10 Appropriation

Owning the injustice

From an imagined past to imagined selves

Identity remains an elusive concept. As Hall (1997) argues, modernity has resulted in identities becoming increasingly fluid and malleable, with individuals assuming different – and sometimes contradictory – identities at different times. Nevertheless, identity does seem to matter, especially when it comes to collective mobilisations: 'People collectively identify themselves and others, and they conduct their everyday lives in terms of those identities' (Jenkins, 2004, p.9). Our small and big actions are influenced by how we perceive ourselves and our place in the world: 'Action is wedded to identity [and] we seek to corroborate our identity – I act in accordance with who I think I am – and [...] we aspire to certain identities – I act to realize a certain desired self' (Presser, 2016). *Collective identity* has been put forth as an essential vehicle through which individuals connect to a particular collective and feel the urge to stand up for it (Ferguson & McAuley, 2020; Hafez & Mullins, 2015; Ruggiero, 2005). Movements frequently use or construct a collective identity to mobilise members for a cause and strengthen solidarity between them (McAdam et al., 2004).

Anderson (1983) theorised nation-states as relying on the idea of an *imagined community*, whose members perceive themselves as linked through a 'deep, horizontal comradeship [...] which makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, but to die for such limited imaginings.' (p.7). It is at least partly due to the power of imagined communities and collective identities that massive mobilisation for the two world wars or various civil and ethnic conflicts throughout the 20th and 21st century was possible. Sacrificing one's life for a cause seems to be linked to individuals feeling connected to a great common shared identity.

Yet, which collectivity do individuals connect with and why? Do national, linguistic, ethnic or cultural variables matter, or is the ability to *suffer with and for others* more universal in nature? Rydgren (2007) argues that the ethnic factor of convergence becomes salient in a context where 'the allocation of resources and rights – and risks – hinge [*sic*] on ethnic category belonging' (p.227). Cojanu (2014) proposes to consider 'ethno-symbolism as [a] legitimising mechanism of identity feelings and collective rights' (p.217).

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Regarding mobilisations for the Arab-Muslim World, there has been much talk about individuals' self-perception of belonging to a global Muslim nation or community and the role that sense of belonging plays in mobilising them to join battlegrounds to defend what they arguably see as brothers and sisters in the religion (Abi-Hashem, 2004; Lakhani, 2014; Piscatori, 2019). Pan-Arabism has also long been a companion of Pan-Islamism, although the relationship continues to be conflictual. There is also a dominant narrative linking Arab identity to Sunnism more specifically, outcasting Shiism as Persian and therefore antithetical to Arab (Childs, 2011). The perception of a transnational Arab identity and community, while effectively based on a shared official language and many cultural references, is also the product of cultural efforts by media and television to forge and maintain the collective imaginary of an *Arab World* (Ouassini & Ouassini, 2020).

In his study on the actual and imagined identities of Salafis in Jordan, Abu Rumman (2014) finds that Salafi militancy needs to be analysed not in relation to its ideology but to the sociology of identity. He argues that in the context of the continuous failure of pan-Arab initiatives and regimes, Salafism emerged as one of the forms of political Islamic activism with a declared aim to remedy social and societal ills by returning to the perceived origins of the religion. Interestingly, Abu Rumman argues that the identity of Salafis in Jordan is based on an overemphasised sense of Otherness that is used as a vehicle to demarcate themselves. As such, their identity is therefore not oriented towards general recognition, but towards exclusion, as suggested by Amartya Sen (2007). Abu Rumman's analysis is based on theories around identity developed by Iranian philosopher Darius Shayegan, who argues that religion-based identity, i.e., Islamic identity, has evolved to become the common denominator of Muslim-majority countries and thus a strong unifying factor for Muslims around the world (Shayegan, 2014). Similarly, yet more pessimistically, Kundnani (2014) argues that extremist violence in Europe, whether within the jihadist or the right-wing spectrum, is based on an 'apolitical, conspiratorial and narrowly identitarian' (p.285) and therefore totally uncritical worldview, in which all societal ills are attributed to an identified and demonised Other. Regarding Hezbollah, Childs (2011) observes that the group has managed to reactivate a transnational Shia identity and link it to the general ideology of resistance (*muqawama*) and thereby maintaining domestic and some international legitimacy. This idea of a specifically Shia transnational identity has also manifested itself in the rise of Iraqi militias following the country's invasion by Daesh in 2014 (Al-Rawi & Jiwani, 2017).

Since collective identity is frequently linked to the past, it must be understood as inherently intertwined with collective memory. Candau (1998) also emphasises the link between the two, while cautioning against holistic assumptions about collective memories: Collective or social memory is fragmentary, malleable and does not exist outside individual memory. Rather, he suggests, memory needs to be analysed and contextualised in terms of its local genesis and manifestations, to understand how it comes to shape identity formation processes. Either way, *memory work* thus frequently overlaps with *identity work*, meaning that the performance of narrating the past is often linked to an ambition to shape collective

identity (Candau, 1998; Candau, 2017). Hence, beyond linguistic and ethnic characteristics, any collective identity must be analysed as a social construction inscribed in a specific moment and context. Nevertheless, brought back to the individual level and the relationship with action, it seems that whatever the objective *raison d'être* of their collective identity, individuals who consider their grievances as *collective* have a (for the least, implicit) understanding of what that collective is, what defines it and why they see themselves as belonging to it.

Adopting and negotiating collective identities

One factor that is relevant for this understanding is the way individuals identify themselves with those that are seen to be suffering. Interviewees feel vicariously victimised. They feel that what is happening to those who are suffering could be happening to them as well. Although this may hold true in many respects, they still undergo a specific mental process of reformulating the victimisation they are witnessing as something that does, or rather must, affect them personally as well.

Across the narratives, interviewees identify themselves with the collectives that correspond to their personal identity, which they have inherited from their families or their context of upbringing. Hence, individuals feel drawn towards Hezbollah and identify with the suffering of Shia Muslims in the Arab World because they are from a Shia family. Christian activists feel particularly concerned by the persecution of and violence against Christian communities. Sunni Muslim interviewees are more strongly impacted by the suffering of Sunni Muslims at the hands of those who subjugate and criminalise them because of their associations with Daesh or the Muslim Brotherhood. For instance, when the Syrian Civil War broke out, the residents of BT showed great solidarity with the revolutionaries

> Because BT was the first place that went down to the street with the flag of the Free Syrian Army, we all went down. We went down to show solidarity. Once they captured Syrian fighters here, and we went down, we would protest so they set them free, and put a lot of pressure on them.
>
> (Bader, Lebanon)

Kurdish interviewees identify more strongly with the plight of Kurdish minorities throughout the Arab World. Finally, individuals identify with a collective because of their living environment in a country or region: People from Tripoli identify with the suffering of Tripolitanians, and people from South Lebanon identify strongly with the suffering of Shia Muslims and Christians at the hands of Israel. Fahad points to the solidarity between Tripolitanians

> In prison, they used to call us Tripolitanians unbelievers, but then we became greater in number, reaching 250 and you couldn't say anything about us anymore, because there is a strong bond of solidarity between us.
>
> (Fahad, Lebanon)

Similar themes can be found in the narratives of Alawite fighters

> They said come and smoke argeela [waterpipe], we don't have anything to do with them. I said I can't. When you see an Alawi be shot or injured, you have to fight.
>
> (Yahya, Lebanon)

At an overarching level of identity, and especially in relation to the Arab World, one's identification as Arab or Muslim can strongly contribute to feeling concerned about what is happening to Arabs and Muslims throughout the world in the age of the Global War on Terror

> Yes, there was a feeling of collective injustice. Especially when people see things like the invasion of Iraq or the Syrian civil war. The Muslim community here in Quebec gets very strongly affected by these things, although they happen thousands of miles away.
>
> (Meriem, Canada)

This collective Muslim identity that is present in many narratives corresponds sometimes to the idea of being part of a global struggle against Western powers. Interviewees see connections between their own fighting and struggles by predominantly Muslim groups in other contexts

> We were always following the news of the US, of the Russians, Chechens, etc. I had downloaded videos of operations and anthems etc. So, they thought that because I was watching these videos, I was certainly with terrorist organisations. They took my phone and they saw all of these things.
>
> (Nassim, Lebanon)

Also, as mentioned above, especially in the Western context, interviewees also identify as 'from the South', non-white, non-European, and therefore express solidarity with all the peoples who have suffered the impact of European imperialism. Other forms of negative identification include refusing to be considered as Western and emphasising pride in one's Arabness or non-Westernness; or refusing to be considered Arab in the case of some Kurds or Christians (Christian Maronite Lebanese conservatives emphasise their supposedly Phoenician genetic heritage). Daniel explains the link between his internationalist engagement and his otherness in the European context as follows

> My political engagement is essentially focused on internationalist struggles. I take my role of an internationalist to heart now. I think the fact that I am a second-generation immigrant…it makes it difficult to feel like I am home…I feel home nowhere and at the same time anywhere. This internationalist position suits me because it corresponds to my identity…simply put. That's why

> I am supporting the struggles for independence, national liberation, like the Kurds or the Mapuche.
>
> (Daniel, Switzerland)

These vectors of identification do not invite, however, to essentialisation, for several reasons. First, interviewees repeatedly stress, as has been mentioned, that their cause is a human cause and that they feel strongly about injustices that happen to other collectives as well. They also make efforts to convey that anyone should feel strongly about the cause that they care about, because the suffering and the injustice are of universal relevance. Nidhal explains this as follows

> To me, the resistance does not necessarily have to do with Islam, with Shia… the resistance happens everywhere. Soviet in Afghanistan, Stalingrad, Nazis, Vietnam, Che Guevara, these resistance movements, wherever they are taking place, as long as they are causes of justice, I am with them.
>
> (Nidhal, Lebanon)

Second, in line with all the preceding findings, the trajectories of activists must be understood as inherently fluid, constantly changing, and strongly influenced by their environment, including their family, their friends, the school they visit and the neighbourhood they grow up in. Hence, these individuals come to identify with a particular collective because of their socialisation. They learn to identify with a specific collective. As a result, the suffering of that collective becomes more salient and more relevant to their trajectories. It is therefore not their identity per se, whether ethnic, religious or else, but the result of a co-constructed identity formation process that has an impact on their collective identity.

Finally, not only do individuals identify with a collective as a result of a process of what seems to be a process of *positive socialisation*, i.e., feeling drawn towards a collective, they also identify with a collective because they experience *negative socialisation*, i.e., being pushed away from a collective. This also includes environmental as well as historical factors, such as particular crises during which violence becomes more commonplace. Crises tend to force people into choosing one identity over another, especially if these identities are involved in a conflict at the macro level. By negative socialisation, I am referring to their being forced into a particular role or identity because they are repeatedly made to feel that they are different, not accepted as part of the place or society they grow up in. As a result of these processes of *othering*, they choose to embrace their *Otherness* more assertively. All interviewees that are engaged politically and for specific causes, display very strong confidence regarding their identity, although that identity is always one that is *Othered.* Politico-ideological engagement includes this reconciliation, at some point, with one's identity. This process may be accompanied by feelings of frustration, but the end result is usually a positive one, in terms of personal gratification and inner peace. Given that these interviewees are met at a later point of their engagement, they are usually already significantly settled in their identities, but their narratives reveal that throughout their trajectories, there

has been a point or moment of rupture, a sense of betrayal, an epiphany where they started seeing behind the dominant narrative, finding a sort of truth to which only a few have access, and a sense of regaining strength in that new identity.

This identity, which is the result of a process of reconciliation with oneself, is generally a positive driver of engagement. It supports identification with those who are considered to be part of a similar collective and drives engagement for more justice and equality. However, exclusive over-identification with a single collective can also breed new forms of racism and othering, if the basis for the identification is a narrowly identitarian one. In fact, it is when these individuals themselves essentialise their identity, and exclude and *other* others based on it, that identity formation processes can become drivers of new injustices.

Framing violence: From self-defence to doing justice

As I mentioned earlier, politico-ideological violence is, by essence, defensive in nature, conceived of as a *counterattack*, and therefore perceived as inherently *moral* (Abu Rumman, 2014; Lakhani, 2014). Colvin and Pisoiu (2020) found that *denial of the victim* is frequently performed by framing the act of violence as defence, deterrence or retaliation. To explore possible ways of making sense of and justifying violence, it is worthwhile briefly discussing the notions of *resistance, self-defence*, *retaliation*, *revenge* and the idea of *doing justice*.

Experiences of violence and injustice may lead to the formation of what has been termed *resistance identities* (Liebling & Williams, 2018), *rebellious identities* (Hafez & Mullins, 2015) or *imaginaries of resistance* (Crettiez, 2011). Operating out of a stance of 'resistance' is likely to imbue actions and actors with a sense of righteousness. Groups, movements and organisations engaging in and promoting political violence tend to perceive and declare themselves as engaged in resistance, struggle, opposition, protest, rebellion or revolution. Mansbridge and Morris (2001) define this as *oppositional consciousness*, a sentiment fuelled by anger over injustice and prompted by personal indignities and harms suffered. Oppositional consciousness rests on *oppositional identity,* which results from 'identifying with an unjustly subordinated group, recognizing the injustice in that group's position, opposing that injustice, and recognizing a group identity of interest in ending that injustice' (Mansbridge & Morris, 2001, p.240). Ruggiero (2005) found oppositional consciousness to be of particular relevance for the emergence of the *Brigate Rosse* in Italy. One also notes that the vocabulary employed in academic research alludes to the notion of resistance, via terms such as 'violent resistance', 'contentious politics' (McAdam et al., 2004), 'political contestation' (Villiger, 2013), or 'oppositional protest movements' (Burgat, 2016). For the Western post-9/11 carceral context, Some argue that Islam has become the 'religion of the oppressed' (Hamm, 2007, p.7), the 'new underdog religion' (Liebling et al., 2011, p.58), and therefore particularly suitable as an ideology of collective resistance. Beyond the carceral context, the attraction of Islam as a religion of resistance is an essential tool for understanding jihadist sympathisers and actors. Like freedom fighters in the past, such as those fighting in the

context of decolonisation, they invoke the religious vocabulary to give a sense of grandiosity and profundity to their struggle and 'espouse the same ideals of revolt and insubordination' (Geisser et al., 2017, p.198).

We may therefore consider the notion of resistance as being tied to a self-perception built over a longer period with a significant impact on identity formation processes. The notion of *self-defence* is, in contrast, more operational, for it determines more clearly that a violent act is *legitimate* in response to a specific act of *aggression*. This principle has been codified into the criminal laws of modern nation-states by positing legitimate defence as primarily non-criminal and deserving of lenience, and international treaties such as, for instance, the UN Charter which states

> Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of collective or individual self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.
>
> (Ch. VII, Art. 51)

The idea of self-defence is therefore far from alien to human nature. It translates the age-old principle of *lex talionis*, which suggests that reacting to aggression using proportionate means is a legitimate course of action. An important issue with self-defence is temporality: Until when is a counterattack justified? At what point does an act of self-defence turn into retaliation or revenge, because the original attack lies simply too far in the past, outside the timeframe within which self-defence can legitimately take place? If we look again at international law, we realise that the notion of self-defence has been stretched not only horizontally (from individual to collective self-defence), but also temporally, to a vaguely determined (and contentious) timeframe before a presumed or expected attack (also called *anticipatory or pre-emptive self-defence*) and, importantly, *after* the attack (Franck, 2001), which is then, arguably, to be considered as retaliation or, more cynically, revenge. By way of example, the doctrine of *pre-emptive* self-defence was the basis (although not sanctioned by the UN Security Council) for the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Greenwood, 2003). The US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, on the other hand, demonstrates the idea of *post-hoc* self-defence, which essentially amounts to retaliation or revenge (Greenwood, 2003).

This brief excursion into international law and affairs merely serves to illustrate the universality of the notion of self-defence and the possibilities of extending it both horizontally (to others, not directly impacted) and temporally (before and after an act of aggression). This process provides a logical framework to morally justify acts of retaliation and revenge, something that can frequently be found in rationalisations of PIV (Grace, 2018). If put and framed in a convincing way, acts of violence can come to be perceived as reasonable, necessary or even noble. It is based on such logics that one may, for example, come to condone the 9/11 attacks, or, likewise, the subsequent US-led escalation into the GWOT, including drone assassinations, unlawful offshore detention and torture. Hence, acts of immense

and often indiscriminate violence, essentially acts of revenge, can come to be considered as *doing justice*. As Kaliayev[1] says in Camus' play *Les Justes*, after he participated in the assassination of the Grand Duke: 'What crime? I only remember an act of justice' (Camus, 1950, p.116) or as Nizar Qabbani, poet and former Syrian diplomat, wrote, referring to the Israeli–Palestinian context: 'I am with terrorism, if it is able to free a people from tyrants and tyranny' [2]. Grace (2018) notes that 'revenge is universal, existing in most societies as some form of payback or infliction of pain on a perpetrator to minimize one's own pain, restore justice, and stop harm' (p.250). Political violence is frequently framed as retaliatory action or revenge intended to restore justice (Marsella, 2004; Silke, 2004). Terrorist groups justify their actions as retribution for military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Grace, 2018; Mohamedou, 2018). Ratelle and Souleimanov (2017) found that retaliation and revenge are key incentives in the violent insurgency in the North Caucasus. Lankford and Hakim (2011) found revenge to be an essential motivating factor for rampage shooters as well as terrorist groups.

It is also important to note that although there may be some consensus on *lex talionis*, perceptions of what constitutes an attack or aggression are likely to be more variable, depending on individual, cultural and contextual factors. Thus, the way a situation or event is framed can be particularly impactful. If a situation is diagnosed (in Benford's & Snow's (2000) terms) as being unjust or wrong and constituting an attack, that understanding is likely to have an impact on what is seen as justified in response. In a similar vein, Akers and Silverman (2014) argue that individuals may learn attitudes that justify violence in pursuit of certain political objectives: 'The "framing" of the conflict teaches the terrorists definitions of the situation and when, where, and how often, it is morally right or justified to engage in political violence' (p.27).

'I will always be a troublemaking bastard': Rebellious underdogs

> Everyone wants to be the underdog. But nobody wants to be the underdog of the underdog.
>
> (Khaled, Canada)

A major theme that has crystallised throughout the narratives as a key aspect of collective identity is the figure of the *underdog*. The word underdog denotes a less powerful person, group or thing that struggles against a more powerful person, group or thing. The collective that individuals identify with is usually perceived and portrayed as the *underdog*, as David who is struggling against Goliath. This underdog narrative is both consistent and powerful because it can, at least narratively and intellectually, sustain engagement as a just and righteous cause, for it is oriented towards the defence of the weak against the greater evil. It is through their identification with the figure of the underdog that interviewees come to identify with the most heinous acts of violence. The following excerpt from the interview with Nassim indicates that the interviewee's approval of Osama Bin Laden

emerges essentially from his admiration for the figure of the underdog being able to strike at the heart of the perceived oppressor

> I loved Osama. I was following him. What he did in the US, I was proud of it. Or I liked Khattab Al Shishani, because he fought against the Russians and he hurt them, although they were living in the mountains. That is something a Muslim is proud of. Most of us are like this here. Even though we were perhaps not even praying. To see that American machines were being destroyed, we enjoyed that. It was the only reasonable thing to do: to hate the US and Israel.
>
> (Nassim, Lebanon)

Interestingly, Nassim also alludes to a presumed link between the idea of jihad and religiosity. Thereby, he is responding to the widespread idea that jihad is somewhat the result of religiosity 'pushed to the extreme'. By stating that 'they were not even praying', his intention is to stress the fact that this idea of defence and retaliation does not have much to do with a particular religious orientation, but with a universal human instinct, in line with the findings presented above.

Given its struggle against hegemonic narratives and attitudes, the underdog identity is also, in a way, an outsider mentality. By detaching themselves from what is perceived as normal, interviewees consciously adopt a radical and rebellious identity. Interviewees can not only thrive as outsiders but may have difficulty changing an identity with which they have become so familiar, as this quote by Kevin strikingly illustrates

> I can't just stop. This is who I am. This will always be my struggle because it's the only thing that makes sense to me. I will always be a troublemaking bastard […] You know, even if I just smoke a cigarette, the cops will come and beat me up. So I prefer to do something to at least justify their violence.
>
> (Kevin, Canada)

The 'troublemaking bastard' translates to a defiant and rebellious posture. *Rebelliousness* is closely related to the figure of the underdog. It is a positive and assertive stance that, on the one hand, emerges naturally from the rupture with what is perceived as the norm. On the other hand, it corresponds to an aspect that will be further explored below, namely the fact that although interviewees identify with the underdog and adopt a discourse of victimhood, they refuse to give in to victimisation and injustice. Rebelliousness means that one refuses to sit through the oppression and idly wait for it to end, but actively opposes and fights it. This stance is crucial to radicality. This adoption of a rebellious underdog identity is well illustrated by Nooreddine, after I ask him whether he and his friends accept the label 'radical Muslims' with which they are frequently confronted

> I mean, what does it mean to be radically Islamic. The media definitely sees us this way. It is very interesting that one of the first instances of outcry about us was when we refused to shake hands with women during an official

> meeting. They made a huge fuss about it and called us radical. We might discuss whether this is really radical or not…But given our position and the way we were attacked, we certainly had to be reactive to a certain extent. We were, I would say, rebelliously Islamic.
>
> (Nooreddine, Switzerland)

The link between rebelliousness, a refusal to idly endure injustice, and the figure of the underdog are also strongly present in the narratives of Hezbollah sympathisers. The group has always maintained the figure of the resistant underdog against a more sophisticated and more powerful military opponent, and it was through that figure that they gained so much popularity among the Lebanese people. The liberation of southern Lebanon in 2000 and the pushback of the Israeli army in the 2006 July War were especially important to the image of Hezbollah because their military victory was not any military victory, but the triumph of the underdog, of David over Goliath. It is interesting to note that the image of the underdog continues to nurture the narratives of Hezbollah sympathisers who frequently refer to their regained strength after decades of oppression

> I remember the liberation very clearly. I was young and I was nine and I remember that we got stronger, because we had worth now…before that we were oppressed, occupied, our families were being spat at, kidnapped, etc. these things. When we went to the South…we were a minority. Now we have the power, the pride, that we can defend ourselves.
>
> (Thulfiqar, Lebanon)

> After the Islamic revolution in Iran, it was like a new generation was built. Shia more specifically, but the oppressed in general, in Iraq, the Shia was always oppressed. And in Lebanon, Hezbollah brought the pride of Shia back. With Hezbollah, the time of the weak Shia is definitely over.
>
> (Samir, Lebanon)

> The second day of the war, Sayyed Nasrallah said they would attack the naval missile. Nobody believed it until immediately afterwards they put the live stream of the attack. Against all expectations. No one was expecting Hezbollah to have the military technology to drown an Israeli naval ship. This was maybe a turning point …we realised we are strong, we can win this.
>
> (Nidhal, Lebanon)

> In the region… Hezbollah has a standing now. Everyone knows now that Hezbollah cannot be easily defeated.
>
> (Jaafar, Lebanon)

This *comeback mentality*, the idea of the eternal underdog finally achieving victory over the wrongdoer is a powerful narrative, which creates a strong sense of solidarity within the collective that identifies with the role of the underdog.

Pride, dignity and self-worth are restored through military victories in the case of Hezbollah, but this mentality can be found in all forms of radicality. Because the figure of the underdog is oppressed, coming back by attacking, fighting and defeating the more powerful oppressor is seen as a righteous act and therefore empowering for the individual and the group.

The following excerpt from the interview with Aziz illustrates the way the collective identity of *Arabness* is also associated with an underdog identity, especially in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian struggle. It is also interesting to note that he posits religiousness and faith as conditions of the rebellious and righteous Arab identity that defends the oppressed

> Nobody…especially in the Arab world…denies the fact that Israel is very well developed. You have to respect them in terms of politics and military. You see…we don't have anything but our Arabness, our will to fight. We don't have, perhaps even collectively, as Arabs, the military power of Israel. But we have something that distinguishes us which is our faith and our fighting spirit. And this will hopefully bring us victory […]…people who are atheists, and I told you I was with them for a while, but then I realized no, the atheist thinking is changing my understanding of myself as an Arab, someone who fights for the emancipation of the oppressed, the atheist framework made these things vanish. It told me to get away from all these things.
>
> (Aziz, Lebanon)

Never enough: Guilt and Solidarity

Furthermore, there are two emotional states that accompany collective identification processes. On the one hand, the narratives reveal that *solidarity* is a major driver of continuous engagement, not only at an intellectual but, and perhaps more importantly, at an emotional level. The interviewees describe moments where they experienced the solidarity as joyful, rewarding and strengthening their convictions to continue their engagement for a particular cause. In that sense, politico-ideological engagement seems to respond to a fundamental need to feel supported and feel that one can support others, especially in the struggle against injustice. Both these feelings combine to form a positionality of *underdog solidarity* which is consistent throughout the narratives

> When we went down to the Libyan border, there were these refugees and we were helping them, it was a collective effort by all the activists involved, especially those from the South. There was this beautiful solidarity, I really appreciated that.
>
> (Battoul, Canada)

Solidarity is also an important factor for engagement specifically in the Arab World. There is a sort of orientalist fascination with the solidarity and the importance given

to the collective when it comes to the peoples living in the Arab world, whether Arabs, Muslims or Kurds. This is particularly relevant for those interviewees living in Switzerland and Canada, who connect with the region from a certain distance.

Another recurring theme when it comes to emotional states in relation to collective identity and political engagement is *guilt*. Guilt is rarely expressed as such but transpires throughout the narratives. Guilt is a major driver of continuous engagement, of feeling that one has to continue fighting for justice when it comes to the victimisation of that collective. The sources of this guilt are frequently associated with material privilege and possibilities. Interviewees express guilt about the material comfort they are enjoying in their lives. Therefore, the theme is more prominent in the narratives of individuals from Canada and Switzerland but can equally be found in different ways among the more materially privileged interviewees in Lebanon. Sometimes the guilt is the result of feeling that one should be there on the ground to fight with the collective for their cause: Battoul felt guilty about not being able to contribute to the revolution in Tunisia. In Randa's and Zahid's case, their guilt referred to their privilege of being in Canada and not with the revolutionaries in Sudan. Daniel and Richard who went fighting with the Kurdish YPG felt that they abandoned them and wished they could help them on the ground. There is a similar feeling of guilt when Palestinian activists like Asif, Salim or Souhail talk about their investment in the Palestinian cause, which is not always easy to sustain from a distance.

Feelings of guilt are further exacerbated through the repeated comparison between one's own lifestyle and that of the collective one sees as being oppressed and in need of support

> I remember going to Egypt… I was like 13 or 14 and I think it was really the question of…poverty and I think…like having an understanding or like why…why is my life so vastly superior? and everybody here like in the sense like I need to go back to Canada and everything will be yeah…and all of these people live in such poverty…because my mom grew up in which is like a popular sort of you know working-class area…and so like a lot of the times would like you know would go downstairs to play football…go downstairs get ice cream and I would be feeling this…almost a sense of guilt but without being able to really express it.
>
> (Khaled, Canada)

In Aziz' case, it's the possibility to go study abroad that is a source of guilt. His quote also shows how guilt is frequently expressed in terms of caring and taking responsibility for *one's people*

> Since I am a medicine student, I hope that my future will be in this domain. Because you can never be sure here. I hope that I will get a chance to help people. If I get a chance to study abroad, I would go and come back. Because I care about my people, my country, I want to come back and serve my people.
>
> (Aziz, Lebanon)

Another source of guilt is the feeling of not being and doing enough, compared to what members of that collective should supposedly look like or how they should behave. In Pasha's case, this feeling of guilt arose with him feeling that he was not a *good Muslim*, not the way a good Muslim would behave

> You know…although I did get some shots during my childhood…the family was stable…My father is a well-known person in the Muslim community, very religious etc. But I was always rebelling against my parents…because of that identity conflict…I was not living the way I was supposed to be...I didn't match the expectations.
>
> (Pasha, Canada)

This feeling of guilt is strongly present in the narratives of Muslim interviewees. I can also attest to it through my personal experiences living outside the Muslim world as a son of Muslim parents: There is certainly a constant internal debate about whether one is pious enough and sufficiently respectful of traditions and culture. Although the question of how to handle one's roots is certainly relevant for all migrant populations, in the case of Muslim emigrants, this feeling is frequently expressed in terms of religiosity. Caring about tradition and culture is substituted, in a sense, by religiousness.

This sense of guilt is a major factor for those aiming to recruit individuals for jihadist causes in the Arab World. Khalil, in his experience with Muslim youth in the Canadian context, argues that

> Daesh played on this feeling of guilt…they used that to target Europeans and Americans…they said you have the capabilities, you have the passports, the means…there is a cause for you out there… you can help your brothers and defend a righteous cause.
>
> (Khalil, Canada)

In light of the discussion on authenticity below, it can already be said that the power of guilt in driving engagement is heightened by the fact that acting upon the feeling of guilt works in the same direction as increasing one's authenticity. One feels less guilty because one corresponds more neatly to the ideal image of what *one should be doing.* At the same time, seeking authenticity also means working towards an ideal and *real* state of engagement and mobilisation. Hence, engaging and mobilising tend to respond to two major social pressures at once: The need to reduce feelings of guilt and the need to achieve authenticity.

Notes

1 The member of the Russian Social-Revolutionary Combat Organization who preserved his real name in Camus' play.

2 Year unknown. Retrieved from http://www.salaheddine.tripod.com/nizar_terrorism.html.

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