

## 19.01.2015 Paris murders and mass demonstrations. A historic event.

The three days from the massacre of the editorial staff of Charlie Hebdo to the Sunday's mass demonstrations will go down in history. It is the whole of society which was wounded, which felt itself destabilised, and which found in itself an irrepressible need for a collective response. That was expressed most forcefully by the demonstrators in their millions.

France at its deepest felt the violence of the attack, and demonstrations to show the emotion of the people were held everywhere, including Corsica. And this reaction went beyond France, as the impressive turnout of heads of state who travelled to march in the streets of Paris showed, while many capital cities saw demonstrators in their tens of thousands. Just like the response to the attack on the twin towers in New York, the attacks in Paris touched people all over the world.

In France, in Europe, and beyond, this dignified and massive response was reassuring. It was essential, vital even, to calm public opinion that had been turned on its head. But the days following this collective test will be decisive in averting the risk of a deep crisis with grave consequences.

Because the origins of the Paris attacks have lost nothing of their relevance. Within the borders of the Middle East first of all, the political crisis is growing day by day, in Iraq, in Syria, as far as Libya, without forgetting Afghanistan which remains explosive with its entanglements with Pakistan, and, via the diaspora, across the English-speaking world.

What will be the anchor points which the "united nations" can use to re-establish the prospect of improvement and progress towards peace? The Kurdish resistance is one of them, facing an "Islamic State" that wants to take "jihad" to the four corners of the world. One clear priority must be to finally stabilise the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which has been left unresolved since the Oslo accords twenty years ago, after Yitzhak Rabin was killed in a terrorist attack. Could the presence of both the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian president at the Paris march finally get negotiations back on track?

Another basis for infernal terrorist mechanism is intrinsic to French society. Could the terrorism of the Kouachi brothers and Coulibaly, born and bred in France, spring up in Denmark where the press first published the notorious sacrilegious cartoons? Probably not, because the leadership of ISIS or Al Qaida need a pool of young people to recruit from populations which are marginalised and pushed into extremism in the societies in which they live. In the same way that the Baader-Meinhof gang of the 1970s were a German form of terrorism, trapped in a German society ravaged by the traumas of Nazism and the Brigade Rosse were a genuinely Italian left-wing deviation in the same years following the events of 1968, the terrorism which was unleashed in Paris had profoundly French roots, as is illustrated by the path taken by the three lost soldiers of the jihad.

It is clear that the most primal anti-Islamic reactions, echoed by all the anti-Arab racism that France has harboured since the colonisation of Algeria and its war of independence, can only serve to strengthen the most tenacious hatreds, those that lead to the most irreparable acts of extremism. The breeding ground for potential terrorists that the fatwas of Al Qaida and ISIS push into crime is a French breeding ground: it has nothing to do with the questioning of the Schengen agreements or all the macho posturing about security into which the French political game routinely descends, and it cannot be reduced to the three lost jihadists shot down by the police last week.

This reality was something which had been grasped well before the murders at Charlie Hebdo, and undoubtedly the police services failed to fulfil their preventive role in the face of a risk of which everyone was aware. The precedent of Mehdi Nemmouche, whose profile was very similar, shooting visitors to the Jewish museum in Brussels and then being arrested by the purest chance at Marseille by customs officers on an anti-drug operation, already showed that French security arrangements had some gaping holes. For three other "holy madmen" to be able to prepare and commit the act only six months later despite their highly chequered pasts, is certainly worrying.

Lastly there remains the profound trauma that the murders of 7 January will leave in the minds of all in France. That relates to a great extent to the fact that the victims were not unknowns, but people who were familiar to a very large majority of the French. The talents of Wolinski and Cabu formed part of the upbringing of successive generations. The younger Tignous and Charb became familiar in the media after they were targeted following the caricatures affair ten years ago.

This targeted terrorism is even more frightening than the blind sort. By succeeding in their mission, the jihadists struck a blow on morale more than an attack that killed unknowns. It made the need for a response to this attack still more pressing. The demonstrators of 11 January answered that need.