community level in Morocco. A fund could be established for financing mini-projects run by youth. This would help develop their sense of responsibility. In general, support should be provided to organizations of young people that promote causes that are just, and advance cohesion (aid to the most vulnerable, fight against climate change, rehabilitation of zones, artistic and cultural expressions in public spaces and in collaboration with residents, etc.).

E. INFORMATION AND CULTURE

Efforts should be made to mobilize the information organs, social networks, and artistic and cultural organizations to better reflect the situation of youth, value their positive initiatives (not only in relation to university or at the economic level, but also in terms of their human, cultural, and social dimensions), promote their participation in the production of information and culture, and advance civic initiatives. In this way, the situation of youth and their aspirations in society can be better taken into account.

Culture must once again embrace innovation and young people should find it possible to give free rein to their imagination, while availing themselves of the experience of other societies and cultures. Fundamentalist Islam brings Muslim culture into opposition with the unbridled and “debauched” culture of the west. Efforts should be made to show that there is a serious dimension to western culture, particularly in the plastic arts, cinematography, and in literary

and digital creations, which could serve as a model to Muslim youth in search of meaning. Culture should expand horizons rather than restrict them and to this end, a significant part of western culture could be instrumental in demonstrating this.

F. GENDER POLICY
The enrolment of girls in school is well underway in most countries of the South. Universities are welcoming young girls in increasing numbers. However, discrimination still exists in terms of preparation for and access to employment. Specific job preparation programs could be usefully implemented.

G. A JOINT NORTH/SOUTH PRODUCTION OF INFORMATION ON RADICALIZATION
It would be useful to exchange information and disseminate expertise on youth integration and the phenomenon of radicalization. The societies of the Mediterranean, both North and South, suffer from a knowledge gap on the subject of violent extremism. The production of knowledge on this subject should be encouraged through the support of research on these issues.

In this regard, the establishment of a MOOC on these issues is to be encouraged. A project underway in Tunisia targets different public actors that interface with youth as well as social science researchers on both sides of the Mediterranean.

It would be useful to take stock of all the initiatives being implemented in these areas on both shores. Civil society actors and framers of public policy would benefit greatly from a greater level of interface with think tanks and University structures and would profit from the sharing of their results.

H. WORK WITH DETAINEES AND RETURNED JIHADISTS
A number of associations are currently conducting programs aimed at detainees, particularly in Tunisia. Access to the data and individuals involved in these programs would be of tremendous benefit to psychologists and legal practitioners conducting research to better understand the profile of radicalized individuals, define the actions to combat recidivism, and prevent recruitment within the prisons themselves. The reintegration of ex-combatants and the provision of support to families are two key steps that must be taken if opportunities are to be provided to escape radicalization and even to allow returned jihadists to contribute, through their experience, to the process of de-radicalization.

I. STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
There is no shortage of areas in which young people could play a role in addressing the challenges facing the societies of the North and South Mediterranean. In their policy of support to the countries of the South Mediterranean, international cooperation could stipulate as a major criterion that youth be involved when these challenges are being addressed. International cooperation resources should be mobilized within the Mediterranean framework to organize a kind of Erasmus+ system of exchange programs (both at the university and vocational levels).
This paper has been written by the Center for Mediterranean Integration based on the results of a discussion group’s meetings on ‘Development and Violent Extremism Prevention’.

The group is composed of economists, political analysts, sociologists, psychologists, development specialists, and administrators from the Northern and Southern Mediterranean, who have been selected intuitu personæ for their knowledge of the subject and the region. Some members of the group have held or currently hold senior positions in public and private institutions in their respective countries or in international organizations. However, they contribute to the group in a strictly personal capacity and their opinions do not reflect those of their institutions.

The contents of this paper are the sole responsibility of the Center for Mediterranean Integration.

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