299

JANUARY
2015

FRANCE "IS CHARLIE",
but for how long?

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"We are Charlie". So goes the message of unity we may take from the Place de la République in Paris on Sunday 11th January. As a result of the hunt for and capture of those responsible for the terrorist attacks on January 7th—the siege on Charlie Hebdo—and January 8th in Montrouge, French citizens, political leaders (except the Front National) and around 50 heads of state and government took part in the enormous republican marches organised in Paris and throughout France to commemorate the death of the victims but equally and, above all, to send out a message of national unity in the face of the danger confronting France. But with the investigation still underway, this message of unity is already beginning to disintegrate and give way to political agendas and public debate on the whys and wherefores of this carnage. So, for how long will France still be Charlie?

If 2014 ended with the idea of *Suicide Français,* the title and theme of essayist and journalist Eric Zemmour's book, 2015 has begun with the most deadly attack on French soil in more than a century and a half. By way of response, close to four million people marched on French streets on Sunday 11th January, the largest mobilisation in France since the liberation. Could this be a French surge in response to the so-called French suicide? As with all tragic events of this type, the emotion is soon followed by the debate on who is to blame and the lessons to be learned.

First and foremost, these events hit hard because of the strong symbolic weight of what they embody. Let's begin with the victims. Charlie Hebdo is a satirical weekly, best known since February 2006 for its cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. The great controversy and sometimes extremely violent reactions that they triggered (fire due to arson, November 2nd, 2011) elevated it to a kind of symbol of freedom of expression. Then in Montrouge the murder of a police officer, symbol of the French state. And, ultimately, the French Jews taken hostage in a kosher supermarket in the heart of Paris, four of whom were killed.

The symbolic weight is due as much to what those responsible represent as the organisations that claim them: two brothers—Saïd and Chérif Kouachi—and Ahmedy Coulibaly. Though their names may sound African, they are well and truly French. Their common features, beyond the extreme violence with which they all acted, lie not only with the France they represent, which is to say, a France that is plural and, whether we like it or not, multicultural and multi-faith, but also in the

religion that they consider themselves to be and to which close to 6 million French people belong: Islam.

Finally, frames of reference are mobilised: the brothers acted in the name of Al-Qaeda in Yemen, Coulilaby claims to have received his orders from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Based on these symbols, with France challenged by a terrorist threat coming from within France itself, it is easy to imagine the discussions already shaking—and which will continue to shake—the country during months of debate amongst the French public.

Radicalisation and Self-Radicalisation. In terms of direct responsibilities, the processes of radicalisation and/or self-radicalisation that those responsible for these killings may have gone through are elements of the analysis and explanation of such a phenomenon. In this regard, it appears that the time these three men spent in prison played a certain role. These processes, which are above all personalised and leave their mark on an individual's trajectory, cannot be fought through general measures. In such instances, the results of the enquiries will certainly make specific details clearer, explaining these three trajectories (from relatively minor acts of delinquency to terrorism), of which the degree of violence is the common denominator.

Intelligence Services Deemed to be among the most effective in the anti-terrorist fight, the French intelligence services are today accused of having failed to thwart the attack, even if it is generally agreed that there is no such thing as "zero risk". Though the Kouachi brothers had a legal history and were under surveillance, it seems today that this surveillance ceased in summer 2014 due to the absence of supporting evidence. Here and there voices are raised to accuse the intelligence services of incompetence, accusations their representatives answer by citing, in particular, a lack of resources. Other voices highlight the myopia the intelligence services have fallen victim to: because this is a case of what might be called the old jihadist generation rather than the "new" one. Some point to the relationship between the end of the surveillance of the Kouachi brothers, the surfeit of media coverage of Islamic State and the addition to the agenda of French jihadists returning from Syria and Iraq. Could it be that because political and media pressure is so focussed on Islamic State, the intelligence services stopped all surveillance of the Kouachi brothers, or was it because of the evident lack of a proven plan of attack? This is one of the central questions to which the services are asked to respond today by the French people.

That other France. More serious and more controversial accusations soon arise: those concerning the terrorists' identities and their alleged affiliation. First and foremost they represent the failure of the mentioned French integration model. And yet, is it necessary to mention that they were born in France, schooled in France and grew up here? The main problem with the perennial debate on integration—beyond the fact that speaking of integration as French creates a terminological problem—is that it turns a specific case into a generality: three individuals who "represent" that France "of immigrant background" embody, through their actions, the failure of a whole "model" (if it even is a model). To start with, taking into account the fact of their being French allows us to de facto eliminate questions connected to both immigration and integration. Likewise, remarking that this is a marginal phenomenon compared to the immense majority of the minorities of which they appear to form part allows the deconstruction of the idea that there is an unavoidable link between integration and terrorism. Given all this, the immediate question prompted is the following: how do French people, born, educated and raised in France, get to this point?

Islam. Just as their origins are not enough to incriminate them, their apparent affiliation with Islam is unsuitable as an explanatory factor. In the first place, it

derives from a particular analysis that requires a distinction to be made between Islam as a religion and Islam as an ideology, which, in this instance, is taken to the extreme. Indeed, in the process of mental construction that characterises them, these young people align themselves with, and proclaim themselves, soldiers of God, charged, specifically, with «avenging the prophet". So, even before getting to the act, the jihadists are in the process of a triple breach: a breach with a society they believe has cast them aside, that marginalises them; a breach with the Muslim community that surrounds them and that they adjudge too lax with regard to Western interventions on "Islamic soil", as well as on measures viewed as Islamophobic in France; and, finally, a breach with their own families, whom they see as insufficiently Muslim when it comes to the injustices the ummah suffers, here and elsewhere in the Muslim world.

The rise on the agenda of right-wing and far-right concerns. A week after the attacks, voices are raised in the opposition with the goal of putting on the agenda the traditional themes now common on the right and far right: the proposal of a referendum on the death penalty launched by Marine Le Pen; the indictment of the immigration policies of the former president, Nicolas Sarkozy, (of which the government was the architect) as "complicating the problem"; and finally, the traditional and eternal debate on the solvency of Islam within the republic. Of greater concern are the proposals to establish a French Patriot Act. At a time when the United States is weighing up the counter-productive effects of measures that were essentially repressive and in large part restrictions on freedom, acting in the light of the failure of most of the anti-terrorist measures applied on the other side of the Atlantic would be one of the best ways to preserve the increasingly fragile equilibrium between security and fundamental rights and freedoms.