

EXTREMISM

Interdisciplinary workshop
with Prof. Gary LaFree
University of Maryland, USA

3rd May 2018, University of Fribourg
Room 4112



Dr. Silvia Staubli
Prof. Michael Nollert
Prof. Monica Budowski

PROGRAM

PART I: POLITICAL EXTREMISM AND PUBLIC OPINIONS

- 10:00 – 10:15 **Welcome and introduction**
Silvia STAUBLI, University of Fribourg
- 10:15 – 11:00 **KEYNOTE SPEECH: Correlates of Violent Political Extremism in the United States**
Gary LAFREE, University of Maryland
- 11:00 – 11:15 *Discussion*
- 11:15 – 12:00 **PhD project presentation: The role of collective strain and political grievance in politically motivated violence**
Ahmed AJIL, University of Lausanne
- 12:00 – 12:45 **Swiss public opinion on extremism and terrorism based on data of the annual «Security» survey**
Thomas FERST, ETH Zurich
- 12:45 – 14:00 *Lunch break*

PART II: RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

- 14:00 – 14:45 **An overview of jihadi terrorism and radicalization in Switzerland**
Fabien MERZ, ETH Zurich
- 14:45 – 15:30 **Understanding (re-)conversion to Salafi Islam in Switzerland: an integrative approach**
Amir SHEIKHZADEGAN, University of Fribourg
- 15:30 – 15:45 *Coffee break*
- 15:45 – 16:30 **Women with men's hearts: women, jihad and the (non)use of violence**
Géraldine CASUTT, University of Fribourg
- 16:30 – 17:00 Final discussion and wrap-up
- 18:15 – 20:15 Public symposium (auditorium 3115)
Detailed information soon:
www.unifr.ch/sopa/news-and-events/agenda/

PART I: POLITICAL EXTREMISM AND PUBLIC OPINIONS

Gary LAFREE ♦ University of Maryland

KEYNOTE SPEECH: CORRELATES OF VIOLENT POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES

While research on terrorism has grown rapidly in recent years, few studies have applied criminological theories to the analysis of individual-level political extremism. Instead, research on radicalization has drawn primarily from political science and psychology and has overwhelmingly focused on violent extremists, leaving little variation in the dependent variable. Using a newly available dataset, we test whether a set of variables derived from prominent criminological theories are helpful in distinguishing between non-violent and violent extremists. Results show that variables related to social control (lack of stable employment), social learning (radical peers), psychological perspectives (history of mental illness), and prior criminal record all have significant effects on participation in violent political extremism and are robust across multiple techniques for imputing missing data. At the same time, other common indicators of social control (e.g., education, marital status) and social learning perspectives (e.g., radical family members) were not significant in the multivariate models. We argue that terrorism research would benefit from including criminology insights and by considering political radicalization as a dynamic, evolving process, much as life-course criminology treats more common forms of crime.

Gary LaFree is Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland. His research is on the causes and consequences of violent crime and terrorism. His most recent books are *Putting Terrorism in Context* (with Laura Dugan and Erin Miller) and *Countering Terrorism* (with Martha Crenshaw). Email: glafree@umd.edu

Ahmed AJIL ♦ University of Lausanne

*PHD PROJECT PRESENTATION: THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE STRAIN AND
POLITICAL GRIEVANCE IN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE*

Political grievance, resulting from the frustration of many young men with the conflicts in the Arab Mashreq and the suffering they cause among the civilian population, can lead to the experience of collective strain. While most individuals experiencing strain will adopt non-violent coping, a small minority will engage in acts of politically motivated violence (PMV). Research investigating the connection between collective strain and PMV from a bottom-up perspective is rare. The proposed study, using a qualitative approach and drawing on knowledge and expertise developed in criminology and political science, aims to gain insights into young men's understandings of their engagement in PMV. Thereby, it has the potential to tap into hitherto unexplored aspects of the issue and inform fruitful, prevention-oriented policymaking.

Ahmed Ajil has studied International Relations at the University of Geneva and holds a Master of Arts in Applied Security Strategy from the University of Exeter (UK) and a Master of Law in Criminology and Security from the University of Lausanne. His research interests are international security and migration, crime prevention, subjective security and politically motivated violence. He's a Doc.CH fellow of the Swiss National Research Fund from 2018-2021 for his dissertation on the role of collective strain in politically motivated violence. He is supervised by Manon Jendly at the University of Lausanne and co-directed by Aurélie Campana at the University of Laval in Québec, Canada. Email: ahmed.ajil@unil.ch

Thomas FERST ♦ ETH Zurich

SWISS PUBLIC OPINION ON EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM BASED ON DATA OF THE ANNUAL «SECURITY» SURVEY

The annual «Security» survey, jointly conducted by the Military Academy (MILAC) at ETH Zurich and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich, serves to determine trends in the formation of opinion on foreign, security and defense policy in Switzerland. Since 1999, Swiss people from the three language regions (German-speaking, French-speaking as well as the Italian-speaking region of Ticino) were interviewed annually by telephone. There are core questions that are annually or at irregular intervals included, such as questions about the general sense of security, trust in institutions, or questions about current issues of security policy. In addition, questions about actual topics were included only once or irregularly. After 09/11, for example, special attention has been given to safeguard internal security such as combatting extremism and terrorism, as well as to the relation between freedom and security.

I will present results on left- and right-wing extremism and terrorism, and different forms of sense of security (in general, in public areas, fear of crime). Furthermore, I will present results on the relation between freedom and security in general, and with a special focus on combatting terrorism. Based on the model of vulnerability following thesis are formulated and tested:

- Vulnerable people (women, elderly people, low income, low education, political right) are likely to feel more unsafe in general, in public areas and have higher fear of crime.
- For vulnerable people, security is more important than freedom.
- Therefore, vulnerable people tend to support combatting left- and right-wing extremism and terrorism more intensively.

Since 2016, combatting terrorism has a high priority by respondents. Therefore, in 2018, we asked six questions about views on terrorism. As a sneak preview, those results will be presented as well.

Thomas Ferst is a research project manager of the annual «Security» survey at the Department of Military Sociology at the Swiss Military Academy (MILAC) at ETH Zurich. He holds a Master (lic. phil.) in political science from University of Zurich and a Master of Advanced Studies in Criminology (LL.M.) from University of Berne.

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PART II: RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

Fabian MERZ ♦ ETH Zurich

*AN OVERVIEW OF JIHADI TERRORISM AND RADICALIZATION IN
SWITZERLAND*

Historically speaking, Switzerland has remained relatively unscathed by jihadi terrorism. This also remained true in the decade after 9/11 that saw numerous attacks, as well as serious issues related to jihadi radicalization, throughout Europe. A number of reasons seem to have helped to insulate Switzerland from those dynamics during this period. However, Switzerland has not proved to be immune to the newest global wave of jihadi terrorism and radicalization that has accompanied the rise of the “Islamic State” (IS) from 2013 onwards. Indeed, even though Switzerland has not been directly attacked so far, the phenomenon of jihadist radicalization spreading throughout Europe has also affected Switzerland. This is not only exemplified by the number of individuals that have left Switzerland to join jihadi groups abroad, but also by the increasing numbers of Swiss residents that are considered to harbor sympathies for jihadi ideology. At first glance, these numbers might appear unimpressive compared to other European countries. For a country the size of Switzerland, which has long been used to exceptionally low levels of radicalization until 2013, these figures must, however, be considered significant. Switzerland has, therefore, found itself confronted with a new security environment from 2013 onwards. But why has Switzerland remained unscathed by jihadi terrorism and the phenomenon of radicalization for so long and what has caused this to shift from 2013 onwards? How have the Swiss authorities and Swiss society reacted to these new circumstances and how might the situation evolve in Switzerland after the downfall of the “IS-caliphate”?

Fabien Merz is a researcher at the Center for Security Studies of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland. His areas of research include Swiss and European foreign and security policy, as well as European internal security, with a particular focus on counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism. Email: fabien.merz@sipo.gess.ethz.ch

Amir SHEIKHZADEGAN ♦ University of Fribourg

UNDERSTANDING (RE-)CONVERSION TO SALAFI ISLAM IN SWITZERLAND: AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

Salafis are characterized by an extremist view of Islam based on a strict emulation of the practices of the Prophet of Islam and of “the pious predecessors” (al-salaf al-salih). However, in practice they show major differences regarding the way they live up to this view of Islam. Wagemakers (2014) has identified three main Salafi groups with each having its own subtypes: Purists/quietist Salafis include the aloofists, the loyalists and the propagandists. Political Salafis engage either in parliamentary or in extra-parliamentary politics. And Jihadists are either revolutionaries or globalists.

Against this conceptual background, this study delivers a comparative analysis of the life conditions that lead to, or catalyze, the “spiritual transformation” (Paloutzian, 2005) of new (convert) and born-again (reconvert) Salafi Muslims in Switzerland that engage in extra-parliamentary politics.

As for the methodology, the study combines the following approaches (see also Jindra 2014):

a) Narrative-autobiographical interview in order to analyze individual life stories of the individuals who have gone through a process of spiritual transformation. Thereby the study focuses on the method of “reconstruction of narrative identity” (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2004) to attain a more systematic and profound insight into the identity transformation of the interviewees.

b) Egocentric network maps in order to analyze the social networks relevant to the transformation process. Thereby the life-histories of the interviewees are used to reconstruct the changes in the networks.

As conversion accounts usually bear traces of the “conversion scripts” (Riesebrodt 2007) of the respective religious tradition, the study also examines if and to what degree the narratives reveal such an impact.

Regarding the data, four selected cases (two converts and two reconvert) who are actively engaged in a Salafi association in Switzerland will be presented and discussed.

Amir Sheikhzadegan is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Fribourg. His fields of interest include Islamic radicalism, Muslims’ civic engagement, Muslim spiritual care, conversion to Islam and Muslims’ identity work.

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Is a woman a “jihadist” like any other, or should we consider the female jihadist commitment as a specific aspect of the global phenomenon? We may know jihadism is not only a men’s business, as we can find women who are as convinced as men by jihadist theses, but according to the complementarity of the sexes – a key concept in jihadism – women do not perform jihad the same way the men do. In my talk, I will focus on a fundamental difference between women and men who engaged in jihadism, especially in the context of *Daesh*: the right to perform violence in an offensive manner. As the use of violence in a war’s context is exclusively a male’s duty according to the jihadist ideology, women could also be violent but only in a perspective of defense: when the jihadist organization experiments troubles, we will see that women may use violence differently, and that the female violence in a jihadist context always depends on specific strategic needs. Even if jihadist women living under *Daesh* weren’t allowed to perform violence in the way the men did, some of them were longing for this right and wanted to engage in battles like men, although they didn’t claim their rights to be treated as equals. The main hypothesis of my talk will consider the distinct functions of female jihadist violence according to the geographical spaces where it occurs: a terrorist attack performed by a woman in Europa or a suicide attack carried by a woman in Syria, would neither have the same meaning nor function – for a jihadist audience as for anyone else – even if *Daesh* takes credit for both of them. As European women are still often regarded as victims rather than actresses when they go along the jihad’s path, we might also question the function of violence in order to deconstruct this bias: if women had the same right to access violence as men, would the European female commitment in jihadism still be regarded as a kind of anomaly, or would it be better “understandable”? Men left for jihad to become active fighters, but women left in order to become wives and mothers: women endorsed roles regarded as “passive” in a context of war, and in this way, their reasons for jihadist enrolment could be less apparent than for men, therefore valued as less intense.

The question of women accessing violence in a jihadist context is crucial, not only for a better understanding of the jihadi phenomenon itself, but also to raise awareness about new types of threats especially in European context.

Geraldine Casutt is a PhD student in sociology of religions at the University of Fribourg and the EHESS (Paris): she works under the supervision of Prof. Farhad Khosrokhavar and Prof. Oliver Krüger. Since 2013, she’s studying the phenomenon of contemporary jihadism in a gender perspective with a focus on the French context.

Parallel to her academic research, she's working for a prevention's programme in Geneva ("Gardez le Lien") where she's in charge of analyzing the cases related to violent religious extremism. She is regularly mandated by the «Centre Suisse Islam et Société» (University of Fribourg) and the «Institut d'études de l'Islam et des sociétés du monde musulman» (EHESS-Paris) to offer trainings about jihadi radicalization to various professional audiences. Email: geraldine.casutt@unifr.ch

Aim

This workshop aims at bringing together researchers from different backgrounds such as in sociology, law, history, social anthropology, and religious studies. The workshop focuses on extremism in a broad sense, covering left- and right-wing or religious groups. It asks what causes radicalisation and what its impact on society is.

PARTICIPATION

The format is a workshop. Invited researchers present their work (15 minutes), followed by questions and discussion (30 minutes).

The language of the workshop is English.

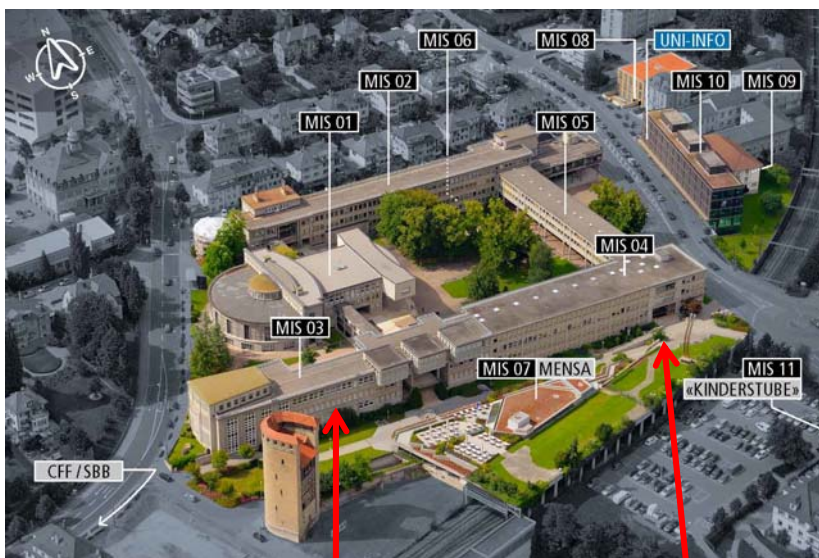
Guests are welcome! Please contact: silvia.staubli@unifr.ch

ORGANIZATION

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VENUE

University of Fribourg
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Auditorium 3115

Entrance to room 4112