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In the post-9/11 era, most counterterrorism strategies tend to increase repression against perceived enemies and contemporarily call upon civil society to contribute to the prevention of terrorism. As a result, civil society is both an actor of the prevention of “terrorist ideologies” and the potential target of state antiterrorism policies. Annick Valleau’s work deals with this paradox by focusing on the comprehensive and inclusive fight against the “three evils,” i.e. terrorism, extremism, and separatism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and of one of its founding members, Russia.

During field investigations in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, she examined both state-led civil society organizations engaged in the prevention of terrorism and civil dissent stemming from the repression of terrorism. To collect sensitive data, she conducted over 100 semi-structured interviews with opposite actors, such as members of military and patriotic organisations, former convicts and human rights defenders. She also used the participant observation method by joining several Russian and Central Asian NGOs on the field.

Annick Valleau’s research suggests that the fight against the “three evils” led by the SCO promotes an alternative to the universality of human rights which accentuates the divide between opponents, perceived as “extremists,” “terrorists” on the one hand and “patriots” of the State on the other. Her work also sheds light on how Russian judiciary and security forces blur the lines between terrorism, extremism and separatism in their professional practice, and emphasizes the alarming and tragic consequences of interpreting terrorism as an “ideology of violence.”