

reader—and by extension the American electorate—that will set the course for our country. His book succeeds in advancing the conversation and encouraging a comprehensive and strategic approach to foreign policy. Although his framework of only three options is relatively simple, it does a fairly good job of capturing a wide continuum of differing mindsets. One could also criticize the work for offering very little in the way of specifics for any of the three options. Of particular note for a military audience was that all three visions included mention of decreased defense spending, a premise that alone could take an entire book to convince some to even consider.

Nonetheless, the purpose of the book is not to finely detail the policies of each strategy, but instead to outline them and encourage a choice within the framework. In that goal, he succeeds. This work is an excellent starting point for an important debate, particularly in an election season. Although it is probably too optimistic to hope for such a nuanced and serious discussion to happen in the public arena, it is fair to expect our policymakers, their staffs, and our citizens to take a harder look at what matters for America. As we all prepare to go to the polls, we should understand better where our priorities in foreign policy lie. This book provides a strong opening salvo for three different visions and a useful structure for discerning one's own choice for the proper role of America in the world. It is only fitting that Bremmer offers an open-ended conclusion: "May we choose wisely."

PRISM

**Terreur dans l'Hexagone:  
Genèse du djihad français  
[Terror in the Hexagon: The  
Genesis of French Jihad]**

By Gilles Kepel, with Antoine Jardin  
Gallimard

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**REVIEWED BY I. WILLIAM ZARTMAN**

**T***error in the Hexagon*<sup>1</sup> is a frightening and authoritative work written for France and, by extension, for the United States. It presents a detailed analysis of the interaction of French society and political Islam over the past decade. This interactional element is of critical importance because, unlike most works on the rise of jihad, this study understands its growth in France as a dynamic between the host population and its leaders and those of the foreign immigrants.

Ten percent of the French population is Muslim. Although France has historically been a melting pot for small groups of minorities, Muslim immigrants have faced—and continue to face—challenges in regard to both French culture and French attitudes toward immigrants, as well as to the very question of what it means to be "French." As important as culture is in France, though, this is not merely a cultural struggle; it is just as deeply an

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economic and a socio-economic struggle on a very personal level for youth who find themselves marginalized and stuck in low-income housing with little hope of finding employment, realizing themselves, or improving their lot. And so it becomes political, a struggle for power—over one's self, one's soul, and one's personal and professional satisfaction in life.

Half a century ago, Algeria was considered by the French to be an integral part of their country; the Algerians, however, were not treated as Frenchmen. When a number of Algerian leaders, including members of the Front de Libération Nationale (the FLN or National Liberation Front), protested that they were not French but Algerian and revolted, France played into their hands by treating all Algerians as rebels and so made its final contribution to nationalist solidarity. "You are not French but Algerian, so act Algerian," they were told by their leaders. Today, many French Muslims feel deep discrimination and so political entrepreneurs tell them, "You are not French but Muslim, so act Muslim," thus conferring a political identity on Islam as a religion. Unlike in Algeria, however, these political entrepreneurs have not succeeded to the same degree in France. In the process, though, the situation has played back into French society and into the political Islam movement as well. This is the message of Kepel's work.

The story begins with the riots of Ramadan in 2005, when youth took to the streets, sometimes violently, to protest the living conditions in the housing agglomerations, dreary and anonymous caserns in the suburbs of Paris that left young people with no place to work, play, or simply hang out, and marked a generational evolution in the political attitudes of the immigrant population. The older generation of North Africans that came after the end

of the Algerian War of Independence in 1962 was mainly interested in integration, both economically and socially, but also sought to retain their religion (without extremism). They sought to exercise their right to vote and in numerous cases were elected to local councils. For the youth, however, more vigorous action burst forth to protest their living conditions. The counter-reaction was swift, beginning with then-Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy's dismissal of the rioters as "a band of riffraff," but crystalizing into the more serious growth of Jean-Marie LePen's xenophobic National Front. Pressed from the new right, Sarkozy, having become president of France, continued to disparage the immigrant population, to the point that when he sought reelection in 2012, the immigrants voted massively to put François Hollande into office. That vote, however, was not repaid—a *trompe l'oeil* victory, as Kepel calls it—and the Muslim immigrants were ready for a further evolution in their political attitudes.

At the same time, political entrepreneurs stood ready in the Middle East to take advantage of the situation of Muslim populations there. The first phase—although in reality it was already the third phase mirroring the evolution of the immigrant attitudes and a longer reach into the past<sup>2</sup>—started with the attempts of national fundamentalist movements to cleanse their own governments of corrupt and impious rulers who did not take care of the physical and spiritual welfare of their own populations. Among those included were the mujahideen and then the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria. (Only the mujahideen in Afghanistan were successful.) The second phase was the transnational movement al-Qaeda, which

thought it useless to attack Arab governments because they depended ultimately on support from the far enemy in the West. They thus believed their destructive efforts should instead be focused on long-distance dramatic attacks on the heart of globalization and imperialism in the United States. The result was the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001. When this created only solidarity against their efforts, however, a third strategy was conceived: to operate “not as an organization but as a system (*nizam, la tanzim*)” and to make random attacks against the soft underbelly of the near enemy, Europe. Resident agents in the United Kingdom and in Spain responded to the appeal to “act as Muslims” and carried out attacks against Madrid and London in March 2004 and July 2005, respectively. (The “system” was one of the networks or rhizomes that lived off of social media, which then became so characteristic of youth movements of the Arab Spring).<sup>3</sup>

This strategy of three phases was the basis of the *Appeal to World Islamic Resistance*, published on the internet in 2005 by Mustafa Setmariam Nasar (known as Abu Musab al-Suri), a Syrian-born, naturalized Spanish engineer hiding in Baluchistan, Pakistan. A significant contribution of Kepel’s book is to bring attention to the work of al-Suri, relatively unknown by commentators among the names of jihad leaders. Al-Suri advocated grassroots terrorist action carried out against civilians in order to sow fear, inspired by but not organized from the top, and characterized by individuals acting in loose networks. (Kepel references a Quranic verse as the oft-cited justification for the use of terrorism, though the term is used in the context of conventional war, not attacks on civilians).<sup>4</sup> Although it is never clear from the account the extent to

which al-Suri was known to terrorists, his work was widely disseminated. Kepel dates the advent of the third phase with the killing of four Jewish children and a Moroccan policeman by Mohammed Merah in 2012, continuing to the horrific attacks in Paris in November 2015 that left 130 people dead and another 368 injured. These are all terrifying examples of al-Suri’s prescriptions. The June 2016 attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, could likewise be included as part of the third phase, as Kepel describes the particular repugnance with which Islamic extremists view homosexuals, whom a hadith orders to be killed.

The implications of this strategy of terrorism are deeply disturbing. Prevention depends on refined information and security over a swarm of individuals, a hydra without a head, not on breaking an organization or its center (despite the pretentious name of the Islamic State or the Caliphate, which facilitates the funding and networking of individuals to commit violence in its name). Terrorism is effective in creating a massive reaction of fear and xenophobia among French voters and commentators alike, which then helps political entrepreneurs win the hearts and minds of the ordinary Muslim population. Ironically, the religious context, twisted but powerful, is further invigorated by the anti-religious sentiment of present-day, nominally Catholic France, and then exacerbated—as the book highlights—by the political support for same-sex marriage and the prohibition of wearing veils that derive from the particular interpretation of France’s constitutional secularism. Above all, however, the incitation of violent extremism is perfectly adapted to take root in the fertile soil of neglect, unemployment, and

aimlessness that turns deprivation into discrimination and revenge.<sup>5</sup>

The most disturbing of the implications is that once the vicious circle of the security dilemma has been activated, it is hard to unwind. Feelings of tolerance, acceptance, and assimilation are not easily generated, and it is not easy to roll back deep-seated discrimination. The need for identity and realization are not quickly satisfied by new measures. Economic crises and recessions, and the pressures of immigration and social disintegration are current concerns not susceptible to rapid policy remedies, and their absence only exacerbates the feelings of neglect and alienation. The United States is not France, but the latitude is the same.

The message is so compelling that it calls for at least some suggestions for a positive response. The weakest part of the work is the nearly total absence of a prescription. The book ends with a half page proposing the ultimate appeal: public education, notably high school and university! Unfortunately, to counter people who firmly believe in immediate salvation in an unknown "Other World" of their inspired imagination, the response of this world has to be a good deal more developed than that. Kepel's book is informing and terrifying (as the Islamists want), and should likewise be galvanizing. But to what end? It tells us to avoid extreme reactions to extremes, but what is the effective middle? A responsive policy was within reach in Hollande's election, where he could have rewarded his supporters with a targeted program of improvement of living conditions, showing that the government cared. It would have taken courage and decision, something in short supply in the government, and it would have been in keeping with the Socialist Party's ideals, currently also

out of reach. It would also require more assiduous intelligence and police work. The same prescriptions still hold, but it is now even more difficult. It will take more than welfare and security policy—it will take leadership to convince the French public to fold over 10 percent of its population into its melting pot.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Hexagon" is a casual synonym for the mainland part of metropolitan France that is derived from the approximate shape of the country.

<sup>2</sup> I. William Zartman, "Political Dynamics of the Maghrib: The Cultural Dialectic," in *Contemporary North Africa*, ed. Halim Barakat (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Heba Raouf and Ali al-Raggal, "Egypt: Can a Revolution be Negotiated?," in *Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat*, ed. I. William Zartman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> In his writing, Kepel cites verse 40 of Surah 8; the correct verse is 60 of Surah 8.

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Arnson and I. William Zartman, eds., *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed* (Washington, DC: The Johns Hopkins University Press and Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005).