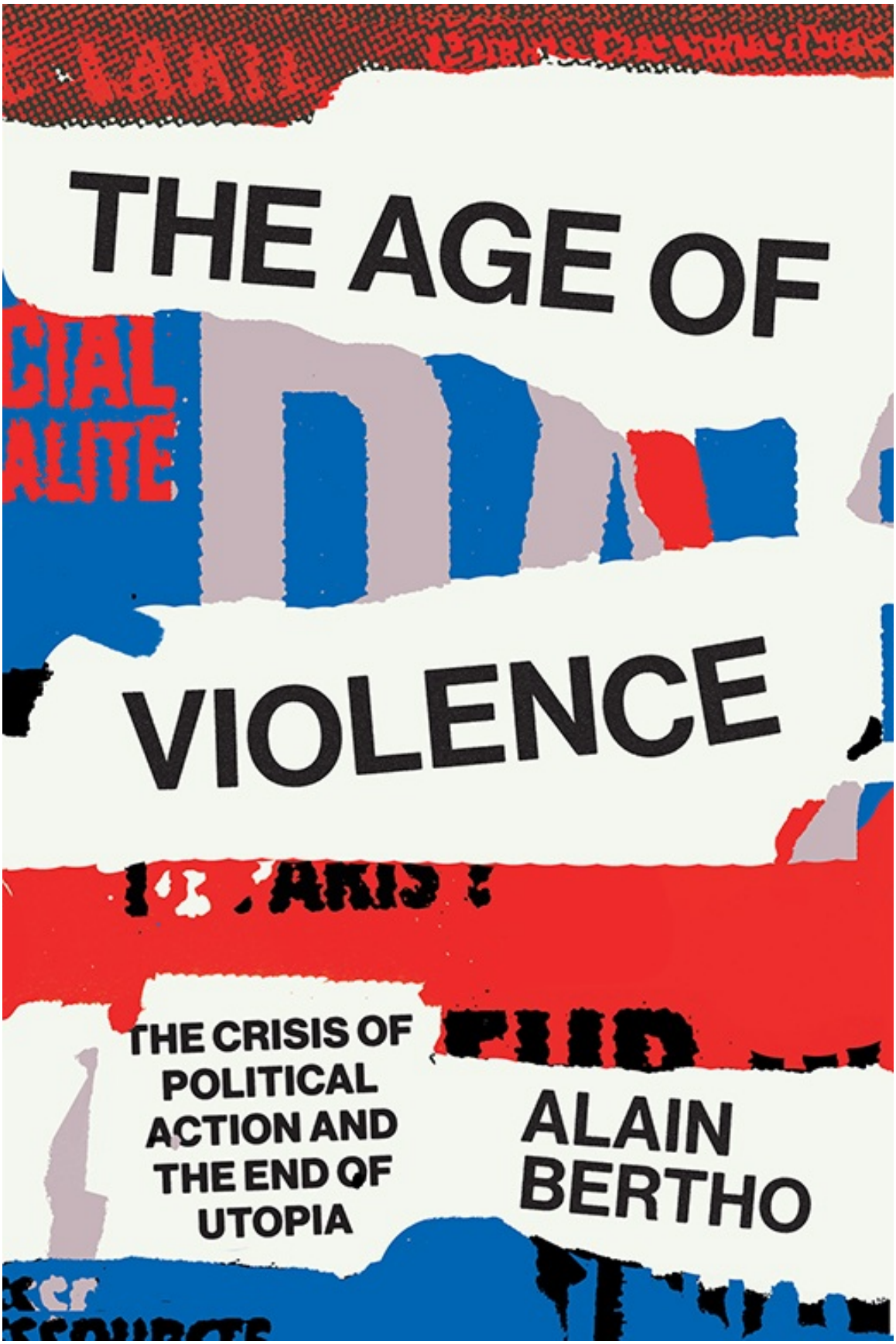
THE AGE OF DISCIPLINE

VIOLENCE

THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL ACTION AND THE END OF UTOPIA

ALAIN BERTHO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INTRODUCTION

Toward a Universal Conflagration

> *The contemporary disorder is within people's heads, and not only in the situations each person finds themselves confronted with.*
>
> Georges Balandier[1]

This book was still being written when the murderous attacks struck Paris and Saint-Denis on 13 November 2015. We are lost for words to describe the wilfully blind carnage, the hundreds of injured and the 130 lives wiped out – lives reduced to a 'warning for those who want to meditate'.[2] In Lebanon, that same 13 November was a national day of mourning in honour of the forty-three people killed by the suicide attack in Beirut's Bourj el-Barajneh district the previous day. On 31 October, 225 died in the midair bombing of the Kogalymavia charter plane above the Sinai, an attack for which Da'esh also claimed responsibility, and on 10 October a bomb that went off at a demonstration in Ankara killed 102 people.[3] So stunned are the survivors and witnesses, so much does the horror that grips us seem to annihilate our capacity to make sense of the drama or inscribe it in a wider narrative, that each of these dramas seems to make us forget the last.

This is what the Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami shows with such talent in his book *Underground*, in which he tries to understand the murderous sarin gas attack perpetrated by the Aum sect in the Tokyo metro in 1995.[4] Murakami interviewed some of the victims – reproducing their singular testimonies – as well as members of the sect. His work shows how in this type of situation two irreconcilable subjective experiences – the subjective experiences of the victims and of the murderers – compete to give some sense to the event. The victims' experience is the horror of a 'why?' that has no answer. We saw this in France in January 2015, again in Tunisia in March of that same year, and once more after 13 November in Paris and Saint-Denis. When 'words are no longer enough', or 'there are no words' to speak about the event, this is because it is 'unthinkable', in the proper sense of the word. Haruki Murakami shares this with us in the two-thirds of his book devoted to the metro passengers whose lives were devastated

by the attack.

But it is the thinking of the authors of the act, or of those who could have been its authors, that gives the act its meaning and ensures its subjective continuity before, during and after. In giving voice to the members of Aum, the novelist allows us to understand a mentality shared both by them and by the much more peaceable Japanese in whose name the murders were perpetrated. He shows us that even though the *passage à l'acte*[5] is always exceptional, it is rooted in a shared experience and vision of the world.

This is precisely the element we lack in trying to understand the 2015 attacks in Paris and the sudden emergence of jihadism on the French and global stages. And yet this affair has apparently been understood. It is said that a threat weighs heavily on the world: the radicalisation of Islam. The facts seem 'to speak for themselves'. Mohammed Merah in Toulouse in 2012, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in Boston in 2013, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Ottawa and Man Haron Monis in Sydney in 2014, Yassine Labidi and Saber Khachnaoui at Tunis's Bardo Museum and Seifeddine Rezgui on the beaches of Sousse in 2015, like the Kouachi brothers and Amedy Coulibaly in January 2015 and the commando attackers of November 2015: all of them killed and died in the name of Allah. The self-proclaimed rebirth of the caliphate seems to function as an international catalyst for callings like these. On 23 May 2013 the Riposte Laïque website headlined 'Merah-Boston-London: Islam wants us dead!'[6] And in January 2015 did we not read, and hear, that the Muslim community had to get its own house in order?

One inescapable dimension of this situation is the fact that numerous Muslims (who, we should remember, make up the majority of Da'esh's victims) are particularly traumatised by these murders perpetrated in the name of their faith. But we would maintain that in no sense is that faith, still less Muslims in general (a 'community that does not exist', as Olivier Roy reminds us),[7] responsible for the murderous radicalisation of French people, Canadians, Australians, Britons or Tunisians.[8] We all know that this is an era conducive to the most varied of murderous follies. Have we really forgotten that on 20 April 1999 fifteen people died in the Columbine shootings in Littleton, Colorado? That on 22 July 2011 the thirty-two-year-old Anders Behring Breivik shot down sixty-nine people on the Norwegian island of Utøya? That on 17 June 2015 the twenty-one-year-old Dylann Roof murdered nine people in a church frequented by the black population of Charleston? That on 1 October 2015 the twenty-six-year-old Chris Harper-Mercer killed ten people at Oregon's Umpqua University? None of these murderers was Muslim.

We should be investigating the violence in the world that leads suffering people to such extreme *passages à l'acte*.[9] Since 2000 ours has been the time of riots.[10] It is also the time of immolation by fire.[11] Let us examine this globalisation that everywhere discredits governments in peoples' eyes. Let us examine this collapse of the systems of political representation which allow for a generalised confrontation. Finally, let us investigate the mass effects of this burden[12] which today weighs so heavily on the future of both humanity and the planet after two centuries of belief in political, social and scientific progress. Even where revolt against injustice or the authorities' inaction on the environment is on the rise, it cannot project itself into the perspective of 'singing tomorrows',[13] as it could in the last century. Radical revolt has run short of revolutionary projects: as Fredric Jameson rightly comments, 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'.[14]

We have to look the truth square in the face: the roots of these murderous and suicidal explosions of violence are not to be found in theological texts, but in the concrete social and political situations of France, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Tunisia. We are dealing not with a radicalisation of Islam but with an Islamisation of the anger, disarray and despair of the lost children of a terrible era – children who find meaning and weapons for their anger in jihad.

For years, we have been watching without understanding. All the elements are laid out in front of us, like pieces of a puzzle that we cannot and perhaps do not want to put together. On the contrary, we allow ourselves to be led astray by a fragmented reading of reality – that of the section headings in the press or of the different silos into which governments divide their various policy areas. We thus treat 'the debt', 'the suburbs [*banlieue*]', 'competitiveness', 'radicalisation', 'youth unemployment', 'social networks', the 'climate threat', the presence of French industry in China, the 'war on terror' in Africa and the Middle East, and refugee deaths in the Mediterranean as separate phenomena.

For this reason, for years we have always been caught unawares by the event. When the deaths of two young men running from the police – killed in an electricity substation in Clichy-sous-Bois in October 2005 – unleashed three weeks of riots across France, there were a few of us – sociologists, ethnologists and urbanists – who said that the event had indeed been foreseeable. But – let us be honest – none of us saw it coming, even after working on and in the *banlieues* for the last two decades. Something about the sense of the times escaped us, notwithstanding how important this something was to the generation that follows our own.

We have to admit that our era has become difficult for us to read. Today, as at the end of the eighteenth century and the dawn of modernity analysed by Alexis de Tocqueville, 'when the past no longer illuminates the future, the spirit walks in darkness'.[15] We, moreover, have to admit that this society of the spectacle that scrambles our view has more impact on those who make a living out of ideas, debate and reflection than it does on the millions of our contemporaries whose everyday experience of the world we are talking about is a painful one. From one day to the next, these latter 'defragment' the fine conceptual architecture of TV debates, intellectual controversies and discourses of authority.

The popular mentality in the age of globalisation escapes the opinion formers and their vocabularies. We could even say that this divorce is the very origin of a mass delegitimation of all the discourses of authority. This global distrust seeks critical reference points and an alternative discourse for itself amid the greatest disorder. And this was indeed the principal objective of the uninterrupted forums in the occupied squares, from Tahrir to Syntagma, Maidan, Taksim, Wall Street and the Puerta del Sol. But if this is a global defragmentation, it lacks any global compass.

The 'end of grand narratives' heralded by Jean-François Lyotard has today been realised.[16] It concerns the narratives of the various powers [*les pouvoirs*] as well as the narratives of those who challenge them. The whole intellectual equipment we have inherited from the twentieth century – the toolbox of political cosmogonies, the sense of history, the totalising dialectic of class struggle and class antagonisms – is no longer much help. The end of modernity thus leaves us as orphans of a rational and polemical ordering of the uninterrupted flow of events and dramas. We have to recognise 'the beam of darkness that comes from [our] own time'.[17]

So we have to go out and listen to this world. Sometimes this work will involve going far away, the better to understand, upon our return, what is happening under our own roof. That was how enquiries conducted in Porto Alegre, Rio and Dakar, exchanges with Chinese, Quebecois, American, Italian, and Spanish scholars, and my doctoral students' works on Tunisia, Egypt, Ivory Coast and China helped me a great deal when it came to reading the French situation. Today we have to listen out for what connects subjectivities to one another in different continents and national situations, for an echo – if not a common sense – outside of institutional narratives and their art of fragmentation. Globalisation is not only financial. It is also informational and cultural. It works at the depths of people's consciences, far from the official sciences and their

exponents.

This work offers the modest narrative of one observer attentive – after over thirty years' work – to the uncertainties and anxieties of the invisible of the globalised urban world. It seeks patiently to connect some of the pieces of the jigsaw to the indications left here and there by the very people who live this puzzle most intensely: the inhabitants of the Rio *favelas*, of the Dakar *banlieue*, the squatter-migrants of Saint-Denis, the Roma forced to drift without destination, and the high schoolers who burn cars. Even this partial narrative outlines the contours of a globalisation without political compass as well as a country – France – that is singularly lost in its own time. It sketches out the contours of a global situation in which all the conditions have materialised for the encounter between individual quests for meaning, in life and in the world, and the highly contemporary political offer that jihad today constitutes. Perhaps there are other possible paths which it would be worth identifying. The murderers/candidates for martyrdom would then appear – 'with neither pity nor fear', as Jacques Lacan put it – as what they are: lost children of the chaos provoked by a devastating globalisation.

CHAPTER ONE

French Divides

You would like to say what it is, but everything previously said of Aglaura imprisons your words and obliges you to repeat rather than say.

Italo Calvino[1]

In 2015 Paris twice dramatically became the world's capital. On 11 January of that year, more than fifty heads of state and government and leaders of international institutions demonstrated in the city together with millions of anonymous people. They marched behind the relatives and others close to the sixteen victims of the murderous attacks of 7 and 9 January. On the night of 14 November, Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, London, Washington, New York, Madrid, Santiago (Chile) and many other cities sported the colours of the French flag, while countless demonstrations expressed their solidarity following the carnage in Paris and Saint-Denis the previous evening. Neither the deaths in Beirut on 12 November, those on the Russian plane destroyed over Egypt on 31 October, nor the victims of the 31 October attacks in Ankara, the 26 June attacks in Sousse or the 18 March attacks at the Bardo Museum mobilised the world to this degree. While the Tunisian flag did indeed fly over Paris's city hall in March, no capital was decked out in the colours of Lebanon, Russia or Turkey following the attacks that plunged these countries into mourning.

Everyone agrees on locating the heart of this torment somewhere between Mosul, Aleppo and Raqqa, in an area that straddles two devastated countries. One of these countries, Syria, has been destroyed by a war waged by its government against its own people since 2011; the other, Iraq, has been destroyed by the 2003 American intervention, which organised the dismantling of the state and the confessionalisation of power.[2] The Islamic State built on this double collapse, in a region destabilised in enduring fashion by the Israel-Palestine inferno. Yet as we know, this regional cyclone – one that comes from afar – has only recently drawn its strength from the youth of eighty-two countries around the world. As we know, in blowing apart what remains of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State has been able to rally jihadist forces across all

continents, well beyond Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan or Tunisia. For example, its black flag regularly flies over nationalist demonstrations in Indian Kashmir. Al-Qaeda was a terrorist network. The Islamic State has become a force [*puissance*] for war and terror across the world. Its capacity to cause trouble is as political as it is murderous.

THE FRENCH MALAISE

This 'storm' – to adopt the word the Islamic State itself used in claiming responsibility for the 13 November massacres – has a unique relationship with France particularly. France's colonial past in this part of the world very much comes into question within this relationship, as does its intervention as part of the coalition conducting bombing raids in Iraq since 19 September 2014 ('Opération Chammal'), and then in Syria since 27 September 2015. Amedy Coulibaly in January and the suicide attackers at the Bataclan in November loudly invoked this intervention as a justification for the murders they themselves perpetrated.

But this relationship is also older, deeper, almost more intimate. If France's home turf is today more on the front line than that of other Coalition countries (starting with the United States), this owes to the fact that Islamic State has a larger potential supply of candidates for martyrdom in France than it does elsewhere. We know that after Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, in 2014 France rivalled even Russia in terms of the number of its nationals on the battlefields of Syria.[3] Our country is confronted with monsters that it has itself contributed to creating.

In July 2014, the British market research company ICM conducted a Europe-wide survey commissioned by the Russian press agency Rossiya Segodnya. It sought to measure the sympathy the brand-new caliphate then enjoyed in three countries: France, the United Kingdom and Germany.[4] The survey's publication in Russia was subsequently relayed by *Newsweek* and then by various French publications and media (*Marianne*, *L'Express*, *FranceTV info*, *Arrêt sur images*). Three thousand people were interviewed according to the usual methods, by way of some basic questions such as: Do you have a 'very favourable', 'quite favourable', 'quite unfavourable', or 'very unfavourable' opinion of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as ISIS?

Without doubt, the results deserve better treatment than what they get from the Far Right – pure and simple instrumentalisation – or those others who cast doubt on their methodology. Three per cent of those interviewed in France

answered that they had a ‘very favourable’ opinion of ISIS, and 13 per cent ‘quite favourable’.[5] Obviously this question was not about finding out – as has been suggested by those adding these two results together – whether or not 16 per cent of people in France are potential jihadists. The question really posed is how and why at that time jihadist horror enjoyed so much greater potential sympathy-capital in France than in its neighbours.

Like all disturbing questions, this one was not truly posed, still less verified or disproven, in any serious fashion. Worse, according to *RT*, the percentage of eighteen-to twenty-four-year-olds in France ‘quite’ or ‘very’ favourable to ISIS reached 27 per cent of the total.[6] Certainly, the *passage à l’acte* is inscribed in individual trajectories: it always crystallises fragilities and sufferings that we can indeed analyse, inventory and map.[7] Those who today devote themselves to dialogue with candidates for hegira[8] - or with those returning from it, as they seek to bring them back into the world of the living – allow us to see the complexity of these individual journeys. But we have not taken the historical, political and cultural measure of what gives collective meaning to these *passages à l’acte*.

This situation is all the more difficult to understand given that the great national-historical narrative positions itself as the opposite of this contemporary barbarism. France loves to pose as the champion of modernity’s universal values, sculpted by the Revolution of 1789 and prepared even before that by the Enlightenment. Indeed, for two centuries, France was one of the major figures of this modernity, albeit not without its own colonial dark stains. The country is thus hit hard – in its popular heart as well as among its intellectuals – by the current crisis of modernity and its values (we will find space to detail this in subsequent chapters). This is a crisis of the state, a crisis of democracy, and a crisis of politics. And the return of the repressed – including France’s repressed colonial past – is devastating.

All this is doubtless one of the keys to France’s national disarray. This is a new era, and the lurch into it has been brutal. A country that was one of the historic crucibles of revolution, the Republic and the social sciences is addressing this new era with a cultural, political and scholarly toolbox tested by centuries of experience. But this rich inheritance was bequeathed to us by an era that is now over: the era in which we grew up, learned and hoped. It is no surprise, then, that politics and the social sciences continue to mobilise old ways of thinking and old vocabularies that are ever more ineffective. Classes, revolution, and the Republic are still very much present in discourse and analysis. This telescoping of a new era and the intellectuality of the era that

preceded it is heavy with consequences.

Indeed, words that are no longer current take revenge on a world that no longer hears them. They change in meaning, turn subjectivities into their opposite, declare incomprehensible what makes sense to new generations, and transform the emancipatory models of the past into instruments of domination. As we endlessly lament the Republic and the class struggles that have now disappeared, real popular mobilisations defy any simplistic attempt to identify them. The people, the Republic and *laïcité* [France's brand of state secularism] have in recent years paid the price for this.

THE PEOPLE DISLOCATED

The riots of October–November 2005 were a powerful alarm bell that very few people wanted to hear. In October 2015, on the tenth anniversary of these events and at a time when France already had the whole world looking at it aghast, the general tone of the debate showed how far stubbornness can go, characterising as a 'simple' social and urban problem what was in fact the symptom of a deep political crisis and a major rupture in the republican narrative.

So where has 'the people' idealised by Jules Michelet in his 1846 book *Le Peuple* gone? Where is the 'the instinct of the simple', the 'inspiration of the crowds', the 'naïve voices of conscience' which Michelet considered 'democracy's deep foundation'?[9] Arriving in power in its name in May 1981, the French Left would – even within its first few weeks in office – contribute to dislocating this people symbolically. It saw neither 'the instinct of the simple' nor the 'inspiration of the crowds' in the clashes that broke out in the Minguettes neighbourhood of Vénissieux during the summer of 1981. And when the real people fails to correspond to the one that has been dreamt of, it is the real people that is deemed to be in the wrong.

Exit the red *banlieue*, bastion of the class struggle. Welcome the *banlieue tout court*, its crisis, its violence and its new institutional geography. 'Neighbourhood Social Development' (Développement social des quartiers, DSQ) prefigured what the 'politics of the city' would then become. Part of the people loses its status as a 'deep foundation of democracy' (and all the more so as a 'deep foundation of the republic'), and instead has a status imposed upon it that sets it apart from the Republic. This so-called 'positive' discrimination has marked a generation of youth, if not two. Those who grew up in the neighbourhoods labelled DSQ and then DSU (Urban Social Development) would set Vaulx-en-Velin ablaze in October 1990, and then do the same to

Sartrouville in March 1991 and Mantes-la-Jolie in May of the same year. In all three cases, it was the death of a young person that sparked the fires, just as it was in October–November 2005 when their children or little brothers set fire to cars across France.

For some, however, this section of the people was now no longer the people – and the Front National were not the only ones to say so. In this view, the *banlieue* is not quite part of France, and 'second-generation immigrants' (and 'third generation' - and why not fourth too?) are not quite French. And so the riot is not a legitimate revolt. The dislocation process has many different dimensions. It is territorialised, with the introduction of 'sensitive zones' in 1996. It is marked by national origins: the category 'migrants' was first added to the INSEE statistics in 1987. It allows the demonisation of 'urban violence' and the identification of 'new dangerous classes'.[10] The contemporary confessionalisation and censure of Islam are but the latest stage in an already long process.

More than twenty years after the March of the Beurs [people of North African descent born in France] and the energy of 'Touche pas à mon pote' ['Hands off my mate', a prominent slogan of the SOS Racisme movement], young people are still dying amid indifference and impunity. In 2003, Mourad, who was fleeing the gendarmes in the Gard *département*, was killed by seventeen bullets: he was seventeen years old. In October 2005, three young men being chased by the police took refuge in an electricity substation in Clichy-sous-Bois. Zyed and Bouna, seventeen and fifteen years old respectively, died there. In November 2007, the motorbike ridden by Moushin and Laramy – fifteen and sixteen years old respectively – crashed into a police car in Villiers-le-Bel. The two teenagers died instantly. The responsibility of the forces of order has always been simply dismissed. And the angry reaction of the friends of the victims, those close to them, and their neighbourhoods has always been near-unanimously condemned – and even convicted in the courtroom. Who raised their voice to offer some understanding of the riots that broke out in Valdegour, Nîmes in March 2003, Clichy in October 2005, or Villiers-le-Bel in 2007?

It seems that there is greater urgency in condemning the burning of a car than the death of a teenager. So, the rage brims over. On the evenings of 27, 28 and 29 October 2005, it was just Clichy that caught fire. But as the days passed, the absence of any institutional compassion and the republican consensus against violence ignited a conflagration across the country. Political France looked on, but without understanding. This deep-seated movement would last for three weeks. It had only a distant relationship with the images of warfare shown on a

loop in the media. Direct clashes with the police were rare. But cars burned everywhere across the country. A strange, indescribable, disturbed atmosphere descended on these neighbourhoods each night. Faced with the flames of anger, the consensual reference to the Republic acted as an injunction to the very silence that excluded this generation – and perhaps also its parents – from the official people. When the movement came to an end in mid November, the will in political circles to turn the page everywhere won out over any kind of collective reflection.

Yet such reflection might have been salutary when, just a few weeks later, strange incidents peppered the school student mobilisation against the 'Contrat première embauche' (CPE, 'First Employment Contract') announced by Dominique de Villepin's government on 16 January 2006. The movement, which began on 7 February and continued up till the end of March, was characterised by a rare determination, shutting down universities, train stations and motorway connections. It secured the non-application of the law (even though it was voted through parliament on 2 April). However, the beginning of the movement was marked by a quite different phenomenon: the student demonstrations in Paris were disturbed or even violently attacked by groups of young people from the poor [*populaires*] neighbourhoods. During the first national demonstration on 23 March, we saw very violent scenes as the procession reached the Place des Invalides. On 28 March, the Paris demonstration marched under police protection. When it was dispersed, the police collaborated with the unions' *services d'ordre* [teams of stewards tasked with keeping protests 'orderly']. The then interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy did not fail to pay tribute to the latter. This fracture between two groups of angry young people was not merely anecdotal. Nine years later, on 13 November 2015, the students had become the thirty-something graduates targeted by the jihadists at the Bataclan, on the Rue de Charonne and the Rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi. Who had sowed so much hatred?

Who today asks themselves what became of the young firestarters of 2005? How many have continued their studies? How many are unemployed? How many are daily victims of police profiling? How many have – rightly or wrongly – been imprisoned? What feelings might they have about a Republic contemptuous even of their anger? What has become of their rage? Do we think that it is enough to look away, like forgetting a bad memory? Do we think that being in denial can make these problems disappear? 'There were no riots in the cities during Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency,' Brice Hortefeux told BFM TV on 17 August 2012, and not as a joke. The immoderation of his remark was

matched only by the political silence that followed it. He dared to make this claim to a (rather unresponsive) journalist, even though we can list no less than 137 clashes and riots in France during the period in question. But, above all, he was able to say it without immediately being contradicted, without immediately causing a public scandal. There is a general collective blindness, transcending the Left-Right divide.

This people has become invisible, its 'suffering' no more than a 'mute remainder of politics', as Michel Foucault put it. How, in these conditions, can it again 'found an absolute right to stand up and address those who hold power?'[11] This people has long disappeared from the political Left's radar. Dislocated in this manner, Michelet's people founds neither rights nor hopes.

PUNITIVE *LAÏCITÉ*

'Most of these youths are Blacks or Arabs with a Muslim identity … Clearly, this revolt is ethno-religious in character.' Thus argued Alain Finkielkraut in 2005, anticipating the general confessionalisation of the social question and the new use of *laïcité* that have established themselves in public debate since that time. [12]

It was one late afternoon in October 2003, at the Lycée Henri-Wallon in Aubervilliers, that I first experienced the confusion that was beginning to reign in this regard. Together with Mouloud Aounit, at that time president of the MRAP (Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples), I helped an old friend through a personal ordeal that would soon become a national political symbol. The former PCF militant Laurent Lévy was very active in networks that sought a refoundation of French communism, and we were working together on compiling a list of social-movement candidates for the 2004 regional elections. One day, Laurent sent me an enigmatic email: 'Here we are, my daughters have turned into Easter eggs.' I quickly understood that Alma and Lila, the brilliant young daughters born of the 'atheist Jew' (as he liked to say) Laurent's encounter with a mother of Kabyle origin – herself 'quite Muslim, depending what day it is' – had together decided to cover their heads with scarves.[13]

As the girls explained in the interviews they gave to Véronique Giraud and Yves Sintomer, this wholly new teenage conviction was reached in a personal way – through reading, trial and error, and do-it-yourself – to the great astonishment of both of their parents.[14] The two sisters got hold of several

Qur'ans in order to compare the translations, and they very quickly distanced themselves from religious associations they considered too sectarian. This was far from Salafist jihad. Moreover, at first an agreement was reached with the school's management. A roll-neck jumper, a bandana and two hairpins totally satisfied the two girls' wish to cover their hair. Back-to-school 2003 looked like it would be a calm one.

Certain teachers who were members of [the Trotskyist group] Lutte ouvrière decided otherwise. From the first days of term, they waged a dogged campaign for immediate sanctions. In this they were backed by their organisation's newspaper, where on 25 September 2003 we could read: 'Well yes, we do approve of the teachers who have had the courage to stand up for this position, and we hope that there are many more of them around the country. And, moreover, the teachers should not need to make excuses or to hide behind the law. Their vocation as teachers, their conscience, should be enough.'[15] On Friday 10 October, in the closed proceedings of the school's disciplinary board, another militant, Pierre-François Grond – a leader of the [Trotskyist group] Ligue communiste révolutionnaire and teacher of one of the two sisters – actively took part in the final decision: namely, the definitive expulsion of Alma and Lila. And 'definitive' it really was, since they were not admitted anywhere else. Having been pushed out of the school system, they got married and became stay-at-home mothers.

Such was the concrete result of a discriminatory mobilisation waged in the name of 'preserving a secular [*laïque*] public education service and our students' right not to be subject to pressure to wear the veil'.[16] The door was thus opened to the 2004 bill banning the veil in schools. Pierre-François Grond and his colleagues did indeed declare themselves opposed to this. But who had opened Pandora's box? I made eye contact with Grond as he came out of the disciplinary board meeting. I still have the searing memory of his absolutely sincere exaltation in his victory.

The assault was made in the name of the Left, even in the name of the Revolution, in a conception of liberation that was to be imposed on the victims. This most social of republics had turned on its children, against its students. The tone had already been set in 1989 in a column published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* appearing under the names of Élisabeth Badinter, Régis Debray and Alain Finkielkraut entitled 'Teachers, let's not give in'. This open letter to the national education minister excoriated the refusal to exclude veiled students, which they considered to represent the 'republican school's Munich'.[17] After all, '*laïcité* has always been a test of strength.'

Such is the revenge of a word, *laïcité*. This essential principle of tolerance and freedom of conscience, the heritage of the republican Left, has suddenly become a repressive principle of which the Right and Far Right have now seized control. Nicolas Sarkozy could thus pass from eulogising European Christianity to a tough, purist *laïcité*, and the Front National from Joan of Arc to the *laïcité* of the school canteen.[18] A strange *laïcité*, this, which no longer has anything much to do with the emancipatory principle of 1905, and which now mobilises figures across a very wide political spectrum, from the far-right movement Riposte laïque (once of the republican Left) to the left-wing journalist Caroline Fourest, or Éric Ciotti, a hard-right MP for Les Républicains in the Alpes-Maritimes. This singular, highly reductive conception of *laïcité* is now imposing itself not on political or religious authorities, but on people themselves. It claims to target all faiths, but by priority in France it takes against the faith of the weakest: Islam.

Paradoxically enough, this 'falsified' *laïcité* – to use Jean Baubérot's term – has become the name of a state confessionalisation of the most discriminated-against popular classes; a disciplinary injunction that completes the dislocation that began in 1981 and discredits the possibility of the Republic forming a basis for national unity.[19]

CHARLIE LOSES ITS BEARINGS

'Communalism, that's the enemy.'[20] Has this slogan become today's equivalent of the famous 'Clericalism, that's the enemy,' pronounced by Gambetta from the ranks of the National Assembly on 4 May 1877? It is not just that. This slogan from another age has had other emulators, more inclined to denouncing religiosity and the 'opium of the people' than they are to demonstrating anything to society. FEMEN's flashmob actions are a striking example of the persistence of this tradition of confrontation. We have to admit, confronting the Orthodox church and its links with the authorities in Eastern Europe is no small thing. Pussy Riot were prosecuted for blasphemy after their anti-Putin protest and performance in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in February 2012, and they even inspired a hardening of their country's blasphemy legislation. In France, where this crime was abolished in 1791 – long before the *laïcité* laws were introduced – the situation is a little different.[21]

In the France of the 1960s and 1970s, the culture of a generation (indeed, my own) prided itself on 'contesting' everything. This established a sort of updated version of Gambetta's struggle, in a humorous and good-natured register. This

new tradition – for which nothing was sacred – was carried forward by the team working on *Hara-Kiri* and then the first *Charlie Hebdo*, which went under in 1982. Full of talent, they maintained their generation's attitude across the decades without noticing that the world was passing them by. That is why we loved them, even when they annoyed us. That is why we sometimes forgave what a lot of other people had trouble swallowing.

Relaunched in 1992, the new *Charlie Hebdo* was a holdout from a generational culture that was getting old. It addressed its time and the whole world with messages that came from another era. Indeed, there were light-years between the famous front-page cartoon 'Bal tragique à Colombey, un mort', remarking acerbically on de Gaulle's death in 1969, and the recurrent humour of the 2000s and 2010s at the expense of what was, in France, not the religion of the powerful, but the religion of the dominated, of the most discriminated against. There are also light-years between the effects of a little French tabloid in the France of de Gaulle and Pompidou, and the effects that any image can have in today's hyper-connected world. What makes people laugh in Orléans, but not necessarily in Saint-Denis, can stir up mobs in Niamey or in Grozny. What risks a fine or even censorship in Paris could put lives in danger on the other side of the world … or indeed in Paris.

Conscious of the threat? Protected? Who had really got the full measure of the symbolic stakes that were being playing out here – even to the point that the murderers did not need anyone to issue them with orders? For the question posed was not – and still is not – whether or not one can caricature the Prophet Mohammed. Rather, the question is the purpose we give to humour about the sacred and caricatures of the divine, where the law allows us to do this. Gambetta had a limited and specific objective, which was to push back the influence of the Catholic clergy in French politics. Today the religious stakes are global, and without doubt demand at least a minimum of strategy. This was the level at which this drama built up. It was then that the pieces of the puzzle were gradually fit together.

We were stunned, shocked. In order to be able to mourn, we had to construct a narrative other than the murderers' own. That was first of all done in the first person: indeed, at the outset, *Je suis Charlie* was not a 'We'. The We did not preexist the distress: it developed in the sharing of emotion and at the rallies. That is why it was ideologically plastic and manipulable.

This narrative initially built up around 'Charlie'. Yet there were three categories of victims – the 'unbelievers' (of *Charlie Hebdo*), the Jews (killed in the Hypercacher supermarket) and the 'crusaders' (the policewoman in

Montrouge and the policeman in the eleventh arrondissement). Mohammed Merah had already attacked Jews and 'crusaders' without sparking so much emotion. And we might venture that if Coulibaly had acted alone, and if the Kouachi brothers had not attacked *Charlie Hebdo*, there would not have been the same mobilisation. Something came together around the attack on a little-known and little-read weekly, which all the more surely became a symbol of collective freedom than any better-established publication could have been. Without knowing it, along with their 'religious' targets the murderers also attacked a last holdout from the France of the 1960s and 1970s; they attacked the childhoods and youthful memories of multiple generations, the last traces of a youth revolt of another era. In this sense, as some high school students told their teachers, the attackers had also murdered some 'grandpas'. But this rather nostalgic image of a nonconformist tradition was far from everyone's memory. In fact, for others the dominant memory was a more recent one: that of a weekly that had become conformist in its satirical targeting of Muslims, and not only with its caricature of the Prophet.[22]

THE 'SPIRIT OF 11 JANUARY', OR THE IMPOSSIBLE CONSENSUS

The centrality of *Charlie Hebdo*, and its promotion as a new national symbol of freedom, thus had a heavy impact. It rendered impossible any truly national emotional consensus. Indeed, the incidents surrounding the government's 'minute of silence' at noon on 8 January revealed the effects on Michelet's 'people' of years of dislocation, and of the stigmatising confessionalisation of the most impoverished. According to the few reports we have of such incidents, the French school students who rejected the minute of silence were, for the most part, very young: fourteen-and fifteen-year-olds in a *quatrième* class in Castelsarrasin, a ten-year-old girl in Montauban, two boys of fourteen and sixteen in Saint-Denis.[23] In substance, they were saying that they could not pay tribute to the murdered *Charlie* journalists, because these journalists had insulted them. The arguments that were related by those teachers who did take the time to get a dialogue going revealed a great deal of anger. A heavy, enduring, serious anger.

Rather than listen to the malaise that was now being expressed, the national education minister played down the 'incidents'. Adding contempt to the contentious, he oscillated between disapproval and simple aloofness. The school students were, in the proper sense of the term, 'reduced to silence'. They were subjected to the general opprobrium, or even criminalised. We thus passed from

a shared emotion to an obligatory one. The apparently unbounded ideological communion was accompanied by a violent intolerance with regard to any other discourse. This risked further feeding resentment and the search for other kinds of bearings. Without doubt, the youth had the nerve to give voice to the disagreements that many adults preferred to keep quiet about in that moment. Only a few spoke out publicly, like the economist Frédéric Lordon or the signatories of the 'No to the *union sacrée*' appeal published on 15 January.[24]

Our country is a very old one, and it seems rather lost in its current century. Like certain others, it does not recognise its own children. So, is it really reasonable for France still to be giving the world lessons in universalism? To carry high and proud the banner of the 'duty to blaspheme'? Sometimes, at least, let us take a look at ourselves in the mirrors that this world holds up to us. The PEN American Center's awarding of the 'courage prize' to the French weekly on 5 May 2015 sparked a small scandal in the English-speaking literary milieu. The ceremony was boycotted by the Americans Francine Prose, Rachel Kushner and Teju Cole, Australia's Peter Carey, the Canadian Michael Ondaatje (author of *The English Patient*) and Britain's Taiye Selasi. All of them refused to bestow their 'admiration and respect' on the paper's editorial line. The polemic that followed was a violent one, and those who said 'I am not Charlie' were soon joined by more than 200 other authors, who together made it clear that there is an essential difference between resolutely supporting expression that transgresses the bounds of the acceptable, and enthusiastically rewarding such expression.[25] Peter Carey attacked 'the cultural arrogance of the French nation, which does not recognise its moral obligation to a large and disempowered segment of their population'. In August 2015 journalist George Packer published an investigation in the *New Yorker* entitled 'The other France: Are the suburbs of Paris incubators of terrorism?',[26] reinforcing this assessment. Meanwhile, the British academic Sudhir Hazareesingh emphasised the 'navel-gazing and timorous republican neoconservatism that is emerging among French intellectuals'.[27]

THE TRAP SHUTS

Was the slogan *Je suis Charlie* the name for a piece of duplicity?[28] It would be difficult to reduce the emotion and the sincerity of the crowds mobilised between 7 and 11 January to this alone. But the emotion and sincerity of those present did not give account of the malaise of those who were absent. The proclaimed consensus kept its gaze turned away from the divisions that silently persisted.

These innumerable crowds – rallied in their emotion behind the world's powers that be – doubtless provided the foundation for a national positioning that the government quickly labelled the 'spirit of 11 January'. It was difficult to make any other voice heard. This 'spirit' perpetuated a sort of collective denial, a mix of rigid certainties and anxiety about the present. Brandishing *laïcité* in the name of the conflicts of the past is inadequate when it comes to facing up to the present.

It is no small thing that the 'spirit of 11 January' in France was carried forth by a government that calls itself socialist, as well as the remnants of the left-wing parties. This 11 January was also a funeral march, marking the cultural and political burial of the '68 generation – that is, the burial of the last great critical, collective, 'revolutionary' drive of the twentieth century. Here we saw a vast and disoriented crowd; applause for the police; the absence or invisibility of poorer and more working-class people; and all the world's powers summoned to join as one. This was a fine, reassuring image of the state, plastered on top of a world boiling over: the real world of the invisible, the desperate, those who are already living the chaos that awaits us.

What traces are left of the citizen upsurge that was then being proclaimed with such enthusiasm? One thing that does remain is the memory of the national sabre-rattling in the face of the coming chaos. There persists disarray, together with a certain wilful blindness toward the fractures that continue working away at the foundations. In a sense, as seen from Raqqa or Mosul, these demonstrations showcased our national weaknesses more than our strength. And the strategists of jihad have drawn the consequences by making France one of the top-priority targets for terror. That was the meaning of 13 November 2015: a trap laid for transforming disarray into a disciplining, identitarian injunction, turning politics into a military march, and instilling the spirit of war into what remains of the spirit of freedom.

CHAPTER TWO

The Coming Chaos

Politics is the continuation of war by other means.

Michel Foucault[1]

On 19 January 2012 the taxi was struggling along the road from Dakar to Diamaguène Sicap when we were passed by a few hundred young high school students by the Thiaroye station, where the toll motorway now crosses.[2] Girls and boys carrying backpacks, many wearing shorts, were demonstrating against their teachers' strike. It was good natured and a little muddled. The traffic was soon halted by tyres blocking the road, which were then burned, letting off a thick black smoke. 'You shouldn't stay here,' a trader whispered to us, and we quickly understood why. Within a few minutes black uniformed silhouettes emerged from the smoke, helmeted and rather heavily armed. The special forces had no trouble dispersing this crowd of young people in short trousers, who headed off to take refuge in the school, thinking this would provide them with cover. The anti-riot forces trapped them in the building.

The official report counted thirty wounded, many of them with open fractures, and with one left in a coma. Apart from its bloody conclusion, this was a scenario I had seen before. I had witnessed it several times, thousands of kilometres away, in front of Saint-Denis's Lycée Paul-Éluard. Here, as outside a number of other high schools, the mobilisations against the Contrat première embauche in 2006 and then against the pensions reform in October 2010 gave rise to similarly paradoxical confrontations with the police. The blocking of the N1 motorway, the burning of dustbins and the torching of a few cars seemed designed more to attract the men in uniform than to hold them off. The conclusion that each matinée inevitably pointed toward was escape, and certainly not a battle. Bruno Froidurot, author of a study on the October 2010 high school students' demonstrations in Lyon, has confirmed these observations.[3] On the margins of a national movement largely carried forth by adults, high school activists also put themselves in the way of danger between 12

and 22 October in Ajaccio, Lyon, Strasbourg, Saint-Denis, Montreuil, Grenoble, Sartrouville, Poissy, Argenteuil, Nogent-sur-Marne, Nanterre, Corbeil, Chelles, Montbéliard, Valenciennes, Nantes, Lens, Mulhouse, Chambéry, Enghien, Villeneuve-sur-Lot, Dijon, Épinay, Les Mureaux, Nîmes, Meaux, and Champigny.[4]

It is difficult to discern any insurrectionary strategy in this sometimes-senseless risk-taking on the part of young people, and evidently there is no hope of their being able to win in such a direct confrontation. But all of them shared a fierce will to 'summon' the government (and thus its police) in order to tell it something that cannot be said otherwise or elsewhere. As one of the French rioters of 2005 so clearly explained: '*It wasn't politics*; we just wanted to tell the state something.'[5] That is without doubt the deeper meaning of the powerful wave of riots and civil strife we have seen around the world in recent years: an unquenched anger, faced with the authorities' autistic response to people's real situations.

OURS IS THE TIME OF RIOTS

In no sense was the diagnosis that I advanced in 2009 refuted over the six years that followed: ours is the time of riots.[6] The most striking thing, without doubt, is that this rise in collective civil violence is essentially invisible to most of the people whose job it is to observe the world or to manage it. The riot only bursts onto the screen when its gravity, its geographical extension or its duration impose it on the news agenda. This was notably the case with the three weeks of torching cars on French soil in 2005, the Greek riots of 6 to 31 December 2008, the English riots of August 2011, and the Ferguson (2014) and Baltimore (2015) riots in the United States. Each of these were sparked by one or several youths dying as a result of a police intervention.

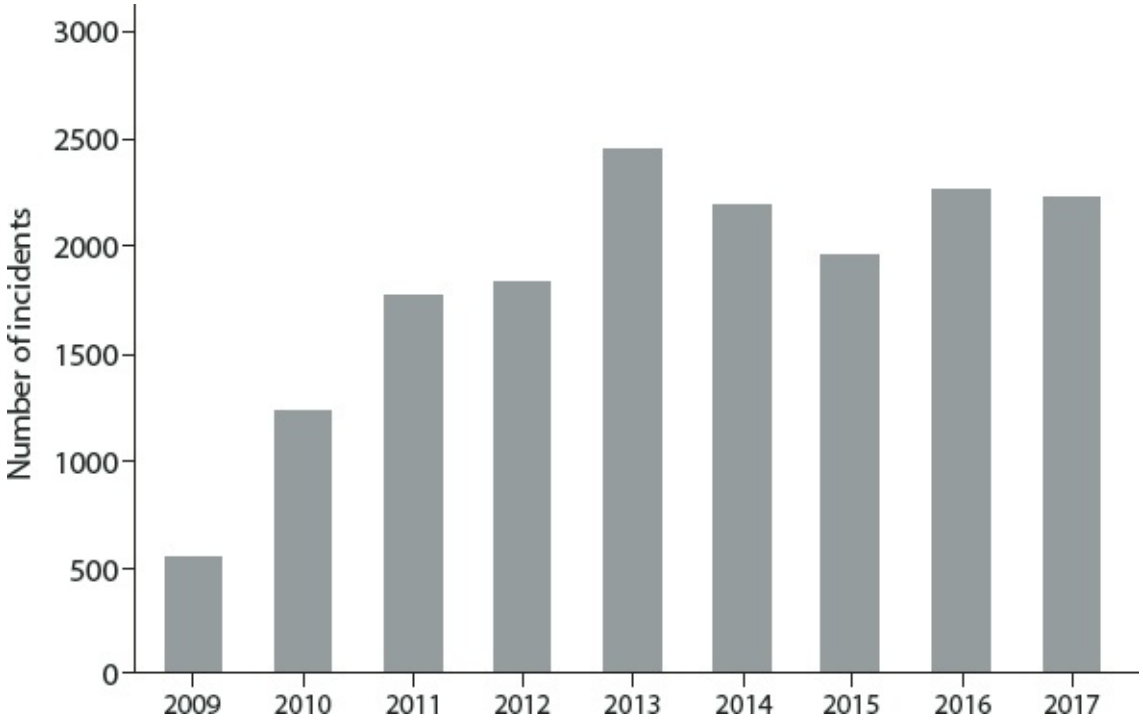

Figure 1. Riots and civil strife

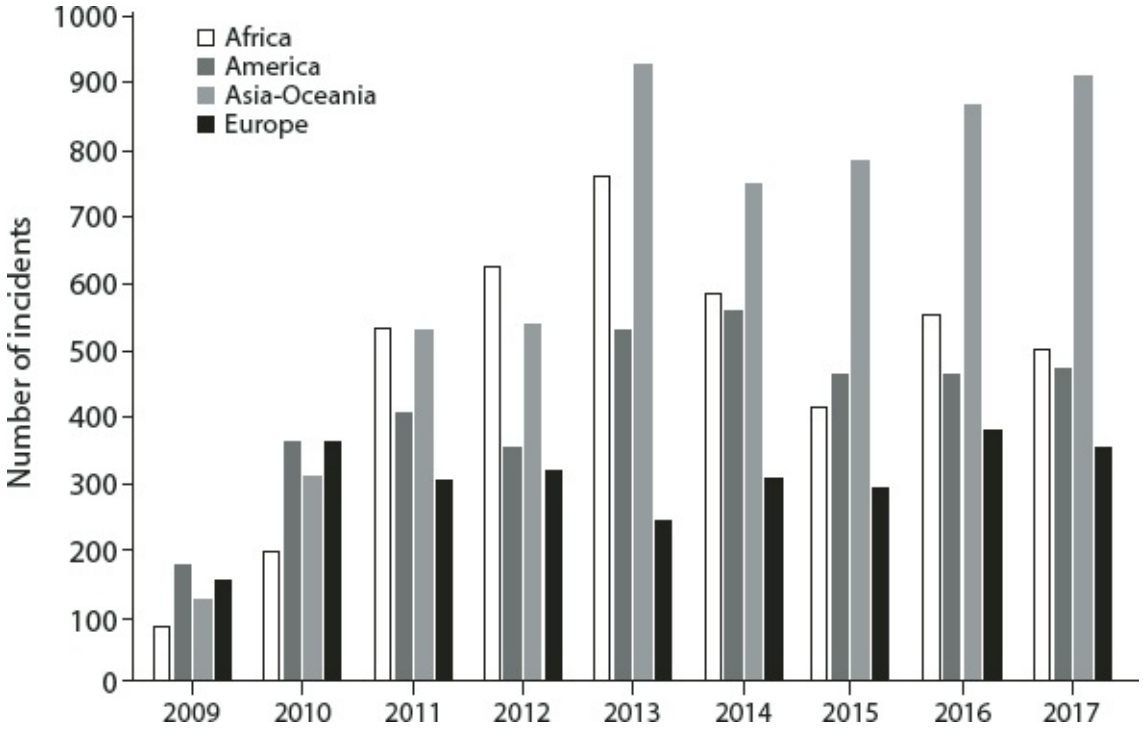

Figure 2. Riots and civil strife by continent

But these explosions of anger are not simply anomalies in an otherwise serene world, resulting in a few spectacular nights of fireworks. While these

alone are ‘visible’ in the mainstream media, they express the same grievances as hundreds of more or less serious incidents that pockmark workers’ mobilisations, urban resistance and student revolts the world over (see the accompanying graphs). And they have the most diverse triggers: the rickshaw ban in the area around the Bangladeshi capital, the clearing-out of informal traders in a Latin American city centre, the suspect distribution of social housing in Algeria, water shortages or electricity blackouts, proof of mayoral corruption or electoral fraud, price hikes, an outgoing president standing for office again in defiance of the established Constitution, renovation plans for some neighbourhood, or even, as in August 2014, a medical team’s intervention in a Guinean town affected by the Ebola virus epidemic.

When we take all this into account, we get an impressive picture, marking out a wave of civil strife worthy of the great revolutionary periods of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: 1848, 1917–19, and 1968. The uprisings in several countries in 2011, termed the ‘Arab Spring’, doubtless marked an important milestone – and one to which we will return – but they did not disrupt the upward trend in riots. Moreover, the countries affected by political change, such as Tunisia and Egypt, saw a lot more riots after spring 2011 than in all previous years.

Some major trends have emerged since 2005.[7] Against the backdrop of the financial crisis, the so-called ‘bread riots’ of 2008 followed speculation on basic food products, and since then riots over the high cost of living have continued without letup. But the rise in food prices is not their only cause. The riots that broke out in 2012 in Nepal, Indonesia and Nigeria were sparked by the rise in oil prices, which caused a rise in the price of petrol and other fuel.

Fuel prices have themselves had another consequence for public policy: tension over electricity production in certain countries, and increased numbers of power cuts. So much did the unpredictable character of Senelec’s electricity supply exasperate the inhabitants of the Dakar urban area that in 2010 Senegal invented the term *émeute de l’électricité*. Pakistan formalised the English equivalent: ‘power riot’. ‘Electricity’ or ‘power’ riots have spread and gained in intensity since the 2009–12 period. They lasted almost the whole month of June 2012 in Pakistan and multiplied across Algeria over the summer.

From 2010 onward, riots rapidly extended across the world’s newest factories. In 2010 Apple was shaken by the riots at the Suzhou iPhone factories in China’s Jiangsu Province. India has also experienced such riots, at Lanjigarh (Orissa) in September 2010 and Surat (Gujarat) in January 2011. The most impressive were those at the Bangladesh textile factories, where child labourers

clashed with the forces of order: in Ashulia, Dhaka and Mirpur in June 2010; Ashulia, Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj in July; Chittagong in October; Dhaka, Chittagong and Gazipur in December; and Siddhirganj in January 2011. Meanwhile Mexico (Cananea, September 2010), Bolivia (Potosí, in August), Malaysia (Johor, in August), Chile (the Valparaíso dockers, in September), Bolivia again (the Oruro miners, in September), Peru (the Zamora miners in September and Lima in April 2011) and Brazil (Juira, March 2011) paint a landscape of revolt in Latin America. Africa has been rather less affected (despite the cases of the Sinazongwe and Chingola miners in Zambia, and the Kyebi miners in Ghana), but it has not left Europe untouched (take the cases of Valladolid, Bierzo and Oviedo in Spain).

South Africa became a theatre of clashes during the Mpumalanga (Middelburg) and Rustenburg miners' strikes between January and May 2013, but rioting also took hold of the farms of De Doorns from 9 to 15 January 2013. The situation was similar in Colombia, with the peasant mobilisation of July–September 2013 causing at least twenty-five sometimes-serious blockades and skirmishes in the Cesar, Cauca, Caquetá, Norte de Santanter, Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Atlántico and Nariño Departments, in parallel to the conflicts at the mines in the departments of Caldas, Risaralda and Antioquia. Riots broke out in Congo (Kambove, February 2013), Mauritania (the Nouakchott dockers, that April), Peru (Cañaris in January, and Retamas in March), Bangladesh (Dhaka, Ashulia, Gazipur) – notably after the collapse of the Rana Plaza (a block of workshops) on 24 April, killing over 1,100 people – India (the Orissa miners in November, the workers at Noida in April), Cambodia (Phnom Penh textile workers, in November), and Vietnam (the Pho Yen Samsung factory, in January 2014).

In parallel to this, looting has recovered its place in the repertoire of popular uprisings. This ancient form of revolt now regularly reappears: in Zhongshan (Guangdong, China) during a conflict over land in November 2011; in Edo (Nigeria) in a riot over the cost of living in January 2012; and in Timbuktu in January 2013, in a riot against the city's Arab population. In December 2012, Argentina was a theatre of collective looting at least on a par with London in 2011. From 20 to 28 December 2012, looting was not so much the collateral damage of the riot as the centre of collective action, conducted by multigenerational crowds who invaded the supermarkets and carried away sometimes-large amounts of goods. In total around fifteen towns were affected. The repression geared up to respond, and two people were killed. This was a national affair, which had surprisingly little echo abroad.

But in 2013–14, it was urban questions across three continents that served as the terrain for three great popular mobilisations and three powerful confrontations with the powers that be. The issues in question were the trees of Istanbul's Taksim Square, the price of public transport in Rio and São Paulo, and the renovation of a neighbourhood in Burgos, Spain. Who could have imagined that speculative redevelopment plans in the great Turkish city would provoke such contagious and determined indignation? The defence of Gezi Park began on 31 May 2013. Adopting the peaceful repertoire of the various 'occupations' of 2011–12, this assembly soon had to face violent repression. Just twelve days after the beginning of the occupation of Taksim Square, São Paulo also caught light, followed by Rio de Janeiro and Brazil's other major cities. Preparations for big sporting events can destabilise metropolises, and the 2014 football World Cup in Rio presented an opportunity to try to drive the *favelas* out of the city centre. This aggravated already-high real estate prices and the cost of living. Here it was hikes in the cost of public transport that ultimately lit the gunpowder. Without doubt, the redevelopment project challenged by the inhabitants of Burgos in January 2014 was a lot less ambitious. But the planned works in the neighbourhood of Calle Vitoria Gamonal – which was meant to be partially pedestrianised – came up against fierce resistance from the inhabitants. At first this was expressed in a traditional, peaceful way, but the stubbornness of the authorities swung the movement toward riots, which unfolded from 10 to 13 January. Solidarity demonstrations across the rest of Spain also resulted in clashes: in Madrid on 15 and 16 January, in Alicante, Madrid, Zaragoza and Barcelona on 17 January, again the following day in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, San Sebastián and Zaragoza, and finally on 26 March in Zaragoza. The mobilisation spread like wildfire, carrying forth a critique of austerity-era public spending decisions.

Unlike the mounting revolts in late eighteenth-century France, this spread of riots and civil strife does not seem to be the prelude to a revolutionary sequence. Rather, across the world we are seeing the official establishment of a divorce between peoples and the powers that rule over them, whatever the nature of the states concerned. Given the lack of a common language, what we once called politics is no longer very useful for organising and giving sense to the relations between peoples and governments. This disappearance of politics is one of the characteristic traits of the transformation of the state's role and the form it assumes in the context of globalisation.

While the states that today manage globalisation are in dogged competition with one another, they do have some common characteristics – whether they are democratic or dictatorial, religious or secular. The first of these – and today the most visible one – is their organic link with financial circuits. The corruption that is denounced in Brazil as in Turkey or China – as it was in Ben Ali's Tunisia – is a particularly visible dimension of this generalised bind of dependency. Doubtless, this latter reaches the heights of sophistication with the European monetary apparatus and the weight of sovereign debts on the financial markets.

July 2015 gave a striking illustration of this. The Greek referendum on the fifth and the 61 per cent 'no' vote to the creditors' demands did not count for much in the face of the Eurogroup's monetarist logic. Worse: the very decision to call the referendum scandalised the higher echelons of power across the continent. What an incongruous idea – wanting to consult the people, allowing it to take a sovereign decision on its own survival! And what a collective eulogy then followed for the 'courage' of the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, when he was forced to accept conditions contrary to the decisions of those who voted. Had betraying one's electoral promises suddenly become an official political virtue? Unless a virtue was to be made out of necessity.

The second common trait among the states of the globalisation era is their permanent recourse to lying. This is an ineluctable development: after all, deceit is very much necessary if states are to maintain a discourse of possibility, even when they cannot control the very forces that forbid this possibility. Without doubt, for Tsipras's European colleagues his greatest sin was that of not lying to his people. This structural deceit is today undergoing a great technical elaboration, ranging from the construction of 'talking points' to the use of the 'announcement effect' as a substitute for action, via the politics of the decoy (for instance by going off on some entirely secondary polemic), or making discourse more technically complex.

But conquering the media – so central to contemporary power strategies – does not amount to conquering peoples themselves. The lie is there for all to see, and the unkept promises have a devastating effect. So when, on 31 December 2008, a young black man called Oscar Grant was shot down in cold blood by the Oakland transit police, we saw just one (small) riot on the day of his funeral, despite the fact that three live amateur videos capturing his death had been widely distributed. America was still under the political spell of Barack Obama's victory, at the end of a campaign that had trumpeted the possibility of change and centred on the theme of a nation that should take account of everyone. Six

years later, ‘Yes We Can’ no longer worked on the black community. Coming in rapid succession, the murders of Michael Brown and Freddie Gray both unleashed riots such as the United States had not seen since 1992.

But what future do such outbursts of rage have? The riot is a display of collective anger at political impotence. It does not change the budgetary situation or government decisions, which are more often than not determined by international constraints. Once the decision has been taken and the popular impotence confirmed, the mobilisation disappears. This respite does not mean acceptance or simple resignation. It means that there is now such a distance between the people and government, the rupture so powerful, that the anger is replaced by the delegitimisation of power. The ‘exodus’, to use Toni Negri’s term, is not a divorce by mutual consent, but a state of permanent mistrust punctuated by episodes of strife. [8] This not only undermines confidence in the existing state; it risks delegitimising every possible state, and every urgent demand for the common good and public-spiritedness.

Let us not fool ourselves: the very legitimacy of states is now under question. Whatever the regime, the idea that government is there to ensure its people’s common well-being is increasingly running into trouble. Between the corruption of states and governmental lies, there is not a lot of space for the imagined possibility of ‘good government’; the famous allegory that Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted in the Siena town hall in 1338 no longer really makes sense.

Certainly, there are some exceptions, most of them temporary. In parallel to leading Brazil toward the great global market, President Lula conducted a massive and effective poverty-reduction programme, especially by way of the Bolsa Família. But the legitimacy thus acquired did not last long, and it fractured during the 2014 football World Cup. The Chinese government boasts of guaranteeing record economic growth, offsetting the increase in inequalities. In general, it does respond to social demands – once the compulsory stage of repressing mobilisations is done and dusted. But beware the conjuncture changing direction.

For more than twenty years, in many countries, states have been seeking an alternative legitimacy. And the alternative that most often imposes itself is that of a securitarian legitimacy. The state protects us from the dangers that threaten our future. There are various such threats. The sovereign debt is one, and it provides a powerful argument for European governments seeking to lock down any debate on the future. Insecurity has been very widely mobilised in order to legitimise authoritarian policing and criminalise the popular classes. In France, it was Lionel Jospin’s government that first embraced the securitarian turn in

urban policy, starting in 1997. His interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, personally chaired the 'Secure towns for free citizens' conference in Villepinte. A political consensus formed around this stance. In 2005, Left and Right were barely distinct in their joint condemnation of the youth in revolt; nor did trade union organisations hesitate in giving their strong support to the forces of order against the *casseurs* [hooligans, wreckers] in the 2006 mobilisation against the Contrat première embauche.[9]

This fight against insecurity, which slides toward the repression of social disturbances, is also backed up by international collaboration and the sharing of methods and experiences. The Copenhagen riots during the March 2007 shutting-down of the Ungdomshuset 'youth house' marked an important milestone in this regard.[10] In these conditions, it is hardly surprising that just as the Tunisian uprising of December 2010 was on the brink of bringing down the Ben Ali regime, French Foreign Affairs Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie told the National Assembly, 'We propose that the know-how of our security forces, which is recognised the world over, should allow the resolution of security situations of this type. That is why, indeed, we propose that the two countries [Algeria and Tunisia] allow action – within the framework of our cooperation – so that the right to protest can remain in place at the same time as security is guaranteed.'[11]

The shift from a right to humanitarian intervention to the right to *securitarian* intervention has for some years also taken on a further dimension, namely that of merging internal and external threats into one. The result is a logic of 'policing warfare' worldwide.[12] We know that 11 September 2001 marked a major turning point in this regard. In the American military doctrine that asserted itself from that moment onward, war became 'just', 'asymmetrical', 'pre-emptive', even a 'war without end'. War no longer has the goal of establishing the victor's peace.[13]

This type of war has been inscribed in a policing logic ever since the 1991 Gulf War. Prior to that, modern warfare had operated according to a logic that is no longer in effect: that of preparing for peace and transforming the enemy into a negotiating partner. The new policing logic is exercised in the name of order, but it does not prepare the way for the 'good guys' peace'. 'Justice is done,' President Obama declared after the summary execution of Osama bin Laden in May 2011. The objective result of this combination of asymmetric and pre-emptive warfare with a policing logic is the fact that over at least the last quarter-century, civilians have accounted for 90 per cent of the victims of conflict. Yet, for all the powers engaged on the operational terrain, losing a single soldier has

now become a matter of state.

Since 2001 there has been no lack of theatres of intervention: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Central Africa. We can only note that while this policing logic has been able to prop up the domestic legitimacy of the interventionist states, it has done nothing of the kind for the allied political forces in the countries concerned. Seventeen years on, the Taliban have not been weakened in Afghanistan, the Iraqi state has exploded, the French-British intervention has been incapable of creating new legitimate authorities in Libya, and the fragile Malian and Central African authorities owe their survival only to the maintenance of a French military presence.

Fundamentally, the most powerful states bolster their own legitimacy precisely by way of the chaos they have themselves helped to create elsewhere. But in so doing, they run the risk of intensifying that chaos even further. For in the last analysis, what threatens a weak government whose legitimacy is being undermined is pure and simple collapse. Thus we begin to see areas of the world that now remain outside of any state control: Somalia, Libya, parts of Syria and Iraq, but also those parts of Mexico in the hands of the cartels. Doubtless, there are others yet to come. The weakness of some states today leaves them incapable of addressing their populations' survival needs, when faced for instance with an Ebola epidemic or the strategies of local jihadism, from Boko Haram in Nigeria to Al-Shabaab in both Somalia and Kenya.

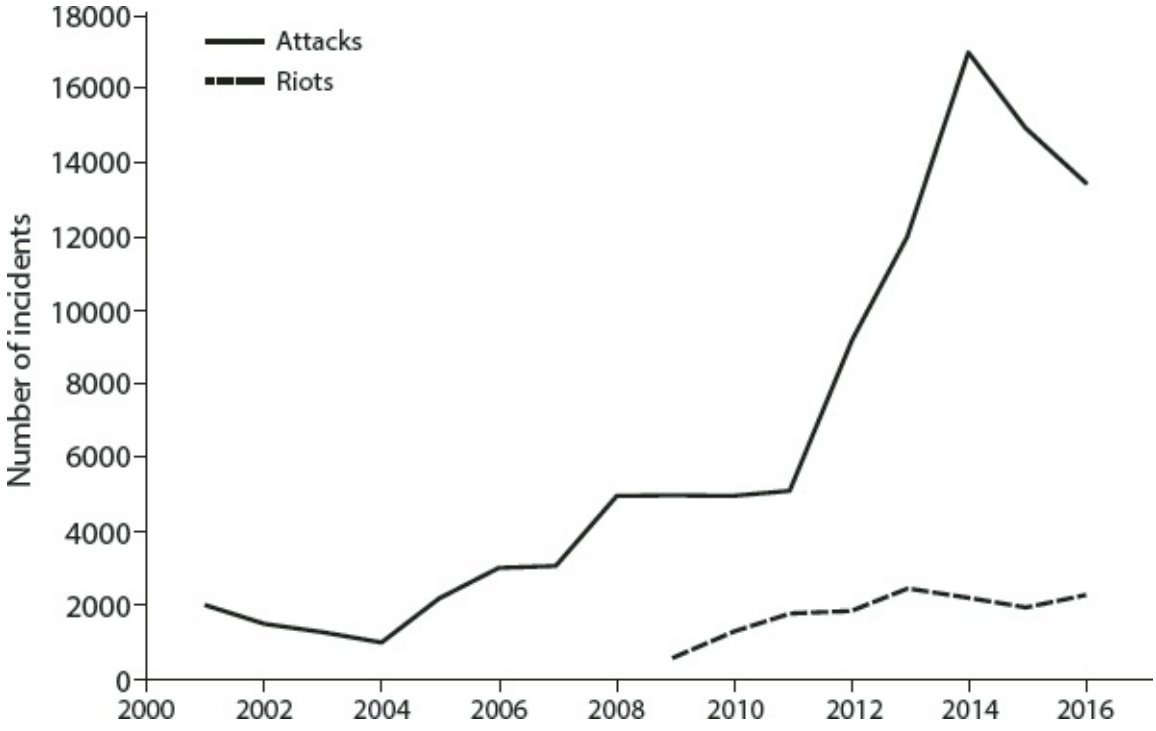

Figure 3. Attacks and riots

A STRATEGY OF VIOLENCE: 'MANAGING BARBARISM'

Since 2001 the state at war has had a named enemy: terrorism. The proliferation of attacks around the world since then is no mere spectre, if we believe the figures, maps and graphs offered by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) think tank for the 2000–13 period[14] – figures that we can also complete for 2014 thanks to the US State Department's annual report, published in June 2015.[15]

Here we can clearly see two major turning points: the noticeable rise starting in 2003, and an acceleration in 2012–14. According to the IEP, these two turning points essentially owe to religiously inspired attacks, with the number of attacks of political, nationalist or separatist inspiration remaining below 800 across this whole period. So, we can say that Al-Qaeda's jihadism established itself starting with the war in Iraq, and that the acceleration that followed the 2011 insurrections, the disappointment to which they led and the collapse of three states (Iraq, Syria and Libya) prepared the way for Da'esh. In 2004 a book in Arabic appeared online entitled *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*. It was signed Abu Bakr Naji, doubtless the name of a collective of authors.[16] While attentively read by the US counter-terrorism services, it only really became a talking point after 2013, when what might have appeared as a flight-of-fancy Al-Qaeda strategy began to take real form in Syria and northern Iraq.[17] Characterised by certain journalists – as well as its French publisher – as 'the jihadists' *Mein Kampf*', the book bore rather closer resemblance to Machiavelli's *The Prince*, on account of its cold and functional cynicism.

Indeed, the book contained a methodical exposition of a territorial and political strategy that broke with Al-Qaeda's earlier approach. The task now was to flood the breaches opened up by the collapse of the weakest states situated on the periphery of the superpowers, and especially of the United States. Such were the terrains of 'savagery' that it was necessary to get stuck into and to 'manage'. The goal was not simply to establish one more state in their place, but to lay the basis for a restored caliphate, one and universal. The Islamic land to be established would recognise no borders. This strategy has no national frame of reference, and in a certain sense it is even deeply anti-statist. But it would be necessary to operate at two different levels: managing the conquered populations, and waging the holy war.

The 'management' strategy is wholly pragmatic; it requires a flexible

administration, compromise with local notables, and a gradual application of sharia. But this administration remains subordinate to the overall, global purpose of war. That is why it is important to clearly distinguish the roles of ‘leaders’ from those of ‘managers’, for the administration cannot arrogate to itself the right to leadership. As for the war strategy, it is not reducible to military considerations alone. Rather, it means embracing a strategy of violence and horror: ‘One who previously engaged in jihad knows that it is naught but violence, crudeness, terrorism, frightening (others), and massacring … If we are not violent in our jihad and if softness seizes us, that will be a major factor in the loss of the element of strength … The Umma which possesses strength is the Umma … which boldly faces horrors.’[18] In the author’s understanding, this recourse to horror will also allow jihad to sow doubts in the media as to the real power of its enemies, the United States and its allies.

So, chaos is at our door. But jihad is not the only force driving it. The crumbling legitimacy of states in the context of globalisation, the crisis of political representation, the search for a securitarian legitimacy and the logic of war have together constructed a situation in which jihad and the Islamic State’s strategists can today prosper. The ‘empire of chaos’ heralded by Alain Joxe in 2002 is now doing its work.[19] And perhaps it is succeeding.

CHAPTER THREE

The People, Nowhere to Be Found?

> *Whatever singularity … rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is the principal enemy of the State. Wherever these singularities peacefully demonstrate their being in common there will be a Tiananmen, and, sooner or later, the tanks will appear*.
>
> Giorgio Agamben[1]

23 June 2011. Dakar's Place Soweto is boiling over. Clashes have taken place across the whole city that morning. But by the late afternoon the National Assembly is the centre of everyone's attention. Will it bend to the will of President Wade and reform the Constitution, allowing him to stand on a ticket together with his son as vice president and seek victory in the first round of the presidential election by way of a simple plurality? The 'black dragon' (the police's water cannon) has run out of water and is no longer drenching people. The demonstrators stand only centimetres away from the police forces massed in front of the Assembly. Branches of trees are set alight. Cars in the surrounding district have already been burnt out. It is a young and very diverse crowd: from students deftly wielding parliamentary vocabulary to the youth from the *banlieue*, who for the most part speak Wolof. The demonstration has been called by rappers known across the country, who have in recent months combined in the 'Y'en a Marre' (fed up with this) collective. The next day, the Dakar press will compare the Place Soweto to Tahrir Square.

The protest has a simple slogan: *Touche pas à ma Constitution* (hands off my Constitution). Nothing about this surprised me at the time.[2] Yet with hindsight, in its implicit reference to the slogan *Touche pas à mon pote* (hands off my mate), it wielded a first-person singular that itself deserves reflection. Is not a Constitution the very symbol of the organisation of a collective? Yet no 'We' was necessary. This rally – an effective one, since the bill was indeed withdrawn – was posed as an assembly of individuals, upholding a foundational national symbol in the first person. A collective had indeed formed, capable of confronting the forces of repression. But it was time limited. It did not preexist the demonstration, nor did it survive it. This is not today an exceptional

situation; we find it in numerous mobilisations. In a certain sense we saw it with the 11 January 2015 rally in France, after the terrorist attacks of the previous days.

FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE TO COMMUNAL STRIFE

Conversely, there are other 'We's inscribed in the long term. But these 'We's, often anchored in traditions, do not all speak the same language. So often there is a 'We-apart', with a need to assert itself against another We: the Indian Hindus' We against the Muslims and Christians; the Ukrainians' We against the Russian speakers; PEGIDA's We against foreigners; the We of the Bété in the Ivory Coast, as against the Dyula; or the South African Zulus' We against the Zimbabwean immigrants. This is also the We of endangered roots, the We of the American WASPs or Front National voters. After all, as the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai shows, racism and intolerance are fed not so much by the relation to an essentialised other, as – first of all – by a difficulty in the relation to one's own self.[3] The success of the expression *vivre ensemble* [living together / coexistence] in the Francophone political vocabulary, from France to Belgium and Quebec, doubtless resides in the possibility it offers of skipping across these two difficulties in the constitution of the national We.

Today the question of subjective and political collectivity is indeed posed. People, class, region, neighbourhood, religion: Which We mobilises us? Which We arrogates to itself the right to define the common good? If the construction of the people's 'commonwealth' is now objectively on the agenda, it remains subjectively problematic.[4] There are some 'We's that bring people together, and others that declare war on the other. Today, the common principles of a human community are at stake in an open, unresolved conflict, just as they have been in other historical periods.

But where, then, has the working class gone? This nagging question has been debated repeatedly. The working class is still there, the statistics protest – as if the objective social presence of workers' labour amounted to a political culture, symbolic recognition, its capacity to rally society, a great historical narrative and a mobilising utopia. The contemporary world has had to mourn the loss of all this: the workers are there, but in a collective sense they have become invisible, sometimes even to their own eyes. What not so long ago made for a 'class' has become a space of relegation, stigmatisation, suffering and sometimes division. In the old industrialised countries, unemployment, the sinking of whole industries, and the working-class defeats of the 1970s and 1980s doubtless

played a role in this. From the 1980s onward in France, the immigrant as a figure has also contributed to wiping away the old figure of the worker.[5] In parallel to this, the contemporary emergence of the *banlieue* identifies the sites of this oblivion.[6] A dark social threat replaces utopia, the radiant city turning into the ghetto *cité* [housing estate].

The massive worker-riots in workshops around the world most of all resemble *jacqueries*,[7] as in the case of the looting worker-rioters in Bangladesh in July 2006. The rage sometimes boils over: in Tonghua (China, 2009), Manesar (India, 2012), Sinazongwe (Zambia, 2012) and Marikana (South Africa, 2012) it was first of all the company managers who were killed. This anger often faces furious repression, as in Marikana's Lonmin mines, where more than thirty strikers were shot down by automatic weapons during a confrontation with army troops. In France, workers condemned to redundancy threatened simply to blow up their factories. This dramatic scenario did indeed play out in the Ardennes (at Cellatex) in 2000, in Caen (Moulinex) in 2001, in Ponts-de-Cé (Helvetica) in September 2008, in Châtellerault (New Fabris), Châteaufort-en-Yvelines (Nortel) and Auxerre (Fulmen) in 2009, in the Allier *département* in 2013 (DMI Fabrique), in Beine-Nauroy, La Marne (Bosal) in 2014, and in Fumel (MetalTemple) in 2015. The battle is there, the enemy is there, and this is where humiliation and dignity play out. But in none of these cases did the workers place their hope in some representative body or in the figure of 'good government'. The working class's subjective sequence is indeed closed.

As for the dislocation we have already outlined (at least in its main stages) in France, it is now doing its work elsewhere around the world. Popular mobilisations in South Africa are often marked by a brutal xenophobia in the townships, as was the case in 2008 and 2015. Papua New Guinea is used to anti-Chinese riots. The popular mobilisation against police violence in The Hague in 2015 took on downright anti-Semitic aspects, as was the case in Sarcelles in July 2014 during a demonstration against the Israeli military assault on Gaza. In this sense, one of the recent dimensions of the rioting as a global phenomenon has been the inexorable rise of communal strife. Clashes between villages or ethnic or confessional groups almost quadrupled between 2011 and 2014 (see table 1). And these figures – based on data I have myself collected – are doubtless underestimates.

Table 1. Communal strife around the world

	2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Africa	35	25	93	103	74	119	129

Americas	0	1	2	2	2	14	3
Asia/Oceania	20	52	112	71	134	102	106
Europe	4	3	12	8	39	8	20
TOTAL	59	81	219	184	245	244	258

In August 2012 the Indian state of Assam saw real pogroms, waged by the Bodos against the more recently established Muslim population, against the backdrop of a conflict over land. These massacres caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and the country's biggest flow of refugees since 1947. In Burma in June 2012, the Muslim Rohingya fell victim to massacres in Rakhine State, following a rape allegation. There were thousands of burned homes and tens of thousands of displaced people, many of whom took refuge in Bangladesh. The drama played out rather quickly, far from foreign attention and humanitarian agencies, which were prevented from taking action in the region. There were estimates of 650 deaths and 1,200 people disappearing. The massacre took place just a few weeks after elections that the regime's historic opponent Aung San Suu Kyi – awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 – had greeted as 'the people's victory'. She remained tight-lipped about this dramatic episode. In January, March, May, June, August and September 2013, Burmese Buddhist monks orchestrated further anti-Muslim pogroms, provoking the authorities' (at the very least, belated) response. Meanwhile in Bangladesh, across several weeks the extremists of the Islamic Jamaat party violently attacked the Hindus. In Lahore, Pakistan, Christian churches were torched on 9 March 2013.

At the beginning of the 2010s, communal strife was recurrent but very localised in Algeria (Ghardaïa) and more sporadic in the Ivory Coast. It became increasingly widespread in Egypt, where the Copts are one of the Muslim Brotherhood's targets. Communal riots seem to have become a structural problem in India, even beyond Uttar Pradesh State, which remains their epicentre; they have also affected Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal. In 2013 violent conflict between the Uighurs and the Han took root in Xinjiang, China, with massacres (in Kashgar in April and Turpan in June) followed by attacks on police stations (16 November, 15 and 30 December). In 2014, this violence was exported to other provinces, with a knife rampage against passersby in Changsha (Hunan, 13 March) and another in Kunming Station (Yunnan, 1 March). Without doubt the bloodiest clashes that same year unfolded in Nigeria, following the actions of the Boko Haram jihadist group; in the Central African Republic – even sparking a foreign intervention; and in Burma. In July 2015, the Indian press expressed alarm at a 25 per cent increase in communal riots across the first

five months of the year, under the new National Democratic Alliance government led by the nationalist Narendra Modi.[8]

A STATE DESPERATELY SEARCHING FOR A PEOPLE?

Doubtless, it is worth recalling the self-evident fact that for there to be a democracy, there has to be a people. That is its precondition. Before being a juridical abstraction, the popular sovereign is a collective subjective power. As Jean Sylvain Bailly – doyen of the Third Estate – told the king's envoys on 23 June 1789, 'The assembled nation cannot receive any order.'[9] When this power is found wanting, a state's legitimacy flaps around in a troubling political void. Electoral abstention undermines even the most comfortable of victories. A people's indifference is never the guarantee of a government's lasting comfort. The powers that be need a people. Even if that means creating one.

The logic of political modernity wants the people to come first, and for it to confer its own legitimacy on the government by way of delegation. But since the twentieth century, there has been no lack of governments that have decided to invert this logic, themselves deciding on the legitimacy of the people, its composition and who is excluded from it. Under Hitler, Jews were no longer Germans, and under Pétain, the naturalised were no longer French. This logic of selection did not die out with the defeat of Nazism.

Indeed, it has enjoyed a genuine renewal over the last few decades – and sometimes it is just as bloody. Thus the Rwandan government itself conducted the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994. Inherited from a colonisation process indifferent to the realities of Africa's inhabitants and their territories, the continent's borders – like those of the Middle East – have created a privileged terrain for these identitarian strategies. In Ivory Coast, the *ivoirité* theorised by the former president Henri Konan Bédié and mobilised by Laurent Gbagbo, one of his successors, organised the nation on the basis of an alliance between the Bété and the Bauolé, to the exclusion of the nearly 30 per cent of the population considered foreign: the Muslim Dyula of the north. A source of strife and civil war, this *ivoirité* was invoked by President Gbagbo in order to reject the verdict of the ballot box in 2010, leading his country to the brink of chaos. In Mauritania in 2011, the 'Touche pas à ma nationalité' (hands off my nationality) movement mobilised the black population which felt discriminated against by the new civil code and the census process, fearing that the Moor majority would deny them their Mauritanian nationality. In Burma, the Muslim Rohingya have quite simply been deemed stateless.

However, the old colonial territories are not the only breeding ground for this restrictive conception of nationality and of the people, nor ethnicity the only selection mechanism. While in France the Right does regularly put the question of withdrawing French nationality from individuals back on the agenda, here the discriminatory pressure on people's membership of the national community also plays out on a much-subtler terrain. The injunction to assimilation (or integration), advanced by both Left and Right, clearly signals that part of the population is somehow external to the nation. So some of us are more and some less French: entirely French, or just 'paper' Frenchmen, to use a popular term that sheds a lot of light on things.

From this point of view, the repressive *laïcité* popularised from the 1990s onward – becoming for many politicians and even intellectuals one of the markers of national identity – is a powerful selection mechanism. While it is a lot 'softer' than selection by ethnicity, symbolically speaking it is very violent. Indeed, this selective assertion of national identity, especially in Europe, is overlaid with the securitarian legitimation of states and the designation of both an external and an internal enemy. In France the injunction to *laïcité* takes on strongly securitarian tones. To point to the supposed cultural exteriority of France's citizens of 'Muslim culture' – whether they are believers or otherwise – is also to point to a threat to the national community.

These logics are so deep-rooted in the global political landscape that Barack Obama's electoral campaign in 2008 could even seem peculiarly anti-conformist. Entirely constructed around an 'inclusive' conception of the American nation in which everyone can find their place, it swam against the dominant currents of our era. Yet the seven years that followed showed that on this terrain even the best of intentions can fall foul of the mood of the times. For while state leaders are tempted to surf on the 'incompletenesses' of national identity (to use Arjun Appadurai's expression), and on the collective anxieties that these incompletenesses provoke, there still remains the problem that there can be no democracy without a people.

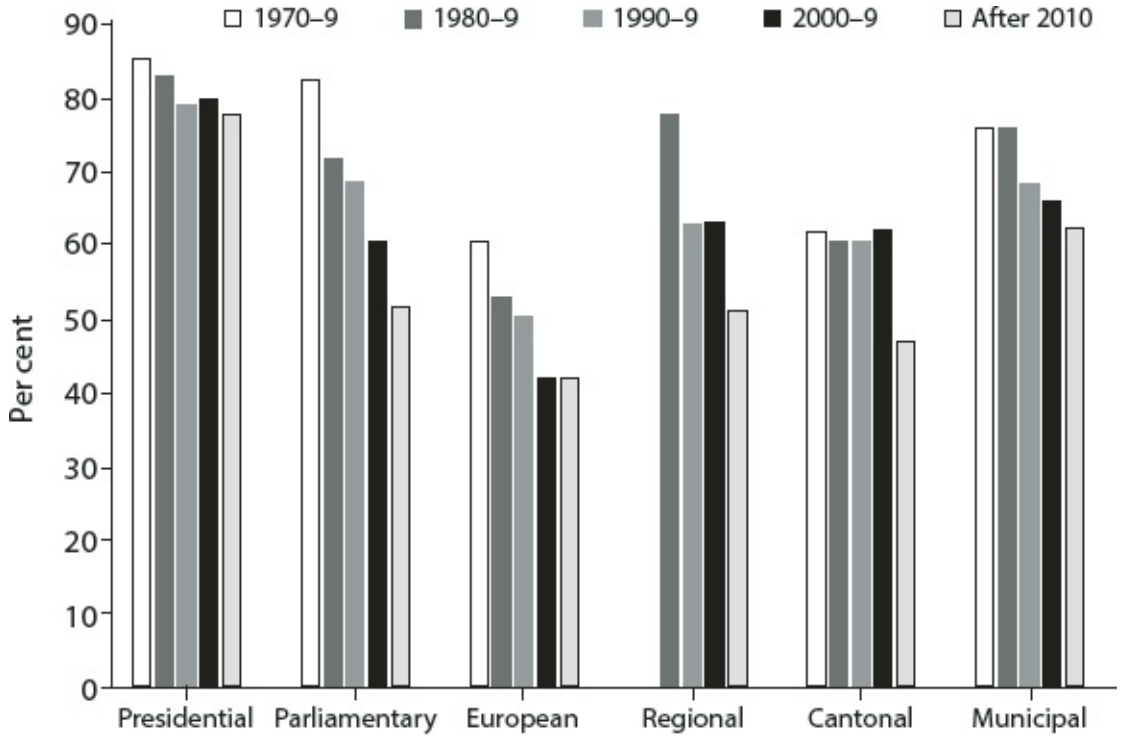

Figure 4. Election turnout in France – mean per decade

What does this have to do with elections, though? We should recognise that these contests are ever less able to catch peoples' imagination. In France, electoral turnout has been decreasing regularly since the mid 1980s (see graph).

This is also the case across Europe, as a 2009 study by the Bulgarian political scientist Antoni Todorov demonstrated.[10] In parliamentary elections, turnout fell from 93 per cent to 76 per cent between 1990 and 2009 in Western Europe (mean per decade) and from 76 per cent to 54 per cent in Central and Eastern Europe. The novelty of liberal democracy and free elections, newly established following the end of the communist regimes, did not in fact prove to be a guarantee of citizen enthusiasm. Over the 2000s electoral turnout fell to 47 per cent in Kosovo and Poland, 52 per cent in Lithuania, and 61 per cent in Serbia.

The situation is more uneven in Latin America, where voting is sometimes compulsory (as in Brazil) and there can be a very high turnout in certain specific contests (as in the votes electing Evo Morales to the Bolivian presidency in 2005, 2009 and 2014). Conversely, there is low turnout in Colombia, Mexico and Honduras (where it continues to fall).[11] In Chile, the 2013 presidential election saw 49 per cent of voters participate in the first round and 42 per cent in the second.

There are also strong variations across the African continent. In Ivory Coast the presidential vote mobilised just 37 per cent of electors in 2000, but 84 per cent in 2010. In Senegal, the dramatic election that saw the defeat of the outgoing president Abdoulaye Wade mobilised less than 52 per cent of potential voters in the first round and 55 per cent in the second. The Malian presidential election mobilised 49 per cent of the electorate in the first round and 46 per cent in the second. In Tunisia the 2011 elections saw a 99 per cent participation rate among those registered to vote, but only 51 per cent of all Tunisians of voting age – 48 per cent of whom were not registered.[12]

As for India, considered the 'world's largest democracy', there was 38 per cent abstention in 1998, 42 per cent in 2004, and 40 per cent in 2009, but 30 per cent in 2014 as the Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi secured his victory.

Certainly, this is an uneven landscape, but we can nonetheless say that the lack of enthusiasm for elections has become a planetwide phenomenon. Paradoxically, this does not stop elections from unleashing passions and even violence. For if electoral representation is no longer functional as a mechanism ensuring popular inclusion in politics, nor does it operate to pacify conflicts. Distrust toward leaders and suspicions of fraud and manipulation increasingly turn electoral campaigns into periods of riots and strife. Burundi offered a bloody display of this from March to September 2015, as did Congo in January that same year, and Guinea from April to September 2013. Across all continents, 2011 and spring 2012 were a period of major electoral clashes, and not only in the polling booths: far from pacifying and providing decisive answers to political and social conflicts, elections now became an occasion for riots (see table 2). The week following the Colombian local elections in October 2011 was marked by violent challenges to the result, even including the torching of town halls; twelve departments were affected, in particular Bolívar (five towns involved, three town halls torched), Cesar (in two towns) and Cundinamarca (two towns). There were at least five deaths.

Table 2. Riots and clashes linked to elections, around the world

	2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Africa	42	49	53	51	92	57	67
Americas	40	6	14	20	54	37	54
Asia/Oceania	7	10	47	45	100	62	71
Europe	8	1	1	2	2	0	10
TOTAL	97	66	115	118	248	156	202

While Senegal avoided a civil war such as the one that briefly swamped

Ivory Coast, the end of the Wade presidency did not pass without strife. There was a riot against the constitutional reform bill on 23 June 2011, and a week of murderous clashes before the first round of elections in February 2012. The growing difficulties that three such large countries as Egypt, Bangladesh and India have had in finding political stability have one dimension in common: the absence of any national consensus on the political constitution of the people, standing above its cultural and religious diversity. The communal strife in India, the persecution of the Copts in Egypt, and the confrontation between the government and a strong Islamist current in both that country and Bangladesh make it hard to find space for political expression in the context of violently contested electoral systems. All the same, local and national elections in India do not reach the same levels of violence as in Bangladesh (where 200 polling stations were attacked in January 2014). In Egypt, the constitutional system itself struggles to achieve legitimacy.

2011–14: SQUARE OCCUPATIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMON

A ‘We’ is decidedly not something that can be decreed. It constructs itself in mobilisation and in hope. In the face of globalisation, the 2010s have seen the emergence of three kinds of We – three possible figures of collective subjective power, outside or even in opposition to the state mechanism – namely, the We of the insurgents of the 2011 Arab Spring; the We of the Occupy movement and its 99 per cent; and the We of Amedy Coulibaly, justifying his murderous 9 January 2015 operation in a posthumous video – in other words, the jihadists’ We. If it is indeed necessary to distinguish Occupy’s We from the We of the Tunisians, the Egyptians or the Senegalese, we also have to investigate what is profoundly contemporary about the jihadists’ We in 2015, in its articulation of the singular and the common, beyond the use of social media (which has itself now become universal).

There was a rare subjective power in the Tunisian mobilisations of December 2010–January 2011, as well as in those in Egypt in January–February 2011. In both cases, a few weeks were enough to get rid of a feared dictator, even despite fierce repression. In both cases, the famous call ‘Resign!’ came from just one voice: that of a people united, convinced of both its might and its right. Its flag was not a red or green one, but the national flag. The people rose up when it decided to incarnate a collective destiny, a national destiny, against the authorities whom it denied any legitimacy in this domain. The inevitable consequences were not long in coming. Across the Arab world, where an

insurgent people was able to incarnate a nation that had been trampled upon, it was joined by the army. In both Tunisia and Egypt, the military played a central role in the final denouement. But in those Arab countries where national unity is less deep-rooted and more precarious, the insurgent people was not able to incarnate this national destiny, and the outcome was very different: the Shi'ites' revolt in Bahrain went down to defeat, the Libyan state collapsed for lack of an alternative structure after the Western intervention, and in Syria Bashar al-Assad methodically massacred the opposition and his people while also manipulating the country's various ethnic and confessional identities.[13]

Elsewhere in the world, a number of mobilisations in subsequent years have taken this same nationalist path. In 2013, the Quebecois students' movement against a rise in university tuition fees held aloft the flag of Quebec, renewing the Francophone national cause in Canada. This 'Maple Spring' concluded with the dissolution of the Assembly and the electoral triumph of a Quebecois party that had not really understood what was happening to it and proved unable to do much with its resurgent legitimacy. In 2013 the Turkish flag flew above the composite assemblies on Istanbul's Taksim Square and in the hundred-odd towns to which the mobilisation spread. At the same time, thousands of kilometres away, the Brazilian flag was held high by the demonstrators in Rio and São Paulo, just as the Ukrainian flag coloured Kiev's Maidan Square during winter 2013–14. Yet this national We struggles to posit itself as a 'constituent' We, to use Toni Negri's term.[14] While this We is asserted against the established government, it remains at a distance from those who come to take that government's place. It leaves it up to others to take care of managing the state, and in both Tunisia and Egypt this meant the Islamists. Only a few rare opportunities open up for a reworking of national identity itself.

In February 2011, the Y'en a Marre movement in Senegal did set out on this task, with its campaign for a 'New Type of Senegalese' (NTS), which then structured its local networks of 'spirits' (the movement's grassroots structures). But the movement's leaders rejected any direct or indirect participation in institutional political life. As for Ukraine's Euromaidan movement in November 2013, it gave rise to something a million miles away from a reworking of national identity. It instead upheld a sort of 'eternal Ukraine', a harsh nationalism that de facto excluded Russian-speaking Ukrainians and opened the way to civil war.

In subsequent months, the early success of the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings' modus operandi (i.e., the square occupations) inspired movements of often very different character, like the Indignados movement in Madrid's Puerta

del Sol from May 2011, or the Occupy movement in the United States in October of that same year. Taken together, these movements made up a wholly singular, worldwide sequence. America's weekly *Time* magazine acknowledged this in December 2011 by making the protestor its 'person of the year', with the subtitle 'From the Arab Spring to Athens, from Occupy Wall Street to Moscow'. The magazine wanted to give the protestor a face, and for the purposes of this issue, the Californian graphic designer Frank Shepard Fairey, alias Obey Giant, was commissioned to illustrate its cover. The synthesis suggested by this artist's perspective was not all that self-evident. While the headscarf and colour range strongly suggested the Arab Spring, it was a young woman protestor from the Occupy movement in California who had actually served as his model, even if the '99 per cent' from the original drawing was absent from the *Time* cover.[15]

Yet, taking a closer look at things, the famous '99 per cent' invented by a small group of militants in New York – animated in particular by the anthropologist David Graeber – is very far from being the national We discussed above.[16] It is a We of universalist ambitions. It is inscribed in the lineage of the alter-globalisation movement of the early 2000s and the World and continental Social Forums that began at Porto Alegre in 2001. Like the Social Forums, the We of the 99 per cent proposes a global militant and identitarian reference point, and it can be materialised in an infinite number of ways, from Occupy Wall Street to Occupy Venice. This reference point tries to establish a democratic mechanism without spokespeople, on the same scale as globalised capitalism. As a sort of emblematic figuration of the 'multitude' at the heart of 'empire', it has the same weakness as the Social Forums themselves: it does not involve itself in a confrontation with a government, it does not pursue any specific strategy, and it thus struggles to take root in any local or national political contest.[17] This relative lack of incarnation immediately had negative consequences for its declared ambitions. In November 2011, the French Indignés movement's capacity to rally people, like its camp on the esplanade at La Défense, thus remained derisory.

Even so, this new modus operandi has also been embodied in forms that serve more local strategies. In Hong Kong in 2014, the opposition and civil disobedience movement Occupy Central did not identify with the 99 per cent movement; it confronted the Chinese authorities, rather than the financialisation of the world. The same is true of the Spanish matrix of this mobilisation, which has built a wide base within the national political context and extended its influence in 2014 with the creation of the Podemos movement.

But if today there is any We with a nonnational vocation, a We that forcefully embodies a strategy for fighting globalisation and the powers that direct it in an enduring way, unfortunately it is the jihadists' We. Through terror it advances the assertion of an identity of universal vocation, in the service of a religious power – the caliphate – whose ambitions are similarly universal. This is an essential element of its power of attraction: it is a combatant We, breaking with the existing order of things, and opposed to the enemy's You. It is an end-of-the-world We. It is a We that takes note of the worldly power of those who spread hardship, as well as of the failure of uprisings against them. Lastly, it is a We that gives sense to 'I's who have lost their bearings. The first-person narratives of French jihadists (most of them converts) reported by David Thomson in 2014 were illuminating in this regard.[18] Discussing 'whatever singularities' in 1990, could Giorgio Agamben have foreseen that their chosen fate would be this unfortunate identification with a divine destiny?

This We is inscribed in the long term. It offers a refuge, a sense of 'our home'. 'We no longer have the right to sharia, even in our own homes'; that was how Amedy Coulibaly justified his murderous actions in January 2015, in a posthumous video where he appeared with weapons in hand. This We presupposes a conversion in the strongest sense of the word: the conversion of people who discover Islam, of course, but also each individual's conversion to the new rules of life, breaking with their past life and what is now considered mere directionless wandering. It is a We that internalises its discipline, which is simultaneously both a universal discipline and one intolerant toward anything that might block its path.

So the coming chaos is not only an imperial chaos. Globalisation has reshuffled the cards of the feelings of belonging, the collective impulses and the subjective powers that we call peoples, classes or historic subjects. The multiple emergence of 'We's apart, of resentment, borders, barbed wire, even massacres, represents a challenge to everything that humanity has in common.[19] Faced with the lethal unification of the world by the market, jihad can present itself as an alternative form of unification, free of national fragmentation; a unification that offers a collective and individual sense, a strategy and an ethic. But, most importantly, this jihadist We aspires to convert all the violence that has been suffered into a mobilising and purifying violence. It turns war into a politics and its militants into combatants. Its seductive capacity is situated on this same terrain.

CHAPTER FOUR

Youth on the Front Line

The youth: tomorrow's future.

Poster at the Foire aux problèmes, 22 January 2012, Dakar

Preparing for catastrophe, counting on no one but herself. Such is the ambition of Madeleine Beaulieu, heroine of Thomas Caillet's 2014 film *Les Combattants*. Even the military training she signs up for does not seem to meet her requirements, too marked as it is by an ethic of group solidarity. She does not believe in solidarity as a response to danger, any more than does Lisbeth Salander, the heroine of Stieg Larson's *Millennium* trilogy. The one is athletic, and from an ordinary family; the other is frail and has been placed under a guardian – a hacker pursued by the police even though she is trying to escape a criminal father. The one relies on her body, the other on her brain. But both are representations of a youth with no confidence in the future or in adults; figures of a generation cornered into fighting back. 'In spring 2012 we walked into a headwind, against the times, and we were going back toward ourselves.' Such is Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois's conclusion on the 'Maple Spring' – of which he was one of the leaders – in his book *Tenir tête*.[1]

A GENERATION REPRESSED INTO INDIFFERENCE?

The coming generation is the first 'post-historical' generation. Albeit in very varied forms, in both global North and South the hope of revolution and social progress often beguiled these young people's parents and grandparents in their own youth, and it forged their vision of the world. Up until the 1970s, their elders' lives were inscribed in some historical sense. In the North, the 1968 generation grew up amid the growth of industry, saw the independence of the colonised nations, benefited from intergenerational social advancement, and won individual freedoms as they brandished the collective revolutionary hopes of the era.

But everything happening now is as if this ’68 generation had squandered its inheritance of hope, guaranteeing itself a better life for want of having constructed a better world. And, along the way, the sense of history got a little bit forgotten. For some decades already, policies promoting ‘remembrance’ have been competing with historical reflection for cultural legitimacy. Is this not quite a confession? What is important is no longer to construct the future, but to avoid the errors of the past. The ‘duty to remember’ transmits only a dead memory.

What credibility does the ‘transmission of values’ have today, when the experience of those who bear these values is all too often both a subjective denial of the hopes of their own youth and a living example of the failings of their subsequent choices, both individually and as a collective? The generation reaching adulthood in the 2010s know one thing for sure: the path taken by their parents, whether they migrated to France in search of a better life, fought for the ‘singing tomorrows’, or worked for their own success, leads to a dead end. No longer is there a collective hope in revolution or social progress, and there is little hope in individual success either. The countdown to the end of the world seems to have begun, with nothing to arrest the rush toward catastrophe.

We should not expect either regrets or a collective mea culpa. Rather, the dominant sentiment is arrogance. For the future was more beautiful in the past – just as for some people the Republic had appeared more beautiful under the Empire.[2] And thus we still have to organise the worship of its relics: Algerian independence, Great Russia, the Republic. And beware these youth, preoccupied with themselves alone, who want to embody this ‘future of tomorrow’ – the slogan on the posters at the Dakar Foire aux problèmes organised by the Y’en a Marre collective in 2012. From one corner of the world to the other, the only responses are disciplining, market ones, from university fees that now come at cost price (the future no longer deserves to have public money invested in it), to the renewed call to authority (of parents, morality, the police), to the brutal repression of whatever strays from the straight and narrow, be it individual or collective. Youth is in the firing line of all those who want to bury the fact that they themselves plundered the future.

Indeed, ‘firing line’ is not just an abstract expression here. Across all continents, young people are dying because they did not respect police authority at sufficient distance. Across all continents, since the turn of the century, these victims have become symbols and their deaths have provoked ever increasing numbers of riots: from 2001 to 2014, I have recorded 411 riots of this type around the world, and that is certainly far from an exhaustive total (see table 3).

Table 3. Riots linked to a young person's death, worldwide

	2001–7	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Africa	2	2	5	8	13	16	14	12	6	9	13
Americas	2	2	7	16	5	16	15	44	50	14	9
Asia/Oceania	5	3	6	12	10	29	31	44	29	20	14
Europe	28	24	9	6	7	5	4	10	6	11	6
TOTAL	37	31	27	42	35	66	64	110	91	54	42

Some of them held on to both their first name and surname: Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré in Clichy-sous-Bois (2005), Moushin Sehhouli and Laramy Samoura in Villiers-le-Bel (2007), Alexis Grigoropoulos in Athens and Freddy Villanueva in Montreal (2008), Jesus Vieira in Setúbal (Portugal, 2009), Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi-Bouzid (Tunisia, 2010), Mark Duggan in London (2011), Freddie Gray in Baltimore and Michael Brown in Ferguson (United States, 2014). Yet so many others have remained anonymous in the annals of these 'hecatombs of lead soldiers'.[3]

Who in France still remembers Illiess, the sixteen-year-old killed in an accident while being chased by the police in Romans-sur-Isère on 28 September 2008; the twenty-one-year-old Mohamed, who died in custody in Firminy on 7 July 2009; or the eighteen-year-olds Jason and Yakou, each killed in motorbike accidents as they tried to flee from the police in Louviers and Bagnolet in summer 2009? Who has heard of Peppe and Pasquale, both seventeen, killed in a motorbike accident during a police chase in Palermo on 2 October 2008? Who knows about the fate of Li Shufen, fifteen years of age, raped and murdered by local notables in Weng'an, Guizhou in June 2008, of Li Guochao, thirty-one, who died in a motorbike accident as he tried to pass a police roadblock in Shenzhen, Guangdong in November 2008, or of Abdelkader Yettou, twenty-six, killed by the police in Oran on 1 June 2009?

However unknown, each of these deaths was a family drama and a collective trauma, on each occasion provoking one or several days of riots. The scenario seems unalterable: the emotion and the anger of the young erupts amid the indifference or disapproval coming from an adult world that is always ready to criminalise the victims or give lessons in morality to the parents. There are, of course, exceptions: the death of Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010 was at the origin of the blaze that swept away the Ben Ali regime just four weeks later. But these traumas also have a lot of other long-term effects: potentially devastating consequences that remain more under-the-surface.

When the nineteen-year-old motorbike thief Ali Rezgui died under police fire in a Combs-la-Ville (Seine-et-Marne) parking lot on 17 September 2000, no

inquiry was launched into this ‘blunder’. Once the two days of riots in the Grande Borne (Essonne) *cité* where Ali lived had come and gone, the media, politicians and police simply moved on. Who was concerned about his accomplice and friend, an eighteen-year-old who escaped this misadventure physically unscathed – the young man in whose arms Ali died? Who was concerned about this young Amedy Coulibaly, who over the next fifteen years would drift between criminality, prison and fleeting media appearances (like during a July 2009 meeting with President Nicolas Sarkozy), before leaving his bloody name etched in history as he killed four hostages in the Hypercacher on 9 January 2015?[4] What became of the youths who torched cars in the France of 2005, who are today between twenty-five and thirty years of age? What will become of the London rioters of 2011, or the Ferguson and Baltimore rioters of 2014?

This rage in response to the injustice of an unpunished death never judges the victims. Whether they are petty criminals or minor offenders like Mohamed Bouazizi, militants like Alexis Grigoropolous, or simply passersby considered suspect just because of their age – if the police draw no distinctions, neither does the collective emotional response. The rage often remains confined to a given district, to the youth of the town concerned, but it can also spread across a whole generation living in the working-class neighbourhoods. And it can extend even further than this, as for instance in Tunisia in 2011 or in China in 2008, where a very diverse crowd attacked and set fire to the Weng’an police headquarters. And – as in Greece in December 2008 – it can also be the rage of young students, manifesting itself in the city centres.

A MOBILISED GENERATION: STUDENTS IN THE FOREFRONT

Indeed, the 2000s and 2010s have also been marked by an exceptional mobilisation of high school and university students around the world, for the most part within a logic of sharp confrontations. While France has cultivated its own distinction between respectable student demonstrations and those of the *casseurs* [hooligans] from the *banlieue* – as was notably the case in the 2006 movement against the Contrat première embauche – high school students’ mobilisations have always been remarkable for their violence.

In 2010, one in six confrontations around the world had to do with a student mobilisation. The often-dizzying rise in tuition fees has set campuses ablaze in California as in the UK, in India as in Italy. In 2011 the violence of university students’ mobilisations remained at the same level as the previous year, in

dispute over the same questions. The beginning of the academic year was marked by the ransacking of the UK Conservative Party's offices (on 10 November 2010) and even an attack on Prince Charles's car! The revolt among young students widened between 2011 and 2012, especially in Africa, where eighteen countries were involved. While Colombia remains a notorious crucible of university clashes, and the young Chilean students' fight for free education maintained its energy and will to confrontation, without doubt Quebec was the star of 2012, with the conflict over the never-ending rise in tuition fees.

The 'Maple Spring' began on 13 February 2012, with the opposition to the fee increase planned by Jean Charest's Liberal government. The strike was exceptional in its length, continuing into the summer and forcing the universities to postpone the return to class that autumn. Like the French government with its pension reforms, the Quebec government refused to negotiate. Despite its length and the students' sometimes violent skirmishes with the police, the strike retained popular support, publicising itself with its red felt squares, pinned to the wearer's lapel. The forces of repression invented fresh laws for themselves, especially Law 78, passed on 18 May 2012.[5] As the weeks went by, the movement took on national proportions, and Quebec sovereigntism passed from one generation to the next: behind the question of education, a Quebecois conception of the state and public services was now at play, in opposition to the federal neoliberalism. The Parti Québécois narrowly won the early elections staged on 4 September 2012.

In 2013–14, a major share of riots and civil strife in general involved students' movements. University students' presence therein was not limited to battles within the universities themselves. Egyptian students were particularly invested in the support for former president Mohamed Morsi and the face-off with the new military regime. The same was true of the universities' place in the Venezuelan mobilisation (not counted in the table 4).

Table 4. University students' riots worldwide

	2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Africa	97	109	75	69	56	118	42
Americas	25	53	63	84	96	72	41
Asia/Oceania	11	15	23	20	14	13	80
Europe	8	6	14	15	7	18	16
TOTAL	141	183	175	188	173	221	179

As for US universities, in spring 2014 they were confronted with the spread of a new phenomenon: student parties turning into alcohol-fuelled riots. It was as

if the rage that was being expressed now extended beyond any specific target.

In Mexico in 2014, the face-off between the youth and the corrupt authorities reached the heights of violence, and of horror. A few days before the anniversary of the 2 October 1968 massacre in Tlatelolco, the mayor of Iguala decided to orchestrate the fierce repression of the mobilisation conducted by the students of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College (in Guerrero state). The police opened fire, leaving six dead, and then moved to intercept the buses carrying other students along the road from Iguala to Chilpancingo. The students were then loaded onto trucks toward some unknown destination. Forty-three of them would never return. For one month, their disappearance remained a mystery, until the confessions that came from members of the criminal organisation Guerreros Unidos. The police had handed over the students to the Guerreros Unidos, who had then massacred them, before burning their corpses at a garbage dump in a neighbouring locality. Violent demonstrations multiplied in protest against first the students' disappearance, and then against the massacre once it had become known. The seat of Guerrero's governor in Chilpancingo was repeatedly invaded, as was the governor's house; the Iguala city hall was torched on 22 October, as were the PRI party's Chilpancingo headquarters on 11 November and the city's government offices the following day. The mobilisation continued into 2015 and from January until June disrupted the election process not only in Chilpancingo but also in Tixtla, Orizaba and Oaxaca, soon affecting half a dozen states.

AFTER 2011, A GENERATION DISABUSED: 'THEIR BALLOT BOXES ARE TOO SMALL FOR OUR DREAMS!'

As iconized by *Time* magazine's declaration of 2011 as the year of the protestor, it was without doubt this generation's year, at least at the level of 1968. This generational uprising took place in three phases: the Arab Spring, the Spanish Indignados' movement starting from 15 May, and the US Occupy movement in October (see previous chapter). The Arab Spring began in December 2010. Its trigger – lest we forget – was one of the multiple riots that we have already mentioned, beginning in reaction to a young man's death. The term 'revolution', widely used at the time, is doubtless excessive, or in any case out of step with the reality of the insurrectionary process. This generation remains at some remove from state power, its stakes and its traps. Indeed, this would be confirmed in the mobilisations of subsequent years. It is as if the will to emancipation had liberated itself of the state itself.

Across two centuries, our modernity had made state power the means of effecting transformation, and soon the supreme goal of all politics. But, in a sense, the rioters of the twenty-first century are putting the state back in its place, albeit without thereby abolishing it. In this sense they are acting on the model of the worker-insurgents of nineteenth-century France (1830, 1834, 1848, 1871), and, without knowing it, rediscovering many of the same convictions.[6] Did not Machiavelli himself speak of 'perfection' to designate a situation of 'disunion between the plebs and the Senate'?[7] The actors in the popular uprisings are not the same as the actors who will draw out the consequences of these uprisings within the space of the Tunisian and Egyptian states. Whether we rejoice in that fact or deplore it, those are the facts: this divorce, which has marked riots as a phenomenon for decades, is not somehow abolished by those riots that do end in victory.

We again find this refusal to take a strategic political approach in the Senegal of 2011–12: the Y'en a Marre movement set itself the objective of 'getting rid' of the outgoing president, but it did not give any indication on how to vote. Similarly, while some of the leaders of the 2011 Chilean student movement did take steps with a view to the 2013 parliamentary elections, as did some of the leaders of the Quebecois student movement in 2012, by no means were these individual approaches adopted by the mobilisation itself.[8] In December 2011 the Valparaíso student leader Sebastián Farfán Salinas (aged twenty-three) passed stern judgement on attempts to translate the movement's strength into parliament: 'We went to the Assembly to see if we could advance, but we realised that the Right is dogmatic in defending its model of education, and besides that the Concertación[9] has [financial] interests in this education system. The results are there to see! A few comrades thought that they could achieve changes on the basis of their parliamentary representation [through their parties]. In reality, they got nothing!'[10]

'Their ballot boxes are too small for our dreams!' ('*Nuestros sueños no caben en sus urnas*') – so the walls of Madrid endlessly repeated. The Spanish Indignados who occupied the Puerta del Sol on 15 May and denounced the corruption and lies of the political system refused to give the slightest indication on how to vote in the 22 May 2011 regional and municipal elections. Taking a similar distance from strategies for power were the occupiers of Taksim Square and the demonstrators in Rio and São Paulo in 2013, and even those of Euromaidan in 2013–14. Their central preoccupation was either to drive out reviled leaders and denounce their corruption, or to bring some weight to bear on major decisions. Without doubt, in a number of cases this approach was indeed

crowned with success, from the departures of Ben Ali, Mubarak and Wade to the dissolution of the Quebecois assembly in July 2012 and the Parti Québécois's success in the early elections held on 4 September of that same year.

But the parliamentary system, which is thus given back the keys to the future, then reveals its weaknesses. It is, moreover, striking to note that these weaknesses are identical both in countries with a long democratic tradition and in others that in some cases are experiencing the first free elections in their history: the result given by the ballot box is nowhere able to respond to popular expectations. Within two years, the Tunisians and the Egyptians had experienced terrible confirmation of this. The same actors who had been able to rally a people as a nation in confrontation with the state – above and beyond all their differences – were not able to translate this drive into institutional terms by establishing the bases of a state for all, founded on the same principles that had mobilised them to begin with. In these countries, the crisis of representation that has been ongoing in the old democracies for some years, or even decades, did its work in the space of just a few months.

The exercise of governmental power by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt entered into a tailspin whose epilogue we now know: the 3 July 2013 coup d'état, supported by millions of demonstrators and greeted by fireworks, very quickly followed by a bloody wave of repression that killed thousands of this Islamist party's supporters. The army's return to state power had been prepared by the Tamarod (Rebellion) movement's action against the Muslim Brotherhood stranglehold over the state, and the millions of signatures in favour of early elections. But the election of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on 28 May 2014, with 96 per cent of the votes cast, closed the liberal and democratic parenthesis that had opened on Tahrir Square in 2011.

In Quebec, the young leader of the Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (CLASSE), at the cutting edge of the Maple Spring, drew a disillusioned assessment. Just twenty-one years old at the time of the strike, two years later Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois would write: 'The PQ [Parti Québécois], having been elected at the end of the student strike, was quite evidently incapable of seizing the opportunity that had been presented to it. Brought to power, it quickly put on its old slippers and set to work managing the province with the same shopkeeper's mindset that has animated it ever since Lucien Bouchard was its leader.'[11] The PQ in government increased university tuition fees, called early elections in 2014, and lost its majority after a campaign identifying *laïcité* as the marker of Quebecois identity. Nadeau-Dubois concluded: 'Apparently, we no longer have any dreams of freedom and justice,

but account statements and invoices.'

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JIHAD AND MARTYRDOM: THE NARROW GATE OF THE POSSIBLE AND OF THE FUTURE

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois's trajectory is a remarkable one, for his bitter experience – that of his whole generation – did not result in despair or discouragement (nor in an attempt to valorise his notoriety for the benefit of his own career). In August 2012 he resigned from his post as spokesperson for CLASSE, 'head held high, with the conviction of having done [his] duty and having participated in a historic popular movement'.[12] He then denounced a government that was 'the very embodiment of the corruption and embezzlement of public institutions' for acting 'unprecedentedly violently' toward youth. But he maintained his optimism, drawing on the collective lesson he had taken from the movement: 'We, members of the Quebecois youth, now know what we have to demand of ourselves.'

The need to make demands on oneself in order to change one's country was also the leitmotif of the Y'en a Marre collective. Through its campaign for the 'New Type of Senegalese', it preached a real ethic of social behaviour in its 'spirits' (local collectives), and especially in opposition to corruption. We find the same ethical demand in the Democracia Real YA! manifesto, at the origin of the 15 May 2011 mobilisation in Madrid: 'Citizens are the gears of *a machine designed to enrich* a minority which does not regard our needs. We are anonymous, but without us none of this would exist, because we move the world … We can eliminate the abuse that we are all suffering. We need an ethical revolution.'[13]

The opening to the possibility of a commons taking form is thus a narrow and demanding one. Certainly, it is situated rather less on the side of Occupy assemblies with their incantations, or of Stéphane Hessel's salutary and globally successful *Indignez-vous!*, than in the inscription of collective activity in some real situation.[14] That can take place nationally or at the local level, as in the case of the 'Areas to be Defended' (ZAD) in France, a concept that appeared in the late 2000s during the fight against the plan to build an airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes.

This implies rigorous organisation, a militant ethic and a new strategy with regard to power. This door was partly opened, in the wake of the Spanish Indignados of 2011, by movements like Syriza in Greece (created in 2004, but only taking off in 2012) or Podemos in Spain (created in 2014). It also proceeds

by way of a radical rejuvenation of its leadership: from Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, born in 1990, to Pablo Iglesias Turrión (1978) and Alexis Tsipras (1974).

Yet, in the latter half of the 2010s, this opening remains narrow and localised, limited to a few national situations. In a lot of cases, the responses to despair and the demand for ethics and effective solutions take other forms, and in particular religious and extremist ones. Sometimes they express strange confusions. In 2012 the famous French rapper Médine drew very curious conclusions from his meeting with his Franco-Senegalese counterpart Simon, one of the founders of Y'en a Marre. In the project for a 'New Type of Senegalese' he saw a 'genuinely healthy way of life', explaining: 'This concept briefly reminds us of the rigour and the quasi-military behaviour that the faithful of the Nation of Islam forced themselves to follow in order to appear in the world's eyes as an ultra-disciplined and organised community.'[15]

We will not understand some of these brutal conversions unless we also read them as determinate responses to the demands of the era. Jihad's success has not arrived from another planet. It is not mainly explained by the deleterious influence of 'foreign' networks: it takes root in a collective experience and proposes an alternative to failure – the alternative of war and martyrdom.

In Tunisia the Salafists' invasive moral demands thus profited from the various different forms of social and political disillusionment: Sidi Bouzid, the crucible of the revolt, became one of their strongholds. Jihad could inscribe itself within a revolutionary legitimacy. A religious authority like the Egyptian Yusuf al-Qaradawi presented Mohamed Bouazizi's act 'as an expression of the jihad against injustice and corruption' in a country that saw no less than 107 immolations in the first six months of 2011.[16] In 2014 and 2015 the black flag flew above certain social mobilisations in Douz, Kef and Siliana.

In March 2015 the well-known Tunisian rapper Marwan Douiri – stage name Emino – announced that he was joining Da'esh. The rapper who denounced police violence, who was – according to the journalist David Thomson – 'the type to have a Jack Daniels or a joint upon waking up' and had been jailed for cannabis possession in 2013, was now congratulating Seifeddine Rezgui, author of the Sousse massacre of 26 June 2015.[17] This latter, a twenty-three-year-old student from the Siliana Governorate, was himself a break dancing fan.

Certain national situations – Tunisia, Egypt, Syria – thus establish jihad as the ultimate figure of revolt, and give it its functional credibility. And the roots it thus sinks can give it an aura of influence. Works such as David Thomson's book, or the report by Dounia Bouzar, Christophe Caupenne and Sulayman Valsan, allow us to follow the living traces of this influence in French society.[18]

According to the figures offered in a report by the US think tank The Soufan Group in June 2014, at that point around 12,000 foreign combatants had joined the jihad in Syria since the beginning of the conflict (including 3,000 Tunisians, 2,500 Saudis, 1,500 Moroccans, 800 Russians, but also 700 French, 400 Britons, 250 Australians, 100 Danes and 120 Kosovars).[19] In total, combatants of eighty-two different nationalities had joined. In July 2015, the Socialist MP Sébastien Pietrasanta's report counted around 1,818 French citizens or foreign residents in France involved in jihadist networks in Syria and Iraq, with 475 of them on the ground, 290 having returned (220 in France), 322 on their way to Syria, 121 dead, 2 in prison and 608 preparing for their departure (to a greater or lesser degree). This marked a rapid increase: a 227 per cent rise in just eighteen months.[20]

The mere extent of this phenomenon demonstrates – if proof were still needed – that it is not simply a matter of a radicalisation process coming from within Islam. The planetwide success of an ideology of war and martyrdom takes root in the radical rejection of a certain globalisation, and in the experience of the failure of the great mobilisations, of a decade of riots without consequence. All other things being equal, this temptation partially recalls the slide into terrorism that followed 1968 in France, Germany, Italy and Japan.[21] But with one difference: while the Baader-Meinhof Gang and the Red Brigades thought, in their own way, that they were opening up the path to the future, the jihadists want to put an end to it.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Truth Is Out There, and God Is Online

When there is no truth, there is no order. When there is no order, there is no justice. Order cannot be built on lies.

Young man from La Grande Borne housing estate, December 2009[1]

In August 2015, the Chinese families of the passengers on Flight MH370 – missing in March 2014 – once more expressed their anger outside Malaysia Airlines' Beijing headquarters. Infuriated by over a year of at best chaotic news from the company and the Malaysian government, and like other families convinced that lies and incompetence had from the outset won out over the search for truth, they no longer trusted anything they heard. While it had just been announced that an authenticated piece of debris from the disappeared Boeing 777 had been found washed up on La Réunion, the sixty-three-year-old Bao Lanfang – whose son and daughter-in-law were on board the plane – told the *Guardian*: 'It has been 515 [days] – that is enough time for them to have produced fake debris.'[2]

The experience of the spectacularisation of the world by the authorities and the media – together with the little games played with reality by official discourses – is on its way to discrediting all 'authorised' speech. But then who does speak the truth, and where does it make its nest? Where has the 'public use of reason' that once characterised the modern public sphere gone?[3] We are living a paradox without precedent in human history: the sophistication of the spectacularisation of the world by the media coexists with the plethora of information today available on the internet. Everyone can ply their own trade in this accumulation of potential truths. Apparent masters of illusion, experts in the deployment of images and staging things, the powers that be are nonetheless on high alert – for truth is becoming a weapon. Transparency activists and whistle-blowers are prosecuted with great severity. The WikiLeaks founder Julian

Assange has lived cloistered in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since 2012, and in 2013 Edward Snowden took refuge in Russia.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE POLITICS OF SPECTACLE

Monsieur K. was a composed man of around fifty years of age, an Ivorian political refugee in France. He was something of an elder figure among the collective of squat residents whose mobilisation I had followed in 2008. After the residents had finally been regularised and rehoused, I spent a few hours with the main protagonists of the mobilisation, in order to draw a few lessons from it collectively. When I asked, 'Would you say that your mobilisation was political?,' Monsieur K. offered this unexpected response: 'Yes, at a certain moment, we had to do politics. We had to begin lying.' Has politics today been reduced to lying?

'To govern', no doubt, 'is to make believe.' This line attributed to Machiavelli well corresponds to the spirit, if not the letter, of his famous book *The Prince*. Whatever the regime, those who govern have always integrated the staging of power, of their power, into its exercise. For centuries, to govern has also been to produce spectacle and the symbolic. Politics exhibits itself and narrates itself. It is both representation and the struggle among representations. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this activity has successively taken the names 'propaganda' and 'communication'. In France, the government has had a 'spokesperson' since 1969. The critique of this activity – from Jacques Ellul to Noam Chomsky passing via Ignacio Ramonet – has worked to show that in going beyond the staging of power we have passed into the pure and simple production of illusions, shadow plays now designed to distract the public gaze.[4] Those able to 'wag the dog' have become professionals in creating political decoys.[5]

Communication, illusion and spectacle are today completely integrated into the exercise of power. The 'production of news' steals a march on the administration of things. It is more important to change the way unemployment rates are calculated than to try to drive up employment, more important to announce measures than to implement them, to talk rather than to act. Talking points become a fully fledged strategy of their own. Words are signs of recognition, markers of the authorised public sphere. It is through words that information will be able to enter a newspaper column or section heading, be identified with the latest fashionable polemic, or fit into a radio or TV segment.

These words are no longer vehicles for thought, but markers of mutually

compatible utterances. Words impose their own coherence: they are ‘internal procedures’, Michel Foucault wrote, and there are ‘internal rules, where discourse exercises its own control; rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution. It is as though we were now involved in the mastery of another dimension of discourse: that of events and chance.’[6] News becomes a succession of ‘discursive events’. The success of this production of ‘news’ is measured by its capacity to ‘make events’ on the spectacular stage, to impose the ‘questions we talk about’, to model the daily agenda of representation and window dressing.

Half a century after he announced its arrival, Guy Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’ is thus realising itself before our very eyes: ‘The images detached from every aspect of life fuse in a common stream in which the unity of this life can no longer be reestablished. Reality considered partially unfolds, in its own general unity, as a pseudo-world apart.’[7] Have we thus reached the perfection of the power of spectacle? Nothing could be less certain. For even if the official narrative does impose itself, it does not trick the popular gaze, which daily measures the gap between political words and its own experience. And sound bites often only convince those who invent them; they can crash on the rocks of the common experience. A secret made explicit by one of the rioters in 2005: ‘Politicians think they are shepherds, but they are shepherding only themselves.’[8]

The use of the term ‘crisis’ is rather emblematic. This word has traversed every conjuncture from 1974 (the oil crisis) to today, by way of 2008 (the subprime crisis), the 1970s steel industry crisis and many others. A word that is supposed to designate an exceptional, temporary period has for decades aided the construction of a political consensus on austerity policies, aggravated social divides and the gradual unravelling of the welfare state. Outside the ‘authorised’ circle of those who have access to public speech, a rumour persists: this crisis is just a word, one that has been exhausted and devalued, a symbol of the divide that has opened up between the authorities and the lived world. ‘The crisis, the crisis, we have now heard it repeated for such a long time,’ the journalist Florence Aubenas wrote in 2010. ‘The factories have already closed. They could at least make the effort to invent another word.’[9] And in 2011 the former trade unionist at Continental, Xavier Mathieu, invited on a France 2 panel for a debate on the crisis, sported a T-shirt printed with a line from the comedian Coluche: ‘It seems that the crisis makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. I don’t see what about that is a crisis. It’s been like that since I was little.’[10] The people who experience the crisis are the ones who do not believe in it.

In 2009, young people from the Grande Borne neighbourhood in Grigny undertook a long project together with anthropologists from the Paris VIII and Porto Alegre universities, working to formulate their thoughts on their situation and that of their neighbourhood.[11] They had the opportunity to present the texts resulting from this work at the Paris VIII university in December 2009, during a conference we organised on 'The Contemporary State and Urban Subjectivities'.[12] It was striking to see how far the question of the state's structural lies about these young people, and the cruel absence of truth in public debates, were at the centre of their problematics. If the work conducted together with these young people was an exceptional case, their experience was not. This everyday experience, like that of millions of men and women, devalorised at ever-increasing speed the vocabularies that were common among politicians, the state and the learned, in favour of 'lived words'. Was that for want of real words?

What we really ought to term a *crisis of shared truth* has entirely harmful political and cultural effects, on a mass scale. We could hypothesise that the crisis we today face in learning in the classroom is not unrelated to this calling into question of shared knowledge. The crisis of the school is caught between two crises in the legitimacy of institutional knowledge: the raising of doubts over institutional speech, and the competition that comes from online information with which teachers are rarely at ease. How many of them have been left baffled by a 'Well I think that' or even 'I believe that', asserted as something equal to the learned authority of reason? Faced with these new kinds of difficulties, education in the classroom has become rigid. While knowledge ought to be the basis of its authority, it instead appeals to authority in order to establish knowledge. This has catastrophic effects. A disciplinarian knowledge loses its rational legitimacy, and it becomes suspect.

Access to the internet and the collaborative circulation and sharing of information and images has allowed the construction of another – parallel – knowledge universe. Despite its great power, this universe is unknown to the institutional world. French teachers, especially, came up against this submerged universe in January 2015, with the incidents surrounding the minute of silence in tribute to the victims of the terrorist attacks. Martine Sanz, a history teacher in a Créteil vocational school, thus found herself faced with fifteen-to sixteen-year-old 'students most of whom were convinced that the Illuminati exist', just like 20 per cent of the French population, according to a June 2014 IPSOS survey.[13] This conviction is based on a profusion of 'proofs' taking the form of images

spread on the internet, the adoption and interpretation of 'revelations' by more or less well-known personalities, and even a few books.[14] As it happens, its power comes less from the capacity to convince people through evidence and witnesses than – paradoxically enough – the fact that neither the media nor schools talk to us about it.

'The truth is out there' – that was the unmissable conclusion of *The X-Files*, the TV series created in 1993 which enjoyed a certain success in North America and in Europe. In these conditions, how can we be surprised that historical facts like the Holocaust or Buzz Aldrin's first steps on the moon on 21 July 1969 can meet with stubborn incredulity among the young, and the less young? We should be still less surprised that the news of the New York attacks on 11 September 2001, the London and Boston attacks in 2013, and then the attacks in Paris in January 2015 could have been greeted with scepticism.

The young generations of recent years, accustomed to the use of images on the internet, have both elaborate and fallacious visual arguments with which to challenge the media spectacularisation of events. The images of the Boston attack were thus reviewed in order to back up the thesis that it had been staged using professional actors.[15] Images of the hostage taking and the assault on the Hypercacher at Porte de Vincennes were dissected in order to insinuate that they had been manipulated.[16] The video of the murder of policeman Ahmed Merabet was analysed for evidence that it had been staged.[17]

These videos cause quite a buzz. And the deniers' arguments receive far-from-negligible public support. Take the case of 9/11: we remember the pseudo-journalist Thierry Meyssan's 2002 book *L'Effroyable imposture* or the statements of the comedian Jean-Marie Bigard on Laurent Ruquier's show *On va pas s'gêner* on Europe 1 on 5 September 2008: 'We are now absolutely sure, certain, that the planes that crashed in the forest and at the Pentagon do not exist. There was never any plane. These two planes are still flying.' These theses make up part of a kind of cultural inheritance in the shadows: that of an informal tendency, far from the media mainstream but whose reference points are known to a whole generation, far beyond those who actually share them. 'I know the history the victors make out *But where's the version of those who lost out?* It's more than my soul can take / When the school curriculum's got the September 11 fake,' the French rapper Zirko (SKS Crew) sang in his '1789' (with more than 100,000 YouTube views within two years of its first posting).[18]

This systematic doubt builds on general theories, from theories about the Illuminati to the ones about Satanism. A common feature is the denouncement of some occult presence that dominates the world and manipulates media and governments. These theories inspire not only a whole literature but also – as modernity demands – a host of websites and online videos. Their French versions are compiled on *Conspiracy Watch*, site of the Observatoire du conspirationnisme et des théories du complot.[19] In France, contemporary conspiracy theories are the stock-in-trade of a political trend that identifies itself as 'dissident' or 'anti-system'. The official truth is always suspect, and always denounced as a weapon of this so-called 'system'. Falsified 'proofs' are used to support this. Thus in July 2013, in one of his regular videos, the far-right publicist Alain Soral took up all of the arguments from the videos challenging the reality of the London and Boston attacks.[20] Five years earlier, his friend and accomplice Dieudonné acted out Meyssan's thesis in his skit *J'ai fait l'con*, portraying George W. Bush as saying, 'We organised the attack,' before concluding: 'Jean-Marie Bigard is right.'[21] The *Meta TV* site – a 'federation of independent media' born of this 'dissident' galaxy – has made a speciality of spreading theses on the Illuminati, 'the Devil's secret plan', '666 and the financial chaos', the 'secrets of the British oligarchy', and the 'scandal of paedophile networks in France'. The *Libre Penseur* (free thinker) site is also a major purveyor of written and video content that processes the news through the prism of this conspiracist perspective, including even government communications promoting vaccination – characterised as 'vaccinalist propaganda'.[22]

Everything is recycled and updated, above all anti-Semitism, and including even old tunes like the denunciation of freemasonry. The extremist proponents of anti-Semitism work to instrumentalise expressions of French solidarity with the Palestinians, confronted as the latter are with the Israeli policy of colonisation and repression. Conspiracy thinking and 'dissident' or 'subversive' news thus add grist to the mill of a revolt that is sometimes ideologically aberrant. From denouncing the great American Satan, it passes to denouncing the 'Zionist lobby', the latter very soon renamed the 'Zionist and Talmudic lobby'. But its slide does not stop there. The Satanism it denounces is not just a political metaphor. 'Paedophilia practised with impunity' and the legalisation of gay marriage are today advanced as proofs of the 'élite's' malfeasance.

A small fringe of French rap has become involved in this affair. One of the driving forces behind *Meta TV* is the rapper Tepa, whose show *Libre antenne* is a sounding box for all kinds of conspiracy theories.[23] In certain rappers' lyrics,

the denunciation of freemasonry, Satanism, the 'Zionist plot', homosexuals and paedophilia is explicit, demonstrating the cultural presence of these themes far beyond this or that rapper's audience. Hence in his 2014 'La loi du silence', SKS Crew raps: 'They're everywhere all around us, Reason to lose your mind / They're protected by justice, We'll tell you about networks of freemasons *Criminals and paedophiles* … We know that with kids / The government does rituals and sado … Enough! Your head's fucked up, it's been sodomised!'[24] Similarly, in his '1789', cited above, Zirko raps: 'The Jules Ferry School, the best way to train your mind / Talk about the Holocaust and of Apartheid *Of the LGBT lobby that brainwashes your kid* … If that's true, then why hide it that Louis XV was a paedophile *Don't believe we should negotiate with the Devil* Behind Hitler and the Revolution were the Rothschilds / Is it a republic, or a freemason dictatorship?'

The revolt against the West thus takes a turn toward a radical and radicalising moral crusade against the conspiracies of the forces of corruption. At least, that is its turn of phrase. But we can only be chilled by the final scene of SKS's music video 'Le mal par le mal'. Here we see a man in chains, on his knees, with his head covered by a sack. Facing him is another man, on his feet, who unsheathes a sword and then swings it, as if to decapitate him.[25]

A RIGHTEOUS ANGER

How and where can we find a principle for revolt and for struggle, faced with corruption and injustice? Without doubt, we can find it on the internet, contradicting all the discourses and all the judgements perceived as 'institutional'. The 'national reconciliation' extolled by the Soral-Dieudonné clan and the 'Egalité et réconciliation' website – one of the most visited in France – outlines the possibility of a popular anti-Semitic and Islamophile Far Right at the margins of the official political space – as distinct, that is, from the whiter, Islamophobic Front National which is today trying to make people forget about its founder's anti-Semitism, the better to establish its respectability. But doubt's work and the advancement of a moral quest are far broader in extent than the little Soral-Dieudonné enterprise. The national principle is narrow indeed, when measured against the moral needs of young people left alone to face the lies and corruption of the powers that be – young people directly struck by the images of global chaos.

The conclusion is that God should not be sought out in Heaven, the church, the synagogue or the mosque. No: he is online. Seeking out a principle that is

simultaneously both a provider of truth and an ethical reference point, Yassine, Clémence, Éric and Souleymane – the young people interviewed by David Thomson – went on the internet to look for the keys to the world. Clémence recounts her conversion, at seventeen years of age, on Google: 'I searched Islam or Allah … And I started crying. I was so happy. I thought, "Woah! I really have a religion. I belong to a community" – but I hadn't known it. All this time, I had felt alone in my thinking.'[26] Like Clémence, the others had started searching by themselves, at a remove from any political, educational, religious or family authority – all of which they see as suspect. And they found jihad: an online truth, a revealed truth, a truth in revolt against even the authority of Islamic institutions, and, with the creation of Da'esh, an operative truth.

Solitary revolts seek a dissident community which allows them to live out their rejection of the commercial and corrupt world. Is it so surprising that they seek this community within the religion of the dominated in the West – the religion of the enemies who have been identified by the West itself? Michael (later, Abu Rayan) was struck by 9/11 like a thunderbolt. He explains: 'I had not known any Islamists or any Islamic discourse. But even before Bush said the phrase "You are with us or against us" I felt that the just middle, neutrality, was no longer possible. For neutrality would be punished as cowardice, a lack of courage.' Going outside the official media, he immediately sought to find out 'who is claiming responsibility for this?', 'who is this bin Laden?'[27] The official devil becomes the god of revolt, and bin Laden a hero.

The society of the spectacle has given birth to its counter-spectacle, a vast continent of images available to everyone. From this point of view, the internet does not have much to do with the public sphere analysed by Habermas. There is no shared truth system in the 'public use of reason'. What we share first of all are images that alone provide their own truth. Faced with the repressive discourse of the powers that be, the rioters posted images on social media of the cars they were burning.[28] Faced with the power of the masters of globalisation, Da'esh posts online images of its massacres and destruction. Jihad has made a home in this society of the spectacle, disregarding any rigorous Salafist approach to the use of images and especially human images. It thus makes up part of the global landscape on offer to those who seek 'another truth'.

This search is now all the more open given that the alternative truth about the world constituted during over a century of communism is today totally debased. The collapse of what was simultaneously a vision of the world, a revolutionary hope and an experience concretised in states has not yet finished revealing its consequences. To this we shall now turn.

CHAPTER SIX

‘What Is Now Left to Us’

> *This is the collapse of an idea. We cannot separate the idea from the material disaster; it does not float along intact, above the fray. Ideas only exist in their incarnation; if the incarnation disappears, then the idea itself is mortally wounded … Thus communism has entered into its final phase … It is as if humanity’s admirable effort – thought, work, heroism and beauty – has fallen like a rocket that does not reach orbit and crashes to the ground.*
>
> Antoine Vitez, 3 March 1990

Goodbye, Lenin![1] The significance of what happened to us between the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the fall of Gorbachev in August 1991 still remains to be measured. The collapse of communism is directly related to what concerns us all today: the confessionalisation of the social world and the expansion of jihadism. Indeed, this is a major cultural upheaval which affects our vision of the world, far beyond any party or geopolitical debate. It has affected our view of the future and history as well as our conception of politics.

‘With superstitions and religions having taken the place of ideologies, we find ourselves caught amid confusion – like always, of course, but this is a different confusion than the one we believe we are in.’ This prophetic diagnosis dates from March 1990. It was written by the theatre producer Antoine Vitez. At that time our little network of ‘refoundational’ communists, assembled in particular around the *Société française* review, was almost hopeful as it followed events that seemed to open up the possibility of a real renewal of the communist project.[2] The 3 March 1990 seminar at the Université Paris VIII made up part of this reflection. At the seminar, and just a few weeks before his premature death, Antoine Vitez offered us a short text of great historical lucidity.[3] He stated in no uncertain terms that ‘the collapse has indeed taken place, and it is continuing, for not everything has fallen yet’. For the benefit of those who still thought that the idea of communism could survive the shipwreck, he added the remarks cited at greater length above: ‘This is the collapse of an idea. We cannot separate the idea from the material disaster.’

I perfectly remember how stunned I was by the force of these words, and at the same time being subjectively incapable of hearing his message in full: a whole era was coming to an end together with communism, a whole political and cultural sequence. Vitez's text has not aged one bit, including his final remark on our own confusion. Shortly afterwards Alain Badiou would speak of an 'obscure disaster', obscure in terms of its causes as well as its consequences.[4] We know that in 2015 as in 1991 Badiou does not draw the same conclusions as Vitez did from the collapse of communism incarnate. Against the expression 'death of communism', in 1991 he held onto the expression 'communist invariants', which he had advanced already as early as 1975.[5] The success of his 2009 work on 'the communist hypothesis' – for him still at its very beginning, in historical terms – shows, if any proof were needed, the difficulty of the historical grief with which our contemporaries are now confronted.[6]

This is no abstract controversy. Today, Marxism's validity as an analytical method can quite legitimately be the object of theoretical debates. But evidently its concepts are no longer subjective categories of critique and popular mobilisation. The world of flesh and blood, of hope and anger, has turned the page, either in indifference or in pain. Indeed, the sequence that came to an end together with communism is not a concern for political scientists and politicians alone. It takes with it a vision of the world and a culture that were incarnated in life stories as well as in power. In her book *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*, the Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich (the Nobel laureate for Literature in 2015) showed the full complexity of this phenomenon.[7] In getting Russians to speak about the emotions and the details of their lives between 1991 and 2012, she allows us to experience – more than just read about – the profound disarray that seizes hold of each and every person during a properly unthinkable upheaval.

Life before and life today, the dreams of before and the disappointments of today – the testimonies tell us of the absolute historical discontinuity that we are experiencing, and that the erstwhile Soviets have experienced on the front line. The harshness of life in the former police state does not at all enlighten them as to the reasons for the market harshness of the life that succeeded it. The hopes of liberation that went before became utterly outdated at the very moment when police power collapsed. The new life does not at all resemble what could then have been imagined. Is this not also the message of the film *Good Bye, Lenin!* – showing us that the Stasi yoke could coexist with a certain hope? Svetlana Alexievich tells us that the real end of communism was not the advent of

freedom or justice: ‘The Gorbachev era … Huge crowds of people with radiant faces. Freedom! It was the air we breathed. Everyone hungrily devoured the newspapers. It was a time of great hope – at any moment, we might find ourselves in paradise.’ But ‘the more they shouted and wrote “freedom! freedom!” the faster not only the cheese and salami but also the salt and sugar disappeared from the shelves … The black marketeers and money changers took power … Communism fell! And that’s it, it’s gone for good. We live in a different world and see it through different eyes.’[8]

Global capitalism triumphed on the ruins of utopias. Financial globalisation and the collapse of communism have in one and the same movement killed off the hope of freedom and the hope for justice. If, as my anthropologist colleague Sylvain Lazarus likes to repeat, ‘historical experience is conclusive’, we can agree that the historical conclusion is nonetheless an obscure and a disastrous one.

END OF THE REVOLUTIONARY HYPOTHESIS

Let us be clear. If what is over is indeed over, that takes nothing away from the historical consistency of what has now come to an end. Communism did indeed exist and was no mere ‘illusion’.[9] A whole representation of collective action, of society, of history, of revolution, comes to an end together with that period: the representation of social classes conscious of themselves, the representation of revolutionary hopes and a figure of change through the state – even in a reformist sense. Indeed, since then all the world’s social democrats have had the same bitter experience: in the absence of any revolutionary hypothesis, social democracy itself no longer has any cultural or political space.

The successive figures of politics, as a subjective power and a capacity to intervene in the affairs of state, have taken the names *republic*, *socialism*, *communism*, and *national liberation*. Over the course of the last two centuries, each of these figures was founded by a revolutionary project: from the ‘Spring of Nations’ in 1848 to the Russian Revolution and its imitators and the struggles for national liberation. The sequence of 1968 marked the end of this modern cycle. Without the revolutionary hypothesis that had served as its foundation at the end of the eighteenth century, the modern conception of politics finds itself in a very bad way. We are desperately searching for its presence in the upheavals of the contemporary world.

This revolutionary hypothesis perpetuated the myth of the temporary fusion of people and state. Since each revolutionary episode demonstrated the

impracticability of that fusion, durable mechanisms of political representation were put in place. Yet even so, it remains the case that power is still exercised or contested in the name of the people. Power was the target of the mobilisations identified as political. A question was recognised as political when it concerned the architecture of the social, and its future becoming. A political mobilisation was known for posing the question of power.

This politics – under whatever regime – restricted itself to managing an apparatus and its court strategies, making compromises and itself being compromised. Soon, the only thing that remains of politics as a tool for collective action is an organisational culture that transforms engagement into a sensitive identity, solidarity into clan spirit, the values of liberation into stakes of power, revolt into internal conformism, means into end. In these conditions we must admit, however difficult it may sometimes be, that the word 'politics', in its popular usage, has lost any sense of nobility and invites only distrust toward a closed world – the world of circles of power and corruption.

The passage from a collective mobilisation to a political action is not only unthought-about, but often unthinkable. The 'political translation' of a mobilisation – so cherished by so many experienced militants – has become a curiosity from another time. This was also the red thread running through the evicted *favelas*' coordination meeting which took place in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro on 26 September 2012, a meeting to which I myself had been invited. At that time, the consequences of the preparations for the football World Cup and the Olympic Games were becoming clear. The expulsion of the city-centre *favelas* had allowed for real estate development of the areas where these slums had been situated. This was also true of the suburban *favelas* situated on the territory that was now to be used for the future Olympic site.[10] One of the representatives present at the meeting thus elaborated his theory of what he called 'vertical politics': the inhabitants were faced with the mayor Eduardo Paes, a member of the centrist Brazilian Democratic Movement party (PMDB), the governor (up till 2014) Sérgio de Oliveira Cabral Santos Filho, himself a member of the same party, and the Workers' Party (PT) government at the federal level. Paes and Santos Filho were both linked to local businesses, and notably to investors involved in the preparations for the sporting events. They imposed an often-brutal policy of pacifying the *favelas*. For its part, the federal government launched a social rehousing programme, Minha Casa, Minha Vida (my house, my life) and established strict rules protecting the *favelados* from abusive expulsions. But at the local level the PMDB and the PT are allies. And nothing and no one in party circles protected the residents from the property

developers' appetites. This necessary distance from all forms of political representation culminated a few months later in the massive demonstrations that preceded and accompanied the football World Cup.

Collective mobilisations and the machinations of power have become two subjectively separate worlds. The distance that has opened up between the two calls into question the very idea of revolution within even the most powerful movements. What did we see in the first half of 2011, during what we called the 'Arab Spring'? At the time, it may have looked like revolution, politics and representative democracy were coming back into force. But what, then, is the meaning of 'revolutions' in which a popular uprising results in what looks more like a military coup – a coup, astonishingly enough, welcomed by the people? The events of 2011 were not those of 1789 or 1792, or 1848, or 1917. There was no seizing of the Tuileries, no storming the Winter Palace. Quite the contrary: the insurgent peoples did not lay claim to power. The actors in the popular uprisings were not the same actors who would then try to draw out all the consequences of these uprisings within the space of the state. This disjuncture, which has characterised the phenomenon of the riot for some years, is not somehow vanished away by 'the riots that win'. The powers that be are shaken. But this popular subjective power does not carry an alternative figure into power in their place. The question of the state remains external to the mobilisation, and the mobilisation external to the state.

TIME HAS STOPPED

Does the end of communism also herald the end of history, as the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama claimed in 1992?[11] This was rather a case of hypothesising a 'final globalisation'; that is to say, the hypothesis that history had reached its end by reaching its final objective. But the 'end of history' that we are witnessing is not at all the one Fukuyama described.[12] It has no meaning, no origin, no blessed ending. Rather, it is a new relationship with time, a new regime of historicity, as François Hartog has suggested: the regime of an enduring present.[13] This 'presentism' changes our relationship with the past, the present and the future.

As we have seen, the first victim is the future, and thus the youth. Modern political thinking entailed a close relationship with the subjectivity of history, an individual and collective human trajectory – potentially intelligible and perhaps manageable in the act of invention and freedom that is the declaration of another possibility. Yet as Arjun Appadurai has shown, thinking on the future

disappeared when calculations of probability replaced the elaboration of possibilities, when reflection on the risks we face won out over utopias.[14] Even if, as the Social Forum process born at Porto Alegre in 2001 declared, 'another world is possible', the least we can say is that its agenda remains rather obscure.[15] As for the 2011 uprisings, from today's perspective we would struggle to chalk these up as a sort of 'rebirth of history'.[16]

Presentism's second victim is history, as a critical summoning of the past. As I heard by chance in the gardens of the Granada Alhambra on 17 July 2015: 'If you don't think about tomorrow, you will not be sad for the past.' I found this remark exchanged between three young French-speaking women – a remark that seems almost to have been snatched from Svetlana Alexievich – simply deafening. Indeed, without a future to build, what good is there in summoning the past? Such is the structurally compromised situation in which the historian's fine craft now finds itself. As Marc Bloch showed, this craft must be permanently updated anew.[17]

Beyond the theological justifications for the destruction of idols, there is also something very contemporary in the jihadists' frenzy against the vestiges of the past. The staging of archaeological vandalism in Mosul or Palmyra has a meaning that may have just as much importance as its scandalising effect on us. Faced with this attitude that we ought to eradicate everything, we could even ask ourselves how come this vestigial defence of the traces of the past is so weak. After all, in the absence of any mobilisation of the past to prepare the future, the powers that be will be tempted to pass from history to memory, from the rational criticism of sources to the sacralisation of the foundational narrative of 'remembrance'.

The French vogue for laws on commemoration is no isolated case; Belgium and Spain have had their own versions too.[18] Commemorations, especially international ones, are taking on new proportions, such as in the case of the sixtieth anniversary of the Allied landings in Normandy. In France, the problem of teaching memory (instead of history) takes its proper place in educational establishments. It does so together with its own declared philosophy, which holds that 'History is the search for truth. Memory is respect for loyalty.'[19] Yet, as the historian Pierre Nora remarks, 'History brings people together, while memory divides them.'[20] The immoderate summoning-up of memory by the powers that be opens the way to a dramatic competition in commemorations.[21] It even undermines the credibility of history itself.

Dieudonné surfs the wave of this competition, for it has a mass echo. It

sometimes sparks up again, as in the case of the incidents surrounding the minute of silence in January 2015. Let us remember the lyrics of the rapper Zirko's '1789': 'The Jules Ferry School, the best way to train your mind *Talk about the Holocaust and of Apartheid* … I know the history the victors make out / But where's the version of those who lost out?'

WHAT 'HISTORICAL SUBJECT'?

Finally, together with the end of communism, the end of the revolutionary hypothesis and the end of history, we have lost the 'historical subject': the collective actor, class and/or party in charge of realising the supposed sense of history. So *exit* the class that would have redeemed history, together with the 'guiding party'. Yet sometimes we do still look for them. And when we do, the real subjects of revolts become entirely mysterious and unreadable in political terms.

What political perplexity there was in France in 2013 when, without warning, the bonnets rouges set about torching Brittany's ecotax gantries, together with half the speed cameras on the region's four-lane motorways![22] This perplexity extends beyond the borders of mainland France. Indeed, the battle over fiscal and public-spending choices is provoking mobilisations of an entirely new tone and composition. The *forconi* (pitchforks) movement, whose wave of mobilisation crashed across the Italian peninsula from South to North in December 2013, brought together different bases of support, from the unemployed to small businessmen, tradesmen, and football *ultras*. Supported by Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement (M5S), they were also joined by the far-right forces of Forza Nuova and CasaPound. Their rejection of politicians, summed up in the slogan *Tutti a casa* (send them all home), enjoyed the sympathy of some 71 per cent of Italians.

This modern jacquerie has a lot of points in common with the bonnets rouges, who brought together the unemployed, under-threat workers, tradesmen, and bosses from the agro-food industry. The French Left lost its bearings as it faced a mobilisation whose objectives, contours, methods and success threw all the compasses of their activism into chaos. Condemned by the [then] Front de Gauche leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and kept at arm's length by the trade union movement – but supported by part of the regional Left, including the mayor of Carhaix – the bonnets rouges would ultimately also have to thank Jean-Marie Le Pen for his support.

This political confusion stretches across the ocean. In Venezuela, Nicolás

Maduro's narrow victory in the 14 April 2013 presidential election was immediately challenged. Accusations of electoral fraud combined with anger over shortages, and in early 2014 the country entered into a lasting confrontation. The main cities were hit by riots (there were more than a hundred in February, March and April 2014), in which the university-student youth were heavily involved. It did not take long for this popular revolt to be catalogued as 'right-wing'. Perhaps because the powers that be in Venezuela are identified as 'left-wing', and because *chavismo* and its 'twenty-first-century socialism' have exercised a real fascination over a part of the radical Left.

The famous 'historical subject' functioned as a trinity: class, consciousness, party. Paradoxically, it articulated the objective of emancipation – that of the 'singing tomorrows' – with the disciplining constraint of the militant struggle; its discourse on the liberation of a universal humanity with the subjectivity of a community of struggle, a community of comrades. Binding together this paradoxical trinity were a secular ethic and a discourse of truth: the famous 'consciousness' that set militants apart, as scouts lighting the way. The truth-discourse was a discourse of history and of the 'historical interests' in the name of which one acted. The secular ethic was that of a militant culture which itself bore the distinction between good and evil, even in terms of personal life and family choices.

So the crisis of parties cannot be reduced to a drying-up of militancy. It is above all characterised by the disappearance of this human melting pot, which ultimately lasted for only a century, and the disappearance of its singularity: namely, the articulation of a truth and an ethic outside of any revealed religion. But Francis Fukuyama was incautious indeed in applauding the disappearance of these kernels of secular ideology.

THE POWER OF FAITH

For all that, the place of morality, truth and eschatology evidently has not disappeared from the hearts of our contemporaries. Antoine Vitez warned us in 1990 that the retreat of political cosmogonies would everywhere encourage a 'return to the religious' in an attempt to give sense to upheavals around the world. This phenomenon can take many forms. The first is that of religious communities which seek to protect their followers from these upheavals. Pentecostalism's communitarian practices thus constitute their main strong point in Latin America, faced with the continent's historical Catholicism. Pentecostalism is also seeing strong progress in West Africa, where it is in open

competition with Islam in Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon and Mali.[23]

The religious reference point often plays very well in situations where traditional parties are failing, as in the case of the US Republican Party. In France, the mobilisation against *mariage pour tous* [extending marriage rights to same-sex couples] from September 2012 onward, a mobilisation which revolved around the Manif pour tous demonstrations, revealed the power of a religious frame of reference outside of any party context. This reference also imposes itself in situations of national and constitutional uncertainty, and as a guarantee of the fight against the corruption of the powers that be. Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have thus occupied a place that no one can challenge them over.

During a long conversation in a Dakar restaurant about the municipal elections, one of our friends – a potential candidate – explained that it was simply impossible to get around this reference point.[24] In the face of a notoriously corrupting state, this NGO militant – both tireless in his service to the residents of his suburban town and radical in his analyses of urban questions – was seeking political references for public morality. To him, only the religious reference – in this case, a Muslim one – seemed workable in a country where political debates were nothing but a shadow play of personal ambitions. I had no arguments with which to answer him.

Finally, religion can be upheld as a revolutionary reference point. Making Islam a principle of revolt against a dominating modernity is not something peculiar to the jihadists of 2015. It was already the case with Shi'ism during the Iranian Revolution in 1979. This attitude does not always leave the Western Left indifferent. Did not the new government in Tehran mark its solidarity with the victims of Apartheid in South Africa, with Cuba and with the PLO? And holding Islam aloft as the new banner of revolution can indeed be a temptation for some of Lenin's orphans. If Tariq Ramadan advocates an 'Islamic liberation theology', the case of the Parti des indigènes de la République (PIR) is even more telling in this regard.[25] The party was born of an appeal launched in January 2005, which I myself signed together with some of my friends and colleagues.[26] The original collective, which transformed into the PIR, was then joined by a small group of militants who relentlessly worked to turn it into an organisation which they doubtless thought would 'become stronger by purging itself', on the Stalinist model.[27]

Its spokesperson Houria Bouteldja can today assert the possibility of making Islam into an 'ideal of radical justice'.[28] Let us hear what she has to say: 'We have to put a whole civilisation into question. This is a civilisation which

pursues its murderous project in the countries of the global South in the form of the colonial counter-revolution, in the form of neoliberalism.' And she concludes: 'You see the destruction of the planet, the dehumanisation of social relations, economic crises, and the rise of fascism. You see our culpability when we are passive or indulge these things. You see the honour we have when we act to fight them. In my view, the choice between compromise and a clean break is already decided!' For Bouteldja, 'we need a radical critique of the colonial character of the powers-that-be. And this is the place for revolutionary Islam. Here, there can be no question of reformism, for Islam and Muslims are never the problem.'

In 1980, a dramatic episode began to play out in the mountains of Afghanistan. Having invaded the country, the Soviet state was obviously unaware that it was now embroiled in its final geopolitical struggle. But no one could have guessed that the mujahedeen, so dogged in the defence of their land, would go on to give birth to a more universal figure of the 'warrior for Allah', giving the word 'jihad' its full contemporary meaning.[29] The collapse of communism has not yet revealed all its collateral effects. The orphans of this culture are a lot more numerous than they think they are. Without doubt, the most burdensome consequence is the closing down of the revolutionary hypothesis, which has left all radical critiques of the existing world order in an enraged stalemate. Yet it is this closing down that has opened the way to the confessionalisation of public action which we are now witnessing.

For anyone who wants to avoid a part of this radicalism becoming Islamicised, the solution certainly does not lie in searching at all costs for an illusory 'deradicalisation'. It lies, rather, in the affirmation of an alternative radicalism. As Antoine Vitez concluded in 1990: 'And what is now left to us – our role – is prophecy, in the sense that we can read about in the Old Testament; the duty of prophecy: sarcasm, invectives and warnings, the critique of the present times, and heralding others.'[30]

CHAPTER SEVEN

In Praise of Radicalism

Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it.

Frantz Fanon[1]

Lakhdar, Judit and Bassam are the twenty-something heroes of Mathias Énard's novel *Rue des voleurs*, set in the Mediterranean Europe of 2011.[2] Over a few months, their fate plays out between the Arab Spring and the Indignados, between Tangier and Barcelona. Lakhdar and Bassam are childhood friends. Lakhdar loves the Catalan Judit. Bassam loves the Qur'an. Lakhdar crosses the Strait of Gibraltar to join his love. Bassam crosses Morocco and Spain in order to spread murderous terror. One dreams of freedom, the other of martyrdom. Their journey culminates in Barcelona's Raval neighbourhood. Faced with his friend's commitment to jihad, Lakhdar has no other choice but to put an end to Bassam's murderous life himself. Lakhdar later declares before his judges: 'I am no murderer, I am more than that. I am not a Moroccan, I am not a Frenchman, I am not a Spaniard, I am more than that. I am not a Muslim, I am more than that. Do with me what you will.'

Seen and lived at the level of everyday life, this new spring of nations and of youth – one made up of insouciance, hope and drama – concludes in impasse. There was, indeed, something visionary about Énard's novel, published in 2012. But while he states that 'nothing but hope or despair changes the world, in equal proportions', we must add that today despair often leads nowhere other than it led Bassam. Should we just leave this generation in the terrible impasse Énard portrays? Do we have to review the subjective and objective situation that has been prepared for the coming generation? Do those that went before – those of the 1968 generation, the generations of decolonisation and national independence – have nothing to offer it except the founding myths of another time, the disillusionment and the resignation that they have themselves embraced?

It is very tempting to adopt such a stance. In the institutional context it is a majority choice. In both Europe and America, since the start of the 2000s, we have been working to implement ‘deradicalisation’ policies. Can we ‘deradicalise’ jihadists? In 2010 one Danish report analysed the experiences of eighteen countries, while dissecting the policies of Denmark, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden.[3] In 2014 the European Commission issued a communication on the means of radicalisation that lead to terrorism and violent extremism, which also addressed how the EU’s response to these problems could be strengthened.[4] The first question this poses right away is the problem of the category ‘radicalisation’, which today circulates without the slightest semantic control. Obviously, radicalisation is not just a question of jihadism. While there are specific measures that concern jihadism, such as the surveillance of mosques or prevention programmes in jails, the spectrum of institutional concerns extends much wider: to far-right groups, far-left groups, separatist and nationalist movements, and even environmentalist and animal rights movements. The reader will have no difficulty understanding that if we throw everything that ‘threatens security and democracy’ into the same category, we run a major risk of being unable to truly identify anything. Though we can indeed see why governments might have an interest in characterising any action that departs from the legality of the moment as ‘terrorist’, it is hard to see how this could be useful in effectively grasping the specificity of jihadism and the bloody quest for martyrdom.

The second question posed by deradicalisation is the possible ambition of such policies. The report by the Essonne Socialist MP Malek Boutih, which caused such a polemic on its publication in June 2015, is rather exemplary in this regard.[5] His diagnosis is indeed of interest when he paints a ‘portrait of a generation on the brink of rupture’, of a youth that finds itself alone faced with a globalisation process that generates a great deal of anxiety, the mere façade of democracy and a ‘disembodied Republic’. He signals the extent of a question that ‘impacts upon a whole generation’. At the end of its first thirty-five pages we might logically expect some outline of a political ambition, a horizon, the sketch of some redeeming hope. Yet there is none: the solutions announced take no account of the seriousness of the diagnosis that has been advanced. Like so many others, the *Génération radicale* report proposes to deal with the consequences of the problem without having the slightest grasp of its causes. The ‘structural responses’ that are advocated consist of giving a Republic that has earlier been characterised as ‘mummified’ a central role in a renewed

mobilisation against radicalism. The task is thus to ‘raise a generation of republicans lighting the way, a generation of children of 11 January [2015]’, and to launch a ‘republican reconquest’ of the classroom. The appeal to the world of associations deemed ‘republican’ would rely on the Republic’s own ‘structuring’ role. Here, mounting Islamophobia seems less dangerous than those who denounce it: the report proposes to ‘fight the fundamentalist discourse that Muslims are being marginalised’; in other words, to fight the denunciation of Islamophobia.

In short, having shown that a generation’s disarray owes in large part to the Republic’s bankruptcy, the *Génération radicale* report is unabashed in suggesting that this same Republic can quite legitimately work to set out an orientation in the classroom, in the associative world, in culture, in the ‘urban ghettoes’, in families or on the internet. The report’s lyrical conclusion summons the spirits of revolutionaries past – of the founders of the French Republic, of Lenin (whom the author does not go as far as naming), of Nelson Mandela. So much radicalism invoked in other times and other continents: Is a radicalism only virtuous after the death of its bearer? The radicalism of our ancestors has little chance of mobilising a youth in a present confronted with the mummies of past revolutions. Memory does not impose itself – rather, it must be summoned. Values do not transmit themselves – each generation reworks them using the yardstick of its own experience. Has the ’68 generation so completely forgotten how it viewed its own parents?

Often the real life of an era is most sharply expressed through the radical critique of the present and the collective search for alternatives. It is here that the values of tomorrow take shape – always amid adversity, but never amid indifference. What should we name ‘radicalism’, if not this eruption of life that tears the veil from the society of the spectacle, from the discourse of authority and the sound bite, by proposing another perspective, another narrative, other words?

Radicalism splits open the present’s fine-looking yet fragile veneer of order. Unlike ‘dissidence’ and conspiracy theories, however, radicalism does not seek the truth somewhere else instead. It draws this truth out of shared experience. It replies to order by holding up a mirror with its own truth. It is an incomparable source of knowledge in our times. And, far from being the prerogative of a few isolated groups under the security services’ surveillance, radicalism spreads over years or even decades just where we did not expect it, where it increasingly escapes the dominant interpretative lenses and media portrayals. This then is an invitation to look and reflect on a few slivers of life, a few slivers of hope, which

are still to be exhaustively inventoried.

ARTISTIC RADICALISM

For example, what could be more radical than the French artist JR's work on the walls of Rio de Janeiro's Providência *favela* in 2008. Providencia is the oldest *favela carioca*, overhanging the city's port and centre. The giant portraits that JR set up on these walls, their gigantic eyes gazing over the rest of the city, say more than any discourse. They restore to each of the inhabitants – and particularly to the women – their full individual dignity, faced with the endless stigmatisation of these neighbourhoods.[6]

Aged twenty-one, the artist had already revealed the sharpness of his senses in his first project, *28 millimètres, Portrait d'une génération*: giant portraits of anonymous faces, posted on the walls of their own neighbourhood, in the Paris region.[7] This was in 2004, in the Bosquets housing estate in Montfermeil. The series had begun with a photo of JR's friend Ladj Ly holding up the photographer by pointing … a camera. A few months later, Montfermeil and Clichy were at the epicentre of the 2005 riots. JR's portraits then extended beyond the limits of his city. In 2011 the Tunisians seized on the example of his project *Inside Out* and posted their own photographs to cover up the portraits of Ben Ali. In 2005, the British artist Banksy's graphic interventions on the separation wall built between Israel and Palestine had a similarly effective unveiling effect.

'Blank walls, silent peoples' read one slogan from May '68 that was often adopted subsequently, and especially in Spanish translation. In contrast, the walls of our cities constantly speak to us, as soon as the first writers have begun adding their nicknames in the form of tags and graffiti.[8] An individual exhibition of anonymity, an illegal form of public sharing, these interventions that seek to 'tear up' or even 'vandalise' the city have marked the aesthetics of our time, and not only urban aesthetics. In 2013, did the *graffito* Kidult not stand up against the recuperation of this street art by vandalising the shop fronts of the luxury brands trying to use it for themselves?[9]

From one side of the planet to the other, tags and graffiti are now part of our urban landscape. While adopted in official communications, and sometimes domesticated in public commissions to the point of almost becoming 'heritage' – as in the case of New York's mythical 5Pointz[10] (which is today no more) or Tacheles in Berlin from 1990 to 2012[11] – they relentlessly exceed rules and

boundaries. That is why they are still often experienced, and prosecuted, as a form of urban pollution. Only a few cities, such as Naples, have proven able to integrate this undisciplined abundance of street art as one of their key attractions for tourists.[12] During the dark years of the Chilean dictatorship, the walls were the only public space for dissident expression. Nonetheless, once democracy had returned, the National Congress seriously debated the possibility of banning writing on walls, except for electoral posters.[13]

Slam and rap have occupied similar spaces. Long before they were renowned icons appearing at the 2010 concert in the Parc des Princes, in November 1996 JoeyStarr and Kool Shen were sentenced by a Toulon court to three months' imprisonment and a six-month professional ban for their 'offensive remarks' concerning the police during a concert in La Seyne-sur-Mer. This was the era in which these two former graffiti artists sparked a scandal with *J'appuie sur la gâchette* (1993), *Paris sous les bombes* (1995) and *Suprême NTM* (1998). Certainly, the radicalism of words or perspectives is a matter of invention and indiscipline. But – not without certain tensions – the galleries that play host to graffiti, and the record labels that produce radical rappers' and slammers' music, paradoxically, do more to deradicalise certain lethal discourses than any French or EU public policy could ever hope to do, simply through their efforts to help these artists expand their audience.

AN EXPERT RADICALISM

As a passing fancy for artists – 'sarcasm, invectives', Vitez would have said – is radicalism not just a sterile, ephemeral form of denunciation? According to Marx, 'an idea becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses'. It just so happens that sometimes the masses themselves have ideas, and that they also notice this. Was it not this that a stunned French political society realised during the 2005 referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty? On that occasion a thirty-nine-year-old Marseilles lycée professor, Étienne Chouard, initiated a mass critique of the text of the treaty. Through the self-managed 'constituent workshops', we saw an impressive mobilisation of popular expertise. The debate broke out of the space of the spectacle: the vast majority of political and media forces campaigned for a 'yes' vote, but 'no' won an incontrovertible victory.

However well-established they are, the state, political parties and other organisations do not have a monopoly on expertise. Their experience is validated on the institutional terrain. But popular expertise can be exerted even in the most

technical domains. How many mobilisations today find themselves forced to occupy this terrain, and to dispute the 'expert' legitimacy of the powers that be? Undocumented migrants know how rigorous they have to be in putting case files together and in their dealings with the state. And people threatened with eviction know that it is in their interest to be able to present alternative projects. Over several years the inhabitants of the Autódromo *favela* in Rio opposed the city government with a document many dozens of pages long, including statistics and architectural plans. Indeed, this is also the approach taken at the heart of the Mumbai shantytowns, as Arjun Appadurai describes.[14] Putting an end to the nomadic movements of the Roma of Saint-Denis's Hanul camp, a permanent settlement plan was elaborated together with the people who were most directly concerned.[15] From 2011 to 2014, the team at the Observatoire international des banlieues et des périphéries, which I set up together with Sylvain Lazarus, conducted a fieldwork inquiry into mobilisations against flooding in the Dakar suburbs. This applied ethnological work highlighted the real popular expertise on this question – indeed, an expertise of great technical depth. The publication of a white paper giving voice to the actors on the ground, the latter's production of a film, as well as a press conference, ended up giving this voice real legitimacy. After years of procrastination, and the corrupt handling of the humanitarian disasters that these floods produced each year, in 2014 the government finally announced that pumping of the groundwater table would now resume, as the white paper had advocated.

There are other well-known projects that have proven their worth. Thus Act Up-Paris, created in 1989, has been able to mobilise patients' own knowledge in order to spread awareness of the extent of the AIDS virus and support medical research.[16] Little-known but global in scope is the engagement of the Fourth World Movement, which has resolutely taken this path ever since 1954. Its founder Joseph Wresinski advocated making 'the thinking of the poorest' into a form of expertise indispensable to any anti-poverty activity.[17] This remains one of the pillars of the movement's strategy, formally expounded in 2008 in its *Guidelines for the merging of knowledge and practices when working with people living in situations of poverty and social exclusion*.[18] Bruno Tardieu, from 2006 to 2014 the movement's delegate-general for France [where it is called *ATD-Quart monde*], underlined both the richness of this experience and its difficulty, especially on account of the reticence of 'French intellectuals' who 'struggle with any thinking that is guided by practice'.[19]

After all, this approach is a demanding one, and for those who make a living out of 'social science' it implies a new professional ethic. From the Arab Spring

to Occupy via the Puerta del Sol, spring 2011 marked the return of a popular discourse in which anyone can have a share. But in thus establishing a different kind of intellectuality, in producing other statements on reality, we need a collective methodology. As the whole experience of the Fourth World Movement well demonstrates, to oppose the words of the powers that be with other words is not something that just rises up spontaneously. Putting thought to work generates more than emotion, revolt and solidarity: it produces alternative statements, a situationally grounded expertise, and prescriptions for governments.

In general, these moments of collective intellectuality are as powerful as they are temporary. We see the researcher's responsibility in such conjunctures beginning to come into focus. This is the responsibility of the clinician who encourages and assists the process of putting things into words, pulling everything together, and ensuring that the results endure and are made available to a wider public. Clifford Geertz suggested that we should read society as if we were reading a text over the shoulder of social actors, taking 'common sense as a cultural system' in order to produce an 'ethnography of modern thought'.[20] Like David Graeber – the American anthropologist at the heart of Occupy Wall Street – the contemporary researcher must go further in encouraging this 'sharing of experience'.[21]

INSTITUTIVE RADICALISM

Radicalism is not revolutionary in the traditional sense of the term. It does not commit itself to any strategy for power. As the prophetic Subcomandante Marcos emphasised in 1996: 'You fight to take power. We fight for democracy, freedom and justice. It is not the same thing.'[22] The creator and spokesman of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), who officially left the stage in May 2014, was always clear: the goal was not to reach government, but rather to secure 'obedient government' ('*mandar obedeciendo*'). This was echoed by the Invisible Committee in France, which in 2007 authored the book *The Coming Insurrection*: 'They want to force us to govern, we will not give in to this provocation.'[23]

Distancing themselves from power in this way – thus anticipating the uprisings of the twenty-first century, and especially the Arab Spring – did not mean that they failed to take their institutional responsibilities seriously. In the areas that they control in Chiapas, the Zapatista movement has established entirely unique democratic mechanisms revolving around the *caracoles*. For

radicalism can be institutive. So-called '*zones à défendre*' (ZAD, 'areas to be defended') began being designated in France at the beginning of the 2010s; this term established itself through the mobilisations against the plans to build an airport in Notre-Dame-des-Landes and the Sivens dam project. It bears a new figure of democracy, outside of the existing institutions: the assertion of popular expertise in determining a territory's future, and the need to obtain what the Zapatistas call 'obedient government'. The means of repression mobilised by the state, continuing even after the death of Rémi Fraisse on 26 October 2014, reflected the extent of the threat that this new subjective alchemy represents.

We are quite far from the 'country against the state' – the title that Alain Touraine and François Dubet gave their 1981 study on regionalist mobilisations in the south of France.[24] The twenty-first century also offers us a host of determined territorial collectives subject to heavy repression, but they have a different face: the city of Oaxaca in Mexico from June to December 2006, the city of Sidi Ifni in Morocco from June to August 2008, and Redeyef and the Gafsa basin from April to June of that same year. Islands and former colonies are privileged spaces for the emergence of this collective subjectivity. Guadeloupe's mobilisation against the high cost of living in 2009 took on a quasi-insurrectional character. Thousands of miles apart, Chile's Aysén region, Italy's Val de Susa and the village of Wukan in China have converged in this territorial and institutive logic.

The 100,000 inhabitants of Aysén live across a territory one-fifth the size of France and are linked to Chile by only a single partly asphalted road. Supported by local mayors, in February 2012 the movement against the high cost of living brought together close to twenty organisations, including the fishermen's union, the United Workers' Central (CUT), the National Tax Employees' Association (ANEF) and the Patagonia Without Dams association. During the first two weeks of the movement, Sebastián Piñera's government called on special forces from other regions – forces known for their violence – and mobilised the 'state interior security law', inherited from Pinochet. On 21 March the military police fired live bullets. A state of siege was declared in all the big urban centres. Internet and phone networks were cut off. On 22 March the movement's leaders were received in person at the presidential palace. As in Guadeloupe, the territorial mobilisation ultimately forced the powers that be to retreat.

In Italy, a whole valley – the Val de Susa – has mobilised since 2000 in opposition to the Lyon-Turin high-speed train line (TAV). The small *comune* of Mompantero, where evictions began in 2005, was the first site of direct clashes. Over seven years there were repeated occupations of the work sites, drawing

their share of violent repression. The local mobilisation became a major national issue. From December 2005 the slogan ‘No TAV’ began appearing on walls around Italy, as far as Palermo. In the area surrounding Chiomonte, this little valley became the theatre of pitched battles in the fields. And the high-speed rail project made no headway.

In Wukan, Guangdong Province, the touch paper was lit by compulsory purchases of farmland combined with suspicions of corruption among local officials. Within a few years the 15,000 inhabitants of Wukan had been dispossessed of the majority of the collective land. Violent confrontation broke out between 21 and 23 September 2011. On 12 December the village rose up and was subjected to a quasi-military siege. On 16 December provincial officials suspended the property sales that had come under challenge. The local administrators who had been freely elected during the conflict were recognised by the authorities.

PRACTICAL RADICALISMS

Radicalism has its rhizomes. When on 26 May 2014 the Can Vies self-managed social centre in Barcelona was threatened with demolition by the site’s proprietor – the Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona – it took no more than a few hours for the neighbourhood to rise up, leading to several nights of rioting. After four nights of barricades and the extension of the protests to Valencia and Mallorca, the demolition project was abandoned. Such are the networks of an invisible but living radicalism today, a radicalism that is capable of creating an event out of the blue. Such, indeed, is the practical effectiveness of these famous ‘social networks’, with all their mysterious power. It is proof, if yet more were needed, that digital networks only work if they produce a very real event and not just a virtual one. By sharing information in real time, they are able to arouse latent networks that are not mobilised by any preexisting organisation. Such was the case in Greece in 2008, in the hours that followed the death of Alexis Grigoropoulos. The same was also true of Spain in January 2014, where the renovation and gentrification projects in Burgos’s Gamonal neighbourhood sparked five days of rioting. But this local conflict also found an echo in Madrid, Alicante, Zaragoza, Barcelona, Valencia, San Sebastián and Santander, cities where the nighttime would also smell of tear gas.

Organisation is one of the sensitive points of contemporary radicalism: we need a real reflection on its persistent absence. We can see no mode of organisation emerging that would be capable of carrying radicalism forward in

the long term, of putting a strategy to work, of creating a space for the sharing of practices, experiences, knowledges and ethical choices. Besides, can or should we today be trying to think of an organisation as the site for producing a global intellectuality and a collective ethic? Yes, replies Alain Badiou, for whom 'an organization lies at the intersection between an Idea and an event' and is necessary for '*the discipline of the event*', meaning 'the possibility of an efficacious fragmentation of the Idea into actions, proclamations and inventions attesting to a *fidelity to the event*'.[25] No, the Invisible Committee retorts without hesitation: in its view, we have 'to construct a force that isn't an organization'.[26] Those with some experience of organisational innovation – like Toni Negri with the Italian *operaismo* in the 1970s or Sylvain Lazarus with the Organisation politique created in 1985 (and dissolved in 2007) – are extremely cautious in this regard.

Paradoxically, the scenario outlined by Badiou seems to be incarnated in Podemos in Spain. Indeed, what are Pablo Iglesias Turrión and his friends doing if not 'disciplining the event' and fragmenting it 'into actions, proclamations and inventions attesting to a *fidelity to the event*'? Yet they do so with electoral goals, as if the figure of the organisation as a collective actor carried by the Idea were decidedly unable to take on flesh and blood except within the terms of a strategy for power – and, as it happens, a parliamentary one.

Perhaps it is quite simply that the question is wrongly posed, or rather, posed in an outdated way. Organising does not necessarily mean founding 'an organisation': 'true discipline isn't focused on the external signs of organisation, but on the internal development of our power'.[27] Evidently, organising is involved in the square occupations, the establishment of a ZAD or the setting up of digital networks. A new organising culture is circulating and improving with the test of events – and this is the culture of a new generation. Where there is more work to be done is not so much on the question of organisation as on the question of 'We' and of the commons.

For, faced with jihadism, contemporary radicalism will fail if it is not up to the task of carrying forth a common idea of humanity and its future. While the emergence of the commons has begun to feed much philosophical and economic reflection, it has still not won the battle for the popular consciousness.[28] And even the best philosophers and economists are not capable of conducting this battle. Rather, it is only the people themselves who are able to do so, in their resistance to the everyday chaos.

CONCLUSION

A New Narrative

We were tired of being tired. So we got moving … And because we had confidence in people, a confidence began to take shape around a new narrative.

Juan Carlos Monedero[1]

THE CHAOS IS THERE

The chaos is indeed there. It is geopolitical, political and cultural. The conflagration raging through the Middle East is knocking violently on the West's door. It took months for governments to recognise the historic extent of the exodus of peoples fleeing the sites of war and terror. What did we not hear in spring 2015? On 18 April did the French president not call people smugglers 'terrorists' and propose a strengthening of the 'Triton' surveillance operation in the Mediterranean? Then, when during the summer we finally recognised the exodus for what it is, people with the best of intentions like the German chancellor rapidly passed from a media-friendly welcome to a panic over border controls, having underestimated the scale of the phenomenon.

Incompetence and short-termist electoralism combined with political confusion. On 7 September 2015 the Socialist MP Françoise Dumas wrote to the mayor of Nîmes to demand that the city play its part in taking in refugees from Syria, and particularly Middle Eastern Christians hunted down by Da'esh. Yet a lot of these Christians have been welcomed in Jordan, a Muslim country that has built churches for them. And do we really have to remind ourselves that the vast majority of both Da'esh's and Bashar al-Assad's victims are Muslims?

Those who govern us do not seem to have got a measure of the situation that is today unfolding. The proclamation of the Islamic State and its expansion through war triggered a worldwide explosion, one whose chain-reaction effects are incalculable. Run for your life – it's every man for himself. Hungary defends the Christian West. France has made a multi-year promise to take in 24,000 refugees (out of close to 500,000). In a country of 36,000 *communes*, this is far

from what Pope Francis suggested, namely, taking in one family per parish. Others propose introducing a ‘war refugee’ status, insisting on the need for them to go back. But where should they go back to, and when? Who in the West has a viable peace strategy for the region?

In July 2015, Turkey decided to bomb Da’esh (a little), the better (really) to wage war on the Kurds – the same Kurds who daily fight Islamic State on the ground and who retook the town of Sinjar on 13 November 2015. In October 2015 Russia proposed to the Western coalition that they should support Bashar al-Assad – which is to say, the man who wages war on his own people, gasses civilians, and tortures thousands of civilians.[2] All those who understand the situation know and repeatedly tell us that the Syrian president is, in a sense, the Islamic State’s best recruiting sergeant.[3] Ever since Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in December 1979, interventions by the great powers have constantly destabilised the region and spread chaos. The weakening or collapse of states in the region has opened the way for this ‘savagery’, the ‘administering’ of which is at the heart of the jihadist strategy.

THE DARK SIDE OF FORCE

From 2014 the Islamic State established itself on the ground. It made homes for itself in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Nigeria and gradually extended its hegemony over all other jihadist networks. Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria are today able to broadcast video communications in the same Hollywood style as Da’esh.

The Islamic State has established itself in the world’s political imaginary. The horrors to which it lays claim also draw fascination. It is a warrior organisation that knows the secrets of trade and international finance, and has also mastered cutting-edge technologies. Most importantly, it has been an expanding force whose paranoid ideology is its unfailing motor: Da’esh becomes stronger with each of its enemies’ offensives and gains fresh legitimacy from every Coalition attempt to defeat it. The doggedness of the fight against it, and the heteroclite character of the coalitions employed in this struggle, bring it ever more political power. You do not militarily defeat candidates for martyrdom, and still less an idea.

The Islamic State is not foreign to our world. It is less a deviation from Islam than a reaction to the violence of globalisation and the states that manage it. The destruction of the Iraqi state and the confessionalisation of the government entrusted to the Shi’ites by the United States opened the way for this. The

West's silence and passivity faced with the massacre of the Syrian people by its own government since 2011, the French-British intervention in Libya without the slightest strategy for peace, the (definitive?) lack of any resolution of the Palestinian question and the failure of all the international promises are so many geopolitical dramas that have produced martyrs, just as the arrogance and violence of Ben Ali's police caused the immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. And is it merely by chance that Boko Haram is prospering in Nigeria, Africa's leading oil producer (and eleventh worldwide), a country simultaneously hit by enormous pollution and daily petrol shortages? There, like everywhere, corruption has done its work. The government has closed refineries, imported petrol at the price of gold, and subsidised this lucrative traffic.

How can we imagine fighting this new globalised jihad while we spare bloody dictatorships and corrupt governments, while we allow what remains of the Palestinian people to die, while we reject the masses of Syrians left to roam with nowhere to go? Can we pursue a policy of fighting Da'esh and at the same time sell twenty-four Rafale warplanes to Qatar, a state that has helped arm it? Can we take pride in the €10 billion worth of contracts promised to ministers-become-travelling-salesmen by Saudi Arabia – the homeland of Wahhabism and Salafism, which is crushing the Shi'ites in Yemen? Can we reasonably mount a military intervention on the very terrain that Da'esh has chosen ('barbarism') by pursuing a rush to war, without also coming up with any plan for peace? Can we fight against those who organise crimes against humanity without involving the peoples who are the victims of these crimes – peoples like the Kurds who are already fighting against them?

Was it a credible and effective approach, on 11 January 2015, to proclaim our rejection of horror by lining up behind the powerful of the world? Was it possible to defend freedom and the Republic by falling in step with Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Putin's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, Gabon's president Ali Bongo, Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, and the number two of Saudi diplomacy, Nizar al-Madani – to cite only the names that caused something of a polemic? Can we build a national unity against terror without confronting the profound divisions that have opened up in our country over more than a generation?

WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO OUR CHILDREN?

'My son is someone else,' the novelist Mouloud Akkouche wrote in a 'Letter to my son, who has set off to wage jihad'.[4] From the 2005 riots to the jihadist

madness, we do not even recognise our children. What are the roots of this anger, and what is the breeding ground of this murderous folly? Could we imagine a more sinister anniversary for the 2005 riots than the final discharge of the policemen implicated in the lethal pursuit of 27 October that year? For there is all the truth of the 2005 riots: in the pain and anger caused by the pointless deaths of two young men, two young men who died of the fear that uniforms can provoke when you are a teenager, when you do not have the right skin colour, when you do not live in the right neighbourhood. Yesterday as today, the absence of collective and institutional compassion amounts to an immeasurable violence.

Who at the time dared to say that this collective anger was legitimate? Even people very much on the left did not. There was unanimous condemnation of the torching of cars, or worse, of schools and libraries. Those with the best of intentions did try, after the event, to transform the anger into a more traditional mobilisation, and especially an electoral one. But they had not got the measure of this generation's disdain for politics. This rage was turned against politics itself, its discourses, its unkept promises, its lies, its agreed repertoire. To everyone's shock this anger again expressed itself a few months later in 2006, with the violent attacks on the student marches demonstrating against the Contrat première embauche.

The symbolic and material situation of this urban working-class youth has worsened since 2005. The rioting has not stopped. Left and Right take turns in power, each of them tangled up in the consequences of policies that are blind to the problems posed, and indifferent to the social damage that neoliberal globalisation has caused. Each of them have continued their moralising and securitarian onslaught. What happened across France in 2005 has still not been identified as a major rupture that also heralds other symbolic and political splits.

This is now a generational and human chaos. Today it wears the youthful face of suicide attackers. They were born in France, they grew up in France, far from Syria and Palestine, and they have no horizon other than death – their own death, and that of others. Bilal Hadfi, who died in his suicide attack on the Stade de France McDonald's on 13 November 2015, was French. He was twenty years old and had already journeyed to Syria. Hasna Aït Boulahcen, born in Clichy-la-Garenne, had grown up in Aulnay-sous-Bois and was looking for work. She was twenty-six years old. She died in Saint-Denis in the early hours of 18 November 2015, during the anti-terrorism police assault targeting some of the perpetrators of the 13 November killings. Former bus driver Samy Amimour, described by those close to him as a gentle and shy young man, was born in Paris. His father

had gone to Syria – where Samy had got married – to try and bring him home. He was twenty-eight years old when he burst into the hall of the Bataclan in order to massacre dozens of youth of a similar age.

France is not simply confronting a chaos that is somehow wholly external to it, whose epicentre today seems to be located in Syria. Rather, it plays its own part in it, as it participates in producing the global chaos. This is one of the reasons why jihad finds a favourable terrain in France. Faced with the chaos of the world and the individual chaos it can engender, jihad has a real political proposal: the conversion of the self, the end of history, and martyrdom as liberation. It is a response inscribed in the lack of a future, the lack of hope, murderous for oneself and for others. Jihad is to our globalised world as the picture of Dorian Gray is to Oscar Wilde's hero: the monstrous face hidden behind a deceptive visage. It is the dark side of the fate imposed upon us.

Can peoples today choose their own future, rejecting the false alternative between an ideology of death and a lethal globalisation? What we most lack in these dramatic circumstances is the very thing that served as the instrument of this choice over the past two centuries: politics as a subjective power. Without politics, there is neither a road toward the future nor the construction of a common destiny. Without politics, democracy is nothing more than a shadow play whose words ring hollow. Without politics, representation is reduced to a spectacle. Without politics, the confrontation of ideas loses its relationship with the real. And then, as the Spanish Indignados say, 'their ballot boxes are too small for our dreams'.

For politics is never well behaved. This subjective power cannot purport to incarnate a people's destiny except in a context of dissensus and the clash between different possibilities. That is why the class struggle as a social frame of reference, communism as a hypothesis, and revolution as a possibility were structuring forces across decades. That is why we miss them today. This is the absence that intolerant identities, the confessionalisation of the social, and ideologies of death all feed off. In his own way the humourist Christophe Alévêque told us this during the tribute night for *Charlie Hebdo* on France Télévision on 11 January 2015, when he sang the Italian partisan anthem 'Bella Ciao'.

But we should do away with nostalgia and establish a contemporary radicalism. We will never open up a new cycle on the basis of regrets or remorse. Contrary to what I long believed – in wanting to 'refound' communism – one never 'refounds' anything. This radicalism is not abstract. It is not an argument for a newspaper column or a TV panel. It is incarnated in concrete

situations, where it operates a critique-in-action of the issues of our era: the financialisation of the world and the corruption of governments, the disdain shown for human creativity and popular intelligence by the logic of profit, the spoliation of humanity by an insatiable minority, the looting of the planet and the spectacularisation of power.

It is not only a matter of getting angry, but also of identifying possibilities and giving a common sense and subjectivity to these multiple forms of resistance. That is what we need in order for contemporary radicalism to open up to the re-symbolisation of humanity's destiny, and for it to resist the temptations of the sacred and of martyrdom. For faced with institutional and economic chaos and the terrorism of the despair it engenders, we urgently need to force fear onto the retreat and to incarnate people's hopes. We urgently need to build confidence in a new narrative.

AFTERWORD

The Arsonist State

> I learned, I learned that there was a battle
> After which love was dead and never returned;
> and the field was deserted, there were no fighters
> but only an eternal defeat
>
> Edouard Glissant, *Le sang rivé*

On 9 April 2018, armed French police invaded Notre-Dame-des Landes to kick out the residents of the 'Zone à Défendre' (ZAD), an occupied area of pasture and woodland.[1] The government claimed that the occupiers no longer had any reason to be there, now that the airport project they had come to protest had officially been abandoned, following a cabinet meeting on 17 January.

What was meant to be a simple mopping-up operation turned into guerrilla warfare in the French countryside. On everyone's minds was the fiasco of the attempted clearing of the ZAD in 2012, known as 'Operation César'. This time around, more than twenty squadrons of mobile gendarmes were deployed together with several detachments of CRS riot police. But they failed to destroy a resistance whose true meaning the powers that be are unable to grasp. Despite the prime minister's warlike rhetoric as he visited the site on 13 April, his government was soon forced to return to the negotiating table with hundreds of the militants concerned. They were determined to realise their plans to build another way of life based on solidarity, community and respect for the environment.

What kind of moral panic must have taken over the government for it to mount this offensive even as it was also wrestling with a series of university occupations, a long-running railworkers' strike, and a dispute with Air France's pilots? Why splurge so much effort and resources, just to get back a few hectares of land?

According to journalists' calculations, the quasi-military operation at the ZAD cost some €5 million. There has been no rebuttal of this claim. It is some irony that in April 2018 the French government also announced it was creating a

token €5 million budget for the human and social sciences.

So, there is to be the same funding for a year of academic research as for five days of ‘keeping order’! The coincidence of these two developments provided a fine example of government priorities. The events in Notre-Dame-des-Landes were a telling display of the new executive’s will to establish its undivided – and undiscussed – authority. Indeed, the same tough methods were used against the students who protested the new university admissions system.[2] Spring 2018 saw a series of police interventions in the occupied universities.

Discussing the student protests in a TV interview with journalists Edwy Plenel and Jean-Jacques Bourdin, Macron’s choice of words was rather pointed. As he put it, ‘The professional troublemakers should understand that we live in a state based on order.’

A state based on ‘order’, rather than one based on the rule of law – is this what we should call it when measures adopted in the name of the ‘state of emergency’ are then brought onto the ordinary statute books?[3] As a further coincidence, this all happened just months after the Spanish state resorted to brute force in its attempt to prevent a referendum being held in Catalonia.

Is this perhaps a case of giving up our liberty for more security? Rising panic in the face of terrorist attacks produces a climate conducive to previous assumptions being abandoned or trampled on. Even Renaud, a left-wing singer well known for his social commentary, sang that he had ‘hugged a cop’ at the 11 January 2015 rally in response to the attack on Charlie Hebdo. The authorities’ worries can also echo among the bulk of the population.

Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Vladimir Putin in Russia, Recep Erdoğan in Turkey, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines and Narendra Modi in India have all made brutal authoritarianism one of the foundations of their popularity. It is an election campaign promise. Faced with chaos, has the time perhaps come for elected autocracies? Only at a push could we call them ‘democratic’.

FAILED STATES, LIVING IN CHAOS

When states do fail, the resulting chaos doubtless provides an apocalyptic spectacle. Slave markets have returned to Libya since its state was destroyed by the French-British intervention. In Somalia, pirates reign supreme, threatening the security of international maritime routes. In Nigeria, a corrupt government is unable to cope with Boko Haram or, indeed, to prevent the spread of inter-communal massacres. The same is true of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Benin.

Corruption eats away at state authority and drags countries into a mire of uncertainty and turbulence. After years of rising hope that social change was on its way, Brazil is today particularly hard-hit by this phenomenon. The impeachment process that the Brazilian parliament initiated against Dilma Rousseff in 2016, as she was hit by the Petrobras scandal, was supported by mass demonstrations. It culminated in a Senate vote on 31 August 2016 that deposed a president who was, without doubt, less corrupt than the people who organised her removal – starting with her successor, the former vice president Michel Temer. Not even eighteen months later, on 24 January 2018, the Porto Alegre court of appeal upheld presidential election front-runner Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's conviction for corruption and money laundering. In April he was jailed, a few days after the supreme court rejected his habeas corpus plea.

How can such authorities enjoy any kind of popular legitimacy? Even beyond President Temer's moves to roll back the clock on social policy, Brazilians today are being subjected to an unparalleled 'securitarian' drive. In Rio de Janeiro, where a process seeking to pacify the *favelas* had already been underway for some years, the army has now directly taken charge of public order. The police stations that had been opened up in the *favelas* have now closed their doors, and the streets of Rocinha constantly resound with the noise of automatic weapons, like in the worst period of the war against the 'narcos'.[4]

What can we say about the situation in Venezuela? After weeks of bloody clashes with the opposition, the institutional coup d'état of 30 March 2017 got rid of the National Assembly's legislative powers and again allowed the Maduro government some margin of manoeuvre. But this did not calm the economic situation in a country today on the slide, which has been worn down by corruption. In addition to the political violence perpetrated by pro-government militias, there is also a wider social violence, with looting of supermarkets and summary lynchings of supposed criminals.

What about the situation in Nicaragua? In April 2018 former guerrilla leader Daniel Ortega's government was forced to abandon pension reform after five days of rioting and looting that left forty-two dead.

What about the situation in Mexico? The reign of organised crime complements the repression coming from the state. The affair surrounding the disappeared students from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College is still an open wound, after more than three years of mobilisations and riots. On 26 September 2014 a convoy of student protestors was intercepted by the municipal police in Iguala. After a bloody clash with the forces of order, forty-three students were handed over to local mobsters. A few months later, all that could be found was a

mass grave.

THE CHAOS OF WAR

Here we have something that looks very much like ‘the world exploding’.[5] This picture bears little resemblance to Steven Pinker’s theories about the contemporary decline in violence.[6] How can we agree with Pinker’s talk of the consolidation of organised states and tendencies toward peace when we can also see the utter collapse of states like Libya and Somalia, large-scale massacres like those perpetrated against the Rohingya people in Burma, and the spread of communal violence in India, Congo, Nigeria and Benin? How can we speak of a ‘rights revolution’ when we see a rise in policies that manifestly stigmatise minorities in the name of defending increasingly fragile national identities?[7]

The final argument put forward by Pinker and those who sing the praises of globalisation is that there has been a decline in wars between the major powers, and between developed countries more broadly. Since 2004, there has indeed been a spectacular fall in the number of conflicts between states, and in the number of victims resulting from such conflicts. But the *Human Security Report 2013* clearly shows that this does not mean that war, and the massacres that ensue, have disappeared.[8] The ‘Clausewitzian’ form of war has almost vanished from the global geopolitical landscape. But it has been replaced by the spread of civil wars involving foreign intervention and a parallel rise in the number of victims.

When we speak of war today, this has little to do with the general mobilisation of August 1914, the Normandy landings of June 1944 or even the war over the Malvinas in April–June 1982. Like the colonial wars of old, war has today become an extension of policing.

During the first Gulf War, Giorgio Agamben diagnosed the emergence of a ‘sovereign police’ that recast the very idea of war and peace.[9] But 11 September 2001 doubtless marked a major turning point in this regard. In the weeks following the attack, America’s military doctrine could be asserted openly.

THE ‘SOVEREIGN POLICE’ AGAINST TERRORISM

Today, we have ‘just’ and ‘preemptive’ war, even war ‘without end’.[10] From 1994 onward, the ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ (RMA) had combined reflection on the technological revolution in weaponry with the idea that the

world had become unpredictable. The new ‘empire of chaos’ emerging from the end of the Cold War could not be ‘regulated’. The fear of a destabilisation of authority took on a global dimension. The threat from the margins now popped up everywhere. It was thus necessary to establish a securitarian system that would prioritise unilateral, localised military action. In 2001 it took the name ‘asymmetrical warfare’; in his 2016 book, Paul Rogers called it ‘irregular war’.[11]

The enemy is no longer identified with a state, but with a multitude of actors identified as potential criminals. We had the wars against the ‘axis of evil’, in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. And we also had the ‘war on terror’ – an expression that France’s Socialist government itself adopted in 2013 to describe its interventions in Mali, in the Central African Republic and then in the Middle East.

In this ‘war on terror’, policing and warfare combine: the domestic and foreign threats intersect and reinforce one another. We call NATO interventions ‘police operations’ and call urban conflicts ‘guerrilla warfare’.

This has significant consequences. When a ‘police’ logic replaces the old logic of warfare, it is no longer necessary to prepare the ground for peace and make former enemies into negotiating partners. In Syria since the Coalition’s intervention, just as in Libya with the French-British intervention, the stated goal is to destroy evil and criminality. These policing operations are conducted in the name of upholding the law, but they do not pave the way for ‘burying the hatchet’. They do not prepare the ground for peace. They could go on ‘forever’.[12]

War is no longer fought for the sake of imposing peace on an enemy. Peace is no longer the purpose and declared end goal of war. War and peace are thus confused. In practical terms, wartime and peacetime are no longer clearly separate. War becomes the means of defending peace. Peace demands war, just as security demands police action.

When an American assault squad secretly operating on Pakistani soil summarily executed Osama bin Laden on 2 May 2011, President Obama declared, ‘Justice has been done.’ Police warfare has become a means of governance for the globalised world.

WAGING WAR ON THE PEOPLE?

These wars in fact kill more civilians than soldiers. Over the last quarter-century, the vast majority of conflict victims have been civilians. The Iraqi-Syrian theatre has, since 2012, been a sort of laboratory for our new modernity.

The war that Bashar al-Assad has been waging on his own people since 2011 – and he has enjoyed Russian and Iranian support – has been ruinous for the populations concerned. First, there are the displaced: 5 million people exiled and 6 million internally displaced within Syria. Then there are the destroyed towns and cities. And there are the dead. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), in the seven years since March 2011, the war in Syria has claimed 353,935 lives. Of these, 106,390 were civilians, including 19,811 children and 12,513 women. The Battle of Aleppo, waged against the opposition between 19 July 2012 and 22 December 2016, alone claimed more than 20,000 civilian lives.

The war that the Coalition has waged against Islamic State is, alas, comparable in this regard.[13] According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), the Battle of Raqqa from 6 June to 17 October 2017 claimed 1,854 civilians' lives and displaced 270,000 people.

Probably the costliest battle involving the Coalition took place in Mosul, Iraq, from 17 October 2016 to 10 July 2017. The number of displaced people is estimated at close to a million. The Coalition has only recognised a few hundred civilian casualties. This figure is difficult to believe, given that Amnesty International counted 5,805 deaths in the four months from 19 February to 19 June 2017 alone, while an Associated Press investigation estimates the total at 9,000–11,000 and the Iraqi-Kurdish intelligence services have provided a 40,000 figure.

In these conditions, when we see images of neighbourhoods destroyed by urban warfare and of bombings by ultramodern planes – whether under Coalition or Russian command – it is hard to speak of 'liberated' cities. The Damascus regime's furious assault on Eastern Ghouta in March and April 2018 and its use of chemical weapons did, finally, spark indignation around the world. But that anger focused on the particular weapons that had been used – not the bombing of civilians with traditional weapons.

We get similar images from around the world. On 17 October 2017, the Philippine government announced that it had won the Battle of Marawi, where it had been fighting Islamic State since 23 May. According to the Philippine authorities, some 389,300 civilians had fled the city by 1 July 2017. The death count remains uncertain.

We could equally look to Gaza's border with Israel. Every Friday since March 2018, civilians have been on the front line. They are killed deliberately, in the name of the 'war on terror'.

DA'ESH, THE ABSOLUTE 'STATE OF WAR'

Has 'justice been done'? Was the deployment of massive military force, together with the apparent indifference toward the large-scale humanitarian disaster that would result, really the best way to destroy the threat posed by Islamic State? If military victory today seems secure, the war also has immeasurable – and, in large part, unpredictable – social and political consequences. In fact, the Islamic State wanted this war. Its defeat, foreseen in the texts that Islamic State takes as its frame of reference, does not mark its final disappearance.

From the beginning of the Western military intervention to the end of the fighting, media and institutional language has constantly denied that it is a state, instead naming Islamic State a terrorist organisation. Yet it did indeed establish a state, in Mosul, in Raqqa, in the towns it controlled (but not in Aleppo, in the hands of a Free Syrian Army, which fought Da'esh). Basing itself on the cadres of the Iraqi Ba'ath party, Islamic State worked tirelessly to rebuild the state administration, to get public services up and running and to collect taxes.[14] In an early phase of its existance, this 'restoration of order' helped it achieve Sunni populations' neutrality or even consent.

But Da'esh has a particular idea of the state, which it very much put into practice. This is a state of religious persecution, of terror and of war, in which no peace is possible before the final judgement. There has been war against the Yezidis of Sinjar, massacred, tortured and enslaved in 2014. There has been war against the Shia. War on nonbelievers. War on the whole world. The entire effort of marshalling resources and organising civilian populations is also directed at warfare. When Da'esh set up a strikingly modern communications and propaganda apparatus, it did so for the purposes of warfare. And war is also the purpose of children's education.

Da'esh is monstrous. It is a reflection of our time and an absurd extension of the logics inherent to the state of war and the fight against the 'enemy within'. This is, indeed, an absolute 'state of war'.

AFTER DA'ESH, PEACE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND

The Islamic State has been defeated militarily. But will this landscape of ruins lead to a lasting peace? For that to be the case, the Coalition's war aims would have had to include a plan for peace. Yet, if there is any plan for peace today, it belongs to Damascus and its allies. Directed at the strengthening of Shia states in the region, it will not allow for Syria to be rebuilt, and it is manifestly loaded

with future conflicts.

There was a Kurdish plan, too. The decisive, on-the-ground role the Iraqi and Syrian Kurds played in the struggle against Da'esh might have raised their hopes for international recognition and perhaps a state. Everyone knows that nothing of the kind will happen. Erdoğan's Turkey has already begun its military offensive against its only real enemy in the region: the Kurdish people. Iran can only celebrate. Will the Coalition allow Turkey to continue?

On 30 April 2018, the Syrian Democratic Forces – an Arab-Kurdish coalition backed by Washington – clashed with Assad's Russian-backed forces in Deir ez-Zor. Da'esh has fallen in Syria, as in Iraq. But perhaps the war is only just beginning.

States today seek to legitimise themselves by promising security. They need enemies to target so they can parade their credentials as a sovereign police force. They do not so much protect their peoples as feed off the chaos. These states say that they are based on order. But they are also arsonists.

Notes

Introduction: Toward a Universal Conflagration

1 Georges Balandier, *Le Désordre*, Paris: Fayard, 1988.

2 Islamic State press release claiming responsibility for the attacks: 'Statement on the blessed attack in Paris against crusader France', at en.wikisource.org.

3 Da'esh is an Arabic acronym for ISIS.

4 Haruki Marukami, *Underground*, New York: Vintage, 2000.

5 Translator's Note: Coined as a translation for the English term 'acting out'; the French version, however, takes on particular connotations in the work of Jacques Lacan, who distinguishes between 'acting out' – designed to send a message to some specific target – and the 'passage à l'acte', which is self-referential and has no interlocutor.

6 Maxime Lépante, 'Merah-Boston-Londres: l'islam veut notre mort !', ripostelaique.com, 23 May 2013.

7 Olivier Roy, 'La communauté musulmane n'existe pas', mediapart.fr, 11 January 2011.

8 See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, Paris: Éditions de la MSH, 2014.

9 Olivier Roy advances the hypothesis that 'the main reason for this radicalisation is the hybridisation of a Muslim frame of reference and, on the other hand, a culture of violence, of resentment, of nihilist fascination for a suicidal, negative and toxic heroism: that of the young Columbine killers who massacred the people in their school. These latter filmed themselves in online videos before passing to action and death, for death is always the end of the story [*l'histoire*]' ('La communauté musulmane n'existe pas').

10 Alain Bertho, *Le Temps des émeutes*, Paris: Bayard, 2009.

11 Annamaria Rivera, *Il Fuoco della rivolta. Torce umane dal Maghreb all'Europa*, Bari: Dedalo, 2012.

12 Translator's Note: Literally, 'mortgage'.

13 Translator's Note: 'Les lendemains qui chantent': a line originally from Paul Vaillant-Couturier's 1937 song 'Jeunesse', expressing the communists' confidence in a bright future.

14 Fredric Jameson, 'Future City', *New Left Review*, no. 21, May–June 2003.

15 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835.

16 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1979.

17 Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?', in *What is an Apparatus?*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 46.

1. French Divides

1 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1974, p. 68.

2 See Pierre-Jean Luizard, *Le Piège Daech. L'État islamique ou le retour de l'Histoire*, Paris: La Découverte, 2015; Nicolas Hénin, *Jihad Academy*, Paris: Fayard, 2015; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Les Arabes*,

leur destin et le nôtre. Histoire d'une libération, Paris: La Découverte, 2015.

3 Richard Barrett, 'Foreign Fighters in Syria', soufangroup.com, June 2014.

4 Kathryn Chamberlain, 'ISIS poll for Rossiya Segodnya', icmunlimited.com, 19 August 2014.

5 Published results (per cent):

	France	United Kingdom	Germany
Very favourable	3	2	0
Quite favourable	13	5	2
Quite unfavourable	31	20	28
Very unfavourable	31	44	54
Don't know	23	29	16

6 We do not have the split between 'very' and 'quite' favourable for this age band (see '15% of French people back ISIS militants, poll finds', rt.com, 18 August 2014).

7 See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Radicalisation*, Paris: Éditions de la MSH, 2014.

8 This term meaning 'exile' (following from the Prophet Mohammed's *hegira*) refers to departure for a Muslim country.

9 Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple*, quotes from introduction to the 1865 edition.

10 Stéphane Beaud and Michel Pialoux, *Violences urbaines, violence sociale. Genèse des nouvelles classes dangereuses*, Paris: Fayard, 2003.

11 'Men's anger must never be a mute remainder of politics. It establishes an absolute right to stand up and address those who hold power.' Michel Foucault, 'Face aux gouvernements, les droits de l'homme', *Dits et écrits*, vol. 4, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, p. 708.

12 Interview with the Israeli paper *Haaretz*, 19 November 2005.

13 'Selon Lila', in Alma et Lila Lévy, *Des filles comme les autres. Au-delà du foulard. Interviews with Véronique Giraud et Yves Sintomer*, Paris: La Découverte, 2004, p. 46.

14 Ibid.

15 Sophie Gargan, 'Le voile à l'assaut des écoles', lutte-ouvrière.org, 25 September 2003.

16 Anne Lafran, Marc Delval, Pierre-François Grond, Rémi Duloquin and Jean-Pierre Hennuyer (teachers at the Cité scolaire Henri-Wallon in Aubervilliers), 'Une exclusion assumée', *Libération*, 22 October 2003.

17 Translator's Note: Referring to France and Britain's capitulation to Nazi Germany at the September 1938 Munich conference, allowing Adolf Hitler to annex the Sudetenland in western Czechoslovakia. In French public life the word 'Munich' is a shorthand reference to the dangers of 'appeasement'.

18 Translator's Note: A reference to the Front National's campaign to impose non-halal food in school canteens, on the grounds of keeping religion out of the public sphere.

19 Jean Baubérot, *La Laïcité falsifiée*, Paris: La Découverte, 2012.

20 Translator's Note: 'Le communautarisme' is difficult to translate into English as simply 'communitarianism', as this could be associated with, for example, the political philosophy of Charles Taylor *et al.* In this context, as in the discourse of French politics more generally, it has the meaning of a break with the supposed universalism of the French republican tradition and the self-enclosure of minority groups (particularly Muslims) into forms of self-identification with their religious identities, through the wearing of the hijab or other such markers. Alternative more or less adequate translations could be 'tribalism', 'groupism', 'sectarianism' or even 'identity politics'.

21 Indeed, across the world as a whole, specific legislation condemning blasphemy – as distinct from general anti-defamation laws – is far from being in the majority. It exists in only 32 (eight of them in Europe) out of 198 countries. See Brian J. Grim, 'Laws penalizing blasphemy, apostasy and defamation of

religion are widespread', Pew Research Center, Washington, 21 November 2012.

22 On this point, see the column by one of its former contributors, Olivier Cyran, 'Charlie Hebdo, pas raciste? Si vous le dites', *Article 11*, 5 December 2013.

23 Max Lagarrigue, 'Incidents lors de la minute de silence dans les écoles tarn-et-garonnaises', *La Dépêche du Midi*, 16 January 2015; 'On ne va pas se laisser insulter par un dessin du Prophète, c'est normal qu'on se venge', francetvinfo.fr, 9 January 2015.

24 Frédéric Lordon, 'Charlie à tout prix?', *Le Monde diplomatique*, 13 January 2015; Ludivine Bantigny et al., 'Non à l'union sacrée', *Le Monde*, 15 January 2015.

25 The text of the letter and a full list of the signatories are available online: Glenn Greenwald, '204 PEN writers (thus far) have objected to the Charlie Hebdo award, not just 6', *Intercept*, 30 April 2015.

26 George Packer, 'The other France: Are the suburbs of Paris incubators of terrorism?', *New Yorker*, August 2015.

27 Sudhir Hazareesingh, 'Chez les intellectuels français émerge un néoconservatisme républicain frileux et nombriliste', liberation.fr, 28 August 2015. See his book *How the French Think*, London: Penguin, 2016.

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Conclusion: A New Narrative

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Afterword: The Arsonist State

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