

# **YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH ANTI-ISLAM(IST) AND EXTREME RIGHT MILIEUS: COUNTRY LEVEL REPORT FRANCE**

**Youth involved in, or close  
to, Corsican right-wing  
nationalist movements**



**LIZA TERRAZZONI**



## **DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality**

### **Young people's trajectories through anti-Islam(ist) and extreme right milieus: Country level report**

**France**

**Youth involved in, or close to, Corsican right-wing  
nationalist movements**


**Liza Terrazzoni EHES**

*This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 725349.*



*This publication reflects only the views of the author(s); the European Commission and Research Executive Agency are not responsible for any information it contains*

---



---

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Setting the scene .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Historical context .....	7
2.2 Contemporary context.....	8
2.3 Locating the youth involved in or close to Corsican right-wing nationalist movements.....	9
<b>3. Field Research.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Data collection .....	10
3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations .....	11
3.2.1. Prison .....	13
3.2.2. Small groups, organisations .....	13
3.2.3. Gender dynamics .....	13
3.3 Ethical practice.....	14
3.4 Data analysis .....	15
3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set .....	15
<b>4. Key Findings .....</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 From attacks against North Africans to the dream of living among Whites: Bobby, the archetype of the studied milieu .....	15
4.1.1. 'Normal Deviants' .....	17
4.2 The interpretive framework of the world predominant in the milieu .....	18
4.2.1 Christian identity versus a conquering Islam .....	20
4.2.2. Migrant (Muslim) privilege versus us, the disadvantaged .....	21
4.2.3. Homogeneity versus multiculturalism .....	21
4.2.4. Political disappointment.....	22
4.3. Paths of radicalisation and non-radicalisation .....	23
4.3.1. Labelling and stigmatisation.....	23
4.3.2. Perception of injustices and feelings of social exclusion.....	26
4.3.3. Ideological and behavioural radicalisation as a response to shocking experiences.....	29
4.3.4. Sociability.....	30
4.3.5. Being socialised to violence.....	33
4.3.6. A favourable political context.....	34
<b>5. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>6. References.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>7. Appendices.....</b>	<b>40</b>
Appendix 7.1: Socio-demographic data of respondents .....	40

## Executive Summary:

The milieu in question concerns youth involved in, or close to, Corsican right-wing nationalist movements. Since the 1970s, Corsica has been home to autonomist and separatist movements. Violence, which is often armed and committed in the name of a political ideology, is very present in the region. Since the 1950s, the region has been the site of considerable immigration from North Africa. The issue of the cultural integration of foreigners (especially Muslim) into the Corsican population (historically associated with Christianity) is a central question. In Corsica, like in France, one can observe the presence of different types of anti-Muslim discourses or actions. This study addresses three contentions. First, that hostility towards Islam is rising in Europe and has become the most powerful and tolerated racism. Second, and at the same time, an anti-Islamist movement is emerging in different European countries, loosely composed of various parties, organisations and individuals who are convinced that an Islamic takeover is unfolding in the West. The local unrest in Corsica is one such example. Thirdly, Corsica serves as a kind of laboratory since all forms of nationalism contain oppressive potential capable of leading to racism and the exclusion of others on the basis of their identity. The milieu studied is composed of youth who are dissidents of the nationalist branch, which holds a majority in the Corsican Assembly. The milieu investigated (with a total of 17 interview conducted) consists of young people of this persuasion located in two social spaces: prison; and small groups with anti-migrant positions. The ideas circulating in the milieu are driven by three ideological affinities: local nationalism; the French extreme-right; and very conservative European movements. This milieu is comprised of 'normal' young people. Far from the image of anti-social youth who are failing at school and poorly-educated or ignorant, those encountered belong to the middle classes insofar as what characterises them is the aspiration for social mobility. They make use of a binary interpretive framework of the world. The adherence, more or less completely, to it, and subsequently to ideological and behavioural radicalisation, is a process resulting from a division in which several elements play a crucial role: disagreement concerning the way in which the notion of a 'people' is defined by local nationalism; experience of political disappointment; resonance between the interpretive framework present in the milieu and biographical experiences (stigmatisation, injustice, oppression, exclusion, relegation); and global ideological conditions. This study shows that it is necessary to consider the implications of labelling for the life trajectories of individuals. Yet it is also important to note that the dissonance between the way interviewees perceive themselves and the label that society places on them is a major factor in the commitment to a radical path, just as it can be a factor in the commitment to a non-radical path. Being labelled deviant due to one's professed political ideas is indeed a turning point. Either young people endorse this label and commit themselves to radical paths, or they seek to detach themselves from it and this is what pushes them toward non-radical paths or out of radicalisation. Furthermore, in the milieu, it is the ability to question the binary interpretive framework of the world and to acknowledge its complexity which hinders the commitment to radical paths. However, the process by which interviewees cross the lines of ideological radicalisation, which manifests itself in intense verbal violence, behavioural radicalisation and physical violence, occurs collectively. It is ultimately quite difficult to categorise the milieu under study as extreme-right, ultra-right, radical right or anti-Muslim. While the extreme-right is traditionally defined as an anti-democratic political ideology which often promotes biological racism and anti-Semitism, no interviewee explicitly endorses this stance and all interviewees have a hard time accepting the association with totalitarian ideologies.

## 1. Introduction

The milieu in question concerns youth involved in, or close to, Corsican right-wing nationalist movements in the region of Corsica.

Corsica is a Mediterranean island and constitutes one of the 18 regions of France. Since the 1970s, it has been home to autonomist movements, fighting for autonomous political, economic and cultural infrastructure in the region, as well as separatist movements, aiming to make Corsica an independent nation. These movements come in the form of institutions (political parties) or underground groups such as the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC). The FLNC, created in 1976, is a paramilitary organisation that uses violence as a means of protest for independence and has been responsible for hundreds of attacks and assassinations. Violence, which is often armed and committed in the name of a political ideology, is very present in the region.

Nationalists, moderates and radicals, have all centred their arguments around the idea of the Corsican people and of the cultural minority. Corsican nationalism can thus be characterised as identitarian and militaristic (Terrazzoni, 2019). Since 1982, nationalist parties (autonomists and separatists) have occupied at least 12% of the seats in the Corsican Assembly. In 2015, a nationalist coalition gained a majority. Originating in the violent and armed separatist struggle, this coalition comprises two political orientations—moderate (the majority, fighting for autonomy) and radical (calling for independence).

Since the 1950s, the region has been the site of considerable immigration from North Africa, particularly from Morocco. Today, the island contains 320,000 inhabitants and 9.1% of the population has foreign nationality, of which 45% are Algerian, Tunisian, or Moroccan<sup>1</sup>. It has the highest proportion of foreigners in France after the Ile-de-France region, while the share of individuals of North African nationality within the foreign population is high compared to others regions. The issue of migration (international and interregional flows) sits at the heart of the nationalist debate: are foreigners (this term applies to anyone considered non-Corsican, such as French people or Moroccans) part of the ‘Corsican people’? This question manifests itself in the notion of ‘common destiny’, according to which Corsican identity is open to anyone who adopts Corsican values, regardless of his or her background. However, nationalists are divided on this idea, in particular because from a historical perspective, Corsican nationalism can be described as a type of cultural nationalism (Terrazzoni, 2019). Thus given the scale of immigration in Corsica and the substantial number of people of North African descent, the issue of the cultural integration of foreigners (especially Muslims) into the Corsican population (historically associated with Christianity) is a central question within the current political sphere. This issue is all the more important considering that migratory flows are regulated at the national level and that movements for autonomy, like separatist movements, are demanding the expansion of administrative powers, including the ability to regulate population flows at the local level.

In Corsica, just as at the national level, one can observe the presence of different types of discourses, actions, events and controversies connected to the presence of Muslims, in which anti-Muslim characteristics can be identified. This essentially concerns an array of discourses and practices that openly display opposition to the Islamisation of society and more generally of Western European societies, as well as hostility toward Muslims living in the territory. These discourses are transmitted by community, political and social actors and, thus, constitute anti-Muslim messages.

The 25th report of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (La Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme) on the fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, which records racist acts, was published in 2016. It emphasises that, in the very tense climate following the

---

<sup>1</sup> INSEE data (Institut National de la Statistiques et des Études Économiques).

Charlie-Hebdo attack (Paris, January 2015) and the Bataclan attack (Paris, November 2015), anti-Muslim acts have risen in a 'particularly alarming' way in France (CNDCH, 2016: 457). When adjusted for regional population, however, these accounts place Corsica first in terms of such acts, with an average of 1 act for every 18,000 inhabitants. Corsica is followed by the Champagne-Ardenne region with 1 act for every 87,000 inhabitants, while the national average is 1 act for every 142,000 people. Corsica is therefore one of the regions where violence against Muslims is, statistically speaking, the most visible.

In the last three years, and especially in 2015 (the year of the Paris attacks), numerous events, which can be characterised as anti-Muslim, took place on the island. In June 2015, a primary school teacher had proposed that schoolchildren sing *Imagine* by John Lennon in English, Spanish, and Arabic for the school fair. Multiple parents refused to let their children sing in Arabic and threatened the teachers and as a consequence, the fair was cancelled. The following day, someone spray-painted 'Arabi fora' and 'lingua corsa' in front of the school ('Arabs out' and 'Corsican language'). In September of the same year, 30 young men rallied in front of the Ajaccio City Hall against the mayor's decision to lend a field to the Muslim community for the Eid holiday. They denounced the Islamisation of Corsica and insisted that the island was and should remain Christian. The following December, in a predominantly North African neighbourhood of Ajaccio, some firefighters were violently attacked by a dozen very young individuals, all of whom appeared to be of North African descent. The following day, hundreds of people assembled in front of the police precinct to express their support for the firefighters. Two to three hundred of them (according to sources) headed toward the neighbourhood named Jardins de l'Empereur. Once there, several people in the crowd yelled 'This is our land!' and 'Arabs out!', while others shouted at inhabitants, threw rocks at them, vandalised the lobbies of buildings and, in certain cases, tried to enter apartments. That same evening, a Muslim prayer hall was vandalised. These events, as well as the results of the report, drove a number of media outlets to characterise Corsica as 'the most Islamophobic region of France', or the leading region of Islamophobic acts in France<sup>2</sup>. Several violent actions against North African immigrants had already made the news in the early 2000s. Since the 2000s, Corsica has been regularly presented in the French and foreign media as racist and one of the more widespread stereotypes about Corsicans is that they are racist.

Additionally, since the mid-2000s, Corsica has seen the formation of small groups that are active on the question of the Islamisation of Europe and defend the idea of a Christian Europe and in particular a Christian Corsica. The network has decreased in size, but is active in the public sphere (protests), political sphere (representatives in the Corsican Assembly) and online (Facebook).

In this context, the appeals to anti-Muslim radicalisation are numerous and varied and are communicated by a range of actors. Thus the Corsican situation represents a laboratory where one can find mechanisms of resistance to, and participation in, anti-Muslim radicalisation in France and more broadly in Europe. I do not argue here that Corsica is more racist than other regions or more characterised by a negative sentiment about Islam. Corsica represents here, rather, a case where the response of young people to such appeals can be observed in a local context characterised by the presence of small groups acting against Islamisation alongside armed violence in the name of political nationalism and, in a more general sense, the defence of Corsican identity. This is a local context which is itself indicative of the anti-Islam climate that has characterised France in recent years.

Thus, this research addresses three contentions. First, that hostility regarding Islam and Muslims is rising in Europe and, as Hafez (2014) argues, Islamophobia has become the most powerful new form of racism, becoming indeed a sort of tolerated racism. Second, at the same time, an anti-Islamist or 'anti-jihadist'

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: <https://www.lesinrocks.com/2016/08/news/corse-premiere-actes-islamophobes-fr/>  
[https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2016/08/15/la-corse-en-tete-des-actes-anti-musulmans-en-france\\_4982934\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2016/08/15/la-corse-en-tete-des-actes-anti-musulmans-en-france_4982934_4355770.html)



movement is emerging in different European countries, loosely composed of various parties, organisations and individuals who are convinced that an Islamic takeover is unfolding in the West (Lee, 2015: 248). The local unrest in Corsica is one such example. Third, Corsica serves as a kind of laboratory since, according to the hypotheses of several researchers (Balibar, 1997; Smith, 1993), all forms of nationalism contain 'oppressive potential' (Balibar, 1997: 66) capable of leading to racism and the exclusion of others on the basis of their identity. Nationalism is essentially built around the idea of 'a people', an ambivalent concept defined by both political and identity-based criteria. When 'a people' is defined as an entity sharing cultural and religious characteristics, nationalism has the potential for domination and exclusion of those who do not share the same identity. This contention is all the more relevant given that Corsica identifies as Christian and is under the protection of the Virgin Mary, as evidenced by its 'anthem', 'Dio via Salvi Regina' (God save you, Queen<sup>3</sup>).

Therefore, the milieu of this study was identified by exploring the three aforementioned contentions (deduction) and by conducting observation (induction).

The field research was conducted along two main lines. First, I investigated several small groups with anti-migrant positions and pursuing two main aims: the fight against Islamisation; and the defence of the 'Corsican people' (see section 2.3). Second, I conducted interviews with young inmates in a Corsican prison sensitive to nationalist ideas (militants in nationalist political groups or only sympathisers), imprisoned for acts of violence and identified by prison staff as sensitive to anti-Muslim speeches. Among the young people I met in these two social spaces, some participated in the demonstrations organised in 2015 in a district of Ajaccio. Others have been convicted of racist violence against individuals of North African immigrant background for acts committed several years earlier. Others have never expressed hostility towards immigrants or Muslims.

In this sense, my milieu is not a well-defined political group but rather a network composed of interconnected young people. This milieu is thus one composed of youth who are involved in, or close to, right-wing Corsican nationalist movements in the Corsican region. These young people are dissidents of the Corsican nationalist movement, which holds a majority in the Corsican Assembly and works for the autonomy, and/or independence of the island. The youth finds this nationalist discourse too consensual and not aggressive enough, especially in regard to the idea of 'common destiny' and the integration of foreigners, particularly Muslims, into the Corsican population.

That means that these young people have left the movement or are in the process of leaving it. Formerly affiliated with the most right-leaning nationalists, these young people are today at the margins of the political spectrum and are either in the minority or unrepresented in the Corsican Assembly. They now try to structure themselves differently, by creating small movements or units that very clearly express support for a conservative right-wing ideology. Accordingly, these young people are 'fed up with moderate nationalism'. They all defend Corsican identity, as well as broader European and Christian identities, criticise the hosting of migrants, denounce high levels of migration, and support populist and/or conservative movements that are flourishing across Europe and the world (Salvini, Orban, Dutertre, Bolsonaro, Trump). They are interconnected and united around key figures, who are older, and constitute ideological reference points but they are not necessarily engaged or close to the same small groups. They may have each taken a different way.

This milieu corresponds to the two main objectives of DARE: in the identified milieu, one finds recruiters encouraging violence and some militants with violent extremist ideologies. It is also a context where young people encounter radicalisation messages.

---

<sup>3</sup> Here the queen, Regina, is the Virgin Mary.

## 2. Setting the scene

### 2.1 Historical context

Although French fascism has existed since 1918, it has since taken the form of a ‘archipelago of small groups’ (Lebourg, 2019: 25). After 1945, certain neo-fascist units, inspired by the ‘conservative German revolution of the interwar period and by European fascism’ (Kaufmann, 2016: 5), were formed, such as Occident, created in 1964 (antidemocratic, racist, violent and against the left). After disbanding in 1968, it gave way to New Order (ON) in 1969, which became a key figure in the radical and moderate extreme-right landscape of France (Lebourg, Preda and Beauregard, 2014). Hostile to the bourgeoisie, ON defended Occident and was already outraged by intercultural mixing (Kauffmann, 2016). In 1971, it assembled 2,300 members (Kauffmann, 2016: 6), mostly young people and/or students living in urban areas (Camus, 1996). The Defence Group Union, formerly known as the Right Group Union (Groupe Union Droit or GUD in French), a violently racist student union stemming from Occident and New Order, was formed in 1968 (and split in 2017). Up until the 1990s, the DGU articulated anti-Semitic positions before defending an anti-Muslim discourse. The Social Bastion (Bastion social), one of the main groups active today, is the offspring of the GUD. New Order was conversely the predecessor of the National Front, the primary extreme-right political party created in 1972 (Camus, 1996). Let us also note the emergence of the New right, in 1969, which defends the right to be different and praising difference. Notably championed by Alain de Benoist, this movement is racist (in the biological sense), opposes liberalism and defends both the Indo-European culture and, on a religious level, paganism.

These groups were born in a postcolonial climate and a general hostility toward ‘North Africans’ who arrived in the 1970s (Liauzu, 1999; Gastaut, 1993). France was a colonial power in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco before becoming a host country of immigrants arriving from these countries. In 1954, 12% of the foreign population in France came from these countries, then 23.5% in 1958, 31.4% in 2005 and 26.6% at the time of the last census in 2016<sup>4</sup>.

The issue of North African immigration became a topic of political and public debate. The Fontanet memorandum of 16 October 1972 strengthened the legislative framework on immigration during a time in which a ‘racist upsurge’ characterised the 1970s (Gastaut, 1993). The environment became so tense that in 1973 the Algerian government under Boumediene decided to suspend emigration to France. In 1992, the Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples (MRAP) published a list of 250 foreigners murdered since 1981. In 1983, the newspaper *l’Unité* published an inventory of racist crimes committed between 1973 and 1983 and the March for Equality and Against Racism was held. 1983 is also the year where the National Front (Front National or FN in French) emerged on the political scene<sup>5</sup> (Charlot, 1986; Mayer, Perrineau, 1996).

The FN has gradually evolved to become the moderate face of the New Order faction. During the presidential elections of 1974, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the future leader of the party, only received 8% of the vote. In 1983, he made his breakthrough in Dreux where he received 10% of votes for the district election. In 1986, 35 deputies (out of a total of 577) joined the National Assembly. In 1988, Le Pen received 14.4%

---

<sup>4</sup> INSEE data.

<sup>5</sup> Since 1972, the National Front has been proclaiming itself to be a ‘social, popular, national’ right, denouncing ‘affairism’ and ‘the decline of power’, envisaging the reduction of public service and positioning itself as a defender of small business. The party ‘opposes wild immigration only to the extent that it endangers the health of the French’ and stands against integrated Europe and for a Europe of homelands (Camus, 1996:20). In January 2018, the FN renamed itself the Rassemblement National (RN). Among the 144 proposals in its programme, there are two consecutive proposals: (1) ‘regain borders that protect and end uncontrolled immigration’ and (2) eradicate terrorism and break up Islamist fundamentalist networks’.



of the vote in the presidential election. In 1995, he won three new cities. For the first time in 2002, he made the second primary of the presidential election, which occurred again in 2017. In 2014, the FN won 11 cities and came first in the European elections (24.86%) and in 2015 it won the highest proportion of votes in the regional elections (27.73%). Even if the party is not explicitly anti-Muslim, but rather anti-migrant, it clearly constitutes a space where hostility towards Islam or Muslims, on behalf of the French nation and identity, is expressed.

Concerning the production of negative representations of North African immigration and of Islam, let us not forget the consequences of a long history, from the Reconquista (722-1492), to colonisation and to the Franco-Algerian conflict (Liauzu, 1989, 1996, 2000). The case of the 'Charles Martel club' is such an example<sup>6</sup>. This small group claimed responsibility for the attack on the Algerian consulate in Marseilles in 1973 and committed a number of attacks and assassinations targeting Algerian nationals, symbols of the Algerian government, and public figures involved in Franco-Algerian relations or active in the Arab world<sup>7</sup>. Current groups also model themselves on this history. In 2012, 70 militants of Generation Identity (Génération Identitaire, created in 2012) occupied the roof of the Poitiers mosque to denounce a growing 'Islamisation' of France, using a banner on which '732, Generation Identity' was written (Cutaia, 2013).

## 2.2 Contemporary context

It is in this context that an antipathy toward Islam and Muslims, has developed in France at various levels (Corcuff, 2015), just as in other European countries (Hafez, 2014). This Islamophobia has been strengthened by attacks committed in France by political groups originating in Muslim countries and/or in the name of Islam, since the 1980s.

Following the 'immigration problem', brought into politics by the FN since the 1980s, one can witness the public construction of a 'Muslim problem'. The decade 2000-2010 was characterised by an ideological and politically rightward shift transcending traditional political divides, partly centred on immigration from Muslim countries and on Islam (Corcuff, 2015). Hajjat and Mohammed (2013) effectively demonstrate the role of French political, media, and intellectual elites in the fabrication of this 'Muslim problem'.

In 2016, Nicolas Sarkozy, former French president (2007-2012, republican right) who was again running for office, described his platform: 'the Republic does not have a problem with religions, but rather has a problem with one particular religion that has not made the necessary and unavoidable effort to integrate', pointing the finger at Islam. In 2017, Manuel Valls, the former Prime Minister of the socialist administration of François Hollande from 2014-2016, spoke of a 'problem' between France on one hand and Islam and Muslims on the other. It is also important to note the recent conviction of Eric Zemmour, journalist and essayist. During the Convention of the Right, a rally of the extreme-right organised by the National Front, he delivered an Islamophobic and xenophobic speech broadcast on a politically

<sup>6</sup> The battle of Poitiers took place in 732. It pitted the Frankish Kingdom, led by Charles Martel, against the Duchy of Aquitaine and the Umayyad Caliphate. The battle led to the victory of the Franks and Aquitanes. The episode is part of the founding myth of the West and Europe and a marker of resistance against the Arab and especially Muslim invader (Liauzu, 1992). The Battle of Poitiers is a key date in the history of France because it symbolises the end of the Muslim offensive. Schoolchildren learn very early on that Charles Martel was the one who 'halted the Arabs in Poitiers in 732'.

<sup>7</sup> The 'Club Charles Martel' is credited, among other things, with the following acts: 2 March 1975, double bomb attack against the offices of Air Algérie, in Lyon and Toulouse; 4 May 1978, the group claims the assassination of Henri Curiel, communist and anti-colonialist militant; 9 August 1983, bomb attack against the Air Algérie agency in Marseille. This summary list illustrates the type of actors targeted by the group.

unaffiliated national news channel<sup>8</sup>. Such examples illustrate the extent to which anti-Muslim discourses are not limited to groups considered ‘extremist’ or ‘radical’.

In France, there is no organised anti-Muslim movement that assembles thousands of militants in the style of Pegida. Instead, anti-Islam views are scattered among political groups that can be characterised as ‘ultra-right’.

Lebourg (2019) identifies two types of movements: fascist and identity-based. The first claims to be fascist and denounces an ‘orientalisation of the West’ carried out particularly by Zionist lobbying. This movement is spread by notable figures such as the essayist Alain Soral or the extreme-right militant Yvan Benedetti (part of the group The French Work, then the French Nationalist Party) (Œuvre Française puis Parti Nationaliste Français). The GUD embodied this movement until the 2000s, when it began to give way to the second movement. This second branch is composed of identity proponents focused on the presence of Muslim immigrants, which they consider a sign of the Muslim ‘Reconquista’ of Europeans. Inspired by the author Guillaume Faye, the intellectual Alain de Benoist, and currently spread by Youtubers, like Daniel Conversano, this movement is embodied by groups like Identitarian Bloc or Secular Retaliation who organised the International Convention against Islamisation in Paris in December 2010. This ultra-right has split into various factions, which often fall apart. It is estimated that, from the late 1980s to today, 2,500 people have joined the extreme, radical, and ultra-right (Lebourg, 2019: 25).

Among the multitude of groups that represent the ultra-right today, let us look at two. The Social Bastion (founded in 2017, disbanded in 2019) arose from the GUD. Inspired by the Italian movement CasaPound, it defended the Great Replacement theory and the idea of an endangered European people, while also fighting against ultraliberal capitalism. Generation Identity was formed in 2012 as the successor of Youth Identitarians, which at the time of its creation in 2002 was known as Identitarian Bloc. This group denounces the ‘modification of society via the intrusive and dissenting presence of Islam<sup>9</sup>’. The group is close to European movements (the Austrian FPÖ, Suisse UDC, Vlaams Belang, the Italian Northern League) and representatives of these parties are invited to the group’s national convention (Cutaia, 2013). The group occupied the Poitiers mosque, was on board the C-Star ship (involved in a Mediterranean patrol denouncing the landing of migrants) and occupied the Franco-Italian border in 2018 before storming the SOS Mediterranean headquarters.

In 2019, a group of deputies affiliated with the left created a commission to investigate misdemeanours and crimes in connection with ultra-right factions. Their report states that ‘the emergence of a new ultra-right terrorist temptation is of great concern and must be taken seriously’ (Rapport de la Commission d’enquête, 2019: 55) and adds that while those active in the ultra-right are spread across a multitude of different groups, a network of groups on a national level is taking shape.

### 2.3 Locating the youth involved in or close to Corsican right-wing nationalist movements

In Corsica, this context is apparent. Many actors, working in different spheres (political, non-profit, social), and belonging to different political orientations, express anti-Muslim viewpoints. Similarly, one can note the existence of small groups affiliated with the identity-based ultra-right, as defined by Lebourg.

<sup>8</sup> He evokes the Islamisation of society, compares Muslims to ‘colonizers’ and claims that ‘all our problems created by immigration are aggravated by Islam’, echoing the ideas of Renaud Camus, inventor of the theory of ‘great replacement’, speech delivered on September 28, broadcast live on LCI (tv).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.les-identitaires.com/en-mots-2/>

However, just as at the national scale, there are no organised ultra-right groups, but rather an ‘archipelago of small groups’ (Lebourg, 2019: 25) that have a hard time unifying themselves, despite multiple attempts to do so.

In terms of politics, a nationalist movement has a majority in the Corsican Assembly. Born of the violent and armed separatist struggle, this movement is comprised of two orientations, one moderate and one more radical. The latter asserts the Christian roots of Corsica, while also defending a ‘common destiny’ (communauté de destin) that integrates foreigners, notably Muslims. Some of these representatives, however, identify with viewpoints espoused by the identity movement described by Nicolas Lebourg and reject the idea of a ‘common destiny’. It is also important to note that the FN (now RN) is strong: during the first primary of the last presidential election (2017), the party won the vote (with 31% of votes in the major cities of Ajaccio and Bastia). Furthermore, over the last five years, small groups have formed, sometimes at the initiative of nationalist militants from the radical branch. They promote the defence of the Corsican people, the non-Islamisation of Corsica, and the strict regulation of immigration, while criticising capitalism and social inequalities (Corsica Patria Nostra; Leia Naziunale; Vigilenza Naziunale Corsa; Identita Corsa, Per a salvezza di u populu corsu). Their rhetoric draws on the local nationalist movement, the French extreme-right (FN, RN) and small ultra-right groups mentioned previously, such as Generation Identity. They are very active on Facebook as well as in the public sphere (distributing pamphlets, appearing at middle schools during certain events, for example). Concerning non-profits, it is noteworthy that one of the main parent organisations on the island is led by a chief exponent of anti-Muslim speech in Corsica who sits in the Corsican Assembly.

The young people that I studied share a connection with the two nationalist orientations represented by the two presidents of the Corsican Assembly, Gilles Siméoni (moderate orientation) and Jean-Guy Talamoni (radical orientation). Within the radical orientation, one finds two key figures, Denis Luciani (president of the parent association) and Thierry Biaggi (leader of the Leia Naziunale movement) who represent the most right-leaning segment and who were involved in the creation of certain aforementioned groups. Young people are largely influenced by the discourses of these three representatives of the radical stance (Talamoni, Luciani, Biaggi) while at the same time attempting to differentiate themselves from them. They try to form beliefs and a mode of action, drift between different small groups, at times joining them, and leave to form new ones, whilst simultaneously trying to unite.

I hypothesise that it is this context (events, the presence of social and political actors expressing anti-Muslim sentiment, etc.) that acts as recruiter to radicalisation, calls to active engagement or resistance. Thus, Corsica might be considered a milieu of radicalisation.

### 3. Field Research

#### 3.1 Data collection

Over the course of this study, I encountered four main methodological challenges connected to issues of identification, trust, dialogue, and the controversial nature of the question of Islamophobia in particular and racism more generally. These obstacles considerably restricted my access to the field and complicated the recording of interviews. I nonetheless conducted 17 recorded interviews, which I supplemented with observations of meetings and discussions and most importantly with the extensive collection of press and digital materials. I systematically followed the Facebook activity of four interviewees, recording the posts with the most interesting implications for the DARE project and noting the reactions of other internet users. Quite often, these individuals’ speech was less constrained on social networks than during interviews.

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length or brief description (as appropriate)	Average length
<b>Respondent memos</b>	17	n/a	
<b>Audio interviews</b>	17	1660 (27 HOURS)	103 minutes
<b>Field diary entries (total)</b>	32	n/a	n/a
<b>Facebook post</b>	Several hundred	Screen shot of Facebook posts	n/a

### 3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

Access to the field was limited by four main difficulties.

First, how does one identify ‘anti-Muslim’ individuals, considering that, in the current right-leaning political context in which Islamophobia has become normalised, this category is not always clear? Moreover, unlike studies of Islamist radicalisation, which are concerned with legal, institutional, social and media-oriented phenomena, the issues attended to in studies of anti-Islamist or extreme right milieus are harder to pin down. Islamophobia, for instance, does not appear in the nomenclature of criminal offences, it is subsumed among ‘racist offences’. Anti-Muslim speech is not always considered an indication of radical ideology and attracts less attention than Islamist speech. Arguably, anti-Muslim radicalism may even escape notice altogether due to the rise of Islamophobia in French society and more generally in European societies.

Secondly, how does one encourage interview subjects to articulate their violent ideas regarding Islam or the violent actions they might have committed, knowing that such acts constitute offences? For while Islamophobia may not be recognised as an offence, hate speech and racially-motivated violence are. This is also difficult as planned terrorist offences are required to be reported to the appropriate authorities. Thus, as part of our ethical procedures, in the process of seeking informed consent, this obligation on the part of the researcher is made clear to interviewees, who are consequently deterred from talking about such intentions.

Thirdly, how does one win the trust of interview subjects and create the conditions for dialogue given, both my visibility in the media as a researcher and the fact that my ideology opposes those of the interview subjects? I have researched and written on questions of racism in Corsica, I have described the connections between nationalism and mechanisms of exclusion in the Corsican context, and I have appeared publically several times to defend minority rights. My interview subjects, who are driven by conservative ideas, categorise me as part of the ‘narrow-minded’ left that they denounce.

Fourthly, while the presence of North African immigrants is generally very stigmatised (Terrazzoni, 2019), Islamist extremism and anti-Muslim racism were particularly controversial topics at the time of this study, which elicited strong emotions and highly-polarised opinions (Peretti-Ndiaye, 2015). The events of 2015, mentioned in the introduction, reveal just how extreme anti-Muslim sentiment can be. In particular, two major events occurred during the course of this study: in January 2018, a Muslim inmate detained in the prison where I had planned to carry out my research attacked two guards with a knife while yelling ‘Allahu

Akbar'. The following September, a young man of North African descent stabbed another young man on the street. In the aftermath, people spoke of 'Islamist acts' and 'stabbings', relying on the rhetoric used to describe a number of 'terrorist' acts.

These questions presented methodological obstacles which were exacerbated by the fact that the community I was trying to access was very tight-knit since the parties knew one another. In this context, I encountered difficulty recruiting interview subjects because they often refused to meet with me out of fear that their identity would not be kept anonymous. In addition, several young people that I had asked to participate in DARE, based on recommendations from existing acquaintances, alerted others about my presence. They presented me as doing an 'investigation' on the 'French fashosphere'<sup>10</sup> and discouraged their acquaintances from meeting with me. This rumour considerably impeded my access to the field, as many individuals refused my requests. I was able to identify three explanations for this research obstacle. (I) A portion of the youth was unfamiliar with the research process, thus had difficulty grasping the concept that their information would only be used for heuristic purposes. Many were also unable to distinguish between the role of a journalist, a police officer, and a researcher and the multiple meanings associated with the term 'investigation' only added to the confusion. Certain individuals had indeed experienced negative interactions with police or journalists, whom they accuse of being biased. (II) The terrain in question is characterised by a genuine fear of stigmatisation; the young people are worried about being labelled 'racists', 'fascists' or 'extremists' and try to avoid these types of negative categorisation. (III) Lastly, by contributing to research that aims to better understand radical environments, research subjects would essentially be acknowledging this radical potential and would run the risk of being labelled a 'traitor' who discusses what should be kept hidden; the violent ideology that they espouse, which could ultimately be punishable by law<sup>11</sup>.

For example, the first individual I made contact with invited me to a meeting with his group, which did not please the other members of the group. To avoid being disowned by his friends, this contact never invited me to join him again. Another individual did not allow me to attend meetings that he organised due to the refusal of his friend. Thus, although I was able to conduct several interviews, the young people very rarely allowed me to shadow them in their activities or participate in meetings and events. It is precisely for this reason that the ratio of interview to observation material is unbalanced.

Nevertheless, the fear of stigmatisation also had the opposite effect; several young people who were more familiar with the research process were enthusiastic about DARE. They considered their participation an opportunity to transform the negative social image that they suffered from, that of 'racists', 'fascists', 'Nazis' or members of the 'faschosphere'. Perceiving the research process as impartial, they were drawn by the possibility of having a platform defined by dialogue, not judgement.

It is important to note, however, that the ideas expressed by these young people and, in certain cases, the acts they committed or planned to commit, constitute offences. As a result, during interviews it seemed as if the subjects tried to adjust their views, in contrast to the more radical views they voice on social networks.

With this in mind, the access to the field was negotiated in the following ways.

---

<sup>10</sup> This term is used in France to designate ultra-right, or extreme-right groups, that are active on the Internet and in the media and which participate in the dissemination of racist views.

<sup>11</sup> Throughout history, many small groups, identified as inciting hatred and racial violence, have been monitored by the police as potentially carrying out public disorder, before being disbanded by the government.

### 3.2.1. Prison

It took several months to gain access to the prison. Authorisation from the Directorate of the Prison Administration (la Direction de l'Administration Pénitentiaire) was obtained quickly, especially since other members of the French team, working on a parallel case study of Islamist milieus, had conducted all its interviews in prison. However, the head of the Borgo prison, where I intended to conduct my research, was initially wary of permitting research due to some assaults that had taken place there. The prison staff had denounced a 'terrorist act committed by an inmate who had been born in Corsica and become a radical Islamist'. Immediately afterward, the small group *Leia Naziunale* protested in front of the prison to show its support for the guards. This event required a considerable amount of pacification within a penitentiary where the same interethnic tensions characterising the relationship between 'Corsicans' and 'North Africans' in Corsica were present (Terrazzoni, 2019). I negotiated access to the prison by presenting the DARE project in detail to the director and by emphasising that one of its primary objectives was to create opportunities for dialogue with youth engaged in violence of any kind. The majority of prisoners accepted the invitation to participate in the study thanks to the education director's backing. Supportive of the research, he served as an intermediary between the inmates and me, particularly by assuring them of the anonymity and the soundness of the process. Multiple interviews were conducted in the prison environment but of the 11 young people interviewed, only five were ultimately included in the data set for the DARE project. The other six, while occupying the same social space of the prison, were ultimately not really be part of the milieu under study. In addition to the interviews with young people, I spoke with the prison guards, the warden and the education director. Interviews with experts on issues of extreme-right and radical small groups in Corsica (for example, associations fighting against racism, the Human Rights League) were also conducted. This allowed me to understand the conditions in which small groups in Corsica emerge and act.

### 3.2.2. Small groups, organisations

The first stage of the research consisted of identifying the types of anti-Muslim messages that circulated as well as the actors that spread them (based on a review of social network and press materials). After identifying the small groups transmitting these messages, I determined if I had mutual acquaintances with members of these groups within the Corsican network of interrelations. I spent much time deliberating on how I should enter the field and present myself, in light of my social characteristics (40-year-old woman participating in the public debate around questions of immigration and racism). I opted for transparency: I decided to announce from the very beginning that as an individual, I did not share the political views of my subjects. As a researcher, however, it seemed necessary to try to understand how and why youth take action against immigration and the Islamisation of Corsica and Europe, rather than to relegate these young people to the political margins. I began by contacting the leader of an organisation, benefitting from a mutual acquaintance we had. Driven by the success of our initial interviews and the rapport that developed between us, I was subsequently able to contact other individuals by way of his recommendations.

I conducted all the field research and the interviews for this study. Since the mid-2000s, I have been working in Corsica where I have numerous contacts that I was able to draw on for this research. I am privileged to have a positive reputation due to the fact that none of the participants in any of the studies I have conducted have ever had their anonymity compromised.

### 3.2.3. Gender dynamics

Gender relations undoubtedly tempered the symbolic violence inherent in the researcher/research subject relationship (Bourdieu, 1993), while producing asymmetrical dynamics. At the prison, I only conducted research in the male wing, since the female ward was sparsely populated (less than a dozen



inmates) and no female detainee matched the DARE project's desired profile. Within small political groups, men are over-represented. Women are certainly present, but in support roles, and thus remain practically invisible to the researcher. The milieu under study consists of male social networks - at least according to the subjects who were interviewed. In this milieu, the figures of reference, as well as the individuals occupying these spaces, are mostly men. During the study, women were occasionally referred to and I was given the contact information of two young women who gravitated around the male subjects but who did not wish to participate in DARE.

I consequently found myself in the position to interview only men. This was also the case at the prison, in a social space where women are rarely, if ever, present. Given this, the act of speaking with a woman is rare for the detainees. In an exclusively masculine environment where violence is common, one could make the hypothesis that my being a woman represented an advantage.

As several studies have shown (Hyman, 1954; Mayer, 1995), the social environment of the researcher—his or her age, ethnicity, political ideas and gender—will influence the responses of the research subjects. Empathy, as in the researcher's ability to understand the research subject without passing judgment or to 'imagine oneself in the other's position' (Bourdieu, 1993: 910), can certainly assist in neutralising social differences.

In the social spaces studied (prison, small groups), and therefore within the milieu under study at large, social relations are characterised by opposition. The Corsican political context has been almost exclusively masculine for a long time and is a space where one fights for his or her ideas (which can result in prison) and where one can be led to enact physical violence. Furthermore, the interview conditions offer a rare opportunity for discussion (free from judgement, particularly moral judgement) for the detainees, who have been punished by the judicial system and who are typically categorised as 'fascists', 'extreme-right' or 'racist'. The interviews essentially elevate socially inappropriate speech and actions to the domain of 'valid' speech and actions. In addition, the interview setting is removed from the interpersonal constraints that are a burden in the milieu under study, where most socialising occurs between men. In this context, it seems that being a woman made it possible to come into contact with the research subjects in an interpersonal situation that is different from the interpersonal situations typical in the milieu studied. For example, the inmates were happy to grant me an interview and, in some cases, were prepared to talk about private issues and feelings that they would certainly not have raised if they had been face to face with a man. During the course of the fieldwork, many inmates expressed their desire to 'see the sociologist' and do an interview. They were less attracted by participation in the DARE project, I realised, than by the idea of talking to me face to face.

### 3.3 Ethical practice

Each participant received an information sheet informing them of the project and the consequences of their participation. All of the consent was obtained verbally; at the start of each recorded interview, the participants agreed to participate in the study and to be recorded. Ethical questions were asked aloud and discussed with the interviewees. I guaranteed that participants' identity and personal information would remain anonymous and ensured the protection of their security. I chose a pseudonym for each interviewee.

### 3.4 Data analysis

Data processing followed the DARE data analysis procedure and was completed using Nvivo software. Four Level 2 (family) nodes were added to the pre-given skeleton coding tree (see General Introduction to this series of case study reports). Since it was one of the key questions in the study, it was necessary to create a separate node relating to the perception of 'Muslims', including that of Arabs and Islam. I therefore created the 'Perception of Arabs and Islam' node. Similarly, I considered it necessary to create a node on a more general topic - 'perception of self and others' - in which the 'other' is not limited to 'Muslim', but encompasses those who are perceived as different. The importance of Europe as a cultural and identity marker led me to create the node 'What is Europe'. Finally, in the Corsican context, the issue of terrorism is omnipresent because separatists using violence are legally placed in the category 'terrorist', as are a fraction of violent Islamists. It was therefore essential to isolate this theme and create a distinct node. Thus I have 29 level 2 nodes and 202 level 1 nodes.

### 3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

I conducted 17 interviews with men whose average age was just under 28 and among whom, five were incarcerated at the time of interview. Of those not in prison, nine lived alone or with a partner and two lived with their parents. Eight interviewees had pursued higher education (university courses). At the time of the interview, seven were working full-time, one was unemployed and two did not have stable jobs. All defined themselves as 'Corsican' and 10 declared themselves as belonging to a Christian region.

## 4. Key Findings

### 4.1 From attacks against North Africans to the dream of living among Whites: Bobby, the archetype of the studied milieu

At the prison where I conducted research, the reintegration counsellor who had been following Bobby for several weeks immediately suggests that I meet him, considering Bobby to be potentially suitable for DARE, particularly due to his reading choices. The counsellor describes him as a young man increasingly interested in identity-based literature, in Europe's Celtic roots and in the White race. During the first meeting with Bobby, I tell him about the research project. Initially he refuses to be recorded or even to participate but, nonetheless, begins to talk. He tells me that he does not want to address questions related to his ideas and his worldview, since he is among those whom 'society' unjustly identifies as 'Nazis', 'racists,' and 'extreme-right'. I explain to him that one of the objectives of DARE is precisely to avoid all forms of categorisation and to reflect, through interviews, on current forms of categorisation as well as the way in which the terms 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' are used, without seeking to class interview subjects in any particular type of category.

Bobby is currently incarcerated for possession and sale of weapons but he quickly reveals to me that he was incarcerated for the first time after participating in a small group of a dozen very young individuals (he himself was 17) that wanted to halt North African immigration to Corsica and committed attacks against this population inspired by FLNC methods (National Liberation Front of Corsica). That was all I would learn during this initial meeting. The following week, however, Bobby agrees to participate in the research, giving his permission to record the discussion.

He begins by presenting his view of the world in which the richness of humanity stems from the world's diversity, differences, and cultural treasures--particularly works of art--which Bobby greatly appreciates and cares deeply about preserving: 'I want to preserve each ethnic group, Corsicans, every race, Whites,

Blacks, but I do not believe in racial superiority'. If he wants to preserve them, it is with the intention of fighting against the threat of uniformity, the disappearance of cultural diversity, the homogenisation of the world. In particular, he associates this uniformity with the extension of Islam in Europe, or as he sees it, a takeover by Islam: 'Eventually, France will be a caliphate'. His rejection of Islam is tied less to a hatred or essentialism of the religion than to an amalgam between migration and Islam, as if every migrant arriving in Europe were Muslim, and to a real, almost visceral fear that European civilisation will die out and that the Great Replacement will occur.

Being very sympathetic to the question of order, he believes that army service allows young people to be trained and get accustomed to discipline. He especially regrets not serving in the army. Pessimistic about the future, he fears a war that he considers inevitable; a war between civilisations where Islamic and Christian worlds would be pitted against each other.

The question of injustice is very present in his discourse. At several points throughout the interview, he broaches the injustices that he believes himself to have been a victim of, as well as the injustices that he perceives on a global scale.

Bobby feels deeply Corsican and nowadays, increasingly European. As a former political militant engaged in Corsican nationalism, and armed struggle, he resorts to violence to defend his ideas and worldview (notably that of a Corsica without Arabs or Islam).

Coming from a middle-class background<sup>12</sup>, Bobby is the son of a public service employee and a shopkeeper, with whom he worked before his incarceration. He talks about his peaceful Corsican childhood, in a society where violence held a particular position:

We also grew up with prevalent nationalism. The Front<sup>13</sup> (FLNC) was a real turn-on - the ski masks, weapons, press conferences. We grew up around that. I mean we got involved more than others, I'd say. We did more things than other people. But the general feeling, all the young people in those days, three quarters, got turned on by the Front (Bobby).

A society where 'you live with hunting, guns, rifles...', which explains, according to him, his passion for weapons and which shows especially his affinity to violence (Crettiez and Sèze, 2017).

Today he is disappointed by nationalism and distances himself from it, especially since a nationalist coalition was elected to head the Corsican Assembly. He sees this as being emblematic of a discourse of openness and acceptance of international and regional migrants, notably of North Africans: 'I don't connect with the nationalists who are currently in power (...) Or the idea of a common destiny even. You have to treat it on a case-by-case basis. And the problem is that common destiny is like the French blood right, anyone... It's selling out.'

---

<sup>12</sup> The middle classes constitute a whole which, despite its heterogeneity (Bosc, 2008) and blurred boundaries (Boltanski, 1982), is distinct in its goal to distinguish itself from both the poorest and the richest. This is done by acquiring a particular 'heritage' (diploma, property, skills) (Bernstein, 1993) strong enough to reach a certain level of comfort, but still too weak to be 'consolidated' and transferable for profit. The aspiration for upward mobility seems to constitute the group's imaginary and cultural foundation, which is driven by the hope to 'not stagnate' (Charle, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> The 'Front' is a diminutive of the National Liberation Front of Corsica. It should be remembered that it constitutes a politico-military organisation that fought for the liberation of Corsica and particularly independence by way of armed struggle. The organisation is responsible for hundreds of attacks and notably focused its actions on fighting against what it named 'settler colonialism'. Under this model, the French were designated as colonists and a number of actions aimed at making them leave were undertaken.

He explains to me why initially he did not want to participate in DARE: 'According to society's standards as a whole, I'll be called a radical, whereas I consider myself someone who's clear-headed.' Hence he feared being stigmatised. What he refers to as 'society' constitutes in fact a particular point of view, supported by a majority, which according to him, his fellow inmates (whom he calls 'reactionary leftists') and especially the media represent:

What I know is that the media doesn't hesitate to use the label extreme-right to describe all the Whites who are somewhat proud of who they are, without denigrating others. Just by saying, 'I'm proud to be a native-born European' today, sadly, you're labelled a Nazi or part of the extreme-right (Bobby).

Deeply convinced of his way of thinking, Bobby believes that much of the world is presently dominated by the 'closed-mindedness' spread by 'propagandist' media like BFMTV. This is why he tries to inform himself differently in order to make up his own mind. To do this, he draws on alternative media, such as RT France, and follows the channels of YouTubers like Conversano.

Bobby expresses his viewpoints while simultaneously taking great pains to reject the labels of 'fascist', 'racist' or 'Nazi', claiming that his love for the world's diversity should preclude him from being characterised as such. The defence of diversity presupposes a separation of peoples such that each group can maintain its 'genetic heritage'. There is nothing 'radical' or 'extremist' for him in this position, only lucidity regarding 'the conversation about the species'. However, he well understands that, from society's perspective, he is considered a radical. As soon as I mention the word 'radicalisation', Bobby immediately makes the connection with Islam and never once considers that he could have been, at a certain time, 'radicalised'. However, he repeatedly expresses how much he feels that, as a White person and as a Corsican, he is worse off than Muslims; that as a nationalist convicted for terrorism he is treated more poorly by the justice system than an Islamic terrorist.

Regarding the issue of the use of violence towards North Africans in his younger days, when I ask him if he believes he was 'radical', he tells me 'no', because he did not have an 'ideal'. It was, he said, just fashionable to be anti-Arab. In a context where interethnic tension was already commonplace, a group of young men, who met at a demonstration against Arabs, decided to create an action group (Terrazzoni, 2019). Thus Bobby wanted a Corsica 'without Arabs, obviously (...) or rather without Islam'.

Today, Bobby hopes to live among Whites, 'without hate or violence'. He is open to 'The Distant Other' and discovery through travelling, but closed to 'The Close Other', which he identifies as a threat<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4.1.1. 'Normal Deviants'

In the milieu studied, Bobby embodies a kind of archetypal figure who articulates extremist views, including, in particular, the rejection of Islam and the desire to live 'among Whites', achieved through the use of violence. In his discourse, ideological and behavioural radicalisation are articulated, which is far from being the norm in the studied milieu.

It should probably be reiterated that, my interviews, and more generally the studied milieu, are characterised by normality. Klandermans, Linden and Mayer (2005), then Crettiez and Sèze (2017) underscored this: the militants in the environments they studied - the extreme-right for the first, separatist nationalists and Islamists for the second - cannot be reduced to mindless and ignorant individuals. In his observations, Mayer found it striking that the individuals in question cast an image of 'normalcy', meaning being socially integrated and connected in one way or another to mainstream groups and ideas (Klandermans, Linden and Mayer, 2005: 473). This is also the case in my fieldwork. The majority

---

<sup>14</sup> This distinction goes back to the partition evoked by Crépon (2006).

of my interview subjects, for example, have aspirations characteristic of the middle classes (e.g. dreams of upward mobility, particularly via a diploma), ordinary hobbies, social skills and read. As a result of their solid upbringing, they express themselves articulately, thoughtfully and demonstrate manners and friendliness. Half of them were at university and come from History or Corsican Studies tracks. In order to bolster their point of view, the majority (regardless of degree or qualification) are also well-informed about history and politics, international policy and current events. The case is somewhat different for the detainees, whose backgrounds are marked by criminal activity as well as shorter academic careers. While this group may feel less concerned with current events, it is necessary to understand the reflexivity shown by these individuals, who often have common goals with the others. As such, the young people interviewed, whether detained or not, are far from the archetypal image of the 'skinhead'. They are 'normal'.

My question is to understand why, in the milieu under study, certain individuals follow Bobby's path, while others resist, by refusing the use of violence and/or by developing a less extremist vision. To do this, I will make use of interactionist theories as well as the sociology of deviance.

Interactionists demonstrate that it is the relations between individuals and their interactions with their environment that make it possible to better understand deviant phenomena. Becker (1963) insists particularly on the articulation between the notion of a deviant career and the concept of labelling. He understands deviance as the transgression of a norm that implies the adoption of a type of behaviour as well as the existence of a norm that prohibits it. If I follow Becker, 'Deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it' (Becker, 1963: 9). Thus deviance does not exist in absolute terms, but is the result of a process of designating and labelling behaviours. The development of a deviant career is tightly linked to labelling processes. Being designated as a deviant, rightly or wrongly, is a central element in the progression of the career<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, to become deviant, an individual passes through multiple stages. The first consists of committing a violation, intentionally or not, but is not sufficient; the second stage is being publicly designated as deviant (labelling), after which the individual can internalise a deviant self-image which is reflected back to him by society and subsequently self-identify as deviant. The third step is the entry of the individual into a deviant, organised group, which rationalises their commitment to the deviant career and within which they will strengthen their identity as a deviant. One of the central aims of the notion of career is to allow for the articulation of objective and subjective dimensions. This essentially means taking into consideration the social structures and the individual's environment, while paying attention to his or her own way of seeing things and representing situations.

All of the individuals interviewed share an exposure to ideological radicalisation, meaning a radical interpretive framework of the world (on a local and global level). I will begin by describing this ideological core and will then focus on processes of adherence and resistance to this interpretive framework before discussing the turn to violence.

## 4.2 The interpretive framework of the world predominant in the milieu

As mentioned in the first section, the ideas circulating in the milieu are driven by three ideological affinities: local nationalism, which defends Corsican identity in terms of ethnic features (for example, the language) and social features (its values, such as honour and solidarity, for example), through the use of violence; the French extreme-right, which defends national preference and condemns the Great

---

<sup>15</sup> Becker showed that 'one of the most crucial steps in the process of building a stable pattern of deviant behavior is likely to be the experience of being caught and publicly labeled as deviant' (Becker, 1963: 31).

Replacement, notably represented by the New Right (G.R.E.C.E. and the Club de l'Horloge<sup>16</sup>); and finally very conservative European movements (Salvini, Orban, etc.).

The interview subjects make reference to these three ideological orientations. However, it is worth noting that few mention the ideologists or texts that might have directly influenced them. They draw on different registers and evoke Eric Zemmour, Karl Marx, Hitler, Conversano and Alain Soral. Nevertheless, their interpretive framework strongly resembles that of the new right during the 1970s; none of them mention Alain de Benoist or G.R.E.C.E. for example.

The young people interviewed hold a distinctly conservative vision of society, and of societies in general, which they believe to be rapidly changing due to globalisation, neoliberalism, social injustice and migration. They claim this is why they 'retreat to a position that consists of preserving what can still be preserved' (Warren). They are drawn to the ideal of a homogenous and conformist society. First and foremost, they defend their Corsican, European, and Christian identity. They denounce social inequality, economic instability and an unjust system, embodied by a state that favours elites; they equally denounce the rising influx of migrants, privileges given to foreigners, and the Islamisation of Europe. It is very important to note that they describe these ideas as taboo in the public debate. They find it deplorable that they and others who address these issues are wrongly called reactionaries, fascists, racists or even Nazis. They believe this is a consequence of the 'political correctness' which they think dominates in France and which manifests itself in today's dominant Western ideology, serving elitist interests with the help of the media and institutions (in particular, via the judicial and educational systems).

In general, all the interviewees share a conservative view of male-female relationships. They position themselves against gender theories and defend a natural vision of differences between 'men' and 'women'. For example, they disagree with same-sex marriage, while they defend a vision of male/female relations in which roles are defined; men must defend women and treat them with care, while sexuality and the family must keep their traditional forms (man, woman).

The interviewees do not adhere to all of the circulating ideas and when they do adhere, do so with varying levels of intensity. This indicates that the study milieu includes different degrees of radicalisation, ranging from strong radicalisation (Bobby) to non-radicalisation (Redford or Brandon). However, it seems necessary to begin by deconstructing the principal ideas concerning the issue of Islam, and it is precisely the manner in which these views are expressed that interests DARE.

I will briefly discuss the binary nature of the dominant viewpoint circulating in the milieu that is in some ways a sign of its radicalness; most interview subjects see themselves as belonging to a social world in which there exists but one alternative, which is contrary and antagonistic to their own. In a sense, the way in which they articulate their ideas does not allow for complexity but, quite the opposite, offers a simplified framework for understanding the world, which only takes two elements into account; the world to which the interviewees belong and its opposite.

---

<sup>16</sup> The Groupement de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européennes (Group of Research and Studies for European Civilization G.R.E.C.E.), founded in 1968 in Nice, is the main organisation of the New Right. According to its general secretary, it is 'a "center of reflection" of the right at the same time as a "true community" for its members' (Duranton-Crabol, 1988: 40).

The Club de l'Horloge is a club of young senior civil servants founded in 1974 by future executives of the Front National, from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris and/or the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. A sort of think-tank, deeply linked to G.R.E.C.E., its objective is to 'ideologically re-equip the right with a rising left' by positioning itself against egalitarian ideology, multiculturalism and immigration (Laurens, 2014:76).

G.R.E.C.E. is anti-liberal while the Club de l'Horloge defends a neoliberal position.



#### 4.2.1 Christian identity versus a conquering Islam

All of the subjects feel Corsican and defend Corsican identity, just as all of them claim to belong to the European world that they refer to in terms of civilisation or culture and sometimes of race. In addition, they seek to defend their identity and their language, but also the Christian religion. Few are practising Christians, but this religion emerges as their identity reference point:

Religion is very important, in the sense that Corsica, I'll go even further here, I'm not talking about religion in terms of faith... in terms of the practice... I'm not a practising Christian, I'm not a Catholic extremist like in the Crusades... But I'm talking about it in the cultural sense because you have to remember something (...) even if not all Corsicans are Christian, Corsica itself is Christian, it's the culture (Christopher).

When Islam is rejected, it is done so on the basis of an incompatibility with dogmatic Christian identity and a fear that Muslims are trying to take over.

It's the question of Islam for example. For me (...), there's still a problem with Islam (...). Islam, it's not a religion, it's a political doctrine. So I'm not saying that it's good or bad, I'm just saying that it's a political doctrine and that the foundation of Islam isn't compatible with a democracy. That's it. So Islam is dangerous for the French Republic and for European democracies (...) I'll go back to immigration since we're speaking about religion: a person who comes from the Ivory Coast and who's Christian will have an easier time assimilating to French society than a person who's Muslim. That's just my opinion (Gary).

While incompatibility appears here in political terms, certain individuals refer to it in cultural terms:

I'm also basing this on the notion that some cultures aren't meant to coexist. North African immigration, from the Maghreb, if it's the Berbers who come, they pretty much have the same culture as us, it's doable, they can integrate. If it's Black African immigration, from Central Africa, it's already more complicated. So either they decide to integrate, or they decide to continue living like they lived back home and then (John claps his hands) at some point, it's going to bust. There's going to be a problem, there's going to be culture shock, there's going to be cultural conflict (John).

The spectre of war, between a Western, Christian, European civilisation and an African, Middle-Eastern, Muslim civilisation seems to be imminent, inevitable and a source of anxiety for some:

No, I'm not scared of Islam or those who could use it as a weapon of war. What scares me is that in the end, given what's happening today with all the attacks, the attempted attacks, etc. And more and more people who fit into that religion, or at least in that ideology, eventually it's going to start a war (John).

Fearing the Great Replacement—the idea that migrants, whom they represent essentially as Muslim, are becoming a majority and imposing their culture—some subjects hope that population flows will be firmly regulated; the extremists hope for measures that will make these populations leave. More than the religion of Islam, they reject its Muslim practitioners, who are perceived as threats.

Because they're making Islam the state religion in France. They prefer to leave the little parishes in villages and small towns in decay and build minarets (...). As for the Great Replacement theory, I'm not going to say whether I agree, but you know. It exists. Whether we want it to or not, it exists. It's a bit of a conspiracy theory, but it exists (John).

#### 4.2.2. Migrant (Muslim) privilege versus us, the disadvantaged

The idea that migrants are better-treated than nationals and benefit from different types of social assistance giving them an advantage over citizens is very common in the milieu under study. It sometimes appears as a justification of rejection.

If people are hateful, it's because to begin with there are a lot of injustices. You can imagine that for a guy who slaved away his whole life and finally retires, they interfere in his retirement, he's not even able to make 700 euros a month and he sees people coming from other countries who are given more than the contributions this guy has paid into his whole life, people who aren't from here and who are given access to everything. Where is the justice? (Christopher).

It is believed therefore that institutions are on the side of 'migrants', a category covering individuals who just arrived in France and those with immigrant backgrounds, in particular the people they refer to as 'Blacks' and 'Arabs'. To the research subjects, these groups are seen as benefitting from a freedom of expression and political support that the subjects themselves do not have, for which they are bitterly resentful.

Just by saying, 'I'm proud to be a native-born European' today, sadly, you're labelled a Nazi or part of the extreme-right'. No, I don't see... Africans have the right to be proud of being African, even if they're in Europe. The North Africans, Muslims... But us, we don't have the right and we can't (Bobby).

#### 4.2.3. Homogeneity versus multiculturalism

As was clear from Bobby's discourse, the question of defending a homogeneous model of society and rejecting multiculturalism emerges. Each country represents a culture that must be respected and preserved. The Muslim world is seen as knowing how to protect its cultural borders and limit multiculturalism. Thus France is viewed as a 'sieve' (Christopher) and a country that is too permissive. John repeats:

I have friends from the movement who have gone to North Africa, to Saudi Arabia, they tell me that 'when you're in their backyard/country, you integrate, but if you don't integrate, get out! Even if you're just a tourist'. So... why don't we do the same? Is it like that everywhere? (John).

Accompanying this sentiment is the idea of 'everyone in their own country', which appears in nearly every interview. This is articulated as a fight against the homogenisation of the world, which is perceived as the inevitable consequence of mixing. This rejection, therefore, does not occur on the basis of rejecting diversity, but, on the contrary, in the name of defending diversity.

And this YouTuber was saying, 'I'll give you an example, it's true I lived in Paris but now that I've analysed things, we Blacks have no business in Europe. Tomorrow, I'll explain my situation, tomorrow if I go to China, I don't just want to see Mexicans in China. If I go to China, I want to see Chinese people, Chinese art, etc.' And so there you have it, I've got the same viewpoint as this Pan African thinker (Bobby).

Gary communicates the same idea:

Today you go to Paris, you realise that there are neighbourhoods where it feels like you're in Abidjan. That's the issue, because when you take everyone in, there's nothing left, there's no more identity. It doesn't feel like you're in Paris anymore. Then you figure 'Paris is a big city,

it's a cosmopolitan city, it's like that in every capital'. But that's not true. If you go to Tokyo, it's not like that (Gary).

In the milieu, views concerning Muslims, and more generally migration, flow between two poles: firmly regulating migration through the implementation of a strict migratory policy; or regulating migration through violence. For example, the most violent subjects, Sauveur, Bobby, Speedy, understand violence as a method of regulation and would be ready to commit to this path. Gary was one of a hundred protestors who descended upon the Jardins de l'Empereur.

Interviewer: And what type of action should there be?

Sauveur: Off the bat, when I see that they're burning down mosques, I'm happy. I'm happy when I see, in Ajaccio, at the Jardins de l'Empereur... I say to myself 'ah that's good, at least they understand that when they attack us, we retaliate'.

Interviewer: And you could join these movements?

Sauveur: Well, if it's a serious thing and everything, I think that in the case of Corsica, I'd do it. Willingly. On the continent... no, to defend Corsica, yes.

Interviewer: And have you already been solicited? Do they exist, these types of small movements?

Sauveur: No. That's what I don't understand. I would be ready to do that with five, six men. Like how they made the Front for the French state<sup>17</sup>, we'd do that for the Arabs, so they get out! All the mosques... their businesses, they leave, we take all their material and they get out.

#### 4.2.4. Political disappointment

From a political perspective, most youth from the milieu are disappointed with both traditional right-wing and left-wing parties and reject in particular the type of politics operating today in France and in other European countries. They draw attention to the State's lack of interest in the most disadvantaged classes and the privileges held by politicians. At a local level, they are especially disappointed by the nationalist coalition because, they say, elected officials do not prioritise the people of Corsica and give too much consideration to immigrants. In fact, the nationalist coalition elected in 2015 originated mainly in the moderate branch, which positioned itself in favour of the idea of 'common destiny' (see Section 1. Introduction). However, this notion involves integrating immigrants from the Maghreb as well as their descendants, in other words integrating many Muslims. It is precisely this point that led Bobby to withdraw from the nationalist movement, as shown in the interview excerpt above. Almost all of the interviewees held the same viewpoint as Bobby and expressed their disappointment. From this point of view, the protests at the Emperor's Gardens constituted a major turning point. They took place just weeks after a nationalist coalition had been elected for the first time in Corsican history. The President of the Executive Council, head of the majority moderate faction, had condemned all forms of violence against the North African population, then spoke out against cultural enclaves on both sides. For the majority of interviewees, this sign of openness towards individuals from the Maghreb is unacceptable. They perceive it as a preference for newcomers over Corsicans, and many consider it a betrayal. Indeed, for 40 years, the nationalists have based their political arguments on the defence of the Corsican people and their interests. Thus, for my interviewees the debate concerns the notion of the Corsican people, who, for them, are defined by ethnicity. Most argue for ethnic preference and define the idea of 'people' in ethnic

---

<sup>17</sup> Refer to the previous note on the Front.

terms. As a result, their disappointment with the nationalists pushes them to turn to ideologies that fully embrace this definition.

This disappointment, which is linked to the disappointment they feel regarding global politics, seems to me to be at the root of the interviewees' political divisions. It also appears to explain why they rally around more extreme ideologies and fight for national preference as well as a clearer separation between natives and immigrants.

### 4.3. Paths of radicalisation and non-radicalisation

My contention is that adherence, complete or partial, to this interpretive framework is a function of the unique biographical experiences of the interviewees (Crettiez, 2016), of the socio-political context in which these experiences exist, and in particular of the interactions that bring political figures into play (Colloval and Gaïti, 2006). The resonance between biographical experiences and this interpretive framework (Crettiez, 2016) revolves around the situations of stigmatisation, injustice, oppression and exclusion that the subjects experience. It also stems from a feeling of being marginalised because of who they are (minor socio-economic actors who are overlooked in politics), because of how they identify (Corsicans) and because of their ideas (at the margins of the political spectrum). Their socialisation into violence plays an equally important role, as can be seen in the last excerpt from the interview with Sauveur when he speaks of the 'Front' or of political careers situated at the margins of the political spectrum (the political affiliations of loved ones).

#### 4.3.1. Labelling and stigmatisation

Throughout the investigation, one of the main issues that elicited feelings of injustice and stigmatisation concerned labelling. Various young people refused to participate in the study out of fear of being labelled 'racists' or 'fascists'. Those who accepted placed utmost importance, during the interviews, on the discussion of categorisation and the relationship between self-identification and ascription (Barth, 1969).

Gary: Because I'm told I am radical, but for me, I don't think that's what it means for someone to be radical.

Interviewer: But you, how do you feel about that?

Gary: I feel like a logical person who wants to talk about problems in society. I don't feel like someone who is radical. I'm considered radical, but I don't think that I am.

They experience this categorisation as stigma, in the Goffmanian sense of the term, namely as an attribute that aims to devalue and discredit them (Goffman, 1963), for as Mikaël says: 'Extreme, I wouldn't use that word, I always find it a shame to pull out a whole semantic apparatus to discredit people'. Thus being perceived to be on the right of the political spectrum is a source of stigmatisation that must sometimes be hidden: 'a French person who votes for the NF won't say that he usually votes for the NF. He'll be scared of being called a Nazi or a fascist.' (Casino).

Gary and others say this label does not seem legitimate or reasonable to them. John defends himself: 'Honestly, do we look like fascist Nazis and everything? Honestly, we're not Nazis or fascists! I don't like it when people call me a Nazi. Anyway, fascism died with Mussolini' (John). Here, we also have Bobby:

It's true, today especially with the media and everything... Basically, even if there's a lot of nuance, prevailing leftism will call me a 'fascist', even though quite the opposite, I like people and want them to preserve their genetic heritage, etc. And one of my dreams is to go on a safari in Africa to meet the Massaï, etc. You can't call me a racist.

Gary goes even further:

Interviewer: And you think that people call you radical just because you ask those kinds of questions?

Gary: Because I go beyond the boundaries of political correctness, the traditional limits of political questions.

Interviewer: So you don't feel radical, but you are called radical...

Gary: Exactly.

We can see that, for them, the act of venturing outside traditional fields of political debates, in other words, of addressing the migration issue and the presence of Islam, is seen, by others, as warranting the stigmatisation as radical or fascist.

Because the moment you go beyond what's politically correct and want to raise questions and issues that aren't raised by everyday politicians, you're radical. When you speak about Islam or immigration, you're a fascist, 'he's a right-wing, extreme-right radical'... You see... (Gary).

Mikaël exemplifies the dissonance existing between the ways these young people perceive themselves and how they are perceived:

Interviewer: You identify as a conservative.

Mikaël: Yes. But then it depends on who you ask. If I express my opinions to most people, they're going to classify me as ultra-conservative I think...

The data reveals that this dissonance plays an essential role; it forms a nexus around which the individuals organise themselves and take action (or not), during a process of radicalisation. Becker's theory shows that the development of a deviant career is tightly linked with the process of labelling (Becker, 1963). Ginhoux (2012) for example, underscored that being labelled a delinquent by being forbidden in stadiums constitutes a turning point in the careers of hard-core football supporters: either their commitment strengthens or weakens.

Gary's case, like others, illustrates the appropriation of the 'fascist' label, a process in which being labelled deepens the strength of his commitment:

No, it's society, the media, all that, that'll caricature my way of thinking and who'll say 'they're radicalised, they're fascists...' So we quickly get caught up in this. After constantly getting called fascist, well we say 'fine, we're fascists'. (...) They won't stop calling me fascist and at some point, I say 'well yeah, I'm a fascist', because the whole day people are telling me 'you're a fascist, you're a fascist', even though I'm not. And so there you go. After always being told that I'm part of that political group, well I just automatically figure that I'm part of that political group (Gary).

This is also what Christopher says:

I'll be honest with you, I'm not originally extreme-right. It depends on what you call extreme-right because if someone calls me xenophobic, or fascist, or a Nazi, we're not going to agree. Today if the extreme-right means, like I've said many times on my Facebook profile, defending what's mine, if I'm a fascist because I'm defending what's mine (because I feel it's entirely normal for Corsicans to be prioritised for housing, for work, for employment in their own country), if I'm considered a fascist from that point of view, then I accept being fascist (Christopher).

Being designated as deviant thus influences the paths and representations that the subjects have of themselves. This is visible in Gary and Christopher's discourse as well as John's:

Interviewer: How do you self-identify? Do you feel like you are at the extremes, in the position of a radical?

John: Yes, radical, yes. Because... how do I explain, radical yes, because we're characterised that way.

Here we have examples of appropriating stigma and of a stage in the deviant career as defined by Becker: the individual internalises an image of himself as deviant that is projected onto him by his environment, he therefore defines himself as deviant and appropriates the label that is stuck to him. We notice here, however, that young people nevertheless try to push the limits of this categorisation to be able to escape it. They have trouble accepting that they are associated with Nazism, from which they try to distinguish themselves during the interviews. Yet, as Brandon shows, labelling can lead some to withdraw themselves:

I travelled with the NF to Tours anyway, so I was pretty committed, but mostly in the shadows. And I always told them... well, it was more so an *eminence grise* because I really didn't want to show my face, I didn't want to draw attention to myself for the simple reason that I was not really sure of my commitment and I knew, and this is what bothered me the most, that a media war was starting, we called it the hunt for fascists, meaning that so-and-so ended up on the internet and people made up crazy and preposterous rumours, so I was really careful, I didn't show myself, I was never in any photo (...). So at some point there was a break, what I was trying to do wasn't working and I told myself 'this isn't my place' (Brandon).

While it is necessary to consider the implications of labelling for the life trajectories of individuals, the data shows it is equally important to examine labelling activities. Within the French democratic political sphere, labelling has the effect of demarcating a frontier between political positions perceived as 'normal' and others perceived as 'pathological'; in other words between moderation and process of radicalisation. To the research subjects, this stigmatisation seems to be the sign of an unfair, even outdated, division in the political sphere between the right and the left. On the one hand, the division seems exaggerated to them, as Mikaël explains: 'Yes, the national watch unit scrutinises... and I really believe that they're worse than the other side. They're so obsessed by everything that's conservative. Fascism, you know, if you go further than François Bayrou<sup>18</sup>, you're a fascist!'. On the other hand, it seems to them that the 'obsessive' stigmatisation they experience is the work of radicals. Stigmatised in the political arena and sometimes within their families, these young people essentially denounce being victims of a type of leftist radicalisation that would forbid people from addressing Islam and migration as distinct political questions.

To these subjects, the labelling that they endure seems even more unfair given that many claim to hold right-wing values - which some recognise as values traditionally defended by the extreme-right - as well as left-wing values. In their discourse, the subjects invert and alter traditional right-wing and left-wing arguments by painting themselves either in a conservative light or a revolutionary one (Taguieff, 1985).

I have examined here the role of labelling. Yet it is important to note an ambivalence: the young people who are conscious of holding transgressive viewpoints, in the sense that their views transgress dominant political norms, feel stigmatised as deviants. This in itself can facilitate the radicalisation process. At the

---

<sup>18</sup> François Bayrou is a centrist.



same time, they are pushed in this direction as the ideas they hold become more visible in the current political sphere, since they believe that they are less and less likely to be categorised as deviant.

### 4.3.2. Perception of injustices and feelings of social exclusion

After having looked at the role of labelling and stigmatisation within the political sphere, let us now examine these same elements outside this sphere. This entails describing how the interviewees feel trapped in an unjust system and how the interpretive framework circulating in the milieu provides them with an analytical instrument that they consider relevant.

The issue of social inequality, especially the type of inequality that one experiences and observes as a Corsican, as a detainee, as a member of the middle class and of the people, forms the core of the interpretive framework and gives it meaning. The rhetoric of justification builds upon the issue of social inequality, which is seen to be exacerbated by migration. We can observe that the ideology described by the research subjects resonates with their lived experience, since many of them informed us of situations of injustice and stigmatisation that they had experienced.

#### 4.3.2.1. *Mistreated by an unjust system*

The theme of injustice is very present and in many ways is what best illustrates Bobby's discourse. He speaks about injustices both from the perspective of his own experience as a worker with a modest salary deserving of rights and from a more general view that he holds of the 'system'. The more the interviewee see himself as a victim of the 'system', the more the system is considered deeply unjust:

Well for me, injustice is my wife at home alone with a part-time job, two kids, she doesn't have any social assistance and the migrants are the ones who get the money, they get everything, we give them everything. That's an injustice. My loved ones before others. That's an injustice. Then, I mean there's so much you could say. The sex offenders who get meaningless sentences while others get really long sentences. You see injustice every day (...). Yeah, then there's the kind that comes from governments, the people at the top who embezzle millions, they don't go to jail and for us to make a couple pennies, it takes years, we're ruined. Injustice is everywhere. Society is... (...) You see injustice at every level. (...) At every level. I mean no system is perfect, but it's too complicated. A fair system, in any case, will never exist, you'd have to be foolish to think that. But at least to be able to show an example. People would work more if government officials got reasonable salaries and didn't scam and embezzle. Like I figured back then, I make 1,250 euros, my wife doesn't work, I've got two kids, I work my ass off, I make 500 euros a month under the table, I get six years in prison and they're embezzling millions and living the high life. I could never go on vacation, my whole life. I'd be a slave and when I finally retire, I wouldn't be able to enjoy my life because I'd get even less money, I'd be living the life of a slave. So then I understand the people who mess up... (Bobby).

Christopher expresses it differently, but the idea of an unjust global system is indeed there: 'The state, the state... nothing but injustice. The state helps who it wants to help. The state is a bunch of thugs, it's a mafia'. Here again we find the theme of migrant privilege: injustice comes from the state, which puts in place discretionary, and thus unfair, policies.

#### 4.3.2.2. *Stigmatised and oppressed as a Corsican*

The strong sense of injustice prevailing in the milieu centres on the minority sentiment that pervades Corsica. More generally, in Corsica, one encounters the view that Corsicans constitute a minority, meaning a group that is treated, or believes itself to be treated, differently and unequally - a group comprised of

individuals who experience collective discrimination due to their cultural or physical characteristics<sup>19</sup>. Most Corsicans say they belong to two distinct groups: a group of people who see themselves, and are seen by others, as members of a particular group; and a group that considers itself socially mistreated by the French state, which embodies the majority, as a result of its cultural ties. Today, the feeling of being dominated, discriminated against and oppressed at the hands of the majority (the French state), centres on three issues: the denial of Corsican identity<sup>20</sup>; stigmatisation; and social as well as legal injustice. This feeling is not a characteristic of the milieu studied. It is a characteristic of Corsica (Terrazzoni, 2014). In the milieu studied, we see heightened criticism of the French state's stance on Corsica alongside criticism of the political action of the French state that is found across the whole country, for example, with regard to its financial instability or migration policies. It is in relation to the latter that we see evidence of the rhetoric of the new-right (Taguieff, 1985) or the extreme-right (Crépon, 2006).

Each of the interview subjects mentioned the feeling of being stigmatised as Corsican, in the sense of being treated differently on the basis of their cultural origins, which they perceived as an injustice. This manifests at different levels. John, a future teacher, criticises for example the fact that Corsicans with a CAPES degree<sup>21</sup> are under the jurisdiction of the Créteil school district and thus must teach in the Parisian suburbs, which John considers irregular and tied to the ill-will the French state bears toward the island. As for Brandon, he always felt that he was different and treated as such due to being Corsican:

People constantly project the image of the good kid on me... As a Corsican, I was 'O Bwana'<sup>22</sup>; or even one day some people from the extreme-left told me: 'But for you it's not the same, you can't say that you're Corsican'. We were speaking about immigrants, about immigration. And they told me 'That's typical, Corsicans are racist' (Brandon).

Brandon tells us here how complicated it was for him to be Corsican. People see him exclusively as a Corsican and label him according to the image they have of the Corsican people: either they saw in him a 'native' belonging to a primitive people with all the stereotypes attached to it, and/or they saw in him a 'racist' as befitting the stereotypes about Corsicans noted in Section 1.

Let us also take the example of the prisoners who all criticise the fact that sex offenders receive lighter sentences than they do when they believe that such sexual crimes are much more serious than their own crimes, which are mostly related to possessing a weapon, robbery and drug trafficking<sup>23</sup>. Even though they do not ascribe this judicial injustice to their Corsican identity, but rather to a faulty system, they still express how much being Corsican influences the process. Dean thus repeats that he went to prison for nothing and that if the judge was harsh toward him, it is because he is Corsican:

---

<sup>19</sup> Louis Wirth's definition is as follows: 'We may define a minority as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination' (Wirth, 1945: 347).

<sup>20</sup> I will not explore this point in detail here, but suffice it to say that the French state accepts Corsican identity but denies the existence of the Corsican people (Terrazzoni, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> CAPES is a professional degree from the French Ministry of National Education that certifies one to teach secondary school or college.

<sup>22</sup> Here the interviewee makes a slip of the tongue: O Bwana comes from the Bantu language of East Africa and is used to refer to a White colonist. Brandon was almost certainly trying to make reference to the figure of Banania (a West Indian woman represented with European physical features and symbolising French colonisation) or use a term indicating that he has always, as a Corsican, been seen as strange.

<sup>23</sup> None of the detainees interviewed was convicted of sexual violence.

And my lawyer was clear when he came to see me in jail, he told me: ‘you’re not about to be released. Even I (as the lead lawyer), I can’t seem to... There’s something political behind this. It’s been a while since they’ve had Corsicans here and they want to get you to crack (Dean).

Some consider the justice system’s handling of their cases an example of discrimination: being Corsican is seen as leading to harsh judicial rulings, even to judicial persecution and to procedures that do not respect the most basic rights. The discriminatory application of state justice toward Corsicans is not only denounced by those who served time in prison, as I was able to observe during previous studies regarding the case of prefect Érignac<sup>24</sup>.

In addition, many find it deeply unjust that Corsican nationalists and Islamists are placed in the same legal category, that of ‘terrorist’:

Bobby: With my terrorist rap sheet, I wouldn’t be able to go to the United States, I’m in FIJAIT<sup>25</sup>.

Interviewer: What do you think of that?

Bobby: It’s a scandal, what’s scandalous is comparing Islamists with us...

Interviewer: Comparing, who’s comparing?

Bobby: The state. When they put us in the same box.

Even interviewees who have never been involved in the justice system, like John, denounce the severity of the state toward Corsicans and its complacency towards Islamists:

We know very well that for the French justice system, it’s better to be an Islamist terrorist than a Corsican nationalist. It’s unfortunate. Everyone says no, but when you look at the convictions, it’s pretty much the same, so... (John).

Thus here we can again observe the opposition between privileged migrants and disadvantaged natives since quite often, Islamist terrorism is seen through the lens of migratory issues. We see here how the interpretive framework circulating in the milieu seems pertinent to the subjects in their understanding of personal situations and, in particular, situations of injustice or oppression that they experience. This interpretive framework appears even more salient when it offers a response to situations that the interviewees experience as traumatic.

---

<sup>24</sup> The case of Yvan Colonna, a Corsican engaged in the nationalist movement, found guilty of assassinating the prefect Érignac (2008), is often used to illustrate this specific application of justice (for example, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was at the time Minister of the Interior, had not respected the presumption of innocence at the time of Colonna’s arrest, which caught the attention of several Corsican figures). More recently in February 2016, the case of a Bastia Club football fan who was hit by a rubber bullet in Reims also elicited emotion and reactions from politicians. The latter had immediately characterised the situation as being in the grip of ‘anti-Corsican racism’ and called for impartial justice, consequently implying that the French justice system is biased regarding matters that involve Corsicans. Several protests followed. Indeed, during court hearings, nationalist movements attracted more new activists than usual, indicating that within the minority experience, the boundaries between social consciousness and political engagement are porous and feed into each other.

<sup>25</sup> The FIJAIT is the Fichier Judiciaire National Automatisé des Auteurs d’Infractions Terroristes, The Automated National Criminal Record of Terrorist Offenders. Indeed, it lists both the perpetrators of Islamist attacks and the perpetrators of separatist attacks.

#### 4.3.3. Ideological and behavioural radicalisation as a response to shocking experiences

Casino presents his ideological attachment in direct connection with shocking experiences involving North African immigrants and/or Muslims; experiences which drove him to breaking point, when he began to look at the world around him differently and where a form of Islamophobia was able to emerge.

Originally I was on the extreme-left, but there were things that shocked me, assaults on a family member by North Africans, who spat on them, I didn't like it and I started to open up. But I never got into pure racism, 'dirty Arab', I don't shout that, I would avoid shouting 'dirty Arab', I don't like it. There are good people. If I go to Syria or I don't know, any country, I meet good people. (...) I was assaulted. There's the terrorist attacks, too, it kind of... the attacks affected me. They really left a mark on me. I think they left a mark on a lot of people. So ... Well Charlie Hebdo, *Je suis Charlie*, at the beginning I said it because I was still a leftist then after, I said, Charlie, it's stupid because they ban Dieudonné<sup>26</sup>. (...) A lot of family events, the attacks and everything marked me. I saw that social mixing didn't work, that... There's Islamic self-segregation. Muslims... I think a lot of Muslims will never let Islam go in favour of secularism, it's bullshit, the identity of Islam is a strong identity and they're right to defend it. They have to defend it at home, but I don't agree with it here. And so secularism is in decline, even if I think secularism is a bit... I won't get into the details but for me... Europe is still Christian... (Casino).

This adherence thus constitutes a response to the shocking events that affected him as well as to the questions he asks himself. Sauveur has an extremely violent discourse towards Muslims which he also portrays, like Casino, as a response both to a shock he personally experienced and to broader Muslim violence, particularly through the terrorist attacks. Indeed, Sauveur witnessed an assault when one of his fellow inmates stabbed a guard with a knife, shouting 'Allahu Akbar'. This event was deeply traumatic for Sauveur and he explains how it had reinforced his anti-North African sentiment and transformed it into an anti-Muslim sentiment.

Sauveur: Let them stay at home, with each other, with their religion, their stuff...

Interviewer: And you've always thought that, like that, or did it come later...?

Sauveur: Since [that incident]. And since I saw it with my own eyes.

Interviewer: Before, you didn't care if a village girl was married to an Arab...

Sauveur: Well, it bothered me a little.

He therefore advocates the use of violence against those he calls 'Arabs':

Interviewer: You think that it is necessary to get the Arabs out of the country...

Sauveur: I think that the French need to take up arms and drive them out.

Interviewer: With weapons?

Sauveur: They don't get tired of killing children, innocent people. They go to Bataclan, they kill 230 people!

In his speech, Sauveur justifies the use of violence by the very violence he perceives among Arabs:

Interviewer: And in your opinion, why would violent action be necessary to restore...

<sup>26</sup> Dieudonné is an actor and comedian who has been prosecuted for anti-Semitism.

Sauveur: Yeah because they're not shy about being violent. At Bataclan, there was a girl from the village who died. And when you see faces like that from your hometown... That's why I don't understand why the French don't take action (...). We heard that there was a girl from Corsica who died but we didn't know who. And then we heard it was her. On top of that, she had come to the village the summer before. She was young, she was 19, 20 years old. You see faces, families that are destroyed by that... I don't understand. I know that personally, if tomorrow someone in my family is affected by that, like what happened on the Promenade des Anglais with the truck, because I have a cousin in Nice, if he had been walking around with his son and they had been hit by the truck, I think I would've been full of hate.

Throughout the interview, Sauveur spoke quite violently about Arabs. It is the violence of Muslims themselves that is used to justify the ideological or behavioural violence that the interviewee supports.

The process of committing oneself to radicalisation is facilitated by sociability, whether in terms of social networks, groups of friends, or even the family.

#### 4.3.4. Sociability

##### *Internet, Facebook, YouTube*

When Casino started considering North Africans dangerous and began getting more seriously active against multiculturalism, he turned to the internet:

Anyway. I started to analyse things, I saw that we're being manipulated, they're not telling us everything, we're being lied to and taken for idiots... Basically lots of things, stuff like that, left and right, and I started watching videos, people who analyse things... on YouTube (Casino).

This source of information is often seen as independent, unlike the media. This was similarly the case with Gary, or John, who also seek independent information that they find, for example, in the Russian media, or Bobby who follows YouTube channels. Brandon likewise describes the discoveries made on the Internet:

And, indeed, in school, I discovered other thinkers on the internet and at a certain point, I saw myself in them, because deep down, what was bothering me already with the left was... how do I explain... I didn't appreciate xenophobia just like I didn't appreciate xenophilia (...). It's true that the internet presented me with thinkers that you couldn't find elsewhere... because Éric Zeymour, of course he was on TV, but I couldn't watch TV at home, so I caught it the next day. It was also really the time of the YouTube boom... (Bobby).

With the exception of the prisoners, the internet, and Facebook in particular, constitutes a space where the subjects express their ideas. For example, Dean, Christopher and John are very active on Facebook, which is their communication platform of choice: it is there that they meet new people, debate individuals with opposing viewpoints and present their ideas. Some occasionally have very violent language. They control their words much less on social media than in the interview setting, where it is fairly clear that some are self-censoring. Given this, the analysis of Facebook pages makes it possible to uncover certain subjects' ambivalence. In particular, this allows for an evaluation of the verbal violence they often express on these platforms and which is difficult for the researcher to identify during the interview. Whereas in an interview setting, speech is restrained or moderated, the internet is where their radicalism expresses itself. Thus, it is clear that most of the interviewees navigate the limits of their own radicalism considerably well, in addition to the limits according to which they could be labelled as radical.

##### *Friends, family*

Groups of friends also represent a springboard toward radicalisation. Brandon describes how he joined a small group defending Christian Corsica when asked by Mikaël, a young man of his age:

He was involved on his own but then again, I knew him through family because he was my cousin's nephew. So I knew that he had an intellectual background, as a former polyphony singer who studied theology, and so he wanted to create a study group around Corsica and Christianity. But I knew, I had heard of this movement, but for me it was a little too extreme-right, I would say occult extreme-right (Mikaël).

Mikaël, moreover, also explains how he participated in the creation of the group at the request of a friend from university, JR. The latter unfortunately refused to participate in DARE. Mikaël and John describe him as very radical, with Holocaust denial and Nazi positions. However, JR seems to be an exception in the milieu, and is presented as such. It is interesting to note that Mikaël nevertheless agreed to join him:

To put it bluntly, he's a Nazi or whatever (...). He's fascinated by the Third Reich. But listen, he doesn't do parades, he doesn't get swastika tattoos, but... that's something I could never do. But then, he says things, these people, from the community, they say things... it's not all wrong. And then they point to things about historical stuff, he says 'this thing, it was like this and not like that'. (...) So it got me interested in the question. (...). Then again, he wasn't there from dawn till dusk holding conferences on the Holocaust, and wasn't reading works on the Third Reich either. And I mean he's someone who's genuinely kind, that's what's funny. He's a nice person, someone who makes people laugh, etc. and basically, he's always been a nationalist militant and that's it. When he comes out of his obsessions, he has interesting analyses, he has things to contribute (Mikaël).

Thus the process of organising and committing to a group is facilitated by a toleration of extremist ideologies, especially by way of friendly relationships. John, James and Gary, for example, have known each other since childhood and came together to found their movement:

John and I have known each other since we were 7. We've had the same political ideas for quite a few years now, we talk about them all the time, and at one point in university, we figured: 'well, it would be nice if we made a Corsican nationalist movement'. (...) Well actually we were essentially a group of friends, young students, all in university together, there were about twenty of us, all affiliated with various nationalist movements, and in my case the Ficus<sup>27</sup>. And we realised gradually over the course of the meetings, even in the union we were all part of in the Student Union, we slowly realised with the meetings and stances of each union, that we didn't really fit the mould (Gary).

Redford describes university as a place where he was able to familiarise himself with the ideas being exchanged in the milieu and where he was asked to participate in groups. It is worth noting here the collective context of Gary's participation in the protest against North Africans at the Emperor's Gardens. Several of his friends went and then he participated in the most violent part of the protest carried out by the crowd:

It's strange, it's a stampede that pushes you to follow and it feeds this hatred, it feeds hate actually. The whole crowd is really... and it's interesting because you can trace it back to fascism in the 1920s or Nazism in Germany in the 1930s, before Jews were deported and exterminated, there were still Jews in Germany. Hate-driven movements that ransacked the shops and everything. Which goes to show we're not necessarily racist and everything but we are driven to say things by this mob which brings out all the hatred on that level. It's

<sup>27</sup> Ficus [a pseudonym] refers to the small group that John, and friends, founded.



cathartic you know, like when you go watch football and insult everyone to let off steam' (Gary).

It seems that this peer socialising is essential in the process of radicalisation.

However, it is also necessary to underline the role socialisation plays in life trajectories that are situated at the margins of the political spectrum. Being socialised to extreme-right values within the family seems to serve as a catalyst for the process of radicalisation, as does a lack of political socialisation within the family. Conversely, growing up in a family defending values such as anti-racism, tolerance, or openness acts as an impediment to radicalisation, especially concerning the rejection of Islam.

### *Calling into question*

If one follows Becker's (1963) line of thinking in the treatment of deviance, one must ask why individuals who respect norms while having deviant urges do not take action. In other words, why do some individuals exposed to the messages of radicalisation circulating in the milieu, such as those outlined in the introduction, not adhere to them? Brandon speaks of the way he was raised by his parents and the values they passed down to him:

At school, I remember, there were two North Africans in fact, and it was a bit ... Actually, I was a racist kid, because my friends.... Basically we were all kind of in the spirit of Ajaccio and... (...) Even socially, because we associate class with race a lot, actually. That was me at school. The two poorest kids were the two North Africans. So, there was... it was a mix of the two: there was class discrimination and racism... We associate one with the other. We said: 'an Arab is poor, the poor person is Arab...' Then again, it wasn't an aggressive racism but more kind of cultural. My parents never raised me like that, you have to be open-minded. That's why I've never been consciously, ideologically, racist (Brandon).

Redford also mentions that family heritage had a deterrent effect on the commitment to voicing extreme ideologies:

Then, I mean, I had security in the sense that my grandfather had been part of the resistance, among others, but he was a communist when he was young. Then again, I didn't know him so there might also be some idealisation on my part, especially when I was young. My parents have always been leftists, so I didn't go that deep into things. I've always had different types of feedback, actually. That's why I say that I didn't commit, meaning it just interested me. I tried to understand, I tried to check it out and everything but I mean... (Redford).

I previously emphasised that the interpretive framework prevalent in the milieu rejects complexity and is comprised of viewpoints that are binary in nature. It appears that, in the studied milieu, the interview subjects, while accepting the complexity of the surrounding world and seeking to reflect this complexity by relying in particular on displays of knowledge (literature, science) etc., are hesitant to commit to ideological or behavioural radicalisation. Thus, the questioning of this binarity, in other words the aspiration to a complex posture, acts as an impediment in that it allows them to question the binary dimension of the interpretive framework.

Gary also explains how constantly being unsure, seeking knowledge, and trying to understand the complexity of the world shields him from radical extremes:

Interviewer: So, what distinguishes you from other people you talk to or your friends?

Gary: Yeah, they only focus on the media they're interested in. It might be a bit crude, but I call that mental masturbation. When you only read philosophic works that confirm your ideas, that's mental masturbation. You're just pleasing yourself and you end up not looking

for information elsewhere, not looking for contradictions elsewhere. I want to come back to that, what sets me apart from my friends who pretty much have the same ideas as me, is that I'm constantly unsure. Meaning that one day I'll be convinced of something and the next day, not at all. I'm never really 100% certain.

Interviewer: And how does that happen? Is it a connection to the world...?

Gary: Yeah. It's a connection to a lot of things: to the world, even to history in general because I've studied so much history, read so many books and everything, that I figure 'Nothing's true', well not in a conspiracy way, but no truth is... you know what I mean? And then, I even have friends who are Muslim and who are great, and sometimes I say to myself 'But how can I think that there's still a problem with Islam? How can I tell myself that this person is going to want to turn me into a Muslim? I turn on the TV, I see what's happening in other places, I read newspapers, the news, and I see how some people act and then I say to myself 'There's still a problem'.

#### 4.3.5. Being socialised to violence

The subjects' familiarity with violence, whether it is connected to a cultural or familial context, also plays a role in the radicalisation process. When Bobby talks about taking action, that is to say assaulting North Africans, and when Sauveur makes remarks supporting violence towards this same population, both look to a justification in the cultural violence characteristic of Corsica<sup>28</sup>. Bobby says he grew up 'around the mythology of the armed, nationalist militant' and was introduced to arms at an early age, through hunting. Sauveur refers to the actions of the Front and suggests that these also be carried out against 'Arabs'. When we talk about violence and taking action, John tells me that 'it's Corsica that has a violent image, due to the independence movement, the Front, etc. It's a place that has a poor track record when it comes to Mafia-style weapons. Even today, there are still assassinations'. He also references episodes in Corsican history where the use of violence had a positive outcome:

I'm going on the assumption that violence should only be used as a last resort. It must be justified and necessary. It's if we have no choice. If you really don't have the option of being heard or making it out. (...) What did the left give us? If there hadn't been attacks on the university, we wouldn't have had it and even then, it's only crumbs (John).

Speedy, detained for weapon possession, clearly articulates the link between cultural heritage and his relationship to violence:

I don't know, but maybe we inherited all of this, this whole situation. Here in Corsica, or on the Continent, there are people who kill but here everyone's capable of killing, in connection with the wars, vendettas, disputes. If you've worked on this, crime and everything, everyone is capable of killing here. A road worker will sweep the streets and then at night, he's capable of going and killing someone for such or such reason. Like I said, it ties into all that. A baker

<sup>28</sup> The presence of violence is tangible in Corsica. This is historically associated with the vendetta tradition - a social phenomenon found in parts of the Mediterranean region including Sardinia, Sicily and Corsica – which places a duty on families to revenge crimes or offences committed against family members. It also has roots in the banditry that plagued the island in the nineteenth century. From the mid-twentieth century, violence has taken rather different forms. From its creation in 1976 and until the recent truce (2014), the FLNC (a clandestine paramilitary organisation) has committed 10,000 bombings and around 220 assassinations (Terrazzoni, 2019). In addition, organised criminal gangs (mafia) exert significant pressure in certain economic sectors and are prepared to kill to retain control. In 2019, the homicide rate per 1,000 inhabitants was 0.045 in Corsica, while it varies between 0.009 and 0.026 for the other French regions. In 2019, there were an estimated ten mafia-related murders in Corsica.

is capable of going off and killing someone. He makes his bread and he's able to go and kill. And in Corsica there's an indifference, it's unique. We live with it. It's an art of war I mean. It's always been that way, and maybe we, and younger generations too, we didn't invent it, it didn't start now, it's been going on for years like that. We inherit all that stuff, that life, where we grow up surrounded by weapons. We've always been around that, for us it's normal. We've seen things, things happened, friends who died, arrested, at 16, 17, friends blown up by bombs, others killed in cars... I mean we live with all that, we inherit all that. There you go. And that's how it is here (Speedy).

Acculturation to violence, as Crettiez has emphasised (2016), probably allows some people, at a certain point, to have a more fluid level of commitment in the process of radicalisation.

#### 4.3.6. A favourable political context

The relationship between biographical experiences and the interpretive framework present in the milieu is not enough to define adherence. The political context is also important in that it forms an opportunity structure favourable to engagement with an extremist ideology. Indeed, the presence at the global, but also European, level of political regimes embodying the hard-right (Bolsonaro, Orban, etc.), as well as the significant rise of extreme-right parties during elections, solidifies the commitments of my interview subjects. Matteo Salvini, for example, is a model for Christopher: 'For me, Salvini is the reference point, someone who's not scared to go all the way. He solidly challenged the Calabrian, Neapolitan Mafia'. Warren also sees him as a positive figure:

But I'll tell you straight, right off the bat, the actions of a Salvini don't offend me. Those are things I understand, positions I understand. (Interviewer) So where do you agree with Salvini? (Warren) Maybe on the personality of the man, the fact that he's firm. Then, I guess we're kind of getting away from ideological considerations, it's on a gut level. Firmness, but even the idea that a population can recognise itself on a supranational scale, it awakens something apparently, even if from the get-go I feel deeply European (Warren).

In this regard, Warren's account is quite interesting because, having served an eight-year sentence for nationalist involvement (and therefore, defence of the Corsican people), his positive perception of Salvini and support for Salvini's actions stem from the resonance between his personal experiences and the work of Salvini, whom he considers a defender of the Italian people.

In addition, it should be noted that the historical and social context is defined by the appearance of a nationalist coalition in the Corsican Regional Authority, by the increasing visibility of the issue of migration in the public debate, by the arrival of hard right-wing political regimes in several countries, and by a rise in radical Islamism threatening Europe.

These are all elements that nurture the conceptual framework in which Bobby and the others situate themselves.

## 5. Conclusions

The milieu under study, in which anti-Muslim messages and calls for ideological and/or behavioural radicalisation are common, is comprised of 'normal' young people. Far from the image of anti-social youth who are failing at school and poorly-educated or ignorant, those encountered belong to the middle classes insofar as what characterises them is the aspiration for social mobility.

With varying degrees of intensity, they make use of a binary interpretive framework of the world in which Christianity is opposed to Islam, migrants to natives, homogeneity to multiculturalism. The adherence, more or less intense, to this interpretive framework, and subsequently to ideological and behavioural radicalisation, is a process resulting from a 'division' in which several elements play a crucial role.

Each of the interviewees was close to or involved in the nationalist Corsican movement, and in particular the separatist branch. In recent years, despite being deeply convinced that Corsican independence is desirable, they have progressively distanced themselves from nationalism in its current political form. They believe that the political movement - such as it exists today and is represented within local institutions, that is to say as an alliance of moderate and radical branches - is currently committed to a trajectory that is too moderate, too inoffensive and too open. In particular, the disagreement concerns the way in which the notion of a 'people' is defined. Most interviewees adhere to an ethnic definition of 'people', defending the notion of blood membership and the idea that the Corsican people belong to the Christian, European world. Yet current nationalists evoke instead the concept of a 'common destiny' (even if they remain quite ambiguous on this point) and are largely in favour of integrating immigrants arriving from North Africa and thus the Muslim world. This is the first cause of division.

Fearing the Great Replacement, my interview subjects sense the disappearance of the Corsican people and, more generally, of Europe. Worried about a clash of civilisations between Christianity and Islam and about the show of force by those they consider 'Islamic terrorists', most of them fear Islam taking over. They also feel they are in a situation of 'legitimate defence', an idea which allows them to justify resorting to ideological and behavioural violence. In this way, migratory flows into Europe, which they describe as uncontrolled, as well as the violence of Islamic terrorism, appear to them as threats weighing heavily on European, and thus Corsican, cohesion. These individuals long for political models that take this context into account, that display a more offensive stance than current local nationalism and that openly accept a discourse and political leanings aiming to firmly defend Corsican identity. Such political models would also defend French and European identity more broadly and implement national preference. It should be noted, however, that the political disappointment they experience concerns both general politics and local nationalist politics. Disappointment is a second cause of division.

The resonance between the interpretive framework present in the milieu and biographical experiences - more precisely, experiences of stigmatisation, injustice, oppression, exclusion and, for some, of feeling left behind - is a third cause of division. Yet it is also important to note that the dissonance between the way interviewees perceive themselves and the label that society places on them is a major factor in the commitment to a radical path, just as it can be a factor in the commitment to a non-radical path. Being labelled deviant due to one's professed political ideas is indeed a turning point. Either young people endorse this label and commit themselves to radical paths, or they seek to detach themselves from it and this is what pushes them towards non-radical paths or out of radicalisation. Furthermore, in the milieu under study, it is the ability to question the binary interpretive framework of the world and to acknowledge its complexity which hinders the commitment to radical paths.

Finally, it is likely that the ideological conditions also contribute to divisions. The historical and social situation at the local level is defined by the arrival of a national coalition in the Corsican Regional Authority. At the national level it is characterised by the omnipresence of a public debate tinged with Islamophobia where the migrant issue is increasingly visible. Internationally, it is defined by the arrival of right-wing political regimes in countries across the world. This context offers multiple opportunities for increasingly tolerated anti-Muslim viewpoints to be expressed. One can advance the hypothesis that radical anti-Muslim rhetoric is being normalised and that adherence to this rhetoric is seen as increasingly banal and less subversive. Given this, it is not surprising that this ideological offering can attract 'normal' young people. Initially seduced by the vague rhetoric that feeds into the public debate, these young

people are later stigmatised - an experience which proves decisive in their personal trajectories. It should also be noted that the ideological offering is, on one hand, abundant, and on the other hand, very accessible. From this perspective, the internet provides a vast selection via social networks. Additionally, coming into contact with radical ideologies has become common and quite easy. Many interview subjects are radicalised because they have unlimited access to radical messages via the internet: alternative media (especially Russians who seem critical of dominant Western ideology), YouTubers or ultra-right Facebook groups.

Steadfast defenders of Corsican, French, and European identity rooted in Christianity, who push for strong restrictions on immigration, the interviewees firmly deny being fascists or racists and refuse all labels. They try to push the limits of these categories since they have a hard time accepting the association with totalitarian ideologies. In this regard, many acknowledge their conservatism while also refusing to be labelled undemocratic or anti-Semitic. It is these two points which, for them, define fascism as well as Nazism and, thus, represent the potential danger of ideas. By mobilising these arguments, they clearly try to position themselves as non-radicals in a political space that is nonetheless prone to radicalisation, according to them. Indeed, they believe that within the current context, displaying right-wing, conservative positions (or even positioning themselves in opposition to mainstream ideology), is enough to be categorised as fascists, notably by the left. They denounce this state of affairs, which they perceive as the sign of a radicalised political space, and in particular of the radicalisation of the left. They see this as a context in which 'narrow-mindedness' structures the public debate. Looking to position themselves differently, their discourse is based on an appropriation of history which they present as running counter to the dominant ideology and conformist thinking that is spread in the public sphere and by institutions such as schools. Some, therefore, consider it important to denounce the extremes of Nazism and communism, as well as to highlight the positive contributions of the economic policy of Hitler or Mussolini. Thus, they insist on putting the extreme-left and the extreme-right on an equal footing and reject any attempt to stigmatise the extreme-right as fascist or Nazi.

Regarding the political commitment process of these young people, one can also see how important it is for them that their ideas be made public; ideas which, from their point of view, do not receive enough attention in the current political debate because they are marginalised as dangerous ideas. Thus, there is an attempt to break out of a form of political and social restriction connected to the different processes of stigmatisation. This sense of being excluded from the political arena feeds into radical life paths.

However, the process by which interviewees cross the lines of ideological radicalisation—which manifests itself in intense verbal violence, behavioural radicalisation, and physical violence—is extremely difficult to comprehend. It is certainly necessary to mention the biases of the fieldwork: while the words of certain interviewees appear constrained during the interview, in certain aspects the internet is the space where they express their radical views. My research shows, however, that this shift occurs collectively. In fact, the interview subjects who resorted to physical violence did so in a collective setting.

It is ultimately quite difficult to categorise the milieu under study. Although the ideology of the new right has clearly seeped into this milieu, it is complicated to describe it as extreme-right, ultra-right or anti-Muslim. While the extreme-right is traditionally defined as an anti-democratic political ideology which often promotes biological racism and anti-Semitism, no interviewee explicitly endorses this stance. Yet it clearly seems that during the interviews, when the interviewees present their political ideas and propositions (in particular, to regulate migration and the integration of immigrants), the shift towards anti-democracy is indeed possible. The implementation of their political proposals would indeed involve challenging democracy, although they themselves do not declare any undemocratic positions. Furthermore, they all deny supporting biological racism and especially anti-Semitism. However, they all adhere to 'new racism', which Balibar (1997) defines as a form of racism articulated in terms of

decolonisation. It is a social phenomenon centred on the issue of immigration and operating within the framework of a racism without races, which justifies exclusion in the name of the irreducibility of cultural differences seen in the incompatibility of different ways of life. These logics of exclusion and oppression are based on both cultural and social essentialism. Immigrants from former colonies suffer from inferiority, originating during colonisation, which, as we have shown, is based on the assumption of not only racial inequality but civilisational inferiority. Moreover, the interview subjects all point to the 'cultural' incompatibility of Islam and Muslims with European (Christian) societies. This reveals the extent to which this new racism is currently focused on Islam and Muslims who, according to this ideology, remain deeply unassimilable. Shifts in vocabulary illustrate this point well. During interviews, subjects use the terms 'migrants', 'immigrants' and 'Muslims' interchangeably. They also consistently view French people who are Muslim and of North African descent simply as immigrants, foreign nationals, and very rarely French citizens.


If they categorically reject Islam, it is also because they see it as a conquering religion, a cultural world that knows how to protect its borders, including in a belligerent manner. It affords a very strong cultural belonging that individuals cannot, and will not, lose. In this sense, we might suggest that they see Muslim belonging as an ideal form of cultural belonging, especially in its belligerent dimension; it is such a belonging that they aspire to. Indeed, in Europe, and more broadly in the West, the Muslim world has always been more or less perceived as a world aspiring to hegemony, a proselytising, strong, convincing, threatening world; the fear of invasion by Muslims (barbarian invasions, *razzias*) is an old fear. The interviewees perceive Islam almost exclusively as a conquering, combative, fanatical religion, and this is precisely what makes it intolerable. They themselves would like the European world, Christian for some, White for others, to be a conquering, combative, fanatical cultural world. Here we see the ambivalence of the relationship between our interviewees and Islam, and more broadly between East and West, and the 'mirror effects' (Henry, 1984: 14) that characterise it.

Finally, the absence of ideological references should be noted. The interviewees do not draw their ideas directly from ideological sources. While their interpretive framework is clearly influenced by the new right and aligns in many ways with the arguments of its thinkers (Faye, Benoist), none ever mentioned their name during the interviews. It therefore appears that this ideology of the new right, which took shape at the end of the 1960s, has infiltrated French society enough to be relayed by many contemporary figures. It is important to note that certain YouTubers (but also certain journalists as well as French politicians) are echoing this thinking today, as mentioned in the introduction.

## 6. References

- Abdellali H. and Marwan M. (2013) *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le 'problème musulman'*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Assemblée Nationale (2019) *Commission d'enquête sur la lutte contre les groupuscules d'extrême droite en France*, Rapport n°2006.
- Balibar E. (1997) 'Racisme et nationalisme'. In Balibar E. and Wallerstein I. (eds) *Race, nation, classe, Les identités ambiguës*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte et Syros, pp. 54-92.
- Barth F. (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Becker Howard S. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.



- Berstein S. (1993) 'Les classes moyennes devant l'histoire'. *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire*, 37: 3-12.
- Boltanski L. (1982) *Les cadres: la formation d'un groupe social* Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Bosc S. (2008) *Sociologie des classes moyennes*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Bourdieu P. (1993) *La misère du monde*. Paris: Seuil.
- Camus J.Y. (1996) 'Origine et formation du front national (1972-1981)'. In Mayer N. and Perrineau P. (eds) *Le Front national à découvert*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, pp. 17-36.
- Charle C. (2003) 'Les classes moyennes en France. Discours pluriel et histoire singulière 1870-2000', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 50(4): 108-134.
- Charlot M. (1986) 'L'émergence du Front national', *Revue française de science politique*, 36(1): 30-45.
- Collovald A., Gaïti B. (2006) *La démocratie aux extrêmes: sur la radicalisation politique*, Paris: La Dispute.
- Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme (2016) *Rapport sur la lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie*.
- Corcuff P. (2015) 'Régence de l'essentialisme dans les discours public autour de l'Islam dans la France postcoloniale', *Confluences Méditerranée*, 4(95): 119-130.
- Crépon S. (2006) 'Anti-utilitarisme et déterminisme identitaire. Le cas de l'extrême droite contemporaine', *Revue du MAUSS*, 1(27): 240-51.
- Crettiez X. and Sèze R. (2017) 'Saisir les mécanismes de la radicalisation violente: pour une analyse processuelle et biographique des engagements violents'. *Rapport de recherche pour la Mission de recherche Droit et Justice*.
- Crettiez X. (2016) 'Penser la radicalisation, une sociologie processuelle des variables de l'engagement violent'. *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 5(66): 709-27.
- Cutaia N. (2013) 'Mouvements islamophobes et Charles Martel: quelle réappropriation ? Cas d'étude sur le Bloc identitaire et l'affaire de la mosquée de Poitiers'. *Cahiers Mémoire et Politique*, 1: 1-27.
- Di Nunzio D. and Toscano E. (2014) 'Taking everything back: CasaPound, a Far Right Movement in Italy'. In Farro, A.L. and Thaler, H. L. (ed.), *Reimagining Social Movement. From Collectives to Individuals*. London: Ashgate, pp. 251-262.
- Duranton-Crabol A.N. (1988) 'La "nouvelle droite" entre printemps et automne (1968-1986)'. *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, 17: 39-50.
- Gastaut Y. (1993) 'La flambée raciste de 1973 en France', *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 9(9): 61-75. 
- Ginhoux B. (2012) 'L'interdiction de stade. Analyse de la mise à l'épreuve de la carrière des supporters de football ultras', *Sociétés et jeunes en difficulté*, 13: 1-22.
- Goffman E. (1963) *Stigma, Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New-York: Simon & Schuster.
- Grégoire K. (2016) 'Les origines du Front National', *Pouvoirs*, 157: 5-15.
- Hafez F. (2014) 'Shifting borders: Islamophobia as common ground for building pan-European right-wing unity'. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 48(5): 479-99.
- Henry J.R. (1984) 'Résonances maghrébines', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 37(1): 5-14.

- Hyman H. (1954) *Interviewing in social research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Klandermans B., Linden A. and Mayer N. (2005) 'Le monde des militants d'extrême droite en Belgique, en France, en Allemagne, en Italie et aux Pays-Bas', *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, 5(12): 469-85.
- Laurens S. (2014) 'Le Club de l'horloge et la haute administration: promouvoir l'hostilité à l'immigration dans l'entre-soi mondain', *Agone*, 54(2): 73-94.
- Lebourg N. (2016) 'L'hydre de l'ultradroite'. *Sciences Humaines*, 315(6): 25.
- Lebourg N., Preda J. and Beauregard J. (2014) *Aux racines du FN L'histoire du mouvement Ordre nouveau*. Paris: Fondation Jean Jaurès.
- Lee B. (2015) 'A Day in the 'Swamp': Understanding Discourse in the Online Counter-Jihad Nebula'. *Democracy and Security*, 11(3): 248-274.
- Liauzu C. (1989) *L'islam de l'Occident. La question de de l'Islam dans la conscience occidentale*. Paris: Arcantère Éditions.
- Liauzu C. (1992) *Race et Civilisation, L'autre dans la culture occidentale*. Paris: Syros Alternative.
- Liauzu C. (1996) *Histoire des migrations en Méditerranée occidentale*. Paris: Éditions Complexe.
- Liauzu C. (1999) *La société française face au racisme de la révolution à nos jours*. Paris: Éditions Complexe.
- Liauzu C. (2000) 'L'héritage colonial: un trou de mémoire: immigration, colonisation et racisme: pour une histoire liée', *Hommes et Migrations*, 1228: 5-14.
- Mayer N. and Perrineau, P. (1996) *Le Front national à découvert*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Mayer N. (1995) 'L'entretien selon Pierre Bourdieu. Analyse critique de La misère du monde', *Revue française de sociologie*, 36(2): 355-370.
- Nicolas C. (2013) 'Mouvements islamophobes et Charles Martel: quelle réappropriation? Cas d'étude sur le Bloc identitaire et l'affaire de la mosquée de Poitiers', *Cahiers Mémoire et Politique* (1): 11-27.
- Peretti M. (2015) 'Excitabilité de l'objet, sensibilité du chercheur ... comment faire du terrain sur le racisme en Corse', *Spécificité*, 2(8): 79-87.
- Smith A.D. (1993) *National identity*. Nevada: University of Nevada Press.
- Taguieff P.A. (1985) 'Le néo-racisme différentialiste. Sur l'ambiguïté d'une évidence commune et ses effets pervers'. *Langage et société*, 34:69-98.
- Terrazzoni L. (2019) *Les autres en Corse, pour une sociologie des relations interethniques*. Ajaccio: Albiana.
- Wirth L. (1945). 'The Problem of Minority Groups'. In Linton R. (ed.) *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 34

## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 7.1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Country of Birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Religiosity	Residential status	No. in household
Dean	32	Italy	Completed vocational secondary	In-full-time	French, Corsican	Has girlfriend but not living together	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	1
Gonzales	33	France	Completed vocational secondary	In prison	French, Corsican	Single	Male	No religion	Not applicable	In prison	Not applicable
Redford	25	France	Did not complete university and left	In part time (seasonal worker)	French, Corsican	Single	Male	Atheist	Not applicable	Not known	Not known
Bobby	32	France	Bachelor's degree obtained in prison	In prison	French, Corsican	Married	Male	Pagan	Not applicable	Prison	Not applicable
Casino	24	France	Did not completed secondary education and left	Unemployed	French, Corsican	Single	Male	No religion	Not applicable	Lives at home with single parent	2
John	23	France	Completed university	Part time (seasonal worker)	French, Corsican	Single	Male	Catholic	Not applicable	Lives independently alone	1
Mikaël	34	France	Completed university	In-full-time	French, Corsican	Divorced	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	Lives independently with own children	2

<b>Gary</b>	24	France	Currently university	Student	French, Corsican	Single	Male	Christian	Believer	Lives independently alone	1
<b>Brandon</b>	26	France	Completed university	In-full-time	French, Corsican	Has girlfriend but not living together	Male	Christian	Believer	Lives independently alone	1
<b>Christopher</b>	45	France	Did not completed secondary education and left	In-full-time (sick leave)	French, Corsican	Has girlfriend and living together	Male	Christian	Believer and Practising	Lives with partner and child	3
<b>Jack</b>	32	France	Not known	In prison	French, Corsican	Married	Male	Catholic	Believer	In prison	Not applicable
<b>Sauveur</b>	22	France	Not known	In prison	French Corsican	Has girlfriend	Male	Christian	Not known	In prison	Not applicable
<b>S</b>	16	France	Currently in general academic secondary education	Student	French, Corsican	Single	Male	No religion	Not applicable	Lives at home with both parents	5
<b>Warren</b>	25	France	Completed university	In prison	French, Corsican	Has girlfriend	Male	Not known	Not applicable	In prison	Not applicable
<b>James</b>	23	France	Completed university	Full time	French, Corsican	Single	Male	Catholic	Not applicable	Lives independently alone	1
<b>Friend</b>	29	France	Completed vocational secondary education	Full time	French, Corsican	Single	Male	Catholic	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	1

Steve	30	France	Completed university	Full time	French, Corsican	Has girlfriend	Male	Not known	Not applicable	Lives with partner	2
-------	----	--------	----------------------	-----------	------------------	----------------	------	-----------	----------------	--------------------	---