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LES FRANÇAIS RADICALISÉS: UNDERSTANDING CAUSES AND VARIANCE OF FRENCH RADICALIZATION

Jessica Schreier

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In the post 9/11 world, radicalization has emerged as a top domestic security concern for nearly every country. In the past five years, France has been the subject of more jihadi-inspired attacks than any other Western nation. Additionally, 2,000 French citizens have joined the Islamic State as foreign fighters, with many now returning back to France. These statistics render France the most important country in Western Europe in regards to counterterrorism, yet little scholarship has been published on French-specific radicalization. This thesis aims to fill this gap by utilizing a theoretical framework to assess the correlations between six variables—unemployment, foreign and immigrant population, population density, Islamic Institutions, and votes for Le Pen—and the rate of radicalization in 96 French *départements*. The findings demonstrate high statistical correlations between these independent variables and rates of radicalization in *départements*, which supports the theory that alienation and economic exclusion of Muslim communities correspond to increases in radicalization. These results represent an innovation in the field of radicalization, both in drawing conclusions on French radicalization and in using empirical evidence to support theory, a rarity in radicalization studies. Ultimately, this thesis recommends tangible changes that can be made to French counter-radicalization policy to curb systematic inequalities against Muslim communities and focus on decreasing rates of radicalization by diagnosing the root causes of the problem, rather than its symptoms. This thesis also suggests the need for nation-based studies on radicalization, as domestic and local circumstances likely influence radicalization.