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SPECIAL ISSUE ON MISRECOGNITION IN WORLD POLITICS: REVISITING HEGEL

Agency (mis)recognition in international violence: the case of French jihadism

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Abstract

This contribution introduces a reconceptualisation of misrecognition that stresses 'creative agency' (gift, work, etc.) as a condition of self-consciousness. Drawing on Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, I argue that recognition struggles are often less motivated by the actors' desire to have a special status than by the desire to make a 'contribution' to society, to 'give' something. The content of a socially valued contribution-gift (as per Marcel Mauss) varies from one society to another but it is linked to the very ability of actors to act on their 'own' and to shape their environment. Thus, subjects identifying with political units or social groups with little recognised agency, while imagining strong abilities to contribute to a given society, will easily feel slighted. It is impossible to be recognised as 'subjects' if one is denied in the ability to 'contribute' to a given society. I apply this perspective to the case of French jihadism, based on 13 interviews with prisoners in France suspected to belong to al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. These individuals experience 'individual' agency denial inside the 'national' community, but also agency denial of 'Muslim sovereignty' outside.

Keywords: Misrecognition; Hegel; Mauss; Sovereign Agency

Introduction

During the last two decades the phenomenon of (mis)recognition has been analysed under various angles in philosophy, political theory, sociology, and lately also in International Relations. With respect to the latter, (mis)recognition is mainly understood as a form of status denial,[1] denial of state recognition in legal terms[2] or an identity of a great power,[3] an inflated self-narrative,[4] confirmation of a positive self-image[5] or narratives of the past.[6] Empirical studies have shown that misrecognition can fuel international conflict,[7] global inequalities,[8]

[1]T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). See also Ayşe Zarakol, 'Sovereign equality as misrecognition', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), this Special Issue.

[2]Jens Bartelson, 'Three concepts of recognition', *International Theory*, 5:1 (2013), p. 107.

[3]Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[4]Richard New Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008).

[5]Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (Colchester: ECPR Press 2011); Reinhard Wolf, 'Respect and disrespect in international politics: the significance of status recognition', *International Theory*, 3:1 (2011), pp. 105–42.

[6]Constance Duncombe, 'Representation, recognition and foreign policy in the Iran US relationship', *European Journal of International Relations*, 21:1 (2015), pp. 1–24.

[7]Caroline Fehl and Georgios Kolliarkis, *Recognition in International Relations: Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context* (London: Springer, 2015).

[8]Simon Thompson and Majid Yar, *The Politics of Misrecognition* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011).

(neo)colonialism,[9] or limit the overall rationality of political decision-making.[10] While these studies are inspired by different epistemological and paradigmatic perspectives, they have one thing in common: they tend to see (mis)recognition as linked to what actors are 'given' in terms of respect (legal status), social self-esteem (social status) or even love (Axel Honneth). Thus, more generally, when these scholars discuss recognition or misrecognition they often refer to what actors *receive* or not as recognition. Here, I will argue to the contrary that an actor's sense of self and value is constructed by what actors *give*. Without making what is felt to be a genuine contribution they may feel that recognition is undeserved and may even feel misrecognised.

I will draw on Hegel and Marcel Mauss[11] to critique the taken for granted assumption in the literature that recognition is about receiving. I propose that what matters most in (mis)recognition regards what actors can *do* and whether they are able to exercise creative agency, by which I mean the ability of the self to express itself through words and deeds in social reality. Conversely, misrecognition can be understood as a frustrated desire for such creative agency. This frustration is less motivated by the desire to *receive* but more by the desire to be able to *give*.

Creative agency as '*Formierendes Tun*' ('formative activity') enables actors to shape their social environment and their sense of self.[12] My perspective has some similarities with the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha C. Nussbaum.[13] Both perspectives shift the focus of attention 'from the means of living to the actual opportunities a person has'.[14] However, what matters here for (mis)recognition is less the capability to achieve well-being and happiness but rather to achieve something which can be considered as a 'gift', that is, a valued contribution to society. A Maussian gift is far from an altruistic act but motivated by a will to obtain recognition from others by making a specific contribution to the social world (valued work, culture, or values). Actors are not valued for abstract properties but for their specific achievements. (Mis)recognition is selective and varies according to the value a given society attributes to the 'gifts' of an actor. Furthermore, and in contrast to Sen and Nussbaum's focus at the level of the individual, I consider that agentic (mis)recognition also concerns collective actors. Individuals can identify with collective entities that are deprived of agentic capabilities.

In order to underline the link between agency and (mis)recognition, I draw on two classical texts that enlightens different facets of agentic misrecognition. First, in line with Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, I will outline how misrecognition can be reframed by paying attention to aspirations for 'creative agency' through work or the destruction of objects. In his discussion about desire and the master–servant dialectic, Hegel frames recognition as a process by which actors get a sense of self through formative doing, for example through work and what work produces. It is through such creative agency that the self can feel real. In order to become real, the self needs to 'objectify' itself.

The second classical text that I draw on in my discussion of agentic misrecognition is that of Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*.[15] For Mauss, actors do not only need to give in order to contribute meaningfully to society, such meaningful contribution requires a return, a counter-gift.

[9]Franziska Dübgen, 'Africa humiliated? Misrecognition in development aid', *Res Publica*, 18:1 (2012), pp. 65–77.

[10]Wolf, 'Respect', p. 107.

[11]Georg Wilhel Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Francfort: Suhrkamp 1971); Marcel Mauss, *Essais sur le don – forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaiques in Sociologie et Antropologie* [*The Gift*] (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950).

[12]Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, p. 145.

[13]Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2001); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001).

[14]Ibid., p. 253.

[15]Marcel Mauss, *Essais sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques. Introduction de Florence Weber* [*The Gift*] (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012).

In paraphrasing Mauss, it seems that misrecognition is not only about giving but also about gratitude concerning the gift.

If we were to apply agentic misrecognition dynamics to the object of this article, so-called jihadist violence, Hegelian misrecognition would imply that an individual may be prone to political violence because he feels unable to concretise and objectify his self in social life, while in the Maussian sense, an individual may participate in social life through work but without positive feedback for his contribution.

This article is structured in the following way. First, I will outline how misrecognition can be reframed in world politics by leaning on Hegel and Mauss.[16] Second, I will present my case study of French jihadism, my empirical material and methodology.[17] Third, I will examine how so-called jihadist prisoners frame violence and how this is related to agentic misrecognition. Finally, in my last section, I will analyse two sociological conditions that can favour agentic misrecognition: (a) identification with collective actors deprived of sovereign agency; and (b) socialisation in values associated with patriarchal society.

Misrecognition through agency denial: Bringing back Hegel and Mauss

As discussed in the introduction to this Special Issue,[18] it seems that something is missing from the contemporary discussion on recognition in world politics. I propose that we need to pay closer attention to Hegel's master–slave dialectic in this discussion. In order for subjects to see their self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*) recognised, they need to feel an ability to shape reality, to be able to project themselves outside of their inner world. It is through such externalisation of the subject that one can achieve a sense of the self by proving 'effectivity' in social reality.[19] I will develop further the evocated link between sovereign agency and misrecognition dynamics. I consider that misrecognition is basically induced by frustrated agency. However, borrowing from Hegel, I add to the discussion on misrecognition in the introduction to this Special Issue that agentic (mis)recognition is also linked to what actors *can* do and not only what they *want* to do. The gap between agency *expectations* (*the illusion of sovereign agency*) and concrete *agency capabilities* towards persons and objects shapes the degree according to which subjects can escape from misrecognition. Furthermore, sovereign agency and relations between subjects are always mediated by objects. A subjects' capability to shape or at least negate objects will condition his possibility to obtain confirmation of self-consciousness.

The three stages of misrecognition and agency

The Phenomenology of Spirit traces the thought process from consciousness to absolute knowledge. Hegel's aim is therefore not to analyse the struggles of real social groups. Hegel himself, however, takes up some of the categories of the master–slave dialectic presented in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* in order to explain interstate conflicts. He considers that the value of a political community is reflected in the ability of its citizens to risk their survival to assert their sovereignty.[20] Hegel's premise throughout

[16]Hegel, *Phänomenologie* and Mauss, *Essai*.

[17]See, for example, Luis Martinez, 'Structures, environment, and disruption in Jihadism', *Cultures & Conflicts*, 1 (2008), pp. 133–56; Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and Xavier Crettiez, Romain Sèze, Billel Ainine, and Thomas Lindemann, *Saisir les mécanismes de la radicalisation violente: pour une analyse processuelle et biographique des engagements violents* (Paris, 2017), available at: {http://www.gip-recherche-justice.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Synthese-rapport-radicalisation-finale.pdf}.

[18]Charlotte Epstein, Thomas Lindemann, and Ole Jacob Sending, 'Frustrated sovereigns: the agency that makes the world go around', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), introduction to the Special Issue.

[19]See Robert Antonio, 'Immanent critique as the core of critical theory: its origins and developments in Hegel, Marx and contemporary thought', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 32:3 (1981), pp. 330–45; Heikki Ikäheimo, 'A vital human need: Recognition as inclusion in personhood', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 8:1 (2009), pp. 31–45.

The Phenomenology of Spirit is the idea that actors are in the quest for self-consciousness. What seems crucial here is that Hegel presumes that recognition requires autonomous agency that has to be exteriorised in the outside world.

Let me reformulate, the Hegelian conception of (mis)recognition through agency: (a) escaping misrecognition by the destruction of objects; (b) escaping misrecognition by the sovereign power to act independently; and (c) escaping misrecognition through formative activity.[21]

Recognition by destructive agency: the power to act negatively in relation to objects

Hegel develops the analysis of recognition in Chapter B, section IV, *Selbstbewusstsein* (self-consciousness), which he conceived as a step towards absolute knowledge, before the emergence of reason, mind, and religion. In the first stage of self-consciousness – the consciousness of having consciousness – consciousness is split. It now has two objects: the external object to it (sense-certainty) and the object reflected into itself. It stays at this abstract level. Consciousness therefore seizes life in order to become active and ensure its existence. Desire (*Begierde*) is for Hegel this concrete manifestation of self-consciousness, which first comes into contact with the organic world (eating, drinking, reproducing).[22] Thus, in the first stage, self-consciousness tries to obtain a sense of the self by consuming and destroying objects.

Absolute sovereignty: the power to act independently

In consuming the object, the subject annihilates the very thing by which it claimed its identity and must therefore permanently reaffirm its self-consistency (*Selbstbestandigkeit*) beyond consumption.[23] In order to stabilise itself, the subject turns itself into to another subject. The quest for recognition through the desire of the other's desire becomes the essential condition to reassure oneself of the existence of self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*). The subject no longer wants to assert itself only through its own negation or destruction, but rather through the absolute domination over another self. The subject intends to have itself recognised through the lowering of others to the role of slave, by depriving them of their independence. The master becomes the master because, according to Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he is able to assert his value by exposing himself to death.[24] This assertion is linked to agency insofar as the master proves that he is not driven by other forces but only by his own will. In his capability to *give* his life the master proves his independence from social determination. The master then asserts his self-consciousness through negation of the value of his own life as well as that of others.

On the contrary, the slave becomes a slave by choosing to save his life rather than giving away at all costs his being and therefore revealing his dependence on life. At this stage, the slave is not able to perform agency. He is driven by fear of death and he can give nothing of his 'self', that is to say something that belongs to him and that might reveal and express his own self-consciousness. The absolute negation of the slave's independence – its assignment to the opposite pole of heteronomy – presents a strong form of misrecognition. Conversely, recognition

[20]G. W. F. Hegel, *Principes de la philosophie du droit* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998: Edition critique établie par Jean-François Kervégan), pp. 535–9.

[21]These are not Hegel's concepts. However, seen in relation to the issue of objectivity (one might say, of objectality), subjectivity (about the future of the subject) and recognition, this expression seems to allow us to better understand today Hegelian questioning by having it resonate with other issues, especially the theory of capacity (capabilities) of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. We present these three moments by immediately integrating some elements of Maussian analysis.

[22]See Charlotte Epstein, 'The productive force of the negative and the desire for recognition: Lessons from Hegel and Lacan', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), this Special Issue.

[23]Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, p. 143.

[24]See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

presumes the recognition of independence. Entirely dependent actors – heteronomous – cannot be recognised and will struggle to arrive at self-consciousness. Even the master will finally fail to obtain pure recognition because it is impossible to be recognised by inferiors.

Formative doing of the slave and mutual recognition of the reciprocity of the power to act and to give

One could ask how the master might recognise the slave and whether this could be related to increased agency capabilities of the slave. As mentioned by Frederic Jameson: 'it is not quite accurate to say that the Master is thereby the truth of the Slave, for the Master has become a mere drone, for whom the Slave labors and whom he provides with the luxuries and necessities of life'.[25] What seems for Hegel decisive is that the master loses by his parasitic existence and inactivity, a sense of the self. In the meantime, the slave realises his own existence. Central to this process of recognition is the formative doing of the slave. As noted by Hegel: 'so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness'.[26] The key to this independent consciousness is work:

> Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is. In the moment which corresponds to desire in the lord's consciousness, it did seem that the aspect of unessential relation to the thing fell to the lot of the bondsman, since in that relation the thing retained its independence. Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self … Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its form and something permanent, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence.[27]

Such work is not so much productive but it is for Hegel an objectivation of subjectivity. Clearly this kind of work is not understood as repetitive, industrialised, and alienating. Work is interpreted by the young Marx as a process of externalising human abilities and reflects the rhythm of 'handicraft production, insofar as the artisan is still able to recognise himself in the thing produced, in the matter thereby formed'.[28]

Hegel suggests that there might be at term a relation of mutual recognition. Such a situation would require a balance of agency. The two subjects are both 'donors' and 'recipients'. It is only if both subjects accept each other as actors that they might achieve something close to mutual recognition. Hegel puts it, for self-consciousness, its 'action is thus ambiguous, not only because it is an action against itself just as much as against the other, but also in so far it is inseparably the action of one just as much as it is as it is of the other'.[29] Mutual recognition thus understands the other to be performing the same actions as itself. Such mutual recognition enables an empathic reciprocity of actors: the 'I' recognises itself in the other recognising the 'I'.

Hegel's consideration of (frustrated) recognition desire for the quest of creative agency is a particularly stimulating starting point.[30] We can identity three stages in which actors cope with misrecognition through the exercise of agency. In the first stage subjects with no previous agency may prove their identity through consumption and/or destruction. In the second stage, subjects try to overcome misrecognition by the quest of recognition from other subjects through absolute

[25]Frederic Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On The Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Verso Books, 2014), p. 57.
[26]Georg Wilhelm Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), p. 117.
[27]Ibid., p. 118.
[28]Jameson, *The Hegel Variations*, p. 23.
[29]Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, pp. 183, 147, my translation.
[30]Sean Sayers, 'Creative activity and alienation in Hegel and Marx', *Historical Materialism*, 11:1 (2003), pp. 107–28.

sovereignty and their contempt of death. Finally, subjects may cope with misrecognition by formative work that enables them to achieve autonomous self-consciousness.

Of course it would be artificial to transpose the master–slave dialectic to the empirical study of French jihadism. However, Hegel's work opens several paths for the study of international violence in general: first, violence/destruction/sacrifice through contempt of death might procure to misrecognised actors a sense of power/agency and therefore a sense of self. Second, while misrecognition is the normal condition of subjects, situations producing more misrecognition than others also exist. If we take the master–slave dialectic, the source of strong (mis)recognition is twofold. The first is related to lack of autonomy in intersubjective relations. Actors simply executing the orders of others will not be able to get a sense of themselves. In accordance with this perspective, I will later ask whether young Muslims engaged in political violence are more affected than other young Muslims in France by the perception that in world politics Muslims suffer from a lack of international sovereignty.[31] For example, do these young Muslims identify themselves with oppressed Muslims in Palestine, Syria, or elsewhere. The second source of misrecognition is more related to objects and the impossibility to exert creative agency through work. While for Hegel the slave is eventually able to carry out formative work to enable some self-consciousness, Marxists interpretations of the master–slave dialectic have pointed out that routinised, low qualified work leads to alienation and the impossibility to achieve a sense of the self. Our related question regarding jihadist young Muslims is to explore whether they have suffered more so than other young French Muslims from professional-social inactivity or are stuck in low qualified work.

Mauss and The Gift

While Hegel focuses on how subjects attempt to achieve self-consciousness in order to get a sense of the self, he provides no detailed answer to the question of how subjects prove their value in society. *The Gift* by Marcel Mauss[32] provides some points for discussion here. Nowhere better than Mauss's *Gift* can we find such a wealth of empirical ethnographic information resonating with the philosophical fable imagined by Hegel. Marcel Mauss speaks of practices such as fights until death for prestige, in the case of *potlatch*, or less extreme fights in the case of *kula*. The comparison between *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Gift* is striking.[33] It allows us to provide to give an empirically founded response to the question of what constitutes the value that actors want to see recognised. Actors seek to have their generosity and their ability to give recognised.

I will mobilise in the following section this second theoretical resource to explore further the link between misrecognition and agency. I will contribute to Hegel's insight that subjects strive to obtain a sense of their existence through effectivity of their agency with the Maussian perspective, that a valued contribution requires a kind of counter-gift from others, some positive feedback, or even gratitude.[34] Finally, I will also show that for Mauss, misrecognition is provoked by inflated ideals of sovereignty. The origins of such a sovereign ideal are less rooted in world politics but what we would call today patriarchal socialisation.

[31]See the stimulating work of Irm Haleem, *The Essence of Islamist Extremism: Recognition through Violence, Freedom through Death* (London: Routledge 2011).

[32]Mauss, *Essais*.

[33]And which Claude Lefort had well carried out in his important article, 'L'échange ou la lutte des hommes', *Les Temps modernes* (1951), pp. 1401–17, first criticism, inspiration of merleau-pontyenne, of structuralism by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Re-edited in C. Lefort, *Les formes de l'histoire*, Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

[34]See, for example, Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge: Polity Press); A. H. Gouldner, 'The norm of reciprocity: a preliminary statement', *American Journal of Sociology*, 25:2 (1960), pp. 161–78; Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946–1963, Vol. III* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1987).

Misrecognition as depreciation of creative agency though lack of reciprocation

Mauss suggests that recognition requires social activity. In *The Gift*, he is mainly concerned with what constitutes the particular value of a subject and social group. While economists consider that value is produced by the accumulation of resources, Mauss argues that the social value of subjects depends on their ability to give or even to waste resources. Thus, it is through their ability to give something to others that subjects obtain a sense of their value. Similarly to Hegel, Mauss articulates social activity with a sense of a self. Mauss does not employ the notion of the gift as something limited to material objects but in a wider sense as something that you offer to others in the expectation to create a relation. Thus hospitality and offering precious or worthless objects belong to a same category of gift. It is important here to understand that for Mauss the gift is associated with a '*hau*'. In the indigenous society '*hau*' means 'spirit of the thing' and is associated with he who gives. In other words a gift does not only present itself but also the person who offers it.

From what follows, it is possible to capture how misrecognition is produced. First of all, a subject can refuse a gift. In this case this refusal is not only the denial of a special object but also of the person who gave it. In the second case, the gift is accepted but not reciprocated. In both cases the 'giver' will feel that he is not treated with the respect he deserves. What links both – refusal to accept the gift and non-reciprocation – is that the 'performed' gift of the giver and therefore the giver himself is misrecognised. The expression misrecognition in this case is the lack of gratitude. Concerning the Trobriand Islands, Mauss alludes to solicitous gifts offered to gods and spirits that corresponds to some remuneration. As he notes: 'They are marks of gratitude and hospitable welcome and must be reciprocated'.[35]

Thus the decisive contribution of Mauss with Hegel is that subjects do not only want to recognise themselves in their objects but also to obtain value from other for what they have done. People expect recognition in proportion to the gifts they gave or they are able to give. Thus, social actors yearn for the recognition of their value,[36] along with the satisfaction of their interests, and this recognition implies their power to give. Mauss suggests in his analysis that the gift cycle with its three obligations to give, receive, and reciprocate is a source of social cohesion if the exchanges are balanced.

Patriarchal socialisation and the potlach[37]

Unlike most perspectives on recognition, the Maussian one suggests that expectations for recognition are not uniform rather depend on what actors believe they have given and/or are able to give in the future. 'Powerful' actors, or those who wish to be powerful, probably have an expectation for greater recognition than actors with fewer resources. The more actors have given, or consider they have given, the more likely they are also contest their subordinate position.

For Bourdieu, the 'gift' in question can be economic and cultural.[38] However, the gift can also be moral and physical. Actors socialised into 'virility', may well display physical courage[39] and engage in practices of 'potlatch'. Mauss shows that actors socialised into patriarchal ideals such as North American tribes will not be satisfied with equal recognition in the cycle of the gift and counter-gift, unlike the more egalitarian dynamic of the Kwakuitl. The purpose of the potlach is not to obtain a counter-gift and to establish continuous relations. It is mainly antagonistic. The recipient of this gift should not be able to render it. Its main purpose is to establish total

[35]Mauss, *Essais*, p. 39.

[36]And therefore, let's say, to be worthy of being loved, respected, and esteemed.

[37]See Holly High, 'Re-reading the potlatch in a time of crisis: debt and the distinctions that matter', *Social Anthropology*, 20:4 (2012), pp. 363–79 and Jon Baldwin, 'Lessons from witchetty grubs and eskimos: the French anthropological context of Jean Baudrillard', *French Cultural Studies*, 19:3 (2008), pp. 333–46.

[38]Pierre Bourdieu, 'Symbolic power', *Critique of Anthropology*, 4:13–14 (1979), pp. 77–85.

[39]See also Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979).

dominance over others and to humiliate them through ostentatious gifts. As noted by Mauss: 'To give is to show one's superiority, to be more, to be higher in rank, magister. To accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant, to become small, to fall lower (minister).'[40] In such societies, the 'value' of men is related to their potential to display absolute dominance over others and to the ability to risk their own life as the master in his fight with the slave. Thus, while social relations and cooperation are critical to societies of *Big Men* who practice ceremonial exchanging, such cooperation is non-existent or highly secondary in societies of *Great Men* where prestige is accorded to warriors who have risked their own lives and caused the most deaths.[41]

Operationalisation of Hegel and Mauss to the study of agentic misrecognition and jihadist violence

How might we transpose Maussian insights into world politics? In particular, will the ideal of inflated masculinity with its values of dominance and contempt for death render actors more sensitive to feelings of powerlessness and misrecognition than a less gendered socialisation?

In particular, I understand the notion of gift in International Relations not in its literal sense but in a Maussian spirit, as the social contribution of an actor to a given society. This contribution does not mean that an actor gives something in an altruistic way, it implies that the actor seeks to shape the (inter)national environment. This formative agency implies, on the one hand, being considered an actor in this society/system with a degree of autonomy, on the other,[42] it implies that these actors can contribute to this society in function of their capabilities. It is my objective to identify situations of extreme misrecognition induced by paralysed formative agency.

What constitutes a gift in world politics?[43] In contemporary societies, the estimated value of an individual depends largely on his work. Thus, wage is an important indicator of the estimated contribution of an individual to society. According to a Hegelian perspective, work provides gratification to an actor in terms of his ability to contribute to a product. Thus, if work is precarious, less gratifying, and mechanical, it will weigh on an individual's creative agency and value.[44] Furthermore, drawing on a more Maussian perspective, I examine whether work is rewarded by an appropriated counter-gift (say in the form of a decent salary). Furthermore, in most societies, individuals are also evaluated by their ability to love and care for others, such as through finding a partner and founding a family. Thus, individuals who are unemployed or have precarious work and live in solitude are likely to feel little recognition.

Regarding world politics, I would like to explore the question of sovereign agency discussed in the introduction. As in any system of interactions, there are standards in international relationships that determine who is sovereign and what kind of actor can be recognised. The core of international sovereignty is diplomatic recognition of states.[45] This recognition accords specific rights to its members. To the contrary, exclusion, such as through the non-respect of sovereignty,

[40]Mauss, *Essais*, p. 95.

[41]Cf. Maurice Godelier, *La production des grands hommes* (Paris: Fayard, 1982).

[42]See Julia Gallagher, 'Misrecognition in the making of a state: Ghana's international relations under Kwame Nkrumah', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), this Special Issue and Epstein, 'The productive force of the negative and the desire for recognition'.

[43]Two stimulating works: Roderick Stirrat and Heiko Henkel, 'The development gift: the problem of reciprocity in the NGO world', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 554:1 (1997), pp. 66–80 and Frédéric Ramel, 'Marcel Mauss et l'étude des relations internationales: un héritage oublié', *Sociologie et sociétés*, 36:2 (2004), pp. 227–45.

[44]See Rabindra Kanungo, 'Culture and work alienation western models and eastern realities', *International Journal of Psychology*, 25:3–6 (1990), pp. 795–812; Marc Loriol, 'Collective forms of coping and the social construction of work stress among industrial workers and police officers in France', *Theory & Psychology*, 26:1 (2016), pp. 112–29.

[45]See Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (Colchester: ECPR Press 2011), p. 23 and Minda Holm and Ole Jacob Sending, 'States before relations: On misrecognition and the bifurcated regime of sovereignty', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), this Special Issue.

is a clear sign of a negation of agency, presenting a situation of blatant 'misrecognition'.[46] For instance, colonised people were not recognised as actors, and consequentially had no right to 'give'. They merely received 'gifts' considered as valuable for great powers, such as the projection of their military and technological power. They were 'civilised', that is to say reduced to passive recipients. Conversely, the value of great powers was assessed according to the number of people 'civilised' under their control.

What does this perspective have to say about individual French jihadists who by definition are not collective state actors? My interviews suggest that French jihadists aspire to ideals of sovereign agency; indeed, they often identify with oppressed Muslims seen to have little of such agency. Individuals tend to identify with collective actors such as a religious community, a nation, or a state. For this study, I hope to demonstrate how jihadists identified with Muslim communities perceived to have little or no creative agency. Furthermore, in a more Maussian perspective, I will also pay attention to possible feelings of ingratitude, for example, with respect to the contribution of Muslims for France during the World Wars or in the context of colonisation.

Finally, in line with the conceptualisation of relative agentic misrecognition outlined in the introduction to this Special Issue, I will probe whether Muslims involved in jihadist violence are particularly attached to ideals of patriarchal society through, for example, physical domination, dominant behaviour, or contempt for death.

Overview of our case study: French jihadism

My empirical inquiry is based a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with individuals imprisoned for jihadist violence.[47] In this article, I am principally concerned with the existence – or non-existence – of misrecognition dynamics to understand the approval of violence by jihadist actors. To this end, our research team conducted fieldwork in penitentiary establishments in France from 2015 to 2016. Our selection of respondents was based on a list of detained persons transmitted by the *Direction des affaires criminelles et des graces* (DACG), the *Direction de l'administration pénitenciaire* (DAP), and the *Directions des services pénitenciaires* (DSP). According to our ethical framework, participation in the research project was on a voluntary basis and all interviewees have been anonymised. Approximately half of the people contacted for interview declined.

Access to detainees was, at times, challenging. For instance, we had to adjust to regular transfers of the prisoners, releases, and new (definitive) convictions, which required continuously updating the list of potential interviewees and the establishments to be contacted. An overall of twenty individuals were interviewed: seven convicted individuals – although not necessarily in prison – for acts of regionalist/nationalist terrorism and 13 individuals convicted for acts of jihadist terrorism – all of whom were imprisoned. Four of the seven interviews with individuals linked to regionalist/nationalist terrorism were conducted outside of the penitentiary establishments.

The small size of our final sample is explained by several factors: (1) a number of persons were placed in pre-trial detention to whom we did not have access; (2) the understandable refusals of certain detained person; and (3) the absence of a positive response from the Fleury-Merogis prison. It is unfortunate that only a limited number of individuals connected to the Islamic State (ISIS/Daesh) have been involved in our study compared to a considerable number of individuals connected to al-Qaeda. This is perhaps due to the more recent nature of ISIS networks and, consequently, the definitive condemnations to which they have given rise.

[46]We think here of the challenges of UN recognition of the Palestinian Authority.

[47]Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Prisons de France: Violence, radicalisations, déshumanisation: surveillants et détenus parlent* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2016).

Four members of the research team conducted the interviews during 2015 and 2016. They lasted between 1 hour 30 minutes and 2 hours 30 minutes each and they were recorded with the permission of the *Direction des Services pénitentiaires* and the interviewee, and then transcribed. The semi-directive and biographical interviews were conducted according to the interview guide,[48] which was also written in relation to understanding mechanisms of (mis)recognition and which allowed the researchers involved to harmonise their questions. On several occasions, these interviews were preceded by information from the DSP on the trajectory, current situation, and personality of the person about to be interviewed. Detainees have sometimes been reluctant to deliver information about their trajectory, thus having background information proved extremely useful. It often took some time to establish a minimum level of confidence so that individuals were willing to take part in the exchange. For a number of our cases, the qualification of jihadist given by the administration seemed problematic and doubtful.[49] Only the explicit adherence to violent acts such as the 9/11 attacks or the attacks at the Bataclan in the name of defending Islam led us to retain this qualifier.

The objective of my inquiry is to show how dynamics of misrecognition through agency denial can be a subjective motivation for jihadist violence. I will try to capture the reasons for a feeling of strong agency denial among the jihadists interviewed. I argue that this lies in the relative frustration arising from a discrepancy between real denials of agency and expectations regarding the ability to act sovereignly.

Research questions

Before analysing my empirical material I will briefly summarise my research questions concerning agentic misrecognition and how it relates to the theoretical perspectives of Hegel and Mauss. I examine four main thematics linked to agentic misrecognition.

1. Subjective experiences. What are the subjective representations of jihadist actors, and especially what are their grievances? Are they expressed in terms of misrecognition? Are jihadist grievances due to the fact that they consider themselves both despised and exposed to the stigma of powerlessness? In line with the Hegelian perspective, do they consider that they are deprived of agency, visibility, and meaningful existence? In line with a more Maussian perspective, do they feel undervalued by French society?
2. Agency expectations. What are the political objectives of jihadists? If the thesis in the introduction is on the right lines, at least in the medium term, jihadists should be influenced by a matrix of state sovereignty. Can we say that the sovereign agency expectations of jihadists are particularly high? Do they identify with state symbols and absolute ideals of sovereignty? Furthermore, are jihadists particularly attached to ideals of patriarchal society? Do Muslims engaged in jihadism participate in and practise, for example, fighting sports?
3. Internal agentic (mis)recognition: work and family. Do individuals engaged in jihadism tend to carry out repetitive, mechanical work or does work provide them with gratification in terms of their ability to contribute autonomously to a final product? As suggested in the section on the Hegelian perspective, actors with subordinated and mechanical work may have difficulty to reach self-consciousness. Furthermore, drawing on a more Maussian perspective, I will explore whether subjects are engaged in an exchange cycle of gift and

[48]See Crettiez, Sèze, Ainine, and Lindemann, *Saisir les mécanismes de la radicalisation violente*.

[49]For the problem of securitisation of Muslim populations in France, see Laurent Bonelli, *La France a peur…: Une histoire sociale de 'l'insécurité'* (Paris: La Découverte, 2014), ch. 2; Valentina Bartolucci, 'Analysing elite discourse on terrorism and its implications: the case of Morocco', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 3:1 (2010), pp. 119–35. On the often-occulted phenomenon of state terrorism, see Ruth Blakeley, 'Bringing the state back into terrorism studies', *European Political Science*, 6:3 (2007), pp. 228–35.

counter-gift and examine whether jihadists exercise a profession with a possibility for positive reciprocation from others. Clearly professions with intense social interactions and are valued highly by society should correspond well to the idea of the Maussian gift.[50] This could be the case for high- and low-skilled employment, for example hairdressers, teachers, or doctors. Individuals integrated in chains of reciprocity have opportunities to feel valued. Furthermore, if individuals are also appreciated in relation to their ability to love and care for other, I ask whether jihadists invest in personal relations and whether they are integrated in an exchange cycle of friendship?

4. International agentic misrecognition. I argue that jihadists tend to identify with oppressed Muslims having little agency and who aspire to sovereign agency. The theme of deprived agency closely reflects the heteronomous situation of the servant at the start of the dialectic. In a more Maussian perspective, I will also examine whether French jihadists feel that past contributions of Muslim communities to France or modern civilisation are believed to be negated. For example, do they consider that Muslims are not respected for their achievements in wars? More recently, this could also be extended to the place of 'Muslim contribution; in France's success in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Thus, the underlying thesis is the following: regarding the case of French jihadists, it is hypothesised that the gap between agentic expectations and realisation will be particularly prominent and this is likely to produce perceptions of misrecognition. Such misrecognition is based on the perception that French and 'Western' societies do not sufficiently value contributions from Muslim individuals and groups. The misrecognition agency gap will be particularly important if strong sovereign ideals fuelled by patrichal socialisation go hand-in-hand with limited social agency.

The first step is to explore the experienced dimension of jihadist engagement, emphasising the link between capacity to act and feelings of ignorance.[51] As a second step, I will consider the sociological and normative dimensions that motivate feelings of powerlessness among jihadist actors. To put it simply, frustration and violence are essentially the result of a discrepancy between a transnational, patriarchal socialisation, stimulating agentic expectations and the ability of these actors and the Muslim community to contribute to national and international society. I associate patriarchal socialisation with activities such as watching action films, joining gangs, and practising combat sports. I contend that this is not associated with a specific religion. The jihadist's opportunity to exercise agency might be limited by a professional situation characterised by little investment and implication, which is poorly valued by others. Feelings of injustice and powerlessness are also fuelled by contact with discriminated Muslim populations abroad. This discrepancy does not necessarily lead to violence but constitutes a breeding ground for jihadist engagement.

Violence for affirmation of the ability to act sovereignly

At first glance, one might think that the jihadists are not attached to state sovereignty claims. Indeed, our 13 detainees did not have any specific claims related to democratic sovereignty. On the contrary, people are often described as 'sheep-like'. The precise idea of any political autonomy for the people seems to be denied by the strict adherence to religious prescriptions. Finally, it is clear that the jihadists are in no way attached to the *Nation*-State, a community that they intend to go beyond by referring to a community of believers.

[50]Avner Offer, 'Between the gift and the market: the economy of regard', *The Economic History Review*, 50:3 (1997), pp. 450–76; Sharon C. Bolton, 'Who cares? Offering emotion work as a "gift" in the nursing labour process', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 32:3 (2000), pp. 580–6.

[51]See Axel Honneth, 'Invisibility: On the epistemology of "recognition"', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 75:1 (2001), pp. 111–26.

Ideals of state sovereignty

Even our interviewees with a generally low level of education are concerned with the ideal of state sovereignty, which remains a matrix of their political fight. After all it is clear that most of them do not condemn the political form of the Islamic State. We can observe identification with a demarcated territory, an administration, a regular army, and a flag. Thus, one of the detainees, Abel, critiqued French people for their lack of patriotism. This negative view of French disunity is repeated several times, leading to a glorifying speech of the patriotic posture, here assimilated to the Russian nationalism:

> If we took Russian people for example, they fought, they shouted, they loved their country and everything. That is an army that is difficult to fight because it has a purpose. Take a French man, what is he going to fight for? A fatherland? A homeland for young people, it is Apple! The French flag, they threw it away! There is nothing patriotic left … The longer it goes on, the better for us! Because they see how French society is evolving. But for the moment it is not heading towards a country of combatants.

Some jihadists, linked to al-Qaeda and criticising the excessive violence of ISIS/Daesh, divulged their fascination for the Organization of the Islamic State, whose modernity and fighting success seemed to galvanise them. This point supports Bert Klandermans's intuition that the success of a social movement lies in the hope of success that one places in it, a well-known phenomenon of the self-fulfilling prophecy.[52] For another detainee, Paul, it is precisely the state centric character of ISIS that is attractive:

> There is a particular attraction towards the Islamic State that did not exist with al-Qaeda … ISIS is less primitive, it is more sophisticated. The GIA, they went to the mountains, they hid in caves, it was not beautiful! With ISIS this is not the case at all! They have uniforms, they have weapons, they have bulletproof vests … They have proven something that will stay in mind of those who think like that. They have proven that they can cope with any army in the world. They have proven that they could govern a territory, … that they could apply the sharia for those who wanted it. They have proven all of that and that will stay deep in the minds.

Thus, Paul opposes the scenic grandeur of ISIS that fascinates him compared to Osama bin Laden (al-Qaeda)'s outdated style.

The matrix of the sovereign state form a part of the interviewee's critique of Western imperialism, which they often oppose to the right to political autonomy. So for Elie who insists that he did not leave France to die as a martyr: 'I stayed a few days after the offensive, it was tough, but it was not planned because I did not go there to fight and die.' However, to a certain extent Elie shows a fascination for the Islamic State. For Elie, their fight is part of a broader fight against a 'predatory imperialism' and the attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State in Europe are considered legitimate as they intend to punish the States, which intervened in Iraq and Syria led by France: 'There is no need for an expert to know that is obvious, this is a legitimate response because we must also see what is bombed in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan … everywhere hospitals are bombed.'

If the other is often simply described as a *kuffar* against whom the use of violence is *a priori* legitimate, we can also observe that they accept the idea of a political group unified by sovereign will. The way in which jihadists unify the adversary reflects their adherence to the principle of general will embodied in state action. In a somewhat surprising way, one interviewee believes that the attacks of November 2015 are part of a democratic script because the French elected a government bombing Muslims. The choice of the *Stade de France* as a target also seems coherent because no 'good Muslim' should support the French team. In short, multiple identities and

[52]Bert Klandermans, *The Social Psychology of Protest* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

loyalties are seen as impossible, and even with respect to sporting activities, this interviewee imagines a sort of unity between people and national symbols. Similarly, the interviewees' framing of the other is highly reductionist. Seven of the thirteen actors seem animated by conspiracy theories about world politics, which is not the prevailing cognitive variable but remains important. Enemies are often presented in aggregates. See the following excerpt from Elie's interview:

> We know very well that there are governments, multinational companies and bankers who will influence the government's decisions. They are vultures, scavengers … They are the ones who will enslave the countries … There are countries producing wealth … France is one of them.

This framing does not leave much room for compassion because the opponents are totally depersonalised and appear as a hostile collective.

Violence as destructive agency

Concretely, a violent act is connected to the objective of regaining recognition through agency, which is first reflected in their justification of violence. Two types of arguments can be identified. First, violence seems to be a mean of subjectifying the Muslim world. Thus, one of the interviewees praised the attacks on 9/11 because he said that it awakened the Muslim community. Choukry said he was fascinated by the 9/11 attacks because it was symbolically strong, demonstrating the desire of Muslims to take back control. He opposes the strategy of al-Qaeda, based on the return of pride, to the one of Daesh, which he considers as too violent: '9/11 awakened Muslims, while the Bataclan stigmatised them.' Justifications often go hand-in-hand with self-presentation as sovereign and dominant when the interviewees believe for example that Western countries would not have the courage to confront the Muslim world because it is much less 'effeminate' than its decadent adversaries.

In a more 'humanitarian' register, still linked to the affirmation of an ability to act, the armed engagement in Syria presented a way to help the 'Muslim brothers' and to save innocent lives, mainly children and women. Elie commented:

> How do you explain the attacks at the Bataclan? Well, according to them you kill thousands of children and women, so we do what you do … that's quite the reasoning. If you stop, we stop … and I say that we should stop and then see the results … But why do they not stop? And those who govern are safe and protected … they do not fear anything! But we, the civilians, are we protected? If something happened to my son, I would blame the government because of its geopolitical shit.

It is also striking to see that almost all of our interviewees refused to consider themselves as victims. They insisted on their lucidity and the free will in their political engagement. They fiercely rejected the sociological discourses insisting on their stigmatisation in French society, which they considered as infantilising.[53] The concern to be accepted as 'sovereign' was central. In short, despite these variations, there is a clear articulation between violence and the desire to project a sovereign, 'powerful', and noble image of oneself, to escape the stigma of weakness and to be recognised as a true 'giver' in national or international society.[54]

[53]See Rebecca Adler-Nissen, 'Stigma management in international relations: Transgressive identities, norms, and order in international society', *International Organization*, 68:1 (2014), pp. 143–76.

[54]See also Catarina Kinnvall and Ted Svensson, 'Misrecognition and the Indian state: the desire for sovereign agency', *Review of International Studies*, 44:5 (2018), this Special Issue.

Grievances: the wound of powerlessness

The interviewees generally confirm what we call misrecognition through denial of the ability to act. This denial is characterised by a feeling that others (French society) do not give to a group the opportunity to shape it through an autonomous ability to act. A large majority of interviewees share the idea that they and the Muslim community suffer from discrimination. Among the most influential factors in the psychological sphere, emphasis on the discrimination of the Muslim community and the minimising of the Muslim status in France is noteworthy. Even if only one interviewee stressed this aspect, the others considered that being Muslim is a problem in France and that they have experienced discrimination.

If we examine in more detail what feeds such a feeling of discrimination, it seems that international grievances (reference to international conflicts) play a decisive role. In a substantial number of cases, interviewees demonstrated a strong sense of anti-imperialism. If we look even more closely at the interviews, we can observe a lexical field of frustration and a feeling of powerlessness: the Muslim community in the world would have long been reduced to slavery and domination, and now the time has come to revolt. As one interviewee declares:

> It was a new era. It was a new era because 9/11 happened. At first, I did not understand. I didn't see the symbolism. The symbol is that Muslim people are back. The first objective was not to kill 3,000 people. The first objective was this symbol. In Islam, civilians can be killed under certain conditions. If it is for a greater cause, and this is a greater cause. It's not like Nice or the Bataclan.

The feeling of powerlessness also stems from a feeling among the interviewees that they continue to live in a situation of colonisation in France. Several of them seemed ashamed at having parents that 'make carpets' for French people. Achir describes his parents as good workers, only concerned with the financial aspect but completely disinterested in politics:

> My father told me not to interfere in politics. They don't want to interfere, when there is an injustice, they let it go, they don't care. There was a certain philosophy behind the idea that it was more necessary to make money.

Labri seemed troubled by his identity: 'I am someone lost, I don't know where I come from.' This led him to conduct research in Algeria and France on his paternal and maternal family roots. In a slightly different register, Larbi recounts a few episodes of violence from a father described as 'a great drinker', 'a party boy', 'a gambler', while minimising the impact of these episodes on him. He also criticises his father for abandoning his cultural particularity. Finally, Abel compares him to his uncle from Algeria 'He was a shepherd, he meditated a lot, worked constantly and educated his children.' Abel is quite critical of his parents, whom he accuses of abandoning their religion and of overly complying to the demands of society: 'For them, to be upright it's going to school and working in order not to do anything stupid.' Finally, Paul also critiques his mother: 'When she converted to Protestantism, she forced me to go to church, but I didn't find any pleasure from going.'

Sociological and normative conditions of feelings of powerlessness and humiliation

How then can we understand such striking feelings of non-recognition among jihadist actors? Two analytical grids were employed. On the one hand, it is a question of knowing whether radicalised individuals are in a situation of non-recognition compared to other social groups; on the other, the purpose is to determine whether their normative grids and socialisation stimulate 'excessive' expectations of recognition or even a certain contempt for population. The denial of the ability for an individual or a collective group to contribute as an 'actor' to the national or international society is decisive. We can therefore hypothesise that those individuals who obtain the least status, prestige, sympathy, and above all the possibility of action, are also those who feel

the most powerless and humiliated. Similarly, those who are most in contact with 'oppressed' Muslim populations through travels or indoctrination on the Internet should also be the most sensitive to this feeling of powerlessness.[55]

Generally speaking and from a perspective of relative frustration, it can be assumed that second-generation immigrants are more likely to feel that this relegation is 'unfair'. Their expectations have been shaped by both the standard of living and the consideration they are given in France, which is not the country from which their parents come from. Then we can assume that actors socialised into an ideal of patriarchal society, where the cult of physical strength and domination prevail, are the ones who would be the most vulnerable to feelings of powerlessness.

My findings support the hypothesis of relative frustration concerning the ability of these groups to act.

Restrictions on a jihadist's ability to act

Concerning a jihadist's ability to act, we focused on work associated with the idea of the master–slave dialectic as the catalyst of self-consciousness and of the ultimate value of the slave. As stated, the depreciation of the contribution made by an individual/social group to society does not only result from unemployment but also from precarious work that cannot be considered as a vocation, a *Beruf*. In short, any work that is perceived as merely servile and precarious without any major social ties with employees or society at large can be considered as a source of agency frustration. Potential frustrated agency is also caused by the identification of an individual with Muslim groups in precarious employment, as was the case for Mohammad Sidique Khan, an educator and instigator of the 7 July 2005 London bombings, who strongly identified with unemployed people, prostitutes, and drug addicts from his British Pakistani neighbourhood of Beeston.[56]

What can be perceived in the international system as an extreme denial of an actor's ability to act? Perhaps, the exposure of actors to torture or government oppression. Muslim actors can identify themselves with oppressed groups through travel or the Internet. Of course, we believe that not all actors act in a uniform way to such disparagement. What determines the violent action is also the positive perception of physical force as an appropriate response to determine the group's social value when facing challenges to its honour. We believe that individuals socialised into a patriarchal environment are likely to respond to challenges to their honour with force; a man must always impose himself through his physical strength and contempt for death. Such a socialisisation will lead to a particularly strong claim to exercise a kind of absolute sovereignty.[57]

Precarious professional situations and experiences of powerlessness

First of all, individuals seen as radicalised often come from stigmatised social groups: underprivileged neighbourhoods characterised by failing schools, petty crime, and claims about abusive and disrespectful police controls. However, in our small sample only a minority of people fell into this profile. Our interviewees can be characterised by their 'biographical availability',[58] that is to say their lack of investment in professional and personal relationships. This availability is also characterised by precariousness/absence from work and absence of a partner and children. It is a

[55]See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism: Understanding Jihadi Movements Worldwide* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[56]Bruce Hoffman, 'Radicalization and subversion: Al Qaeda and the 7 July 2005 bombings and the 2006 airline bombing plot', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32:12 (2009), pp. 1100–16.

[57]Bernhard Schissel, 'Boys against girls: the structural and interpersonal dimensions of violent patriarchal culture in the lives of young men', *Violence Against Women*, 6:9 (2000), pp. 960–86.

[58]Johanna Siméant, 'Socialisation catholique et biens de salut dans quatre ONG humanitaires françaises', *Le mouvement social*, 2 (2009), pp. 101–22.

strong explanatory factor for nine of our interviewees. None of the interviewees appear to be engaged in family life that might prevent them from taking part in a violent act.

As mentioned above, the subjective experience of the interviewees often reflects the feeling that France does not include Muslims in its Republic, the contribution made by French Muslims is not recognised. Choukri, while affirming his adherence to 'French values', insists at the same time on his suffering as a Muslim and likens himself to a 'circus freak':

> I've always felt French. I've always voted. I have always respected French values. But now, with all this, it's getting harder, and I may be using an excluding term. Let's say that I distinguish several groups in France: Muslims who are circus freaks, the elite who doesn't care about anyone and who will run away in their helicopters as soon as the shit is over, and the French in general. This is just to make it simple, you can make distinctions between other categories, but I am being quick. I've always loved France. I even know *La Marseillaise*. And I'm sure a lot of Frenchmen don't even know it. I've always loved France, but with what it did to me … I will always struggle to find work.

Achir refuses to acknowledge that democracy, which he believes does not function, can prevail over Islam:

> There is a problem: I am not a Frenchman, we are not in a democracy, today with hindsight I say there is no democracy in the etymological sense of this term: demos cratos, the power to the people! The people do not have the power, today I read the news and I know everything. With the 49.3, everything that is happening … Demo, cratos, there's nothing at all! It is crushed so there is a problem about that … Democracy does not exist to me. Freedom of speech does not exist, individual freedoms don't exist. There is a concern about finding a job, finding simple things in life that are not accessible to everyone.

For Omar, a whole system of thought is attributed to 'republicanism' specific to France, which prevents Muslims from climbing the social ladder:

> The problem is not purely French, but it is clear that France is the country that allows the least a person with immigrant roots who comes from the bottom of the ladder to climb up … For example, the English multicultural system is often criticised but can you picture a black or Arab mayor of Paris? In England it's a Muslim Pakistani and in the United States it's a black man … Do you realise that in France, a Muslim man has four to five times less chance of finding a job than a black man in the United States. And these are the numbers of the *Institut Montaigne* [a conservative French think tank].

Generally speaking, they are complaining about a lack of integration and the idea that the French do not consider the Muslims as belonging to their society, which is accompanied by complaints about a lack of professional opportunities.[59] The lexical field of the population reflects a feeling of misrecognition with repeated reaffirmations that 'We are not sheep', 'We are despised', that the 'cops' are racist and that the offenses endured in public places are motivated by their religion. The feeling of powerlessness is reinforced by the fact that almost all of the respondents who were second-generation immigrants stressed the 'sheep-like' behaviour of their parents.

[59]Yolande Jansen, 'Secularism and security: France, Islam, and Europe', *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 69–86.

Moral shocks and identification with the Muslim population oppressed in the capacity to act sovereignly

An often neglected but seemingly important factor of radicalisation is that of exposure to moral shocks with oppressed or even tortured Muslim populations. Talking about 'moral shocks' refers, according to the American sociologist James Jasper, to the confrontation with a particularly shocking event, instilling in the one who faces it, a feeling of disgust and anger leading to the necessity of a commitment considered as unavoidable.[60]

Regarding the young jihadists encountered, two types of moral shocks are regularly mentioned. The first one points to the critical role of the Internet or more generally of an image of violence endured by the Sunni Muslim populations, from the American prison of Abu Grahib to atrocities taking place in Damas. The images of innocent victims – Sunni women and children massacred by Bashar al-Assad's army or Hezbollah's Shiite militias – are all sources enabling the reactivation of an 'emotional community' for jihadists who are committed spectators. Repression undergone during police interrogations in Egypt, Yemen or Pakistan, accompanied by physical torture can serve to strengthen this commitment.

Torture can generate hatred and anger, reactivating the will to fight with the Renegade states and their Western allies. More surprisingly, it can confirm, in the eyes of those who are object of torture, the validity of their commitment perceived from then on as a divine test. Besides, it is also the daily feeling of administrative or police harassment by those who display their faith and determination, which can drive these individuals towards 'jihadist engagement'.[61]

Our research reveals the crucial place of transnational experiences in understanding the jihadist career: almost all of our respondents have regularly travelled to Muslim countries and have been in contact with oppressed people abroad; a large majority of them make repeated references to international conflicts and the oppression of their brothers and sisters in Iraq, Palestine, or Syria. Personal experiences and encounters are an important catalyst in the revolt against injustices towards Muslims around the world. If we examine reflect upon what contributes to this feeling of misrecognition, it seems that international grievances (reference to the international conflicts) play a determining role. Only one of our interviewees does not make such a reference, two of them refer to such issues as non-consequential, and ten of them affirm its centrality in their decision to engage in political violence.

Abdel, also evokes his encounters with Muslims in the south of Thailand, on the Malaysian border, who were in conflict with the government: 'the oppression they suffer is huge!'. Abdel mentions 'rapes of sisters' and also declares 'when I went there I talked to brothers, they all told me things are in a critical state'. Fahim, seemingly one of the least politicised jihadists in our sample, makes sense of his commitment as a response to the spectacle of mass murders in Syria:

> I do not even understand why it erupted there; I do not know the beginning of the beginning, I was not there … I cannot say who is responsible. I just see millions of deaths on TV and I do not know anything about it. Basically, all I'm saying is that it's innocents and it's not Bachar Al Assad.

It is also the case for Michel, more structured ideologically, but just as traumatised by the videos of massacres in Syria that he opposes with the violence in Algeria during the black decade:

> Jihad is the summit of Islam … and when we see the massacres in Syria it touches the heart. For example, in Algeria in our time, jihad was just to change the regime there were no mass massacres, do you understand? That is perhaps why Syria attracts much more people because there is a mass killing.

[60]James M. Jasper and Jane D. Poulson, 'Recruiting strangers and friends: Moral shocks and social networks in animal rights and anti-nuclear protests', *Social Problems*, 42:4 (1995), pp. 493–512.

[61]Philippe Braud, *L'émotion en politique*, 335 (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1996), pp. 335–54.

The perception of ingratitude of Muslims contribution to French society

In our sample there is also the strong idea of ingratitude towards what Muslims contributed to French society in general. There is the widely accepted idea in our interviews that whatever Muslims do for France, they are not recognised for it. Many of our interviewed jihadists consider that Muslims have contributed to France's wealth and international standing. Knowledge of past achievements of Islam civilisation is in great part due to personal readings (such as François Burgat's work)[62] and jihadist propaganda. It is not my proposal here to examine the mechanism that explains how jihadists are exposed to such propaganda that has always a historical reference in social reality. I will only point to the narrative underlying the basic perception that Muslims have 'given' a great deal to France but are not at all rewarded for this gift. Thus, for Elie, the massacres in Palestine can be compared to those committed by French forces in Algeria and he emphasises that he was simply excluded from his class of history when he referred to such colonial atrocities.

Another perception of ingratitude relates to criticism of French republicanism. The interviewees considered that French '*laicité*' is a pretext for suppressing contributions made by Muslims to France. Such is the case of Ghassan who complained of feeling stigmatised in his work because of his 'Muslim beard'. Somewhat paradoxically, one might argue that the extreme French ideal of a sovereign nation that is 'one and indivisible' produces in a dialect the aspiration for absolute sovereignty among French militants of the Islamic state.

Patriarchal socialisation and jihadist commitment

A large number of radicalised Islamists have undergone a 'patriarchal' socialisation that makes them particularly sensitive to an incapacity to act in society. This socialisation could be seen to predispose them to react with 'firmness' or even with violence to 'offenses'. However, I am not suggesting that a violent reaction is an automatic response to misrecognition. Options are plural: apathy, political mobilisation, or non-violent resistance.

The cult of manhood may be characterised by the belief that a 'real man' must be dominant in social relationships, prove and use his physical resources, and be willing to risk his life to preserve his honour and protect his own kind. As mentioned above, we note that most respondents evolve in an environment that can be described as 'highly masculine': body building, practise of combat sports, interest in technical studies or socialisation in youth gangs. From a subjective point of view, the respondents often expressed their desire to be physically and morally strong and not to appear like 'wimps' like their non-Muslim compatriots. In the same way, we noted a strong rejection of homosexuality. The fact that a growing number of women leave for Syria does not necessarily invalidate the role of the hero protector's identity for radicalisation. It seems that some women encourage this dominant role of the protective man or even partially identify with masculinity. The evolution of the international scene and especially the situation in Syria provides a catalyst for the activation of self-identity as a protective hero. A large number of young people feel that it is their duty to protect their 'brothers' who are loosely attacked by a perverse and unscrupulous regime while seeing in the inaction of Western governments the proof that Muslims are merely objects of Western domination.

It would be interesting to dig deeper into the role of a patriarchal socialisation in the jihadist career. We noticed 'a warlike virilism' assumed by about half of the respondents. In responding to our question about the purpose of war waged by jihadists in the face of an objectively superior military apparatus, Abdel points to the impossible Western victory over many military sites and the intrinsic weakness of a West without 'War capital':

> There was Vietnam, there was Korea, there was Iraq. When we talk about a war, we come to a territory, either we take it or stabilize it, we have a specific project. Has America managed to

[62]Burgat François, *L'islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).

> do this once in its history? … Never! … Take the case of Afghanistan! There were almost sixty countries that went there to fight farmers, peasants, and shepherds with old Kalashnikovs … today the Taliban are as strong as before!

Abdel adds to this historical observation his disdain for a Western society, turned towards satisfaction of immediate pleasures and spiritually incapable of engaging in an effective war:

> Once I was on a bus and I told a brother who was with me: how will they react when the Taliban are here? He laughed and he told me, you think they're going to fight, look at them! … You ask them to do a 100 m, they collapse on the ground! What will they do? Young people are no longer young here, they are already old, it is not a country of fighters!

Abdel also practises combat sports like the vast majority of jihadists we met: 'I used to do a kind of Muay Thai boxing mixed with other martial arts … I also did Thai boxing and normal boxing … here … basically, that's it!' This attachment to aggressive sporting activities is coupled with a discourse rejecting victimisation: 'A true Muslim does not complain, it is a basic rule. He does not have to say they did this to me or they did that to me.' Paul, in the same way, emphasises his sporting practise and does not hesitate to link it directly to his militant commitment: 'I really like sport; I started at 13, I was doing boxing, Thai boxing, yeah, I always played sports … it was important to prepare [Question: prepare for the fight]. Yeah, get ready for jihad. The moment when I prepared myself the most was when I was with the Chechens in Egypt.' Paul is referring to his shared apartment with Chechen iihadists in Cairo for several months where they practised martial arts.

Arguably, then, jihadist misrecognition is shaped by frustrated agency ideals of 'patriarchalism'. Experience of misrecognition can be resumed as the result of an extreme gap created by a difference between inflated agency expectations fuelled by ideals of sovereignty and patriachalism and limited possibilities to express creative agency in French society, which I have argued here is largely due to repetitive, mundane work as well as identification with oppressed Muslims in world politics seen to be deprived of any sovereign agency.

Conclusion

Can the French case study of jihadist misrecognition be generalised? I will briefly discuss the London bombing perpetrators of 2005 and other cases of jihadist violence in order to respond to this question.

First of all, it is clear that the agency aspirations of the London bombing perpetrators reflects at least in part the idea of the sovereign state. Similar to the case of French jihadists, we can observe a tendency to essentialise the 'opponent' and to personalise the state through a belief in sovereign will. In his recorded confession, Sidique Khan insists that the role of the British army in Iraq in 2003 in order to justify his a suicide attack:

> Your democratically elected governments continually perpetrate atrocities against my people all over the world. … Until we feel safe, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight.[63]

Moreover, the display of uniforms in jihadist video presentations and constant references to Western imperialism also suggests that international agency expectations were to a certain degree shaped by the ideal of organised state sovereignty. This particular attachment to state symbols is even more relevant for ISIS militants, who systematically use flags, uniforms, and make references to a demarcated territory.

[63]See {https://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,22989-1761688,00.html}.

Second, in our interviews carried out with jihadists, one can clearly identify a repeated reference to Muslim populations as being deprived of any real contributive agency in French society and world politics. It seems that we can establish a link between denial of autonomy on the one hand, and on the other, a kind of attractiveness to be free to self-sacrifice, since it represents an active contribution. Explicit references by supporters of al-Qaeda state that contempt of death in the name of Islam revitalised their pride in light of their powerlessness.[64] The videos of the perpetrators of the London bombings present themselves as men of action, as soldiers of god. This connection between jihadism and the desire for 'sovereignty' is ever more apparent in videos of ISIS in which Westerners are presented as gagged, humiliated, and in distress, as they await their certain death.[65] The relative frequency of words like 'servitude' and 'valet' in speeches made by al-Qaeda are in contrast to the 'liberty' and dignity of the courageous jihadists.[66]

Third, as with the case of the French jihadists, we can detect strong identifications among the London bombers with oppressed Muslim populations at home and abroad having limited agency capabilities. For instance, one of the bombers spoke of the invisibility of Muslims in British society. The four perpetrators are from Beeston, a town densely populated by Pakistani immigrants and their descendants with high levels of crime and unemployment. According to the brother of Mohammad Sidique Khan, Gultasab, the moral outrage of his brother, triggered by witnessing Muslims neighbours involved in prostitution and using heroin awoke his political consciousness.[67] All the bombers, but perhaps mostly Sidique Khan who distinguished himself by his social work, identified strongly with their neighbourhood.

Furthermore, in videos diffused by the London bombers, we can observe a projection of a Muslim world that is threatened by the Western 'imperialist' powers. One year after London bombings, Al Jazeera broadcast the martyrdom videos of Sidique Khan (1974–2005) – the leader of the perpetrators – and of Shehzad Tanweer (1983–2005). Tanweer, another perpetrator of the London bombings and protégé of Sidique Khan, denounced the intervention of the British government in Iraq and Afghanistan in his own video. During the interviews that we conducted in the neighbourhood of the mosque in Finsbury Park, London, which was frequently attended by at least three of the perpetrators of the London bombings, we witnessed an obsession with the repression of Muslims in Palestine, Chechenia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. A British Muslim with a Pakistani background emphasised in an interview in July 2010 that 'a common knowledge of the global character of American imperialism exists, in the way it manifests itself, for instance, in Iraq and Afghanistan'. One of the new directors of the mosque in Finsbury Park maintained that the American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and its continuing support of Israel was, in addition to the 'brainwashing' of the perpetrators, the most important motivation for the London bombings in 2005. Journals circulated in the surroundings of the mosque, which accused Western states of genocide against Muslim populations in Bosnia and Iraq. We can also add that the theme of limited Muslim agency is also exploited in the propaganda of al-Qaeda.[68] Furthermore, bin Laden eluded to 'children killed in Palestine and Iraq everyday', 'death in Khowst mosques' and 'premeditated killing of our people in weddings in Afghanistan'.[69]

[64]Khosrokhavar, *Prisons de France*; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

[65]Brigitte Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: Mainstream and Digital Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[66]Maéva Clément, Thomas Lindemann, and Eric Sangar, 'The hero-protector narrative: Manufacturing emotional consent for the use of force', *Political Psychology* (online, 2016).

[67]Shiv Malik, 'My brother the bomber', *Prospect Magazine*, 31:5 (2007).

[68]Haleem, *The Essence of Islamist Extremism*, p. 30.

[69]'You will be killed, just as you kill', *The Guardian*, Extracts from Bin Laden Tape (14 November 2002), available at: {https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/14/alqaida.terrorism3}.

Finally, international agency expectations of the perpetrators of the London bombings were at least, to a certain degree, shaped by the ideals of patriarchal society. As mentioned, a violent response is not automatic when faced with extreme misrecognition. It is argued here that the perpetrators' choice to commit a violent act is connected to their patriarchal socialisation. This socialisation is not a Muslim one, rather but it is produced by a masculine environment, a technical education, and fighting sports. Most jihadist suicide attacks are committed by men, most of them aged between 18 and 30, and aiming to cultivate and valorise strength (though exception should be made of the 'kamikazes' of the Middle East, who acted in a context of war).[70] A significant number of perpetrators of terrorist attacks practised combat sports, like Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, known for taking part in the murder of journalist Daniel Pearl. Indeed, in 1992, he had participated in an arm wrestling world championship. Among the four hijackers of the 9/11 attacks, three practised martial arts, and all the individuals involved in the London bombings practised Taekwondo. Furthermore, the authors of the 9/11 attacks and those of London were mostly enrolled in technical studies (women remain largely under-represented in this field). Finally, some of the 9/11 bombers also received a particularly harsh upbringing that glorifying physical strength. For these individuals, residing in an al-Qaeda training camp known for its extreme roughness and selectiveness is a source of social prestige, much like attending an elite university. It seems that contrary to popular belief, it is not religious, but military values that are central to the doctrine behind the September 11 attacks.[71] Respect for patriarchal values is an indispensable condition for the acceptance of violence as a rational choice in the face of perceived injustices.

Jihadi discourses and practices clearly allude to serving a greater cause. References to heroism or sacrifice can be understood as a means to cope with perceived powerlessness. It may seem paradoxical to prove one's sovereign agency by becoming a slave, but this slave becomes something of a 'divine' force. The narrative is based on the desire to extract empirical contingency by heroism and ennoblement. Therefore, what appears in the jihadist discourses studied is the Hegelian contempt for death, in contrast to the 'cowardliness' of the Westerners. Does contempt for death enable actors to become 'sovereign', to become conscious of their being and to become those who are able to 'gift'?

In sum, this article has argued for a reconceptualisation of misrecognition that underlines the place of 'agency' (gift, work, international sovereignty, etc.) as an essential condition of self-consciousness. I have argued that recognition struggles are less motivated by an actors' desire to have a particular status than by a desire to make a contribution to society, to be able to 'give' something. While the content of a socially valued contribution-gift varies from one social context to another, it is consistently linked to the very ability of actors to act on their 'own' and to shape their environment. I suggested here that subjects identifying with political units or social groups with little recognised agency, while imagining strong abilities to contribute to a given society (through patriarchal socialisation) are particularly vulnerable to misrecognition. The French jihadists studied experience 'individual' agency denial inside the 'national' community, but also agency denial of 'Muslim sovereignty' outside. This upscaling of agency misrecognition is enhanced by the possible identification of an individual with a collective actor and the associated emotional investment in such a community. A perceived mismatch between an actors' claimed capabilities and recognised contributions to society can encourage political violence.

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[70]Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[71]Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008).

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