CHAPTER 3

Islamophobia, Orientalism and "Jihadist Radicalisation" in the TV Series *El Príncipe* (2014–2016)

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1 Propagandistic Discourses on "Jihadist Terrorism" in Contemporary Spain[1]

The concept "jihad" derives its meaning from the third Arabic form of the triliteral root j-h-d, which denotes a struggle or an effort. What sets "jihad" apart from other forms of exertion and combat (e.g. *qital* -fighting-, *harb* -war-) is the fact that by definition, "jihad" implies a struggle in the path of God (*fi sabil Allah*) (Firestone 2002; Albarrán 2018; Bonner 2008). The way such exertion is articulated admits a whole continuum of possibilities, ranging from the deployment of violent, even military means ("lesser jihad" -*al-jihad al-asghar*-) to that of moral and spiritual betterment ("greater jihad" -*al-jihad al-akbar*-). It follows from this that there is no such thing as the doctrine of "jihad", but rather a plurality of normative practices related to jihad whose capaciousness and diversity greatly exceeds doctrinal and juridical discourses on it, thus showing that these are neither the only nor the defining elements of "jihad" as meaningfully Islamic (Balbale 2014, 98, 102; Ahmed 2015, 444). Nevertheless, the understanding of "jihad" as a militaristic enterprise is predominant in both the origins of Islam,[2] and also in doctrinal and popular discourse (Streusand 1997; Esposito 2003). This is also the conceptualisation of "jihad" that underlies *El Príncipe*. From this perspective, and following the iconic attacks of 9/11, "jihadist terrorism" has come to refer both in public discussion and practice to a widespread form of modern warfare against liberalism. This contemporary trend is often referred to by conservatives as "modern jihadism" (Harris and Nawaz 2015, 42, 102) and "global jihad" (Harris and Nawaz 2015, 115).

1 In line with critical scholarship on terrorism (see Jackson 2016, 103), in this chapter, I will use inverted commas to underscore that the meaning of "jihad(ist)", "(counter)terrorism" and "radicalisation" is not self-evident, but discursively mediated.

2 See Ahmed 2015, 317; Albarrán 2018, 138.

In Spain, to which "jihadist terrorists" often refer as "Al-Andalus",[3] this essentialism allows the State and mainstream media to reduce local "jihadist terrorism" to a security concern to be monitored and neutralised as part of the so-called "(Global) War on Terror" (De Arístegui 2006; Torres Soriano 2009; Reinares 2014; López Bargados 2016). According to this narrative, in Spain "modern global jihad" peaked shortly after 2003 when then-President Jose María Aznar made the highly controversial decision to involve Spain in the US invasion of Iraq. However, it did not take long for Al-Qaeda to retaliate against Spanish civilians via the 2004 Madrid train bombings, which yielded 2,050 non-fatal injuries and 192 deaths. These attacks redefined Spain's overall security and defence strategy against "jihadist terrorism", increasing its related staff and profiling, toughening the Spanish penal code and raising its "counter-terrorist" alert to level 4 out of 5 (*Ministerio del Interior* 2015). However, this process did not prevent an increase in "jihadist terrorist" activities in Spain, culminating in the 2017 Barcelona attacks carried out by ISIS.

The ideological reduction of Spanish "jihadism" to a security concern to be monitored and neutralised as part of the "Global War on Terror" has served to advance State surveillance and Spanish nationalism while depoliticising local "jihadist terrorist" attacks. First, it has allowed the Spanish State to overstate its attributions in a globalised context where these have shrunk, thus manufacturing a new social consensus that can then be instrumentalised for surveillance and compliance purposes (Anholt 2011; Reinares 2014). Key to this effort is the chauvinist framing of the Spanish nation as the "Good" and the "Us" within the theological and anthropological binary "Good/Us vs Evil/Them" (Brown 2017). As part of the latter, the Spanish State has dehumanised the Arab-Muslim Other as a permanent threat to an otherwise successful State, thus perpetuating its oligarchic structures while instituting a new strand of Orientalism, understood as the distorting stereotypes through which the white West observes the East, thus rendering the latter servile to the imperialistic interest of the former (Said 1978, 26–7). This new Orientalism conceptualises Spanish "jihadist terrorism" as a problem of public order, focusing the attention on the "jihadists" alleged rampant psychopathologies (Torres Soriano 2009), which in turn facilitates the disavowal of Spain's (neo)colonial record and responsibilities (López Bargados 2016, 18).

3 Originally denoting medieval Iberia under Islamic rule (711–1492), for "jihadist terrorists", its contemporary "reconquest" appears as a moral duty towards the consolidation and prosperity of an eventual universal caliphate (Torres Soriano 2009).

1.1 *What is "Jihadist Radicalisation", Anyway?*

Based on the above, the contemporary label "jihadist radicalisation" is predicated on the reduction of "jihad" to "jihadist terrorism" against the "Western infidel". In this context, "radicalisation" (neither irreversible nor necessarily conducive to "terrorism") emerged as a mainstream term after the publication of a 2007 New York Police Department report called *Radicalization in the West*. The process known as "jihadist radicalisation" is best understood as a form of ideological recruitment by which an individual comes to accept the behaviour and beliefs that are characteristic of "jihadist terrorism". According to Harris and Nawaz, "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" relies upon four elements: a grievance narrative (whether real or perceived), an identity crisis, a charismatic recruiter and an ideological dogma ("jihadist terrorism"). First, there is a specific grievance narrative, combined with an identity crisis. Second, upon recruitment by a charismatic leader, this narrative is fossilised by ideological dogma, whereas the identity crisis is alleviated by tribalism (i.e., high in-group loyalty happening at the expense of out-group hostility). Finally, those recruited embrace this dogma and adopt its propaganda to express themselves (Harris and Nawaz 2015, 10–11, 58).

In Spain, the most common profile of a recruited "jihadist terrorist" during the 2004-to-2016 period (while *El Príncipe* was recorded and aired) was a male under 30 years old who had been radicalised at home, on the internet, at his local mosque or in prison, for an average period of four to five years. Madrid, Catalonia, Valencia and Ceuta stood out as hotspots of "jihadist terrorist" recruitment and radicalisation (García-Calvo and Reinares 2013).

2 *El Príncipe: Amor sin Frontera*

El Príncipe: Amor sin Frontera (2014–6) is a hit crime fiction and soap opera that owes its title to the homonymous neighbourhood where the TV series is set, which lies in the south of the Spanish exclave city of Ceuta in northwest Africa. Easily discernible by its iconic, favela-like orography, El Príncipe stands as a (post)colonial remnant of Spain's encroachment on Africa with 20,000 inhabitants, the overwhelming majority of whom are Arab Muslims.

Mohamed Laachiri (2012) showed that since the 1960s, El Príncipe has experienced a steady decline and deterioration, mired in petty crime, drug dealing, unemployment and more recently, "jihadist terrorist radicalisation". Already in 2002, local Hamed Abderraman Ahmed claimed that "We are the forgotten ones. Not even the police dare to enter" ["*Somos los olvidados. Aquí no se atreve a entrar ni la policía*"] (as cited in Rodríguez 2015).

The TV series *El Príncipe* is best understood against this background. It spans two seasons for a total of 31 episodes, and its plot can be roughly summarised as follows:

(i) The Spanish National Centre of Intelligence (CNI) has detected a "jihadist terrorist" cell, and now seeks to identify its local recruiters as a means of dismantling the cell in question: "We have confirmed the presence of a jihadist cell that is recruiting disaffected youngsters from El Príncipe neighbourhood, to turn them into suicide bombers (…) the goal is to identify the collaborators and deactivate the cell" ["*Hemos confirmado la presencia de una célula yihadista que está captando a jóvenes descontentos del Barrio de El Príncipe, en Ceuta, para convertirlos en terroristas suicidas* (…) *el objetivo es identificar a los colaboradores y desactivar la célula*".]

(ii) The mission leader is CNI agent Javier Morey, a secular, fit and bold young man who stands for Spain's postcolonial modernity. Shortly after landing in El Príncipe, Morey meets Fátima Ben Barek, the Orientalist embodiment of a green-eyed, slender Arab Muslim woman. When they first exchange glances, intense sexual chemistry ensues, as if both had met in a previous life. This tension operates as symbolic déjà vu of the Christian conquest of al-Andalus and the parallel onset of Spanish African colonialism. As Daniela Flesler has noted through Shahab Ahmed, "the recognition of an Other as a stranger (…) is constituted through an encounter in the present that reopens past encounters" (2008, 117).

(iii) Morey and Fátima's sincere and desperate romantic desire for each other is held back by the repressive, backward forces of Muslim patriarchy and its prohibition of interfaith marriage. Fátima's older brother, Faruq, is a major drug dealer, while her younger siblings (Abdessalam and Nayat) get recruited by the local "jihadist terrorist" cell called *Akrab*. In addition, Fátima's family forces her to enter into an arranged marriage with her cousin, French Arab Muslim named Khaled Assour. While presenting himself as a successful businessman, Assour is actually the leader of *Akrab*.

As remarked by Flesler, the evocations of Moorish spectres in contemporary Spain serve a dual purpose, namely:

> They symptomatically alert us to the openness of the past, how it is not solved (…) At the same time, the convocation of these ghosts attempts to dilute the most troubling ramifications of the past regarding the Arab identity of Spain, positing 'Moors' not as an intrinsic aspect of this identity but in a definable space of otherness (…) (2008, 124).

(iv) Eventually, Morey manages to unmask Fátima's husband as the leader of *Akrab*, and also as a stereotypically repressive wife-beating Muslim, both of which are blatant Islamophobic tropes.
(v) Morey and Khaled fight over Fátima, conceptualised as the trophy woman of neocolonialism (whether Spanish/secular or French/Muslim). In the end, Morey survives, but both Khaled and Fátima die. In other words, Spanish modernity prevails over both its enemies and its ultimate object of (neocolonial) desire.

While there has not been any comprehensive scholarly analysis of *El Príncipe*, the most relevant precedent is perhaps a brief article written by Yasmina Aidi in 2015 and published shortly after the first few episodes were aired. Aidi focuses on the extent to which this series reproduces and consolidates various forms of racist and sexist stereotyping while further contributing to the othering of Spanish Muslims. She makes the following claims:

(a) The romance between the main characters (mainland Spanish Morey and Spanish Muslim Fátima) "recycles (…) vulgar, racist fantasies that white men have of Arab women".
(b) The casual use of the term "*moro*" ("Moor") is racist and factually inaccurate.
(c) The producers make it look as if all Muslims are potential "terrorists".
(d) Muslim men are portrayed as "domineering (…) patriarchs".
(e) The series is not well-researched.
(f) The series "makes no effort to understand why youth may gravitate to gangs or religious extremism".

Whereas I agree entirely with Aidi's central claim that El Príncipe "is perpetuating dangerous stereotypes" (e.g., Orientalism, Islamophobia), charges (c) to (f) are unwarranted. First, while there is too close an association between Islam and "terrorism", not all Muslims are depicted as potential "terrorists". This is evidenced by characters such as Hassan (Fátima's father) or the local imam, both sincere and vocal moderate Muslims who consistently oppose and condemn violence in general and "jihadist terrorism" in particular. Their anti-Islamophobic messages, which are particularly recurring in the second season, are compounded by the late appearance of Samy, a Muslim policeman whose parents were killed by the perpetrators of the 2004 Madrid bombings.

Second, despite the existence of apparent inaccuracies and prejudiced falsities, the TV series is on the whole well-researched. *El Príncipe*'s scriptwriter visited the homonymous neighbourhood several times before starting its fictional rendering (Rubio 2014). The settings, local institutions, traditions, costumes and prayers of the characters, plus the different divisions within the Spanish national security forces and their procedures, are all accurately recreated. There is also a meticulous reproduction of the linguistic conventions used in

the abundant "jihadist terrorist" material (videos, letters) and iconography featured in the series, some of which are shown directly in Dariya and Modern Standard Arabic.

Finally, and crucially to my overall argument, as I shall show in the following section, Aidi's claim that "the series (…) makes no effort to understand why youth may gravitate to gangs or religious extremism" is unjustified.

3 The Path to Jihadist Terrorism as Recreated in *El Príncipe*

While each of the most relevant cases of "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" in *El Príncipe* is the archetypical representation of a different kind of recruit (e.g., the *mujahid*, the returnee, the *inghimasi*, described in Section 3), all of them feature the four core elements identified by Harris and Nawaz: a grievance narrative, an identity crisis, a charismatic recruiter and the ideological dogma of "jihadist terrorism". What varies amongst the recruits is the presence or absence of aggravating factors: unemployment, lack of prospects, lack of education, love, power hunger, and resentment towards "Western" foreign policies.

3.1 *First Season*

The main thread is the disappearance and retrieval of Fátima's disaffected brother, Abdessalam Ben Barek, also known as Abdu. His is the last in a long and dramatic series of "radicalisation" cases, to whose analysis I shall now turn, following the order of their presentation in the series.

3.1.1 The Original *Mujahid*: Tariq Basir

When he was just sixteen, Tariq blew himself up in Tangier in the name of "jihad" (hence "*mujahid*", a person who fights a "jihad"), killing eleven. Although he is never seen on camera, we gradually learn that his influence in the "radicalisation" of other disaffected youngsters from El Príncipe is significant, and that he epitomises the figure of the charismatic recruiter. Indeed, Tariq recruited Abdessalam, and the former's suicide inspires the youth from El Príncipe to follow suit.

3.1.2 The Suicide Bomber: Karim Basir

Tariq's brother, Karim, is uneducated and poor. One day he accepts €1,000 in exchange for a dangerous assignment: getting rid of a member of the Ben Barek family. After Karim stabs his victim to death, the police put him in jail, where he discloses crucial information related to *Akrab*. Upon his release, the local *sheikh*, who has learned about Karim's confessions, savagely tortures the

young whistleblower. With Karim's wounds still open, he is told that he has been "chosen by Allah" to blow himself up, and that this is his last chance to serve "The Cause". A classical *mujahid* speech ensues with the effect of encouraging Karim to become a suicide bomber. Eventually, Karim is persuaded and gets a bomb strapped to him.

Morey then arrives at the scene and begins to negotiate with Karim. This dialogue is highly symptomatic of the way the Spanish intelligence services conceptualise "jihadist terrorist radicalisation". Instead of adopting a traditional and authoritarian position, Morey drops his gun, opens his arms in a non-threatening fashion and offers himself up to Karim:

> Let everyone go, Karim. I will stay here alone with you. You will bring an infidel to hell, and that way, you will reach heaven. For that's what you want, right? (…) Or is it? (…) You don't want to die, Karim.
>
> *Deja que se vayan todos, Karim. Me quedaré yo solo contigo. Te llevarás un infiel al infierno, y con eso llegarás al paraíso. ¿Porque eso es lo que quieres, no?* (…) *Tú no quieres morir, Karim.*

By reducing the complexity of "jihadist terrorism" to an epiphenomenal form of ideological brainwashing specially designed to colonise the vulnerable minds of poor adolescents, Morey, who represents the Spanish security forces, disavows the sheer possibility that there might be some deeper cause to it. As proved by the denouement of the scene, this disavowal merely exacerbates the problem.

Unconvinced by Morey's condescending speech Karim answers back: "Enough is enough! Shut up. You're not going to convince me. It's too late. You're all going to die. Allah hu Akbar!!!" ["*¡Ya basta! Cállate. No me vas a convencer. Es demasiado tarde. Vais a morir* (…) *Allah hu Akbar!!!*"] only a fraction of a moment before blowing himself up.

3.1.3 The False Convert: Hakim

Hakim is an extrovert Spanish Arab police officer. At age sixteen, he was involved in petty crime, got arrested and ended up in a probation centre. At that point, a leading local police officer, Fran, persuaded him to become a policeman. One day, Hakim's girlfriend (her colleague Mati) realises that he features in an *Akrab* video. The next day, she confronts him, but Hakim denies the accusation and quickly removes the video from the server. However, the CNI finds independent proof that he had actually smuggled in the gun with which Tariq committed suicide and had tried to get rid of Karim while the latter was in jail. Hakim flees, but the local police manage to find him, and a

shootout begins. Another pre-suicide negotiation ensues with a leader of the Spanish security forces (Fran). Hakim exposes his condescending and tokenistic approach vis-à-vis Spanish Arab Muslims:

> HAKIM: Don't talk to me like I'm a youngster. I'm a soldier of Allah!
> FRAN: I made a policeman out of you!
> HAKIM: Just because you needed to have a Moor in there (…) you've never taken me seriously!
>
> *HAKIM: ¡No me hables como a un niño, soy un soldado de Allah!*
> *FRAN: ¡Hice de ti un policía!*
> *HAKIM: ¡Porque te interesaba tener un moro allí* (…) *nunca me has tomado en serio!*

Hakim is not particularly poor or ignorant. Nor is he best described as a religious zealot. Rather, his "radicalisation" process is mainly due to the perceived need to overcompensate for his everyday alienation as an Arab Muslim Other in contemporary Spain by finding a strong sense of identity in the ideological tenets of "jihadist terrorism". Like Morey, Fran reduces the complexity of "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" to brainwashing and essentialised "terrorism": "If you truly hate me, if you are actually a terrorist, shoot. I want to see just how much they have brainwashed you" ["*Si de verdad me odias, si de verdad eres un terrorista, dispara. Quiero ver hasta dónde te han comido el coco*"].

Hakim now realises he cannot escape from the kind of false exclusionary disjunct Fran is making explicit, i.e., one that perpetuates Islamophobia by narrowing down the diverse socio-cultural, religious and political allegiances of Spanish Arab Muslims to two options: Western secularism or "jihadist terrorism". Unable to find the answers he was yearning for, Hakim shoots himself dead in front of Fran and Mati.

3.1.4 The Man in Search of Meaning: Abdessalam Ben Barek (Nickname "Abdu")

The grievance narrative begins with Abdessalam's "radicalisation" when he is denied a scholarship to study medicine in mainland Spain, which he perceives as unfair. Neither poor nor uneducated, it is at this point that he starts to distance himself from his girlfriend and family, seeking spiritual refuge instead in the local mosque and applying his academic skills to the exploration of the *Qu'ran*, alongside local "jihadist terrorists".

At the beginning of the last episode, Abdessalam takes a bus to Ceuta. He plans to stow a bomb in the boot of the bus, wait for the vehicle to board the ferry and then detonate the bomb. However, the local policemen manage to

identify Abdu as one of the passengers. A whole security operation ensues, which mobilises plenty of troops and police personnel. As Fátima, her fiancé, his brother and Morey all learn about the situation, they rush to the port. Abdessalam decides to hold the remaining passengers hostage, threatening to kill them. A round of spontaneous one-on-one negotiations begins to deter him from detonating the explosives, or at least to allow some extra time for the police to deactivate the bomb.

Abdessalam's brother Faruq is first up. He gets on the bus and informs him that Fátima is getting married that same day, letting him know that the whole Ben Barek family looks forward to welcoming him back. To his bafflement, Abdessalam replies that he no longer feels any connection to this type of earthly celebrations, for he has chosen to embrace "Allah's path" instead. Faruq attempts to counter-argue these claims by reducing "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" to a matter of trivial ideological brainwashing, thus denying Abdessalam any agency in the process: "You haven't chosen anything. They have brainwashed you, and before you know it here you are, on a bus with a bomb, terrorising people" ["*Tú no has elegido nada. Te han llenado la cabeza de ideas y cuando te has querido dar cuenta estás en un autobús con una bomba aterrorizando a la gente*"]. Abdessalam frowns at Faruq's sweeping diagnosis and shoots him in the shoulder. Eventually, Faruq abandons the bus in hope of saving his own life.

Next up is Fátima Ben Barek, his sister. She adopts a less judgemental stance: "Abdu, what happened to you? Why did you flee?" ["*Abdu, ¿qué te pasó?, ¿por qué te fuiste?*"]. While previous negotiators were merely addressing the symptoms (i.e., the alleged brainwashing), Fátima lucidly understands that she needs to confront Abdu with the very fantasy that structures his "jihadist terrorist" *jouissance*, i.e., what drives him beyond the search for pleasure or material gain (Žižek 2012, 311). Abdu replies as follows: "I joined this fight to combat this type of empty life, so that Islam rules again over good Muslims" ["*Yo me uní a esta lucha para combatir ese tipo de vidas huecas, para que el Islam vuelva a gobernar sobre los buenos musulmanes.*"] Fátima hugs him and takes advantage of the fact that Abdu is now off guard to take the gun from him gently. However, she fails to do the same with his phone detonator, to which Abdessalam holds fast.

Upon leaving the intimate isolation of the bus, Abdu opens his eyes to the outer world and gets increasingly anxious. Morey tries to calm him down by congratulating the youngster on his improvement while urging him to drop his phone detonator. As Abdessalam ignores Morey's requests, he spots a police agent actively trying to deactivate the explosives. At which point, he realises that his leverage will not last long. Abdu's whole self-narrative and identity as a

heroic, "enlightened jihadist" is about to crumble. He goes irreversibly berserk, and just a split second before he can blow himself up or the bomb gets deactivated, Morey despatches Abdu with a precise headshot.

In sum, what we learn at the end of the first season is that for the Ben Barek family, the return of Abdessalam was a much more complex situation than that of merely reclaiming a lost child. His ego had become so intractably linked with the narrative of "jihadist terrorism" itself that one could no longer remove his commitment to it without killing him.

3.2 *Second Season*

The final season of *El Príncipe* focuses on Morey's slow but steady unmasking of Khaled Assour as the leader of *Akrab*. Along the way, Morey will come across other cases of "jihadist terrorist" recruitment, whose analysis will equip him with a deeper understanding of Khaled's motives. I shall now discuss those cases, following their order of appearance in the series.

3.2.1 The Returnee: Tammam Naid Yasin

Yasin embodies the proverbial figure of the returnee, i.e., the foreign fighter that returns home after the conflict. A chemist in his country of origin, upon moving to France, he was forced to work as a street cleaner. Over the years, Yasin would experience a strong political disaffection towards Western Europe and alienation as a second-class citizen that will find in the ideological dogmata of "jihadist terrorism" a catalyst for "radicalisation". Eventually, he enrolled in the Syrian War, from which he would come back to Europe and arrive in El Príncipe.

Already in Ceuta, Yasin is initially arrested, as he is accused of brutalising his wife and daughter, and involvement in "jihadist terrorism". However, he manages to get away with denying both accusations. After being released without charges, he quickly rejoins fellow "jihadist terrorists" Khaled and Salman, Khaled's uncle. Together, they start plotting an ambitious attack in El Príncipe. Yasin suggests they contaminate a major supply of water in the neighbourhood. By placing his experience as a chemist at the service of the "jihadist terrorist" cause, he is effectively mirroring Abdessalam's manoeuvre in the first season: using his experience and skills against the very Western society that had previously judged these abilities insufficient to grant him first-class citizen status.

In their role as archetypal charismatic recruiters, Salman and Khaled are fully aware of this psychological need, as shown by the ease with which they take advantage of Yasin's desperation to prove himself. They set him up for failure and then report him to the police in the hope of making the latter believe that they are both innocent and cooperative.

3.2.2 The Bait (Sergio Montes) & the Prospective Wife (Nayat Ben Barek)

Sergio Montes is a student at the civic centre of El Príncipe who works part-time in a local fruit shop. His is the story of a handsome, witty teenager trapped between an alarming lack of prospects and a solid ambition to overcome this predicament. This combination is a recurring breeding ground for the so-called "express radicalisation of *conversos*", i.e. Spaniards with no Islamic background who convert to Islam while in Spain. After some weeks of consuming "jihadist terrorist" content through social networks and local institutions, Sergio embraces Islam, changing his name to Mohammed Fatah. At this point, a charismatic recruiter comes along, offering him the chance to join ISIS in the Syrian Civil War. In what is arguably too close an association between embracing Islam, on the one hand, and "terrorism", on the other, Mohammed leaves El Príncipe in a matter of hours.

As it turns out, he will serve not only as a combatant but also as a bait for the prospective wives of ISIS' soldiers, the recruitment of whom constitutes an integral part of ISIS's propaganda (García-Calvo 2017). This aspect is fictionalised via a fleeting romance between Nayat Ben Barek, Fátima's younger sister, and Mohammed himself. The night before leaving El Príncipe for Syria, Mohammed sends the following message to Nayat: "Nayat, I'm leaving, and I can't say goodbye. But don't be sad, for soon we shall see each other again. You're very special to me. And I know you won't forget me." ["*Nayat, me voy y no puedo despedirme de ti. Pero no te entristezcas, porque sé que pronto nos volveremos a ver. Eres muy especial para mí. Y sé que no vas a olvidarme.*"] A subsequent investigation reveals that Sergio used his website to send similar love messages to many other girls.

A promotional video is then released, featuring Mohammed as the poster boy of "jihadist terrorist" proselytism:

> My name is Mohammed Fatah. I was born in Ceuta (…) before coming to Syria to join the Jihad I had my friends, my family and my job … I was just wondering how I could help others. In the end, I found all the answers in the *Qur'an*. Today, brothers and sisters across the world join our cause. We *mujahideen* are good people (…) What are you waiting for? Look around you and ask yourself one thing: Is this how you want to die?
>
> *Me llamo Mohammed Fatah. Nací en Ceuta* (…) *antes de venirme a Siria para unirme a la Yihad yo tenía mis amigos, mi familia, mi trabajo … Yo lo único que hacía era preguntarme cómo podía ayudar a los demás. Y al final encontré todas las respuestas en el Corán. Hoy hermanos y hermanas*

> *de todas las partes del mundo se unen a nuestra causa. Los muyahidines somos gente buena* (…) *¿A qué estás esperando? Mira a tu alrededor y pregúntate una cosa: ¿es así como quieres morir?*

The video is exposed as propagandistic by Fátima and the local imam at a lecture at the El Príncipe civic centre:

> FÁTIMA: Ok, guys, this looks like a teaser trailer, right? (…) They are like bait. You only show the highlights, and hide the end [of the movie]
> LOCAL IMAM: And in the end, this boy will die (…) being a good Muslim is not about that. It's not about taking up arms and killing those who don't think like you. This kid has been fooled.
> FÁTIMA: Just like they fooled my brother Abdu.

> *FÁTIMA: A ver chicos, esto se parece al video promocional de una película, ¿verdad?* (…) *Son como un cebo. Solo enseñas lo bueno, las mejores escenas, y te guardas el final.*
> *IMÁN LOCAL: Y el final es que este chico acabará muerto* (…) *ser un buen musulmán no es eso. No es coger un arma y matar a los que no piensan como tú. A este chico lo han engañado.*
> *FÁTIMA: Como engañaron a mi hermano Abdu.*

This oversimplification of the ideological allure exerted by ISIS on the vulnerable youth from El Príncipe fails to convince many of the (infantilised) students, amongst whom are Nayat and her friend Nasira. The instructors' attempt to make their students understand on a rational level that the video is propagandistic is futile, because the students already agree with that. What the instructors fail to realise is that the ideological pull exerted by the video lies in an argument from authority (i.e., in the status and looks of Mohammed). In other words, while the instructors think that their students are vulnerable to "jihadist terrorist" recruitment because they are subject to false consciousness (i.e., they do not understand that the video is propagandistic), what they are missing is that the students are actually subject to a more subtle form of ideology: enlightened false consciousness[4] (i.e., they know that what they are doing is wrong, and yet they do it, because they cannot resist the allure exerted by the charismatic recruiter). As Nayat confesses to Nasira after watching the video

4 For a discussion of the difference between "false consciousness" and "enlightened false consciousness", see Žižek 1989, 30.

and listening to the instructors' advice, "but he is so handsome …" ["*es que es tan guapo* …"]

In the end, both Nasira and Nayat travel to Syria, joining other young females to support ISIS's soldiers. As Mohammed enters the building, Nayat runs in desperation to hug him. Mohammed avoids her, eventually grabbing Nayat by the arm and reminding her of "the primary allegiance of the soldiers' wives", i.e., "serving Allah". The tragic end is served: eventually, Mohammed is shot dead, Nasira blows herself up, and Nayat is rescued in tears as she realises she had been used all along.

3.2.3 The *Inghimasi*: An Anonymous Squad

The term "*inghimasi*" refers to "jihadist terrorists" who venture deep into the territory of the enemy with no intention of coming back alive. In the last episode of *El Príncipe*, as the Spanish secret services and police become certain that Khaled is the leader of *Akrab*, they decide to go after him. Surrounded, Khaled reacts by making a phone call to an anonymous disaffected youngster from the neighbourhood, merely uttering the codeword "*inghimasi*". The message gets passed through three other local alienated teens. One after the other, they all grab their Kalashnikovs and head to the police station in defiant attitude. Upon their arrival, they open fire, shooting in an orgiastic frenzy. In this indiscriminate act, it is not difficult to see the manifestation of a previously frustrated desire to access power the proper way allegedly prescribed by Western/Spanish liberal modernity, i.e., by uncorrupted meritocracy expressed through civic structures (trade school, college, job market). Their outburst of subjective violence is best understood as the inverted specular image of the situation of objective sociopolitical and economic violence they had suffered daily in El Príncipe, the violent ideology of "jihadist terrorism" offering them a voice through which to express their grievance. Eventually, the Spanish elite "counterterrorism" forces (GEO) take the police station by storm, killing three *inghimasi* with surgical precision and arresting the remaining one, Hicham, Mohammed's brother, who had also converted to Islam.

3.2.4 The Avenger: Khaled Assour

Khaled Assour takes centre stage in *El Príncipe*'s second season as the ultimate villain. His is the figure of a "radicalised jihadist terrorist" and a recruiter, and is, in fact, *Akrab*'s leader. Born and raised as a French Moroccan, Khaled Assour presented himself as a successful businessman with exquisite manners and prestigious education during the first season. In the eyes of Fátima's family, Khaled struck the perfect balance between Muslim cultural proximity and the promise of higher living standards in glamorous Paris, far away from the troublesome everyday life of El Príncipe. At one point, they even get married.

The story of Khaled's "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" begins in Paris, where he grew up as a disaffected immigrant, a second-class citizen. His frustrated desire to gain power and social status coincided with a significant presence of local "jihadist terrorists", thus offering the breeding ground for his "radicalisation". In *El Príncipe*, we learn that a substantial part of Khaled's success and wealth comes from his involvement in *Akrab*. Not entirely in line with the traditional values to which he has been paying lip service, in reality, Khaled prioritises his lustful obsession for power and success above almost every other concern, including his family and Islam itself.

In the end, Morey exposes Khaled as being responsible for the indoctrination of Abdessalam and other local youngsters. This forces Fátima to decide between her husband and the one she truly loves, Morey, who represents Spain's modernity. This struggle is best revealed in a heated argument between all three characters:

> KHALED TO FÁTIMA: Go with him. Go with him! Do you know what awaits you? In this country, you'll always be a second-class citizen.
> MOREY: No, that's not true. Moreover, you're not talking about Fátima. You're talking about yourself, what you went through when you were in Paris years ago. Back then (…) you just wanted to be like anybody else, but no matter how hard you studied, no matter how expensive your suits, your neighbours wouldn't see you as one of them. You were a parvenu. All of a sudden, you learned from *Akrab* and you saw the perfect opportunity to avenge all your humiliations (…), right? But at the end of the day, you're afraid to realise … that you're nothing … nothing.
>
> *KHALED A FÁTIMA*: *Vete con él. ¡Vete con él! ¿Sabes lo que te espera? En este país siempre serás una ciudadana de segunda clase.*
> *MOREY: No, eso no es verdad. Y además no estás hablando de Fátima. Estás hablando de ti, de lo que tú viviste cuando estabas en París hace años. Entonces* (…) *solamente querías ser uno más, pero por mucho que estudiaras, por muy caros que fueran tus trajes, tus vecinos seguían sin mirarte como un igual. Eras un advenedizo. De pronto alguien te habló de Akrab y viste la oportunidad perfecta para vengar todas tus humillaciones* (…) *¿verdad? Pero en el fondo tienes miedo de darte cuenta … que no eres nada … nada.*

Here Morey's seems to be able to grasp what the instructors at the civic centre of El Príncipe had missed, i.e., that ideological recruitment operates not only rationally, but also libidinally (i.e. based on irrational desire) (Žižek 2012, 11–30). Khaled did not become the leader of the local "jihadist terrorist" cell

due to his supposed commitment to the "jihadist terrorism". Rather, he understood the inconsistencies of this ideological dogma but did not hesistate to use it as an excuse to first repress his personal frustrations (as in Khaled's early struggle in Paris to conceal his humiliations as a second-class citizen) and then fill his inner void as an individual (that is, with the imprint of a new empowering identity, that of *Akrab*'s leader).

3.2.5 Coda: A Tragic End

In the last scene of the series, a shooting breaks out between Morey and Khaled over Fátima. Morey manages to hit Khaled, leaving him badly injured. Morey then runs away with Fátima. However, a struggling Khaled manages to chase them down with a Kalashnikov and shoots a continuous burst at both of them. After which, Morey and Fátima throw themselves in the water to save their lives, as Fran arrives at the scene and shoots Khaled dead from behind. Morey then emerges from the water and pulls Fátima out, but by now, she is barely breathing. Morey desperately tries to revive Fátima, who recovers consciousness for a brief moment, just long enough to declare her ultimate love for Morey, before dying in his arms. A panoramic view of both bodies lying at El Príncipe's shore ensues, accompanied by poignant Orientalist music that further accentuates the Eastern quality of the sunset.

On the one hand, this final postcard would seem to convey the need to look at the bigger historical, political, economic and cultural picture to understand the personal dramas affecting Morey and Fátima in particular, and the inhabitants of El Príncipe at large. On the other hand, it would also seem to demonstrate just how Morey's (modern Spain's) obsession with its ultimate object of postcolonial desire (Fátima/northern Africa) was bound to destroy the latter right at the edge of romantic conquest, with love operating here as a sublimation of neocolonial victory.

4 Conclusion

In this essay, I have explained that the kind of conservative framing of "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" that underpins *El Príncipe* is rooted in the Islamophobic reduction of the doctrinal principle of "jihad" to military attacks of the "terrorist" sort against the perceived religious-cum-political enemy. In Spain, this essentialism allows the Spanish State and its conservative ideologues to reduce local "jihadism" to a security concern to be monitored and neutralised as part of the "Global War on Terror". This helps the Spanish State strengthen its surveillance while engaging in the Orientalist dehumanisation

of the Arab-Muslim Other as a permanent threat to the country, while depoliticising Spanish "jihadism" as a public order problem chiefly motivated by the alleged rampant psychopathologies of "jihadist terrorists".

I have shown that *El Príncipe*'s plot is deeply embedded in this ideology, which results in the undeniable reproduction of Islamophobic and Orientalist stereotypes that taint the fictional recreation of "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" in the Ceuta neighbourhood of El Príncipe. Chief amongst these are those previously mentioned by Aidi, namely: the romance between Morey and Fátima (which perpetuates Orientalist fantasies), the term "*moro*" (Moor), (which reproduces racist stereotypes), and the excessively close association between Islam and "terrorism". To this, I should like to add, based on my analysis, a depoliticising over-reliance on psychological factors as the main rationale behind the "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" undergone by the characters.

Finally, I have shown that contrary to Aidi's view, the above does not need to imply the strawman that we should dismiss the TV series as a "silly television series" that "makes no effort to understand why youth may gravitate to gangs or religious extremism". On the contrary, my analysis reveals that in *El Príncipe* the pervasive presence of Spanish chauvinist, Islamophobic and Orientalist elements coexists with a well-researched, open-ended and thought-provoking problematisation of the process of "jihadist terrorist radicalisation", including its defining features (with a psychoanalytical focus), archetypical actors and underlying geopolitical logic, i.e., the century-old neocolonial dispute between Spain and France over Morocco. Potentially, one could even surmise that *El Príncipe* hints at the possibility that Spain's self-proclaimed modern progressive liberalism fails to account for the nature and causes of "jihadist terrorist radicalisation", including its justifying ideologies. This is best illustrated by the ongoing inability of the State security forces and local institutions to deal with "jihadist terrorist radicalisation" in El Príncipe in an effective manner, precipitating the tragic end.

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