RESEARCHING THE EVOLUTION OF COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

FARANGIZ ATAMURADOVA AND **SARA ZEIGER** | EDITORS

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ABOUT HEDAYAH

Hedayah was created in response to the growing desire from members of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and the wider international community for the establishment of an independent, multilateral center devoted to dialogue and communications, capacity building programs, research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations. During the ministerial-level launch of the GCTF in New York in September 2011, the U.A.E. offered to serve as the host of the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism. In December 2012 Hedayah was inaugurated with its headquarters in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. Hedayah aims to be the premier international center for expertise and experience to counter violent extremism by promoting understanding and sharing of good practice to effectively serve as the true global center to counter violent extremism.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

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INTRODUCTION

Sara Zeiger & Farangiz Atamuradova

Background

The field of research on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is growing, and the international P/CVE community is learning and implementing new techniques, methods, and practices. This edited volume adds perspectives in P/CVE research to that body of literature from the speakers that presented their latest research at the International CVE Research Conference 2019, which took place in Melbourne, Australia in October 2019. In summary of the research and discussions during the Conference, this volume aims to share experiences, from both academics and practitioners, in what has been working, and what could be done better in P/CVE research, policy, and practice.

In the first five years that the annual International CVE Research Conference was held, it has regularly contributed to expanding that field of P/CVE research in two ways. First, the Conference showcases the latest, cutting-edge research in CVE, to include perspectives from the academic community and the practitioner community. This combination of academic and practitioner perspectives ensures that the conversations in the P/CVE research field include research with rigorous academic standards as well as research that can be made available efficiently and quickly from practice-oriented methods. Second, the Conference speakers are asked to contribute to an edited volume to publish their findings presented at the Conference. The edited volume ensures

that the findings are shared beyond the Conference participants, and that they can be accessed by the wider network of individuals and institutions that are working to enhance their P/CVE activities, policies, and programs.

The sixth International CVE Research Conference in 2019 was no different, in that it looked at new and emerging research in CVE and showcased that research in a discussion-oriented forum where the CVE community could respond to the research and share new ideas for how to adapt to the ever-changing threat of violent extremism. The Conference discussed a number of topics and cross-cutting themes. For example, one session focused on new technologies, media, and artificial intelligence in relation to violent extremism and CVE. Other panels explored trends in religiously-based violent extremism and the evolving role of the far-right in violent extremism. Multidisciplinary topics were also explored, such as the crossover between criminology, social sciences, psychology, and P/CVE as well as the discourse on identity and hate speech that increasingly corresponds with the literature on P/CVE. The panels also covered topics such as education and P/CVE and gender perspectives in P/CVE. There was a special session on challenges and opportunities for P/CVE in South East Asia and the Pacific, given the location of the Conference itself. Finally, several panels also presented research on evaluating P/CVE national policies and strategies, as well as evaluating P/CVE programs.

The International CVE Research Conference 2019 was hosted and sponsored in part by Hedayah, Deakin University's Alfred Deakin Institute, AVERT (Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism) Research Network and School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Sponsors include the Government of Spain, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, and the European Union (EU) Commission.

Strategic Partners for 2019 were Afrobarometer, Albany Associates, Conflict Management Consulting (CMC), DAI, Facebook, the Global Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), the George Washington University Program on Extremism, M&C Saatchi, Macquaire University, Monash University, Moonshot CVE, Multicultural New South Wales (NSW), RESOLVE Network, the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), SCCV Project, The Stabilisation Network (TSN), the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, the Canadian Network for Terrorism, Security & Society (TSAS), and Victoria University.

P/CVE Research Worldwide

The sixth Conference provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the progress of the CVE research field in the first five years the Conference has been held. In short, the P/CVE research field has made significant progress in a number of areas.

In the first and second conferences, there was a demand for more and effective research on the drivers of radicalization (push and pull factors) relating to violent extremism (Zeiger & Aly, 2015; Zeiger, 2016). However, in the past five years, numerous organizations and research institutions have answered this demand to develop more careful research that pinpoints the reasons and pathways to violent extremism at an increasingly localized level. Studies on drivers of radicalization have emerged from across the globe—some led by international organizations, and others led by local NGOs and research institutions seeking to enhance their local efforts for P/CVE. In 2019-2020 alone, research has detailed factors leading to radicalization with a regional focus, such as in East Africa (Van Zyl & Mahdi, 2019); with a country-specific focus, such as those covering North Macedonia (Arifi, 2019), Trinidad and Tobago (Aldrich & Mahabir, 2019) or Tajikistan (World Bank, 2020); and with a hyper-localized focus, such as in Kwale County, Kenya (Mkutu & Opondo, 2019). Still, others collated research results to develop multi-national studies that attempted to map trends and patterns of drivers of radicalization globally (Kruglanski, Bélanger & Gunaratna, 2019). Now, once sparsely populated with an occasional study on the drivers of radicalization, there is a much more diverse pool of research studies on this subject. Due to the location of the 2019 Conference in Australia, it was decided there would be a specific focus on South East Asia and the Pacific when it came to papers representing drivers of radicalization.

In addition, there has been a shift toward publishing research evaluating the effectiveness of P/CVE programs. Partially due to demand from donors and governments requiring accountability for public funds, monitoring, measurement, and evaluation have become important topics in the P/CVE research

realm. While the first few conferences contained relatively few researchers evaluating the effectiveness of CVE programs, numerous studies have since looked at programmatic evaluation to see what works and does not work in P/CVE (Cherney & Belton, 2019; Harris-Hogan, 2020; Marrone et al., 2020). There is also a growing interest in the evaluation of National Action Plans (NAPs) and strategies related to P/CVE, especially after the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (2015) has encouraged countries to adapt their own plans at the national level (Feve & Elshimi, 2018; Wulandari, 2019). The evaluation of CVE programs and NAPs were chosen as critical topics for the 2019 Conference, partially reflective of this emerging body of literature.

Finally, as the body of P/CVE research has grown, it has also become more multi-disciplinary. Drawing on expertise from the development sector, policy-making, political science, religious studies, psychology, sociology, criminology, education, and many other disciplines, the P/CVE field has been able to innovate new ways of conceptualizing radicalization and responses to it. For example, psychology has brought understanding to the social and personal factors relating to cognitive and behavioral changes (Trip et al., 2019; Nussio, 2020; Schumpe et al., 2018), and neuroscience has enhanced this by being able to test chemical changes in the brain related to violent extremism (Hamid & Pretus, 2019). Technology and communications sectors have also enhanced studies related to terrorists' use of the internet and effective responses (Monaci, 2020; Marrone et al., 2020). For instance, the Global Network on Extremism and Technology conducts research studies and produces research reports on this subject (GNET, n.d.). This multi-disciplinary approach to CVE also led to unique panels at the 2019 Conference on psychology, criminology, technology, and communications, for example.

Hedayah as well as other organizations such as the RESOLVE Network (n.d.), have been working to create a platform allowing policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to share their latest findings, contributing to a better understanding of the ever-changing subject of VE and P/CVE. To continue to support these efforts, the following essays are research publications conducted by a selection of the various speakers that participated at the International CVE Research Conference 2019. The aim of this publication is to produce a body

of P/CVE research that progresses the P/CVE field, and ensures that P/CVE research continues to grow and adapt to the new challenges, new technologies, and new directions that violent extremism presents globally.

Essays in this Volume

The essays contained in this edited volume can be summarized as follows. First, in his essay titled "Improving national PVE strategies: Lessons learned from the Swiss case," Fabien Merz looks at the dynamics between research and policy through the lens of the development of the PVE strategy in Switzerland. The essay highlights research that was conducted on foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Switzerland, based on a dataset of 130 individuals. This information helped to shape policy and program recommendations in the PVE strategy. In particular, he highlights the successes of how empirical research may have contributed to the Swiss national PVE strategy, but also the pitfalls of how research may take too long to conduct before a strategy may be developed.

The chapter "Lessons learned from assessing the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism of Finland" by Elli Partanen summarizes the process and evaluation of the 2016 National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism of Finland. A comprehensive assessment of this plan was conducted by an independent organization (KPMG) to evaluate if and how the Plan was being implemented. The research took a particular focus on collecting information from various CVE actors, including local/city government bodies and civil society groups at the local level. One success of the Plan included the establishment of localized networks of individuals working on PVE. On the other hand, it was found that local actors did not always have the competencies to carry out PVE work, and needed more training.

Libasut Taqwa examines the Indonesian National Action Plan on CVE that Leads to Terrorism, and the role of the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT) in his essay titled, "Initiating the National Action Plan on Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities." Since the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism was launched in 2015, countries have been developing

their own national-level policies and strategies in alignment with that Plan of Action. As a result, Indonesia has undergone a process of developing a NAP, under the BNPT. This essay explores that process, both in terms of challenges and successes, and suggests a way forward that continues the close collaboration between BNPT and civil society in Indonesia in order to finalize and implement the NAP.

André Alves dos Reis' essay titled "Lessons Learned on PVE-E: the experience of GCERF funding programs in Bangladesh, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, and Nigeria" provides an overview of key takeaways from the program experience as well as provide suggestions for how future prevention of violent extremism through education (PVE-E) could be improved. Drawing on specific contextual examples, the author highlights some potentially evident, but yet critical points required to consider in understanding the relations between education and levels of violent extremism, as well as how education may be best leveraged as a prevention tool, facilitating youth in their personal development and learning. Furthermore, the essay also calls for further research required to understand the relationship between certain approaches, which in return may help enhance the effectiveness of PVE-E programs.

In the chapter titled "Engaging Communities in P/CVE projects in fragile and conflict affected states," Rory MacLeod presents Tony Blair Institute for Global Change's experience in adapting CARE International's Community Score Card (CSC) in their Supporting Leaders project in Nigeria. The approach, renamed to Joint Community Action Plan (JCAP), helped to better understand the existing obstacles to social cohesion in Nigeria and develop a way to give ownership to religious leaders and community members to identify and develop a shared understanding of common issues. The author makes a number of recommendation based on the findings of the pilot implementation of the CSC, which is normally used in local governance and service delivery context, drawing on the potential benefits it may have to improve effective project design, and monitoring and evaluation at the community level.

The chapter "Resolving conflict and preventing violent extremism in Southeast Asia" by Jim Della-Giacoma overviews case studies of conflicts in Indonesia and the Philippines that had different outcomes, and analyzes those conflicts in relation to the availability of political processes. Giving examples from Acheh, Ambon, Maluku, Poso, and Mindanao, Della-Giacoma concludes that when there are opportunities for peaceful political processes to end or manage conflict, those conflicts are less likely to turn into prolonged violent extremism. In this sense, one way in which communities can be resilient to violent extremism is through their ability to express and resolve grievances through political means.

Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Rizwana Shahzad examine several case studies of foreign-funded school-based interventions in Pakistan in their chapter, "Assessment of foreign-funded interventions of preventing violent extremism through education in madrassas: The case of Pakistan." The chapter looks specifically at religious-based schools (madrasas) because there has historically been a heavy focus from donors on funding projects which claim to prevent and counter violent extremism through madrasas in Pakistan, but with little evidence that these programs are sustainably having an impact. In particular, the essay focuses on two case studies where CVE funds were diverted to Pakistani madrasa training. In terms of the planning of the program, both case studies seemed to have sufficient planning dedicated to creating effective programming. However, the evaluation of the programs' effectiveness and the long-term sustainability of the programming was questionable. In this regard, the essay emphasizes the need for donors to more carefully coordinate on programs in Pakistan and ensure there is long-term ownership, capacity, and funds to continue the project beyond a simple in-and-out intervention.

In her chapter titled, "Gangs, criminal exploitation and violent extremism: Exploring the crossover to prevent youth violence," Carys Evans of ConnectFutures presents research from a program that sought to tackle multiple forms of violence in young people, to include related to both violent extremism and gangs. While acknowledging some key differences between these two types of violence, the essay (and the program) found that there were many areas of overlap, which provided common lessons learned for both types of prevention programs. In the BRAVE (Building Resilience against Violence and Extremism) program implemented by ConnectFutures and St. Giles Trust, experiential learning programs helped to debunk stereotypes, prevent recruitment, and share testimonials through storytelling. An evaluation of the pro-

gram found that safeguarding spaces for young people to engage in this sort of experience—that directly counters the violent aspects of the grooming line of recruitment—is productive toward preventing gang-related violence and violent extremism.

Birga M. Schumpe, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Claudia F. Nisa, and Manuel Moyano, authors of the chapter titled "On the Role of Sensation-Seeking in Political Violence," state that individuals seeking sensation and restoration of significance, which was initially caused by various factors such as loss of meaning, humiliation, or a personal crisis, may be more likely to adhere to new beliefs. These beliefs may include political causes, which these individuals are willing to fight for and put their lives at risk. Following the presentation of the research findings, the authors draw on a number of practical implications for P/CVE that may aid in detecting extremism and developing effective counter-messaging strategies.

In a time of growing concern over far-right violence and extremist groups, William Allchorn's essay titled "Moving beyond Islamist Extremism: Counter Narrative Responses to the Radical Right" brings to our attention the ideas and messages propagated by far-right actors and how do practitioner and policymakers respond to this. One of the most common specific counter terrorism interventions are counter-narratives or any other sort of messages that aim to delegitimize extremists' messages and propaganda. Allchorn seeks to draw attention to a relatively under-researched spectrum of counter-narratives targeting far-right extremism. To do so, he highlights three case studies of counter-narrative campaigns and provides his evaluation, underlying lessons learned on the methodologies employed and other critical aspects in developing a successful counter-narrative campaign, all while taking into consideration the existing extremist narratives.

In the chapter on "Violent ego-centered sovereignism as a global threat?," Dennis Walkenhorst and Maximilian Ruf discuss Sovereign Citizens or Reichsbürger and the potential threat group of individuals identifying with this category can pose to society. This essay presents available information on the existing and growing number of individuals who share common logic and belief that allows them to deny and disobey existing state authority and establish

their own "ego-centered sovereignty." These groups, which more recently are using means of violence, are often categorized under the umbrella of right-wing extremism. However, the authors suggest that using similar P/CVE strategies as to right-wing extremism has not been effective, and therefore, further research on the topic is required to develop a more applicable response.

In the essay titled "What Women Say: The Intersection of Misogyny and Violent Extremism" the author, Saeida Rouass, seeks to further explore the intertwined relationship between misogyny and white supremacy. To do so, the author presents and draws upon three case studies of US-based women, who once had a connection with white supremacist VE groups or movements. Using the interviews, the author draws readers' attention to the importance of looking at women's perspective in order to develop robust and all-encompassing policies in response to white supremacist VE. Rouass argues that women's experience within these groups can provide critical insight into the role misogyny plays in establishing power-relations between female and male counterparts of the groups or movements.

Alistair Harris presents The Stabilisation Network's (TSN's) lessons learned and challenges faced while seeking to mainstream gender in the organization's project in highly challenging environments such as in Al-Hol Camp in Syria. The paper titled "Addressing the Threat of Violent Extremism through Highly-Targeted, Female-Specific Online Communications: Lessons Learned from Northeastern Syria and Al-Hol Camp" primarily focuses on online P/CVE communications in Syria, also drawing on the experiences from offline communications and lessons learned from Iraq and Lebanon. Through the given case studies, the author seeks to draw attention to certain critical aspects about the way women from vulnerable groups prefer to communicate. This essay also provides recommendations on how to best approach female target audience through evidence gathered during project design as well as evaluation stage.

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1

IMPROVING NATIONAL PVE STRATEGIES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SWISS CASE

Fabien Merz

Introduction: The Swiss Context

During the post-9/11 era, Switzerland has, for different reasons, been less affected by so-called jihadist[1] activities than most of its European neighbors (Vidino, 2013). Furthermore, the country has so far been spared a jihadi attack on its soil. Despite this, Switzerland has been affected by the global wave of jihadist radicalization and the corollary phenomenon of so-called "foreign terrorist fighters" (FTFs). This was mainly caused by instability in Syria and Iraq and the concomitant rise of the group known as the "Islamic State" (IS) from around 2013 onwards (Merz, 2016). The number of FTFs departing from Switzerland (93 till November 2019, according to the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service) might seem small in absolute numbers compared to the many hundreds who left other European countries such as France, Belgium, the UK, and Germany (Barrett, 2017). However, in relative numbers, for example, regarding the ratio of FTFs per capita, Switzerland only seems to be slightly less touched by this phenomenon than countries like Germany and more affected than countries like Italy (Eser et al., 2019). Consequentially and reflecting the assessment of most European intelligence services, the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) assesses the threat emanating from jihadist FTFs as heightened since 2013 (Situation Report FIS, 2013). Since 2015, it has recognized the issue of FTFs as a "flashpoint" and considers the threat emanating from IS as a major area of concern (Situation Report FIS, 2015).

[1] The term jihadism is highly controversial. Jihad means "struggle" in Arabic and takes different meanings according to the context. According to Vidino (2013), scholars traditionally distinguish between the "greater jihad" (an inner struggle of self-improvement to please God) and the "lesser jihad" (armed struggle to please God, from which comes the somewhat simplistic translation of jihad as "holy war"). Over the last few decades, the term has commonly been used both in the Muslim world and in the West to indicate the ideology and the movements that advocate violence to pursue Islamist goals.

Prompted by this new threat landscape, Switzerland published its first federal Counterterrorism Strategy in 2015 (Federal Council, 2015). One of the main areas of activity listed in this strategy relates to the preventive dimension of counterterrorism, which also comprises the prevention of radicalization, commonly referred to as the prevention of violent extremism (PVE). Building on this strategy, Switzerland has not only developed the Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism (2016) but also published the domestic National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Radicalization and Violent Extremism in 2017. This domestic action plan, which is to be understood as the country's national PVE strategy, is informed by the recommendations made in the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) of the UN Secretary-General (2016), which is itself based on the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006).

The domestic action plan proposes preventive measures that are adapted to the Swiss context and aimed at curbing different factors that enable radicalization. These measures are grouped into different areas of activity, such as, amongst others, the enhancement of cooperation and coordination between relevant actors, the enhancement of international cooperation, and the enhancement of knowledge and expertise on the phenomenon of radicalization and violent extremism. The latter area of activity also comprises measures aimed at "organizing research projects and studies on radicalization and violent extremism in Switzerland" (Swiss Security Network, 2017, p. 13).

It is in light of this provision that a team of researchers from different Swiss institutions of higher education were, in mid-2018, mandated by Swiss authorities to conduct a study on different areas relevant to the prevention of violent extremism in Switzerland. Besides briefly summarizing the results in section 2, which can be found in full detail in the study report (Eser et al., 2019), this paper will also seek to take up key observations that were made during the process of working on this project in section 3. Section 4 will present solution approaches in order to address the shortcomings identified.

Section 2: Key Findings of The 2019 Study

The team of researchers, under the leadership of Prof. Eser Davolio from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), was tasked with a) looking at the backgrounds to jihadist radicalization, b) conducting an overview of challenges in detention, and c) assessing the measures aimed at preventing violent extremism. These three areas of inquiry were deemed as particularly relevant to the Swiss context and were mutually agreed upon by the contracting authority and the researchers mandated to conduct the study.

Backgrounds to Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland

The first part of the study tasked with shedding light on the backgrounds of radicalization was conceived as a follow-up to a study led by Prof. Eser Davolio (2015). This first study had, amongst other things, looked at the profiles of Swiss FTFs. Together with Johannes Saal from the University of Lucerne, the author of this paper was tasked with conducting this similar part of the new study.

For this purpose, the authors were fortunate to have the opportunity to draw on an extensive data set that was provided to them by the FIS.[2] This anonymized data set comprised, amongst others, sociodemographic information,[3] information related to the social context and personality,[4] and information regarding factors that have contributed to the process of radicalization[5] on a total of 130 individuals who had been dealt with as a priority by the FIS due to their jihadi activities over the last ten years. Among these 130 individuals were 72 FTF who had left Switzerland, 9 individuals who had been prevented by Swiss authorities from traveling abroad in order to join jihadi groups, as well as 49 individuals who had radicalized but stayed in Switzerland and attracted the attention of the FIS due to their jihadi activities.[6]

The analysis of this data set revealed a number of broader trends related to jihadist radicalization in the Swiss context. As it relates to Switzerland, jihadist radicalization seems to be a predominantly male phenomenon. Barely one-fifth (19%) of the individuals in the sample were female. Two-thirds of the individuals in the sample were aged between 18 and 35 and had, as a general tendency, a lower level of education and a higher rate of unemployment than the national average for similar age groups. The analysis of the data set also in-

[2] More details on the nature of the data set can be found in the initial study (Eser et al., 2019, p. 10–11).
[3] Such as, among others, age, gender, relationship status, origin, place of residence, and level of education and occupation.
[4] Such as, among others, family problems, history of drug use, criminal records, and history of psychological abnormalities.
[5] Such as, among others, the role of peer groups, the role of the Internet, missionary activities, and contact with Salafist preachers.
[6] See the initial study for more details regarding the criteria applied by the FIS for including individuals in the data set and for a definition of the different categories of individuals included in the data set (Eser et al., 2019. p. 10).

dicates that jihadist radicalization in Switzerland seems to be a predominantly urban and suburban phenomenon, with only around 11% of the individuals included in the sample having lived in a rural area.

Furthermore, individuals with a migratory background were clearly overrepresented, with around 32% of them having roots in former Yugoslavia, around 20% having roots in North African countries, and around 15% having roots in Middle Eastern countries. However, these were, to a large extent, individuals who had either grown up in Switzerland, i.e., second-generation immigrants or individuals who were socialized in Switzerland from a relatively young age. This means that the frequently used term "home-grown" also seems to apply in the Swiss context. It was further interesting to note that converts to Islam, amounting to 20% were disproportionally overrepresented in the sample when compared with the number of converts among the overall Muslim population in Switzerland (1–2%, depending on the estimates).

Regarding the often-mentioned "crime-terror nexus" (Basra, Neumann, and Brunner, 2016), it was interesting to note that a quarter of the individuals in the sample had committed criminal offenses prior to their radicalization, and 16% had served custodial sentences. However, only a few of them were imprisoned repeatedly or for several years. The data set also allowed for insights regarding the role of online extremist propaganda, preachers, as well as mosque groups in the radicalization process. It was found that while the consumption of online extremist propaganda seems to have often played a role as a catalyst, it was group dynamics and contact in the real world with like-minded people that seemed to have played a decisive role in most cases. This seems to indicate that, saving a few exceptions, the consumption of extremist online propaganda seems to have been accelerating, but only in very rare instances a sufficient condition for radicalization. The analysis of the data set furthermore highlights that radicalization tended to be a long-term process while the phenomenon of "blitz radicalization," in other words someone radicalizing within a few months, seemed to be the exception.

In light of these findings, besides taking into consideration the overall trends identified, the authors particularly recommend taking into account the finding regarding the instrumental nature of real-life contacts when devising future PVE strategies and measures. It is furthermore suggested to keep in mind that the consumption of online content often seems to serve as an accelerating, but only rarely as a sufficient condition for radicalization.

Overview of Challenges in Detention

Dr. Mallory Schneuwly Purdie from the University of Fribourg was tasked with conducting the second part of the study that aimed to provide an overview of the challenges jihadi radicalization poses for the Swiss penal system. To meet this objective, the study carried out semi-structured interviews with prison directors, heads of security, Christian chaplains, imams, and Muslim chaplains as well as with external experts such as criminologists and federal prosecutors. Overall, 15 persons performing various roles in 18 establishments in 7 different cantons were interviewed between December 2018 and February 2019.

The results indicate that the phenomenon of radicalization is limited, but still a concern for certain Swiss penal institutions. The number of cases was found to fluctuate depending on various parameters, such as international developments, the rise in the number of charges, and the degree of the overall prison-overpopulation, among others. Penal institutions were found to use various measures such as detection protocols, internal regulations, the creation of new coordination positions amongst staff, ongoing staff training, and, in some instances, the introduction of imams or Muslim Chaplains in addition to Christian Chaplains.

Despite these initiatives, the results also indicate that penal institutions have to improve certain aspects of the way they handle the phenomenon of radicalization. Areas such as placement procedures (the question in what establishment and in what cells to place the respective individuals), institutional monitoring of radicalization, as well as the practice of risk management were found to have the potential for optimization. The author also stressed that these improvements seem especially pressing in light of the number of FTFs potentially returning to Switzerland in the near future, a scenario that could increase the number of cases prison authorities would have to deal with.

Assessment of The Measures Aimed at Prevention

The third part of the study, conducted by Prof. Eser Davolio and Ayesha Rether, both from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), was aimed at assessing the measures and procedures for preventing radicalization. This part of the study specifically focused on the work of the so-called cantonal and municipal "extremism specialist units" (Fachstellen Extremismus) and

the so-called "bridge-building specialist units" of the cantonal and municipal police services (Fachstellen Brückenbauer). In federally organized Switzerland, these units are—in cooperation with other structures within the cantons and communes, and ideally with the support of civil society—responsible for taking preventative measures against extremist radicalization within the different Swiss cantons and municipalities.

In order to assess the work of "extremist specialist units," interviews were conducted with representatives of every one of the ten units spread throughout Switzerland.[7] It was found that the extremist specialist units provide support, particularly for professionals working in the public administration, but also for private persons, for example, for family members who are faced with situations related to jihadist radicalization. Therefore, these specialist units were found to function as low-threshold points of contact to examine specific cases of radicalization. The findings also showed that, aside from casework, the specialist units also perform an essential coordinating role by bringing together all the relevant actors on a case-by-case basis, as well as the crucial role of relaying cases to the police if security concerns arise. Additionally, the specialist units were also found to make an important contribution to raising awareness, educating and transferring knowledge in relation to extremist radicalization, inter alia through public relations work, presentations, and the answering of parliamentary questions.

In order to assess the work of "bridge-building specialist units," interviews were conducted with representatives of six out of the nine units currently operating within the different Swiss cantonal and municipal police services.[8] It was found that while the exact tasks and approaches differ, most of these units broadly operate within the framework of what is commonly referred to as "community policing." Most of these units carry out networking activities and seek to establish mutual trust through dialogue with migrant communities, religious associations, and asylum seekers, in order to, amongst other things, have an open exchange on issues of extremism.

[7] Due to the federal nature of the Swiss system, these units are unevenly spread across different Swiss cantons and municipalities. Their repartition is primarily a function of how relevant the issue of extremism is for the different cantons and municipalities. Furthermore, these units sometimes depend upon the cantonal authorities and sometimes upon municipal authorities. See page 31 of the study report (Eser et al., 2019) for a complete list of the units, whether they are attached to cantonal or municipal structures, and for an overview of the units that were interviewed.

[8] As with the "extremist specialist units," the federal nature of the Swiss system means that the different "bridge-building specialist units" are unevenly spread among the different Swiss cantons. They are sometimes attached to the cantonal police services but are sometimes also attached to the municipal police services. See page 39 of the study report (Eser et al., 2019) for a complete overview of the units that were interviewed and their organizational affiliations.

Given the variance in terms of tasks performed and approaches taken by the different "bridge-building specialist units," the authors recommend harmonizing certain aspects that relate to the inter-institutional cooperation of these units. In that same vein, the authors also recommend increasing exchanges between these different specialist units in order to further improve the current approaches aimed at preventing radicalization.

Section 3: Observations made while working on the 2019 study

As previously mentioned, the Swiss approach to PVE is largely based on and informed by the recommendations made by the UN and, more specifically, in the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) of the UN Secretary-General (2016). Furthermore, Switzerland has recently been praised by the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) for its approach to fighting terrorism and, more specifically, also for its approach to PVE. What follows is, therefore, not about singling out Switzerland for its approach taken towards PVE but rather as a tagging and pointing out of problems accruing from what seems to be the prevalent and currently generally accepted orthodoxy in the field of PVE. The author having worked in, and therefore being most familiar with, the Swiss context, the Swiss case will be used to exemplify some of these shortcomings.

What sound sequencing ought to look like on a theoretical level

One of the main observations relates to how the process of devising national PVE strategies is sequenced. The best practices in the field of public policy, evidence-based policy (EBP), would suggest that policy decisions ought to be informed by rigorously established objective evidence (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012). Applied to the field of PVE, this would mean that one would first have to have at least a certain baseline of empirical evidence regarding the backgrounds and drivers of radicalization in a particular context before seeking to devise a national strategy aimed at preventing this phenomenon in that particular environment. The importance of this is also emphasized in the recommendations made in an independent review analyzing the procedures that underpinned the elaboration of 19 different national PVE strategies conducted by the Global Center on Cooperative Security (Feve & Dews, 2019).

On a theoretical level, therefore, it seems evident that one needs to know what causes or at least what contributes to causing a problem in order to be able to

address it in a targeted manner. A more heuristic approach to devising PVE strategies, or its alternative, what some commentators have called "template approaches" (Eric Rosand et al., 2018), seem less promising in terms of being able to address the specific factors that contribute to radicalization in a particular environment. Indeed, such approaches are more likely to address the issues that are ***assumed*** to contribute to the problem instead of addressing the issues that ***have been shown*** to contribute to the problem as established by empirical evidence. Needless to say, more heuristic and so-called "template-approaches" not only have to be expected to be less effective in terms of outcomes as it relates to preventing violent extremism, but of concomitantly also constituting a suboptimal approach when allocating public resources.

The dissonance between theory and practice

These considerations seem obvious on a theoretical level. However, as it relates to the process of devising national PVE strategies on a practical level, the actors responsible for elaborating such strategies often find themselves confronted with factors that will impede compliance with the ideal sequencing described above. Amongst these factors are, for example, political and public pressure to act as quickly as possible in order to prevent more individuals from radicalizing (i.e., the pressure of having something to show in terms of a strategy that can counter this phenomenon). This is particularly relevant in the context of the wave of jihadi radicalization and the high number of FTFs who have joined jihadi groups abroad, which has—since at least around 2013—been perceived as a particularly grave and acute threat in the political and public discourse of European countries and elsewhere. Furthermore, against the backdrop of this publicly perceived threat, "first movers" (i.e., countries that, for various reasons, are quick(er) to devise national PVE strategies) can, in the logic of one-upmanship, put additional pressure on the authorities of other states to also come up with respective national PVE strategies as quickly as possible.

To add to the short-term pressures of devising a respective PVE strategy as quickly as possible, empirical studies have often proven to be costly and time-consuming, and they sometimes fall short of being able to provide a sufficient baseline of empirical evidence that can constructively feed into the elaboration of a respective national PVE strategy (Eser et al., 2019). These difficulties of conducting large-scale empirical studies in terms of cost, time-effectiveness, and the usability of results seem often to be associated with the

difficulty of accessing the necessary empirical data. Andrew Silke (2001) had diagnosed this problem relating to research on terrorism as early as 2001, and this same issue still seems to be prevalent today when it comes to researching radicalization. This is at least partially due to the fact that for reasons that will be taken up later, it has often proved to be difficult for researchers to access the kind of empirical data that are a prerequisite for gaining valid empirical insights into the backgrounds and drivers of radicalization (Sageman, 2015; Eser et al., 2019).

Combined with the political and public pressures described above, these difficulties associated with empirical studies can hamper compliance with the sequencing described above when devising a national PVE strategy. This means that what should be, at a theoretical level, the first step in terms of sequencing when devising a PVE strategy (i.e., conducting empirical research which provides a baseline of empirical evidence) is, in practice, likely to be delayed or even rendered impossible by the non-availability or at least the difficulty of gaining access to necessary empirical data. At the same time, political and public pressures are likely to hasten the implementation of what, in theory, should be the second step, i.e., devising a strategy. A combination of these factors is likely to jumble the theoretically ideal sequencing of first conducting empirical research, which provides a baseline of empirical evidence, before devising a strategy that seeks to address this phenomenon based on the insights gained.

Observations made in Switzerland

The Swiss case can be used to exemplify this. As previously mentioned, in Switzerland, the threat emanating from jihadist radicalization and, concomitantly, the problem of FTFs have been assessed to be serious by the FIS since 2013. This perception of an imminent threat was also largely reflected in political and public discourse. Since 2013, there has, for example, been an increase in parliamentary motions and requests related to the issue of terrorism in general and, particularly, to FTFs and the issue of radicalization. The same concerns were also reflected in the coverage of terrorism in Swiss mainstream media. Furthermore, indicating these same concerns amongst the general population, a representative study conducted by the Center for Security Studies (CSS) and the Military Academy at ETH Zurich in 2016, found that 87% of voters in Switzerland approved of more measures to fight against terrorism (Szvircsev Tresch et al., 2016). These trends undeniably indicate the existence of political and public pressure to act fast to address radicalization and FTFs in Swit-

zerland. The fact that some other European countries such as Belgium and Germany were, for various reasons, faster in devising national PVE strategies might have further increased pressure on the responsible Swiss authorities to press ahead with devising an own national PVE strategy.

Furthermore, the difficulties and shortcomings associated with empirical studies in the field of PVE also seem to have been an issue in the Swiss context. Indeed, the Swiss experience exemplifies how the accessibility of data can affect empirical studies' ability to yield a usable baseline of empirical data regarding the background and drivers of radicalization. Since it is difficult, time-consuming, and often prohibitively expensive for researchers to gather granular and large-scale empirical data themselves, one alternative is to turn to government agencies that do collect this kind of data, as a corollary of intelligence gathering and criminal prosecution. Accordingly, the researchers working on the first study (Eser et al., 2015), who were tasked with shedding light on the background of jihadist radicalization in Switzerland did have access to a small data set from the FIS. This data set was comprised of limited information on socioeconomic variables such as age, gender, and nationality as well as limited biographic information on Swiss FTFs (Eser et al., 2015).

Looking at the shortcomings of this data set, it is firstly important to note that FTFs only represent a sub-segment of the manifestation of jihadist radicalization as a whole. Other subgroups, such as individuals who radicalized but did not go abroad, are equally important subcategories that would have to be included in order to get a picture as exhaustive and, therefore, as valid as possible of the phenomenon of radicalization. Only looking at FTFs while leaving out other subgroups will, consequently, only yield a very partial picture of the phenomenon and, therefore, not allow for valid insights into the backgrounds and drivers of radicalization. Furthermore, in addition to those shortcomings that relate to the scope of the data set, the few socioeconomic variables and the very limited biographic information that were provided, arguably proved to be insufficient in terms of the depth of information so as to allow for granular insights into the phenomenon of radicalization. It can be argued that, due to the limited nature of the data set in its scope and depth, that first study fell short of yielding a sufficient baseline of empirical evidence that could then have been used to inform the Swiss national action plan which was to be published at the end of 2017 (i.e., approximately two and a half years after the publication of this first study in mid-2015).

Conversely, the team of researchers working on the first part of the second study that was published in 2019 were, for reasons that will be discussed later, granted access to a more extensive data set, both in terms of scope and depth. As opposed to the data set provided for the first study, this data set, again provided by the FIS, comprised not only socioeconomic variables but also, information related to the social context and personality of individuals, information regarding factors that have contributed to the process of radicalization as well as information related to jihadist activities. These different categories together totaled approximately sixty different variables, checking the box in terms of the necessary depth of information contained in the data set. Furthermore, the data set in question did not only comprise the information described above on FTFs (n=72) but also on individuals who had been prevented from traveling abroad in order to join jihadi groups (n=9) as well as on individuals who had radicalized, stayed in Switzerland, and attracted the attention of the FIS due to their jihadi activities (n=49). The inclusion not only of FTFs but also of these two other subcategories in the data set checked the requirements in terms of scope. Together with the depth of information provided, the analysis of this data set enabled broader and more precise insight into the phenomenon of radicalization in Switzerland than the previous study published in 2015 (see Eser et al., 2015 and Eser et al., 2019 for a comparison of the results).

This means that in the Swiss case, empirical research on the backgrounds of radicalization was, in fact, conducted before a national PVE strategy was devised. The Swiss authorities deserve full credit for financing the first study published in 2015 and for supporting it by making the data available. However, as noted, this first study was, largely due to the nature of the data set provided, limited in its ability to provide a baseline of empirical evidence that could later have been used to fundamentally inform the national action plan published in 2017. In hindsight, it seems a fair criticism that the first study and the national action plan, published two-and-a-half years later, were not conceived as two interlocking parts of a unified process, whereby the latter could have fundamentally informed the former. It must, however, be highlighted that this likely had more to do with structural factors (discussed in the next chapter), which enabled extensive data-sharing to not yet be in place more than a failure to think strategically of the actors involved. Due to the emergence of these different facilitating factors in the meantime, the researchers working on the second study mandated in 2018 and published in 2019 were granted access to a more extensive data set by the FIS. This, in turn, allowed for a certain base-

line of empirical evidence on the backgrounds and drivers of radicalization that could have proven useful in order to inform the national action plan had they been available a few years earlier, for example regarding the role of online propaganda and of real life contacts discussed in chapter 2.1.

In sum, this means that in Switzerland, likely due to short-term pressures and the difficulties associated with conducting empirical research that yields a sufficient baseline of empirical evidence, the ideal sequencing (in terms of EBP) regarding the approach taken towards devising a PVE strategy was jumbled. It was jumbled in the sense that the national action plan was devised before the availability of a sufficient baseline of empirical evidence regarding the backgrounds and drivers of radicalization was established. From numerous exchanges with practitioners that have worked on national PVE strategies and based on the work done by the Global Center on Cooperative Security (Feve & Dews, 2019), it is the author's understanding that a similar approach of devising a strategy before having a baseline of empirical evidence regarding radicalization seems to be rather the norm than an exception.

Section 4: Improving National PVE Strategies

This raises the question of whether (and by what method) the factors described above that contribute to an imperfect sequencing when devising PVE strategies could be mitigated. Political and public pressures seem to be the product of larger, macro-level or exogenous dynamics, such as the threat-perception of a particular society and the rapidity with which other countries elaborate respective strategies. Such macro-level and exogenous dynamics might arguably prove relatively difficult for policymakers to influence directly. Therefore, short of being aware that such dynamics can materialize and preparing the actors that have a participatory role to play in the elaboration of PVE strategies not to have their hand overtly forced by these pressures, the options seem somewhat limited in this area. However, it seems more realistic and expedient for policymakers to act on the shortcomings associated with empirical studies, such as the ability of empirical studies to yield a baseline of empirical evidence, which, in turn, seems closely related to the accessibility of respective empirical data.

From the Swiss experience, it can be gathered that government authorities, oftentimes those charged with intelligence gathering and criminal prosecution, usually do gather the kind of large-scale and granular empirical data (in terms

of scope and depth) that is required for studies to yield a usable baseline of empirical evidence. Here, however, experiences have also shown that these authorities might, due to different factors, be reticent to share this data with researchers and academic institutions that could assist with a neutral analysis. Since the kind of empirical data that allows insights into the phenomenon of radicalization is likely to contain personal information on individuals, it is also likely to be sensitive in nature. This means that sharing this kind of data will most likely require data protection agreements between the institution providing the data and the institution conducting the research. Preparing and negotiating these agreements can be time-consuming and will inevitably also entail investing a certain amount of resources for the institution providing the data. Preparing and anonymizing data in line with the respective data protection provisions and laws, as well as the whole process of coordinating with researchers, will most likely prove even more time-consuming and will again inevitably tie down a certain number of human resources for the service sharing it. From the perspective of the service making the data available, this might prove difficult to justify internally, especially if the service in question is already overstretched in terms of human resources.

The sensitive nature of the data also necessitates a relationship of trust between the institution providing the data and the institution conducting the research since any mishandling of the data by the latter could backfire on the former. Even if this relationship of trust is established and data protection agreements are devised, there will always be some residual risk associated with transferring sensitive data to a third party from the perspective of the service providing the data. Sharing this data might, therefore, be perceived as not being in the direct institutional interest of the service that will have to invest resources and that will furthermore also have to accept a certain amount of the residual risk associated with the potential mishandling of data.

Since the factors presenting an obstacle to data sharing can, of course, vary from one context to another, what can be done to counteract these factors will have to be modeled on the specific context at hand. However, as was the situation in Switzerland, there were probably a few elements that contributed to counteracting some of the factors that tend to hamper extensive data-sharing with academic researchers. These elements were still absent in preparation for the first study (Eser et al., 2015) but were then instrumental in incentivizing the FIS to share the more extensive data set that enabled the insights gained in the first part of the second study (Eser et al., 2019). Amongst these elements was

the setting of institutional incentives that encouraged state agencies to facilitate research projects and studies in order to enhance knowledge and expertise on the phenomenon of radicalization and violent extremism. As previously mentioned in Section 1, in the Swiss context, these incentives were codified in the national action plan published at the end of 2017, which explicitly stipulated the objective for state authorities to help to facilitate research projects and studies. Besides making available the appropriate financing, this can also be achieved through making available necessary data. Such incentives codified in strategic documents, as in the national action plan in Switzerland, can help tip the balance in favor of sharing data (or of sharing it more extensively) during the internal decision-making process of the agencies concerned.

In the context of the second study conducted in Switzerland, it might furthermore have proven helpful that Prof. Eser Davolio, under whose direction the study published in 2019 was conducted, had established a good relationship with the respective agencies while collaborating with them for the first study published in 2015. Since the establishment of personal working-relationship based on long-term collaboration might not always be possible, it might also make sense to consider establishing trust and familiarity between the research community and the relevant authorities in other ways. In Switzerland, for example, there is an informal, bi-annual exchange platform between academia and authorities where researchers working in the field of PVE can present new projects and relevant authorities can share what topics preoccupy them. Apart from other positive effects, similar fora might also help to familiarize these two communities with each other and build trust, particularly in view of potential future data-sharing agreements. Furthermore, it also seems sound to provide the respective agencies that gather the data with enough resources for them to cushion the potential burden of having to tie up a certain number of human resources in preparing the data and sharing it with researchers.

Institutional incentives to share data, trust-building measures between the relevant authorities and the respective community of researchers, and the allocation of sufficient resources for the relevant agencies might, therefore, help in mitigating the factors that seem to present an obstacle to sharing data (or sharing it more extensively). This, in turn, should then contribute to providing the necessary conditions that allow for studies to yield a usable baseline of empirical evidence in a reasonable time and financial frame. In Switzerland, for example, the institutional incentives that facilitated the extensive data-sharing benefiting the second study published in 2019 were put in place with the national action plan published in 2017. Here, one can, of course, not fail to note that it was that same national action plan that created the necessary institutional incentives that facilitated the more extensive data-sharing that allowed the second empirical study published in 2019 to yield the baseline of empirical evidence that should, in terms of sequencing, have preceded the action plan. Looking at these experiences, this would, therefore, mean that the factors that prevent empirical studies from yielding a usable baseline of empirical evidence should ideally be addressed before a respective strategy is devised (rather than through that strategy).

Improving future iterations of national PVE strategies could, therefore, be achieved by codifying a respective process sequencing in one way or another. This implies making sure the conditions that allow empirical research to yield a baseline of empirical evidence are created before a strategy is devised and, concomitantly, also making the availability of a baseline of empirical evidence a sine qua non condition before the strategy-devising process is started. How exactly these steps can be implemented will most likely have to be adapted to the specific context and to every country's political, bureaucratic, and institutional particularities. These steps seem important in order to make sure that future PVE strategies will be rooted in a baseline of empirical evidence as opposed to what seems to be the current norm (Feve & Dews, 2019).

Furthermore, since what contributes to radicalization in a particular context is not static and might change over time due to different factors, it will also prove vital not only to have conditions in place to allow empirical studies to yield empirical insights before a strategy is devised but also to maintain these conditions after the strategy has been devised. This could be achieved by codifying the incentives conducive to empirical research into the strategy itself, as it was, for example, done in the Swiss national action plan. This should then allow for further empirical studies to be conducted and help continuously bolster and keep up to date the available empirical evidence on the backgrounds and drivers of radicalization. The next logical step would then be to devise those strategies in a way that will allow them to be readjusted in light of the new empirical evidence emerging. This would mean conceiving future national PVE strategies more as living documents that evolve over time in light of new emerging empirical evidence.

The benefits of having a strategy that adapts to new emerging evidence might outweigh the difficulties associated with implementing a strategy that may

change over time. As an avenue for further research, it is worthwhile to conduct research into how this adjustability could be integrated into future iterations of PVE strategies. Against this backdrop, it might also be worthwhile to explore how concepts used for continuous optimization in the field of management, such as for example the Japanese concept of "Kaizen" or its derivative the so-called "continuous improvement process" (CIP), could be used to this end (Imai, 1991; Fryer, et al, 2007).

To conclude, the observations made working in the Swiss context highlight the importance of first making sure that future PVE strategies are rooted in a baseline of empirical evidence. This alone would probably contribute to significant improvement of what seems to be the current norm in terms of PVE strategies (Feve & Dews, 2019). In order to further improve future strategies, it is suggested that future interactions should be conceived in a way that would allow them to be constantly improved in light of emerging empirical evidence. Ultimately, it is hoped that these two steps might contribute to developing future PVE strategies that are more effective in terms of preventing violent extremism.

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM ASSESSING THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT RADICALIZATION AND EXTREMISM OF FINLAND

Elli Partanen

Introduction

The Ministry of the Interior coordinates preventive work against radicalization and violent extremism in Finland. In 2012, the Ministry published its first National Action Plan (NAP) for the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism. The 2012 NAP, however, was revised in 2016 considering the rapid evolution in the operating environment. For the purposes of this essay, the 2016 NAP and the work that was carried out by the KPMG in Finland were subject to assessment. The results of the comprehensive assessment by the KPMG[1] are officially published and are summarized in this essay (Kinnunen & Partanen, 2019). It should be noted that the consultants conducting this assessment had no prior experience in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism work as the goal of the Ministry was to have an unbiased external assessment on the NAP. The new version of the NAP was published later in 2019, and the recommendations that were provided as a part of the assessment were taken into consideration for the new NAP.

In the context of Finland, preventive work is divided between several actors as described in the NAP, including authorities, municipalities, civic society organizations, and academia. As such, different actors and their respective roles and responsibilities that are included in the NAP formulate an important part of the lessons learned discussion in this essay. The NAP contains a list of short-term goals and 12 measures (general and strategic level) that encompass 36 subsections. The measures are mainly used to assess the success of the aforementioned goals and are aimed at strengthening preconditions for prevention practice, for instance, through the development of systems and collaborative procedures. From the early level preventive work, measures are

[1] KPMG is global network of independent member firms offering audit, tax and advisory services.

targeted at individuals who are at risk of being radicalized and persons who are already radicalized. The task of the responsible parties that have been appointed for the goals of the NAP is to ensure the implementation of the goals and measures. In the Action Plan and the assessment summarized in this essay, "violent extremism refers to using, threatening with, encouraging, or justifying violence based on one's own view of the world or on ideological grounds" (Kinnunen & Partanen, 2019).

The Methodology of the Assessment

The assessment of the NAP (2016) was realized through familiarization with the background material provided by the Ministry of the Interior, and by conducting a series of interviews of the central actors involved in the NAP on how the Plan was carried out. The starting point was to interview those actors explicitly mentioned in the NAP, and the pool was expanded from there to also include those that participated in the work of the National Cooperation Network.[2] Furthermore, individuals that participated in the meetings of the local cooperation networks in Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, and Oulu were also included in the interview pool. In connection with the cooperation networks, persons and actors actively involved in local cooperation were also interviewed. These expert interviews were executed individually and in groups, depending on the particular circumstances. The next section provides an overview of the interviewed parties that comprise a significant representation of national actors responsible for the prevention of violent extremism efforts in Finland.

From the government, representatives from the following agencies were met: the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, the National Police Board, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service, the Finnish National Agency for Education, the Finnish Immigration Service and the Criminal Sanctions Agency. Furthermore, persons involved in the Anchor Model,[3] researchers of the University of Helsinki, persons participated in the

[2] National Cooperation Network for the Prevention of Violent Extremism coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior is the most central network on the national level. The cooperation network consists of actors around Finland, authorities from different sectors and civic society organization operators; the tasks of the group include the preparation of training related to the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism, research, prevention of local situation pictures, promotion of local work, preparation of the EXIT operation and other services as well as cooperation and communication with communities.

[3] The Anchor model is arranged within police departments, and through it the police have an important role in implementing multi-professional cooperation where radicalised persons are encountered. The goal of the Anchor model is the multi-professional early intervention in the situation of an adolescent with the purpose of promoting the adolescent's wellbeing and preventing crimes. Anchor teams also work with persons already radicalised or at risk of becoming radicalised.

continuing education 'HY+ course'[4] of the department of teacher education, representatives of the HY+ education, and representatives of early childhood education from Helsinki and Kirkkonummi were also interviewed. The assessment team also interviewed representatives from civil society, including Finn Church Aid, the Vuolle Settlement, the Muslim Youth Forum of Turku, Mahdi Youth Society, and MuVenna project. Additionally, several religious leaders were also participating. One of the benefits of the conducted interviews was that they helped clarify actors' roles and responsibilities in preventive work and their cooperation with other organizations in Finland. Participation in international, national, and local cooperation forums was also reviewed. Lastly, information on the effectiveness of the NAP was collected from the participants, and development proposals for the preventive work in Finland were examined.

National Action Plan

Actors Responsible in the NAP

The NAP provides a framework and national level action points on the prevention work for Finland. The actors identified in the NAP are accountable to implement those actions in the sector and to ensure that they are executed throughout different levels of management, all the way to first-hand practitioners.

Conventionally, actors named in the NAP include the politicians and decision-makers, the social services, the healthcare services, the youth services, the education sector, the police, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service, civic society organizations and religious communities as well as the family and friends. The role of the core stakeholders is briefly described as illustrated in the action plan and observed in the interviews.

For the 2016 Plan, different cooperation forums brought together actors operating within the subject nationally, locally, and per field. Central stakeholders listed in the NAP are involved in the prevention of violent radicalization to extremism initiatives through cooperation forums. One of these actors is the National Cooperation Network. Nationally, the National

[4] HY+ is centre for continuing education within the University of Helsinki. The participants from this institution included teachers, guidance counsellor, and a representative of the HY+ training programme for teachers).

Cooperation Network[5] for the Prevention of Violent Extremism is the most central network that is also coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. The cooperation network consists of actors and authorities from different sectors and civic society organization actors. Furthermore, a designated steering group was established to represent organizations of paramount importance and monitor the implementation and results of the NAP. The steering group annually approves the operating plan of the National Cooperation Network, which describes the actions and the schedule of the calendar year.

For the implementation of the 2016 strategy, local networks operate in four different cities in Finland, namely, Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, and Oulu. Local networks contain parties that are considered important cooperation partners in each location. The extent and scope of the action are determined on the local level. Additionally, the steering groups of the projects (e.g. MuVenna, Radinet, Reach Out) form cooperation forums based on particular subjects that bring together different actors on local and national levels.

Goals of the National Action Plan

The primary objectives of the NAP are to:

1. Coordinate prevention, disseminate best practices, increase competency, and act flexibly by considering the changes in the operating environment. The aim is to make the action coherent, without unnecessary duplication or gaps. Competency and best practices must be easily available. The action must be developed and reviewed according to the changes in the operating environment.

2. Create effective and viable structures and measures for the prevention of violent radicalization and extremism. The objective is to ensure that the wherewithal and permanent structures for preventing violent radicalization and extremism at the level required by the local situation picture are in place everywhere in Finland.

[5] National Cooperation Network for the Prevention of Violent Extremism coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior is the most central network on the national level. The cooperation network consists of actors around Finland, authorities from different sectors and civic society organization operators; the tasks of the group include the preparation of training related to the prevention of violent radicalisation and extremism, research, prevention of local situation pictures, promotion of local work, preparation of the EXIT operation and other services as well as cooperation and communication with communities.

3. Launch the RADINET (exit) service. The goal is to develop a service which supports the disengagement of radicalized persons from violence and the sphere of influence of violent groups. Simultaneously, this will reduce the threat of violence to society and people.

4. Launch the Helpline service to support the family and friends of the radicalized people. The goal is to support them in situations where a family member or friend has, or is about to, become radicalized. This will help prevent the social exclusion of the family and contain radicalization.

5. Promote the actions of organizations in developing services to which violently radicalized people can be referred. The goal is for the organizations to establish violence-prevention services everywhere in Finland which facilitate disengagement from violence, ideologically motivated violence included. The authorities, especially the police, are aware of said services, and case management and service coordination function in an efficient and comprehensive manner.

6. Increase competency, expertise, and awareness as regards the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization. The goal is for both professionals and the representatives of organizations who, in their everyday work, encounter people that have, or are about to, become radicalized to be able to widely recognize the underlying signs of radicalization and properly act to put an end to the development that leads to radicalization. Expand research on violent radicalization and extremism.

7. Efficiently detect and investigate hate crime, support the victims, and the target communities of hate crime. The police and the other law enforcement authorities will improve their action on detecting and investigating hate crime: the objective is to reduce the underlying causes of violent radicalization and extremism.

8. Actions resulting from the increased number of asylum seekers. The growing number of asylum seekers has exacerbated polarization in society, which different extremist movements try to exploit in their efforts to recruit more supporters and to disseminate violence-inducing propaganda. The objective is to prevent the dissemination of violent radical propaganda and recruitment to violent extremist movements among asylum seekers and to efficiently carry out their integration. The

action will take into account the recommendations of the report "The educational tracks and integration of immigrants – problematic areas and proposals for actions" (Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2016, p. 6).

9. Prevent violent radicalization and extremism through good, balanced, and clear communications. The goal is to use words, in writing and speech, in a manner that does not offend, label, or radicalize any individuals or groups as supporters of violent extremism or, at the extreme, as terrorists.

10. Strengthen the ability of children and adolescents to identify, and guard against, violence-inducing messages and propaganda. The objective is for children and adolescents, on their own and together with others, to counter radical and extremist messages and propaganda.

11. The special responsibility of the police in the prevention of violent radicalization and extremism. The objective of the police is to be comprehensively cognizant of their special responsibility in preventing and countering violent radicalization and extremism. This responsibility stems from the fact that violent extremism, as a phenomenon, lies at the core of maintaining public order and security: guaranteeing a safe living environment, the safety of individuals and communities, as well as protecting civil rights.

12. Measures aimed against different forms of violent radicalization and extremism. The objective is to be able to more efficiently prevent right-wing extremist recruitment, increase the competency and the preparedness of the police in countering left-wing extremist violence, which especially occurs during demonstrations, to reduce the number of those traveling to conflict areas, and to establish a process for dealing with those returning from combat zones such as Syria and Iraq (Kinnunen & Partanen, 2019).

A substantial section of the NAP was comprised of planning for success, challenges, and development targets of cooperation. The national short-term (the end of 2018) goals for preventing violent radicalization and extremism in Finland perhaps forms the most important aspect of this section. The key goals included:

1. National and local structures and procedures based on multi-professional cooperation are in place which makes it possible for the authorities, organizations and communities to prevent violent radicalization and extremism.

2. The volume of ideologically motivated crime will continue to decrease year by year compared to the previous year.

3. The number of those traveling from Finland to conflict areas for the purpose of engaging in combat/violence will start to go down from its peak. The starting date is 1 November 2015.

4. Those returning from conflict areas are identified. The ones having committed crimes will be brought to justice. All returning persons will be systematically targeted with individually tailored measures which reduce the risk of violence and help improve their ability to cope.

5. The police will efficiently detect and investigate hate crimes. The victims of hate crime will be supported and the impacts of crime on the victim's reference group will be identified (Kinnunen & Partanen, 2019).

Measures of National Action Plan

The objectives of the measures in the NAP have been recorded in relation to their subsequent key performance indicators. The measures, their subsections, and defined goals were discussed according to the division made in the NAP.

The majority of the measures are graded as general level measures (see Table 1). Their primary aim was to improve cooperation, create structures, increase information and expertise, and strengthen critical thinking. Three of the measures are at the individual level and two partly. The individual-level goals were typically directed at individuals who are at risk of becoming radicalized or who have already become radicalized (or their close circle). Goals for this level were more concrete than the general level goals. For example, focus groups and goals for the RADINET (exit) service and Helpline support role were clearly defined. Furthermore, there are altogether three measures in the NAP directed at a larger group. These are directed at the victims of hate crimes, asylum seekers, and various forms of violent radicalization and extremism.

Action	Focus	Target group
Action 1: Coordination and cooperation	General	General
Action 2: Efficient and functional structures	General	Risk group / Radicalized
Action 3: RADINET (exit) function	Individual	Risk group / Radicalized
Action 4: Helpline support service Not implemented	Individual	Radicalized
Action 5: Radicalized guided to join organizations	Individual	Radicalized
Action 6: Increasing competence and knowledge	General	Risk group / Radicalized
Action 7: Hate crimes	Individual / Group	Risk group / Radicalized
Action 8: Refugees	Group	Population / Risk group
Action 9: Communications	General	Risk group
Action 10: Critical thinking by children and the youth	General	Population
Action 11: Special responsibilities by the police	Individual / General	Risk group / Radicalized
Action 12: Actions directed at different forms of action	Group	Radicalized

TABLE 1 The classification of measures according to the focus and target

The structure and classification as illustrated in Table 1 were not created to be presented, but rather as a tool to understand the prevention work, the focus, and action strategy as independent variables. Although the consultants working on the assessment were not experienced with the subject matter, the study demonstrated that very few of the actors on the field had an understanding of target groups or focus of the action points. Additionally, clear definitions were lacking in the domain of action points and on the roles of the actors.

Main Findings

The key findings of the assessment were grouped under the following categories:

1. **Short-term goals.**
   Findings suggest that there is no link between short-term goals and the action points outlined in the NAP. The actions and goals set in the NAP should be linked in the future to improve the possibilities in monitoring, evaluating, and assessing the NAP's achievement of its goals established in the early phases of the project.

2. **The roles of actors.**
   The definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the different actors were not always clear. Given that the differences between the actors and the challenges they experienced varied, it is reasonable to suggest that clear definitions of roles and responsibilities would have shed more light on the mandate of different groups and individuals, and their overall approaches to counter-violent extremism (CVE). Moreover, this could have helped each group to understand mutual challenges, subsequently leading to substantially more important discussions that could have potentially better informed future CVE projects and ultimately policymaking.

   The formation of a clear role has been the most difficult for those actors who have limited professional experience in the CVE field. Precisely, this lack of experience and knowledge was exemplified in the education sector, for instance, when discussions involved the questioning of the frequency of violent extremism as a phenomenon and how this affects the practical work of various actors. On the other hand, due to their higher knowledge and experience in CVE, institutions such as the police and the Criminal Sanctions Agency experienced fewer challenges in understanding CVE and certain elements of the NAP such as the identified measures. Furthermore, the approach to the prevention of radicalization relative to the most important themes underlying this surging problem is perceived by the abovementioned actors in different ways. In the education sector, for instance, the actors strongly focused on the general development of critical thinking, the improvement of media literacy, and the ability of the youth to counter violence-inducing messages. While such initiatives and goals are an important aspect of societal development and CVE initiatives, they were too broad and did not tackle the immediate risks posed by violent radicalization and extremism. On the other hand, the police and the Criminal Sanctions Agency focused more on the risk groups of radicalization and those already radicalized community members. This demonstrated a stark contrast between the two organizations. It can be said that actors identify different themes of focus in their work to prevent violent radicalization and extremism. In this exercise, the two dominant themes included measures directed at the entire population as identified by the actors from the education sector, while security agencies, namely the police, and the Criminal Sanctions Agency, decided to focus on persons already in the radicalization process. Future projects of this nature should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the

participants involved. This would set the pretext for the categorization of the actors by their professional experience and knowledge of violent radicalization and extremism. Most importantly, this would bolster cooperation and collaboration between different actors and lead toward more success in designing and executing future NAPs.

3. **Lack of information and competency.**
The increase in competency and knowledge is sought after, especially in respect of the application of theory in everyday work situations. An example of this is a teacher who wishes to increase his knowledge of violent radicalization and extremism so that it allows him to have extensive and insightful discussions on CVE topics. The teacher's ultimate goal is to teach his students. One of the primary problems for organizations aiming to fight CVE that were part of this study was that their training goals and needs were unclear consequently leading to them being confused about the type of knowledge and competency they required to complete their projects successfully. However, in some sectors, the training needs have been clarified, while in most sectors, the clarification of the training needs was planned but never materialized.

Increasing competency and expertise in CVE projects is challenging because the actors necessary for information differ sector by sector, locally and according to the job description. The prevention of extremism is considered basic work only by a few working in the CVE field. Trainings employed by sectors can respond to the correct need as the scope and content of the training can be planned in a targeted manner. In addition to the nature of sector-specific trainings, the training need at the local level arose in several interviews. At the local level, training could be provided for all workers in the municipality's social facilities, childcare, community services, and education system, with the aid of local actors that have the responsibilities and duties as well as operating models that can help provide support.

HY+ continued education was deemed an outstanding means of obtaining knowledge and growing one's own competence among the participants. However, providing broader training to all teachers at the local level is not a realistic goal; rather, the quality of the curriculum and revised information should be resolved in a manner acceptable to the existing systems. Based on the successes achieved in one's own operation,

good practices are shared amongst the cooperation network. Current good practices, however, do not adapt effectively to the operating models. Implementation of established good practices elsewhere is not necessarily considered appropriate as one's own project is still deemed effective as things stand at present.

4. **Cooperation**
Cooperation in practice refers to multi-professional cooperation and cooperation between civic society organizations and authorities. It also refers to multi-level cooperation that involves the ministry-level to first-hand practitioners. Cooperation is important especially in cases where a person moves between the services of different actors, there is a risk that the situation picture and the service chain are broken. A good example of multi-professional teamwork is the Anchor scheme, in which an adolescent's issues are attempted to be addressed multi-professionally with the aid of a more comprehensive toolbox than one which the police themselves might be able to provide. The aim is to break the criminal career of the youth right at its beginning by focusing on the root causes. This is an important aspect of the counter-violent extremism work because it is commonly known that the history of petty crimes is often one of the antecedent conditions of radicalization. Furthermore, borders between municipalities are a clear challenge in the cooperation efforts. Although, for example, citizens travel fluently through regional borders in the metropolitan region of Helsinki, the regional facilities do not automatically keep pace. This creates possibilities for a radicalized person to avoid the authorities if the authorities cannot be agile enough to gather and distribute intelligence. In this context, the dissemination of knowledge is commonly deemed one of the greatest obstacles in the cooperation on preventive work.

During the interviews, the participants expressed the potential deepening of the cooperation in practice by sector-specific cooperation networks was evident. The growth in the industry or actor-specific knowledge and expertise exists in the context of numerous training sessions and workshops, but particularly in customer service interviews, broader incentives to improve professional practices and skills were highly desired.

5. **Local Operationalization of the NAP**
In assessing the NAP, one of the most important findings was that local organizations are frequently cooperating, which contributed to objectives being successfully achieved through the NAP. Representatives of different authorities and civic society organizations learned about each other and their role in the NAP, and whom to contact when in need of assistance. Additionally, the cooperation increased mutual understanding of violent radicalization and extremism. Based on the discussions held with local networks, the local cooperation enhances the knowledge of the civic society organization sector and therefore the services of the civic society organizations become more familiar.

The primary challenge at the local level is the small number of concrete measures available. A positive example of a joint project in the local network is Tampere, where the purpose of the preventive research was to jointly solve the current issue with a city-wide process map entitled "When Concern Arises."

Recommendations

The following recommendations were provided for the 2019 NAP based on the findings made throughout the assessment:

1. **Clarify the interfaces between actors, and thus the description of the roles between the actors more extensively.**
The first recommendation focuses on defining the roles of each actor on a more specific level than on the previous NAP. Furthermore, the definitions should be extended to include the interfaces between the actors, as in defining solely the role of each actor a risk of gaps remaining in between the roles exists. A practical example of this situation would be the responsibility of an individual moving from one authority to another. In the current framework, the process is separately created within two authorities without cooperation between the two parties. Therefore, it is important to clarify the roles, but also the potential gaps between two entities that might be handling the same case.

2. **Emphasize the cooperation between actors by establishing measures extending the actors' scope of operation where actions are developed despite the borders challenges between the actors.**
Additional to defining the roles of actors, the importance of defining interfaces between the actors was detected in the assessment. When solely the role of an actor is described, the risk of having gaps between the roles defined remains. Understanding the roles and describing those in the new version of NAP should be not only about the actor's own role but the role and the interface with other actors. The new NAP should also clarify points of cooperation, and where a jointly developed process is needed.

3. **Understand the signs of radicalization, the importance, and risks of radicalized individuals, and allocate responsibility accordingly.**
Considering that a radicalized person is successfully traced, relevant actors (in most cases security and intelligence agencies) need to pay attention and be cognizant of the nature of social interactions and social networks that these individuals are part of without adding to a single person's risk of becoming radicalized. Each actor involved should understand the importance of an encounter with a radicalized person, and implement appropriate processes while abiding by the "do no harm" principle. Lastly, the actors agreed that regardless of the nature of the action or measure in question, deterioration of the existing situations should be avoided.

4. **Train practical actors with specific goals and priorities so that resources are allocated efficiently. Some of the interviewees envisioned web-based training and self-study packages as practical ways to help the situation.**
In almost all the interviews training was seen as a part if not the whole solution to the existing challenges. Differences were detected, however, on what the training should include. For instance, some found understanding individual radicalization processes to be essential in fighting this problem, while others advocated more for practical toolboxes to support the first-hand practitioners.

5. **Arrange civil society organizations' funding so that the continuity of operation is secured, and the knowhow accrued during the project can be utilized.**

The NAP assigns action points in civil society organizations, mainly through cooperation with other actors, but also as separate projects which those organizations fully carry out independently. In the process of assessing the NAP, the message from civic society organizations themselves and other actors with experience on cooperation was that the operations carried out by these actors are pivotal and the continuity should be secured. The authors of the assessment recommend, that the next NAP secures the funding of the civil society organizations that partake in the prevention work on radicalization and violent extremism to maintain a high level of work, secure the continuity of operations, and utilize the know-how in individual projects.

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3

INITIATING THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Libasut Taqwa

Introduction and Background

Since the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, Indonesia has faced many challenges related to violent extremism. These challenges have continued into the last decade in various forms. The reports of *New Straits Times* (2017) and *CNN Indonesia* (2019), for example, shows that several attacks in major cities in Indonesia continued to occur throughout 2012-2019, including; a police station shooting in Central Java (2012), a bombing in Sarinah Building, Jakarta (2016), a bombing in Kampung Melayu Jakarta (2017), an attack of police station in Medan (2017), a bombing in three churches in Surabaya (2018), an attack on Riau Police Headquarters (2018), and a bombing at the police station in Kertasura, Central Java (June 2019).

The various attacks above indicate that violent extremism is still a serious problem in Indonesia. Research results from a Wahid Foundation study (Wahid Foundation & Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 2019) show that at least 7.8% of the population want to be involved in radical acts of violence. This research is also supported by another finding by the *New York Times* which states that Indonesia's openness towards different ideas can also provide opportunities for a number of cases of violence, criminalization, and discrimination committed by vigilante groups (Roger, 2012; Mudzakkir, 2018). Similarly, research conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) of Islamic State University of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta suggested that 57% of teachers in Indonesia had an intolerant opinion towards other religions, and 37.77% wish to carry out intolerant actions that lead to acts of violence (Tempo.co, 2018).

On the other hand, the efforts of the Indonesian government to deal with the rise of extremism in recent years have come a long way. Since the 2002 Bali bombing, the Indonesian government has ratified various laws and regulations on terrorism that cover treatment and de-radicalization of potential terrorists and terrorists.[1] The Indonesian government also involves the Indonesian National Army (TNI) –in certain limitations- and the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) in combating terrorism.[2] In fact, since 2004, Indonesia, under the police force, has formed a Special Anti-terror Detachment 88 (Densus 88) which has the task of dealing with acts of terrorism (Arif, 2015). Despite these various efforts, the combating of extremism in Indonesia has not yet reached its maximum potential. Some argue, besides a lack of coordination among the government agencies, the existing law on terrorism is not sufficient for security forces and intelligence to take preventive actions against any terror attacks (Singh, 2016; Rasyid et al., 2018; Grealy, 2018). By involving various elements of the state apparatus, the government also tends to prioritize the security approach rather than involving prevention in a holistic strategy (Fenton & Price, 363-395). The imbalance of this approach then sparked various controversies and became its own paradox in tackling extremism in Indonesia. Some reports even say that instead of decreasing, the number of people involved in extremist actions is actually increasing (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017).

To maximize the work of combating extremism, through the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 46 of 2010, the Indonesian government established a special anti-terrorism unit outside the Military and Police - later to become the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) - as a non-ministerial institution under the Ministry of Politics, Law, and Security. The BNPT has several main duties: to develop national policies, strategies, and programs in combating terrorism; to coordinate the relevant government agencies in the implementation of policies in combating terrorism; and to carry out the formation of task units consisting of elements of relevant government agencies in accordance with the duties, functions, and authorities of each.[3]

The establishment of the BNPT was intended as an effort to institutionalize counter terrorism that was previously sporadic in ministries and institutions in

[1] For example, Lieu of Law No. 1 of 2002 on the Eradication of Terrorist Attack; Anti-Terrorism Law No. 15 of 2002; Prevention and the Suppression of Terrorist Financing Law No. 9 of 2013; Law No. 5 of 2018 on Terrorism; including the Law No. 17 of 2011 on State Intelligence.

[2] As mentioned in article 7 paragraph (2) point (b) number (3) of Law No. 34 of 2004 on Indonesia National Army (TNI). One of the main tasks of TNI is military operation besides war, which in point three is mentioned among other to handle terrorism action.

[3] This is in accordance with Article 1 of Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 46 of 2010 on National Counter-terrorism Agency (BNPT).

Indonesia. BNPT is also a coordinating body for addressing terrorism and its variants in Indonesia, which not only takes a security approach, such as the TNI and POLRI (Sumpter, 2017), but also includes the areas of prevention, protection, deradicalization, enforcement, and national preparedness (Putri, 2012).

The background to the formation of the BNPT is also to answer the biggest challenge in handling Indonesian terrorism, which lies in the lack of coordination between government institutions, also lack of collaboration with civil society (Putri, 2012). In contrast, the latest developments in violent extremism trend requires a comprehensive strategy that involves cross sectors and multi-stakeholders. The formation of the BNPT is a first step towards developing a more comprehensive approach to the Indonesian context.

Considering these challenges, under the coordination of the BNPT, Indonesia has initiated the preparation of a National Action Plan for Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism (or known as Rencana Aksi Nasional Penanggulangan Ekstremisme Berbasis Kekerasan yang Mengarah Pada Terorisme [RAN PE]), which will become a strategic legal umbrella for tackling violent extremism that leads to terrorism in Indonesia. This document will not only serve as a reference for a joint national strategy for tackling extremism, but will also be a vehicle for coordination and cooperation across ministries and institutions as well as civil society in Indonesia (Dja'far & Taqwa, 2018).

The RAN PE document was initiated by BNPT in 2017 after considering international resolutions such as The UN Secretary-General's 2016 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism[4] and through various public discussions involving government institutions and civil society.[5] Recommendations for the preparation of a national action plan also come from religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama which consider the government needs to immediately have a national strategy document to prevent extremism.[6] The results of the public discussion and recommendations were then elaborated into an academic draft of the RAN PE document submitted to the president to obtain official permission to prepare it. In early 2019, the president released an official letter granting BNPT permission to continue the preparation of the RAN PE legal drafting as

[4] The UN Secretary-General's 2016 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism recommends that "…each Member State should consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism" (para 44).

[5] Public discussions held by BNPT during 2017-2018, respectively in August 2017 in Semarang; September 2017 in Malang; October 2017 in Bandung; December 2017 in Bogor; January 2018 in Jakarta; and February 2018 in Depok. These discussions were specifically held to broaden the support of civil society and government institutions. Various discussions involving ministries, institutions and also civil society were also held throughout 2019 to strengthen the document.

[6] As will be explained in the next section.

a presidential regulation by involving and forming an inter-ministerial and institutional committee consisting of 24 Ministries and Institutions.

In addition to government institutions, BNPT also openly collects the aspirations of civil society with respect to the RAN PE. This is similar to Burkina Faso that insisted civil society took part in writing its national action plan (NAP) (Agustin Loada & Peter Romaniuk, 2014), or Norway with calls for civil society to be part of a permanent reference group to improve national PVE coordination (Allam, 2017). Through the drafting process,[7] the involvement of civil society to provide input and criticism on the draft RAN PE was always conducted through regular public discussions held by BNPT during 2017-2019. As a result of the advocacy of civil society organizations initiated by the Wahid Foundation, input, and advice from civil society organizations regarding the involvement of civil society, especially in the aspect of prevention, are also explicitly guaranteed through specific articles in the RAN PE document.[8]

The involvement of civil society in the RAN PE drafting process is important to be noted as one of the breakthroughs for counter-terrorism in Indonesia. Previously, the government was often criticized because it did not optimally involve civil society in preventing terrorism, including in the process of formulating policies. In fact, international mechanisms such as the UN Security Council Resolution 2178 of 2014 emphasize the importance of involving civil society in preventing terrorism (Ginkel, 2012; Wulandari, 2019). Therefore, this is a sign that the government of Indonesia takes seriously the international recommendations of involving civil society in preventing extremism.[9]

However, the RAN PE drafting process has not been completely smooth. In particular, there have been several challenges during the drafting process that relate to the document content including the drafting process itself. For example, despite two inter-ministerial meetings to harmonize the legal documents held by the BNPT and the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in January 2020, there is still no official agreement on the definition and the use of the "violent extremism" as the title of the national action plan.

[7] Officially, in the decree issued by BNPT, the legal drafting committee of the draft RAN PE is limited to ministries and government agencies. See BNPT Head Decree No. 138 of 2019 on the Establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Compilation of a Presidential Regulation on the National Action Plan for Combating Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism.

[8] The role of civil society is mentioned at the activity planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages. See the Draft of Presidential Regulation on the National Action Plan to Counter Violent Extremism that leads to Terrorism. (2019). The draft. October Version.

[9] For examples; General Assembly Resolutions Resolution 60/288 on adopting the UN Global Counter-Terrorism stated the important role of civil society on CVE.

This essay analyzes the drafting process of the RAN PE in order to elucidate the potential effectiveness of the strategy and its future implementation. Based on the results of this research, there are some challenges about definitions, lack of coordination, the involvement of civil society, and a priority of civil society organization (CSO)'s advocacy issues for the drafting and implementation of the National Action Plan.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research method. The data used in this research are derived from official documents, official minutes of meeting with government officials and CSOs in RAN PE context, recommendation papers from CSOs. The secondary sources used are: UN documents on violent extremism and terrorism issues as well as books and journals which focus on the dynamics of countering and preventing violent extremism in Indonesia.

Specifically, reports and documents on RAN PE discussion activities conducted by BNPT will be the main material to see input and criticism from ministries and government agencies related to the RAN PE document. To analyze input and recommendations from civil society related to the process of preparing and content of RAN PE, the discussion report document organized by the Wahid Foundation and the recommendation document from AMAN Indonesia and the Working Group on Women and PCVE (WGWC) will be the main material. This study also uses the United Nations benchmark in seeing whether the preparation of the RAN PE, including discussions regarding definitions, priority issues in document preparation, and involvement of civil society are in accordance with international standards as set out in related UN documents on extremism and terrorism. In addition, specifically related to the involvement of civil society and the effectiveness of the implementation of the RAN PE document, it is also compared to the national action plan on extremism that has been made by other countries to compare issues that challenge the preparation of a national action plan.

Initiatives to Draft the National Action Plan on CVE

According to BNPT, Indonesia does not yet have a published or public strategic document covering a comprehensive way to tackling extremism (BNPT, 2015; BNPT, 2019a).[10] A published strategy is needed so that it can become a reference at the national level not only for certain ministries and state institutions but other ministries and government bodies, civil society, and the private sector (Wulandari, 2019). On the other hand, the publishing of previous government regulation will still not be sufficient for overcoming the threat of terrorism.

As previously noted, since 2017, the Indonesian government under the coordination of the National Counterterrorism Agency has developed a draft National Action Plan for Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism (RAN PE). In compiling the RAN PE, the government engaged and cooperated with various organizations from civil society, one of which is the Wahid Foundation, to develop and enrich the elements contained in the 3 pillars of the RAN PE as mentioned in the draft of October, namely: (a) Prevention which includes protection, counter-radicalization, and preparedness; (b) Law Enforcement and strengthening of the legislative framework; and (c) International partnerships and cooperation (BNPT, 2019a).

For BNPT, RAN PE has two aims: increasing public resilience from the threat of violent extremism that leads to terrorism; and increasing the protection of the right to citizens' security from violent extremism that leads to terrorism. These goals are strengthened by the principle of RAN PE as a living document, the implementation of which is to be adjusted to the objectives and problems of each ministry and government body. It means, this document is designed to adapt any changes possibilities that might occur in the flow of government bureaucracy (BNPT, 2019a).

The idea of each country developing a national action plan (NAP) to prevent violent extremism became part of a global agenda when the United Nations released the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (UN Resolution, 2015) and encouraged many countries to involve themselves in the preparation of their own NAP in their respective countries, including Indonesia. The need for this action plan was also emphasized by General Assembly Resolution No. 68/127, entitled "The world against violence and violent extremism; promoting tolerance and reconciliation: encouraging peaceful, inclusive societies, and fighting violent extremism" (UN Resolution, 2014). Affirmation was also given by the UN Security Council, which warned of the need for action to tackle violent extremism and stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters in resolution 2178. (UNSC, 2014). In Indonesia, support for the existence of a NAP received a warm welcome from the government and helped to initiate the preparation of RAN PE. Indonesia has also helped to lead the preparation of a regional action plan, the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Terrorism and Violent Extremism (Kemlu, 2015; Yovandra et al., 2018).

[10] Article 15 of Regulation No. 77 of 2019 on Prevention of Terrorism Acts and Protection of Law Enforcement Officers also mandated the BNPT to formulate national strategy on Prevention of Terrorism.

In line with the global context, the drafting of the NAP is part of Indonesia's commitment to prevent the influence of global terrorism in Indonesia. In addition, by the end of 2019, more than a dozen governments had published national action plans including Albania, Burkina Faso, Denmark, Finland, France, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, Montenegro, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Somalia, and Switzerland (Koser et al., 2020). Several more are developing national strategies, policy frameworks, and action plans. Therefore, the preparation of this NAP is important in the Indonesian context.

In the drafting of RAN PE, encouragement from various elements of civil society also strengthened the process. Some of the support came from, for example, recommendations from the national congregation of 'Alim Ulama of Nahdlatul Ulama - the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia - in 2017 (Fathoni, 2017). For Nahdlatul Ulama, because of the terrorism threat, the government should have a national strategy to counter it. Support for the preparation of the RAN PE also came from a coalition of civil society initiated by the Wahid Foundation.[11] The Wahid Foundation and more than 20 civil society organizations even actively and regularly held various meetings, with the CSOs and ministries to provide input to the government since the drafting of the RAN PE especially in the context of CSOs role in the document (Hafizen & Taqwa, 2019).

After two years of the public consultation and inter-ministerial meeting process, on January 25, 2019, the President, through the Ministry of State Secretariat (Kemensesneg), issued an Initiative Permit Letter which officially allowed the preparation of the RAN PE as the presidential regulation draft.

[11] A non-governmental organization that focuses on humanitarian work and the promotion of peaceful Islam. Wahid Foundation was established to advance the humanitarian vision of KH Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) in advancing the development of tolerant, multicultural, society in Indonesia, improving the welfare of the poor, building democracy and fundamental justice, and expanding the values of peace and non-violence in Indonesia and throughout the world. See http://wahidfoundation.org/eng/index.php/page/index/About-Us.

The letter mandated BNPT to continue the process of drafting and creating an Inter-Ministerial Committee consisting of approximately 24 ministries and government bodies including TNI-POLRI (BNPT, 2019). During 2019, BNPT held a series of focus Group Discussion that involved inter-ministerial committee to discuss the document (BNPT, 2019b). BNPT is also involved in public consultations and meetings arranged by Wahid Foundation and CSOs working group to share the development of the drafting process and to consider the aspirations of civil society. In BNPT planning, the RAN PE is expected to be finalized at the end of 2019. However, until this research was written, the discussion continues because there is still no final agreement regarding the term violent extremism that leads to terrorism as the title of the document. This challenge arises - as will be discussed - due to the absence of a legal basis for the term violent extremism in Indonesian law.

Challenges During the National Action Plan Drafting

Based on BNPTs meeting reports throughout 2019, several things can be noted as challenges that come from the dynamics of coordination between ministries and relevant governmental bodies (BNPT, 2019b). First, similar to many other countries that have developed a NAP, as a term, "violent extremism" is problematic and confusing to stakeholders in Indonesia, and this was reflected in the process of developing the NAP. In a number of meetings held by the BNPT, there was still a disagreement between the BNPT and the ministries and bodies regarding the use of "violent extremism" as a term and as a title of the document. In particular, according to several ministries (BNPT, 2019b), the use of the term "extremism" can be problematic if it is not clarified by the BNPT because this term does not have a normative basis in Indonesian laws and regulations, because in the laws in Indonesia related to terrorism, terms related to terrorism and its derivatives are still very limited. On the other hand, the ministries that involved in the inter-ministerial committee suggested that the action plan should use an existed term like terrorism because it has been defined formally in Indonesian regulation.

For example, in Law No.5 of 2018 on Combating Terrorism, "violent extremism" did not exist as a term, only "terrorism," "violence," and "threat of violence." In Law No.5 of 2018 on Combating Terrorism, terrorism is defined as "an act which uses violence or threat of violence which causes a widespread atmosphere of terror or fear, which can cause mass victims, and/or creates damages or destructions to strategic vital object, environment, public facility, or international facility with a motif of ideology, politic, security disturbance."

Based on this definition, there are a few main elements in the definition of terrorism. First, an act which uses violence or threat of violence. The said violence in the definition is every act of abuse of physical power with or without the use of a tool unlawfully and causes danger to a person's body, life, and freedom, including making a person unconscious or unable.[12] While the said threat of violence is every unlawful act in a form of spoken, written, drawing, symbol, or gesture, both with or without the use of a tool in a form of electronic or non-electronic which can cause fear to a person or people at large or restrain the basic freedom of a person or society.[13]

Second, this act creates a widespread atmosphere of terror or fear, which can cause mass victims and/or cause damages or destructions to strategic vital object, environment, public facilities, or international facilities. Third, the motif of the act is an ideology, politics, or security disturbance (Maya, 2018).

On the other hand, for the term violent extremism, as stated in the UN Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons (2016) states that violent extremism has a focus on action by using violence motivated by: (i) Violence-based ideology such as the political ideology of neo-Nazis group and/or religious and/or belief interpretations that advocate the use of violence; (ii) certain issue-based movements such as those that fight for animal rights or anti-globalization that use violence; and (iii) Ethno-nationalist based violence or the separation of state unity.

As of now, the BNPT defines violent extremism as the behavior of someone who has beliefs and acts to support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious and political objectives. This includes terrorism and sectarian forms of communal violence (BNPT, 2018). Furthermore, acts of extreme violence are actions that are based on extreme and/or radical beliefs by using the path of violence to achieve goals that are motivated by ideology, religion, and sectarianism (BNPT, 2018).

In this regard, BNPT and the RAN PE drafting team needed to ascertain whether this term would cover all acts of violence committed by vigilante groups, or whether it is only related to terror committed by religious-based

[12] See Article 1 point 3 of Law No.5 of 2018 on Combating Terrorism.
[13] Article 1 point 4 of Law No.5 of 2018 on Combating Terrorism

organizations. With the proposed definition, BNPT also needs to consider that violent extremism term is in line with the definition of terrorism that has been formalized in the terrorism law. If too narrow, the term could limit the interpretation of the strategy and laws to only religious-based violent extremism. If too broad, the term could mean that all acts of violence committed by any groups in Indonesia would be categorized as "violent extremism" without any attempt to distinguish their motives.

It should be noted that the term "violent extremism", although not showing up in the legislation in Indonesia, has been used by government officials in official speeches in the past. According to Alamsyah M. Dja'far and Junaidi Simun (2019), the term was used by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in his speech during the independent day ceremony of the Republic of Indonesia in 2014 at the Parliament (Ministry of State Secretariat, 2014). In the official document of the speech, although he does not explain the definition of violent extremism, President Yudhoyono conveyed the term "Violent Extremist Organization" (VEO) as a movement that needed special attention from the government in terms of security. The same term also appears with a short explanation in paragraph 2 on Rationale of Ministry of Defense Regulation number 20 of 2014 on National Defense Health System (2014) that included separatist and terrorism as an act of violent extremism. Without a stated definition, the regulation still used a broad category because not only include faith-based organizations, but also separatist organizations such as the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka – OPM).

Looking at the dynamics of the definition above, terrorism and violent extremism in the Indonesian context have some similarities. However, the BNPT has not explicitly determined whether all elements in the definition of violent extremism criteria by the United Nations will be included in "the violent extremism that leads to terrorism" in the RAN document. Cases such as the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka - OPM) certainly require a deeper study to be separated from the policy dilemma in Indonesia which is not yet clear whether it belongs to the category of terrorism or not (Jones, 2013).

The second major issue in the RAN PE development is that of coordination between ministries and government bodies. Coordination between stakeholders to formulate a policy is actually very good in the context of violent extremism; with coordination, the collaboration will arise. The collaboration will thus have an impact on the formulation of public policies that prioritizes the involvement of all stakeholders, including non-state actor, because it allows for a deliberative forum and collective decision making (Ansell & Gash, 2007) in which the stakeholders involved can engage in a dialogue process until it reaches a consensus on a particular public issue (Wulandari, 2019).

One of the biggest challenges in overcoming violent extremism in Indonesia is the lack of space for coordination between stakeholders and collaboration between civil society (Arham, n.d.; Malik, n.d.; Putri, 2012; Meijer, 2012). Apart from the final agreement on definitions and terms yet to be found, often the responses from the 24 ministries and institutions in the RAN PE document meeting were inconsistent.[14] Ministries were also less responsive, sending passive officials to meetings if they sent anyone at all. Since BNPT was established, coordination challenges often occur between ministries and institutions including with civil society organizations (Agastia et al., 2020). One example is the Deradicalization Blueprint document compiled by BNPT in 2013 which is attributed to a lack of interest from other ministries (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014). As a result, often the performance of preventing extremism between one ministry and another is not enough connected.

Third, gender issues are very important for the NAP on violent extremism document. In many countries, this issue generally receives less attention from the government during the NAP drafting. According to the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) (2017), after reviewing nine NAPs, only one (Switzerland) recommends gender mainstreaming and others that mention women perceive them solely as victims instead of agents of change. Notably, more generally, in some countries, civil society consultation even has been limited or unrepresentative, and on the whole, the private sector has not been engaged in the process.

In Indonesian context, according to a document compiled by The Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia and the Working Group on Women and Preventing / Countering violent extremism (WGWC),[15] one of the issues that had not been maximally discussed in the process of preparing the RAN

[14] In several meetings that held by BNPT, some ministries sent different representative in different meeting that influence decision making during the meeting. This changes the final decision that has been made at the previous meeting.

[15] WGWC is a network platform for civil society and government that works to strengthen gender mainstreaming in policies and interventions to combat radicalism and extremism (terrorism) in Indonesia. Followed by 24 organizations from civil society and government to work in the prevention of violent extremism declared a collaboration platform called Working Group on Women and P / CVE (WGWC) on July 24, 2017 in Bogor. The WGWC is a shared house for actors working on gender mainstreaming in preventing violent extremism (WGWC, 2020).

PE is gender mainstreaming (AMAN Indonesia, n. d). According to AMAN Indonesia, in an effort to ensure the fulfillment of women's rights and create gender equality, the global community recognizes two strategies in grounding a gender perspective, namely gender mainstreaming as stated formally in Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development (2000), and "stand alone" gender equality as noted by UN Secretary General Plan of Action as one of seven pillars on CVE (UN, 2015). In explaining these two strategies, AMAN Indonesia articulated that gender mainstreaming is when gender is used as a perspective; thus, gender indicators should be incorporated into all the pillars in (a) Prevention which includes protection, counter-radicalization, and preparedness; (b) Law Enforcement and strengthening of the legislative framework; and (c) International partnerships and cooperation (AMAN Indonesia, n.d.).

With respect to "stand alone" gender equality, this means gender equality as an affirmative action, a special intervention to respond to women's problems (AMAN Indonesia, n. d.). Therefore, under the first pillar of the RAN PE document (prevention which includes protection, counter-radicalization and preparedness), it would important to include Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as sub-pillars to the RAN PE. According to AMAN Indonesia, BNPT can apply these two strategies in addition to Indonesia having implemented Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) in accordance with Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000, also because the government has launched guidelines for implementing gender responsive planning and budgeting (BAPPENAS et al., 2012) to avoid overlapping planning and budgeting policies that include gender mainstreaming.

On the other hand, BNPT itself, in the academic paper prepared, claims to have adopted both strategies (BNPT, 2018). Aside from being a living document, RAN PE also contains several principles that are adjusted to the principles contained in the UN Plan of Action on Violent Extremism such as human rights, justice, gender equality and women empowerment, safety and security, good governance, participation, unity in diversity, and local wisdom (Wahid Foundation, n.d.). However, in the future, it is important to note that the BNPT continues to involve civil society to discuss gender issues in the RAN PE document to see where the differences are between the views of civil society and the government.

With these three main challenges above, it should also be articulated that the RAN PE as a whole has been most successful because of the openness of the BNPT on behalf of the Indonesian government and appreciated by the ministries and institutions in the drafting process (BNPT & Wahid Foundation, 2019). We can also note that the involvement of civil society as part of the drafting process is an important step toward implementing UN recommendations, a step that has not been taken by all countries drafting a NAP. This engagement is important to guarantee participation and strengthen the strategic position of civil society in preventing violent extremism in Indonesia, because so far, the role and contribution of civil society has not been well appreciated by the government in proper regulation, whereas the great potential for preventing extremism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The preparation of RAN PE carried out by BNPT with the support of civil society shows Indonesia's great commitment to preventing and combatting violent extremism. In addition to playing a role at the global level in adopting the Plan of Action mandate from the UN, the RAN PE document also shows high appreciation for the role and contribution of civil society in Indonesia. Collaboration between government and civil society will certainly add strength against extremism. Of course, as explained in this paper, not all of the preparation process went well. There are still some challenges that must be considered by the government before this document is ratified. Therefore, the authors formulated several recommendations that need to be considered by stakeholders in perfecting the preparation of the RAN PE going forward.

First, the government needs to ***ensure that each of the actors involved agreed with the use of violent extremism that leads to terrorism as a term*** or determines a common definition that suits the Indonesian context for the title of the action plan. Understanding of definitions and terms can build better and measurable performance among each stakeholder involved. In addition, with a common definition, suspicion of certain groups and religions as a trigger for extremism can be prevented earlier by strong regulation.

Second, ***strengthening coordination and collaboration among ministries and government bodies is critical to further the document.*** This coordination is not only limited to meetings and field performance that are in-

tegrated with each other, but also includes harmonizing policies and synergies related to violent extremism that crosses sectors and involves non-state actors.

Third, the government needs to ***hold more discussions with civil society organizations and ministries on how to compromise the gender perspective into the draft.*** Therefore, strengthening gender perspectives has become a common agenda in Indonesia and globally.

Finally, the government needs to ***facilitate a coordination platform or forum between CSOs and the government in developing the draft.*** The platform will continue after the draft is signed by the President to ensure the implementation and evaluation. Engagement or cooperation with civil society organizations on preventing and countering violent extremism means that government authorities and civil society organizations should learn to understand and respect the role played by the civil society.

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4

LESSONS LEARNED ON PVE-E: THE EXPERIENCE OF GLOBAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE FUND-FUNDED PROGRAMS IN BANGLADESH, KENYA, KOSOVO, MALI, AND NIGERIA

André Alves dos Reis

Introduction

Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) provides grants to community-level initiatives on preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) that are led and implemented by local partners. This approach's main logic is that P/CVE interventions need to be tailored to the local context. Despite the contextualisation, due to their common focus on P/CVE, GCERF-funded programmes share some similarities. Most of the grants, for example, have prevention of violent extremism through education (PVE-E), the component in which the grantees engage directly with the educational sector (formal and informal).

The primary purpose of this essay is to provide an overview of the lessons generated on PVE-E of GCERF-funded completed programs in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Mali (2016-2019) and active grants in Kosovo and Kenya. The aim is to consolidate current learnings and suggest ways in which projects on the PVE-E can be enhanced by identifying common denominators across the country programs.

The essay starts with a very brief discussion of the literature on education, violent extremism, and PVE-E. It is followed by methodological considerations on how these lessons were generated and identified, and then those lessons are presented in the next section. Finally, some concluding considerations are discussed in the final section.

(P)VE and Education

The relationship between education level and violent extremism is unclear. Some studies indicate that education level has no direct impact on terrorism and violent extremism (Krueger & Malečková, 2003). Others found a positive correlation between secondary and higher educational levels (and a higher standard of living) and the likelihood of supporting VE groups (Berrebi, 2007), while another set of studies support the notion that although education level has no direct effect, unemployment among educated youth can be a factor increasing vulnerability to radicalization (Bhatia & Ghanem, 2017).

In a more recent study, trying to disentangle the relationship between education and violent extremism, researchers examined the expansion of the educational sector in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in 50 African countries and its effects on terrorism (Danzell et al., 2018). The results were mixed: the expansion of primary and secondary education seemed to reduce terrorism, whereas tertiary education did not have any significant effect. Furthermore, the relationship between education and terrorism levels displayed non-monotonic effects on societies whose populations of youth were rapidly increasing. Thus, the relationship between education level and violent extremism is still up for debate, but it seems unlikely that there is a direct relationship between education and violent extremism.

On the other hand, education's potential contribution to preventing violent extremism is recognised, primarily through education that promotes civic values and citizenship (UNESCO, 2017; Veenkamp & Zeiger 2015). Moving away from formal aspects of education (years and degrees) towards a focus on educational methods, content (curriculum and extra-curriculum activities), and educational environment, research, and practice has increasingly shown that proper education can assist in building resilience against violent extremism at the individual level by enhancing cognitive capacity, values, and personality traits (Stephens et al., 2019; Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2019).

If education can assist in building resilience, what are the possible modalities of implementation? According to UNESCO (2017, pg 54-63), PVE-E interventions can be implemented through different modalities: cross-sectoral partnerships (e.g., National Plans on PVE with educational components), curriculum-based approaches (e.g., through traditional subjects or cross-curricular projects), teacher training and support (e.g., training on PVE), whole-school approaches (e.g., comprehensive interventions that deal with schools and its policies, teaching, activities, relationship with communities), non-formal education and community-based approaches (e.g., arts and sports, awareness-raising to parents), and intersectoral partnerships (e.g., interventions that work on the nexus between an educational institution and community leaders, local governments).

Project and Methodological Considerations

The lessons learned presented in the next section are the result of an in-house GCERF project conducted over seven months from May/2019 to December/2019. In this period, the author reviewed documents from both completed and active grants in Bangladesh, Kosovo, Kenya, Mali, and Nigeria with components on education; and led a learning event workshop at HQ level with GCERF grantees in December 2019.
The grants surveyed included:

- **Bangladesh:** five completed grants (2017-2019) in the west and southeast of Bangladesh and Dhaka;
- **Mali:** six completed grants (2017-2019) across the whole country, especially in the central part of Mali;
- **Nigeria:** four completed grants (2017-2019) in North Central Nigerian states;
- **Kosovo:** five active grants (2017 - present) across the country, including the capital Pristina; and
- **Kenya:** three active grants (2018- present) in Nairobi, and the northeast and east of Kenya.

All those grants had an education component within their programs. Following the modalities presented by UNESCO (2017), the interventions were mainly on: non-formal education and community approaches, and teacher training and support; and to some extent on whole-school based approaches and intersectoral partnerships.

However, they did possess essential differences. All Nigerian and Kenya grants had a PVE-E component that was inserted into a more comprehensive PVE-community-level approach. Mali had a similar approach, with the difference being that its PVE-E component was more heavily focused on vocational training and Qur'anic Schools. Both Bangladesh and Kosovo had both types

of projects: PVE-E embedded in broader PVE interventions, and programs entirely focused on education: university students in the case of Bangladesh, and high school students in the case of Kosovo.

The lessons were identified through a process of reviewing relevant documents from the grantees:

- programme reports submitted by GCERF grantees every quarter, in which they report the activities implemented in the last quarter as well its learnings and challenges;
- reports that result from third-party monitoring or end-of-grant evaluation exercises conducted by external and independent consultants contracted by GCERF. The third-party monitoring and evaluation follow OECD-DAC criteria and standards, evaluating the programs regarding their relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability;
- baselines, mid-line, and end-line surveys conducted by GCERF grantees, usually involving independent consultants or external research institutions and primary data collection;
- end-of-grant completion reports, and results in framework submitted by the grantees, in which they report at the completion of the grant how much was achieved compared to the goals and targets set at the beginning of the program, the overall impact of the program, unintended consequences, and learnings;
- stories of change gathered by GCERF grantees, which are personal stories of beneficiaries. Although anecdotal, such stories are important as examples of the plausible causal mechanisms linking GCERF-funded programs and the impact achieved;
- presentations that were done by GCERF grantees during the GCERF Forum 2019 (a global learning workshop hosted by GCERF with representatives from its grantees).

In terms of how these lessons were collected and identified, the documents were first sorted by the grant. Each document was reviewed, and each paragraph was coded regarding its relevance to the object of the investigation: PVE-E. Every paragraph in which educational approaches, educational institutions, or education-related population groups (students, parents of students, teachers, principals) were mentioned was coded as PVE-E relevant.

After this coding, the author collated a separate document all the excerpts related to PVE-E, one for each grant. Paragraphs that were not classified as PVE-E but were essential to provide meaningful context to the PVE-E content paragraphs were also included. After this process, the author summarised the learnings for each grant. Then, the author identified common themes of learnings on PVE-E across the grants at a global level. After three rounds of categorisation and adjustment, six categories were developed:

- Research (needs assessments and baselines)
- Access and trust
- Engaging critical stakeholders
- Curriculum and extra-curriculum activities
- Gender
- Leveraging PVE-E

The section that follows will provide an overview of GCERF lessons learned on PVE-E under six lessons that dialogue with those six categories identified and developed. It is vital to notice, as a cautionary note, that the findings and learnings are more policy-oriented and based on qualitative and quantitative data gathered by different actors, using different data collection methods; that is why the purpose of this article is to show lessons that seem to be valid across different contexts, rather than comparing programs. The paper does provide early findings and lessons that could be applied and, more importantly, should be further tested and verified by research.

Lessons Learned on PVE-E

The lessons presented in this section are organised across the common six themes identified during the review process of identifying lessons learned. In general, GCERF programmes have been quite successful in their PVE-E components. More than 75% of the outcome indicators related to PVE-E from the four completed rounds of grants (Bangladesh Round 1, Mali Round 2 and 3, and Nigeria Round 1) successfully reached the target. The programmes were most successful in achieving targets on raising awareness of students and teachers on VE and PVE.

Lesson 1 - Research: Conduct a thorough context analysis before the programme starts

Working on PVE-E requires a good quality understanding of the context, drivers, and characteristics of the population and educational institutions engaged during the programme, especially testing common assumptions. For example, findings and patterns found in one country or locality do not necessarily translate to other contexts; thus, the importance of proper needs assessments and baseline studies.

In Pakistan, researchers found that in comparison with secondary school students, madrassa students tended to hold more extreme views and that religiosity was a good predictor of sympathising or not with the Taliban (Hanif & Shaheen, 2019). However, in the research supported by GCERF in Bangladesh with students from madrassas, private and public universities in the greater Dhaka region, the results were quite different.

Using an adapted BRAVE-14,[1] a metric developed to measure youth's resilience against violent extremism, the research found that students from private universities had lower resilience to violent extremism than their public university or madrassa counterparts. Also, the research commissioned by GCERF found that religion and religiosity were a factor of resilience for those students, especially on discrediting violence.[2]

Such insights have clear programmatic implications and show that rather than assume the context, risks, and factors of resilience, the practice of PVE-E (but also PVE in general) benefits from a thorough assessment that informs the projects. In this case, the project developed by the grantee in Bangladesh developed its PVE-E approach based on such findings, rather than assuming a group was more vulnerable than others.

Lesson 2 - Gain access through trust and tailored approaches

Even if the PVE-E design is based on the best evidence available, PVE-E work's success relies on securing access and building trust with institutions (e.g., schools, universities, madrassas) and individuals (e.g., principals, teachers, students, parents).

It is especially the case for religious, educational institutions that may be cautious about engaging with non-religious actors (as observed in Mali) or a perception that specific approaches usually included in PVE-E, such as cultural events, are actually entertainment and thus not appropriate for a religious institution (Bangladesh).[3]

In this case, the first important consideration is the timeframe of the intervention. Projects that had a short timeframe for implementation and were implemented by partners without a robust previous relationship with these institutions experienced difficulties securing access and gaining cooperation, as was observed with madrassas in Bangladesh.[4] It seems that in other cases, in the same context, in which the projects had a more extended timeframe or were implemented by an organisation with previous ties with the religious institution, there were fewer problems in securing access and collaboration.

Beyond building trust, longer timeframes and long-standing relationships also help civil society actors to understand the worldview of those institutions, its teachers, and students, facilitating the design of an approach that considers their particularities.

For example, instead of focusing directly on the content, working on less controversial activities such as vocational training, which has tangible benefits and address poverty, has proved an excellent entry point for working and build trust with Qur'anic Schools in Mali,[5] where collaboration with external non-religious actors mainly when funded by international organisations, are sometimes viewed with skepticism. With trust built, the grantees were then able to start discussions on P/CVE.

In another example, in Bangladesh, the rebranding of activities as social change or professional/personal development was more effective in engaging previously reluctant institutions and motivating students in madrassas and private universities.[6] The ethical challenge here is not to disguise PVE, as transparency is also critical to build trust.

[1] For more on BRAVE 14, please see Grossman, M., Hadfield, K., Jefferies, P., Gerrand, V., & Ungar, M. (2020). Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism: Development and Validation of the BRAVE Measure. *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 1-21.
[2] Perception Study of university students in Greater Dhaka region (2018) commissioned by GCERF
[3] Direct observation, interview conducted with students and teachers.
[4] Independent end-of-grant evaluation report of AFM in Bangladesh (2019) commissioned by GCERF
[5] Third-party monitoring report in Mali (2018) commissioned by GCERF, and direct observation
[6] Independent end-of-grant evaluation report of AFM in Bangladesh (2019) commissioned by GCERF, direct observation, quarterly report (2019)

Lesson 3 - Engage critical stakeholders – especially teachers, parents, and youth

Once access to the institution and individuals is secured, the main challenge proved to be engaging the main stakeholders. Teachers and principals are still sometimes neglected or do not receive enough support. Successful programmes established positive relationships with teachers and teacher associations from the start.

The *GCTF Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism* points out the need to train teachers on educational methods, PVE, and other issues as successful good practices on PVE-E (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2019). GCERF's own experience is that teachers should be supported, and that the projects that were more successful treated teachers and the staff not just as beneficiaries, but as co-creators or leading implementers.

In one of the projects implemented in Nigeria, the GCERF grantee provided support for the creation/strengthening of Peace Clubs in schools. While the GCERF partner provided support to convene such clubs, didactic materials, and training teachers, the teachers themselves were responsible for mentoring youth and leading the clubs. While the general knowledge on violent extremist drivers increased from 43% to 63% in the youth engaged by the program, the figure increased to 91% when considering only students engaged directly through these school-based peace clubs.[7]

In Kenya, teachers' engagement from the start was beneficial to the programmes, especially in facilitating the selection of vulnerable youth and de-escalating any tension among the participants.[8] On the other hand, in Kosovo, activities in schools in which teachers were treated more as beneficiaries than co-implementers faced some initial difficulties in terms of getting engagement and creating sustainability.[9]

Parents are also critical for PVE-E activities, especially when there is reluctance from them or their children to engage and participate in PVE activities, due to cultural norms and practices. When engaged, parents can become important PVE 'change agents' themselves in the community, creating a multiplier effect for PVE-E activities. In Bangladesh, school/madrassa committees between teachers and parents were a valuable force in engaging both to function as an early warning system. It also helped reduce parents' resistance to extra-curricular activities.[10]

[7] End-of-grant report and final Results-Framework (2019) submitted by GCERF grantees
[8] Presentation on PVE-E from GCERF grantee at GCERF Forum 2019
[9] Presentation on PVE-E from GCERF grantee at GCERF Forum 2019; Mid-line assessment (2019) commissioned by GCERF grantee)

Finally, the most critical stakeholder, but often neglected, when designing and implementing PVE-E activities are youth. As happened with parents, the GCERF programs that involve youth from the start seemed to have achieved the results planned and generated some interesting dynamics in which the youth took up the initiative to continue some activities on their own.

One of the most promising avenues was to rely on the students themselves to convene and relay the PVE message to their peers. Following a Training of Trainers (ToT) design, some students in Bangladesh were selected and received life-skills and PVE training; then, they convened and relayed such information to their peers. The results were quite remarkable because not only it was identified that with that strategy the program could directly or indirectly train on the content more than 2/3 of the student body, but also for those trained, more than 90% seemed to have developed an awareness of their role on PVE.

Lesson 4 - Implement curricular and extra-curricular activities, going beyond curriculum design

As alluded in the section on consideration of the project and methodology (but also in the previous lessons), GCERF found that the most effective ways to mainstream PVE into the education sector goes beyond traditional approaches such as curriculum design and development. It would also need to include aspects that would fall on teacher training, non-formal education, and community approaches as well as whole-school approaches such as:

- Extra-curricular activities for students – within the school;
- Extra-curricular activities for students – outside the school;
- Educational activities that engage youth (and possibly adults);
- Awareness-raising and capacity building for teachers, principals, and parents; and
- Technical and vocational training.

[10] GCERF Bangladesh Country Portfolio: Lessons learned (2019), direct observation

Looking beyond the curriculum with such analytical and refined understanding can help balance different priorities, entry-points, and approaches. For example, working on curricula demands close collaboration with the national and local educational authorities and probably an organisation with national reach and policy experience. In contrast, a program focusing on educational activities that provides youth with skills to improve livelihoods – such as vocational training – needs to establish a good relationship with training providers and local businesses.

As explained, influencing curricula was a real challenge because of the community-based nature of the work of GCERF grants. An exception was universities or madrassas, due to their higher capacity and academic freedom, where GCERF grantees were able in coordination with the administration of the institutions to include in the curriculum via course offerings the thematic of violent extremism and prevention of violent extremism.[11]

Besides the level of the intervention, the relatively low capacity of teachers and schools at the grassroots to absorb and implement any changes of the curriculum was also a significant barrier, which encouraged GCERF grantees, in general, to take another approach to implement PVE-E activities. GCERF grantees worked with teachers and principals to create and institutionalize *quasi-curriculums*, enhancing ownership and sustainability. The interventions were tailored to the school's local context and needs - which is another benefit of a localised approach since sometimes the national curriculum is incapable of addressing such nuances - and regularly offered during or after school hours.

Extra-curricular activities included arts/drama/theatre/writing activities and have been simplified and successful across most countries and age groups. Sports activities were also useful in building social skills, especially among younger students[12], in alignment with the recent literature on sports and PVE that indicate the benefit of sports to an individual feeling of self-confidence, and development self-control in situations that could ignite conflict (Johns et al., 2014). As reported by all grantees, due to the often-interactive nature of these activities – cultural and sports- youth were highly engaged and participative. Another successful activity was celebrating certain national and international days at school with festivities and activities, fostering the sentiment of commonality and fraternity, in several projects across different countries.[13]

[11] Direct observation, end-of-grant report (2019)
[12] Presentation and learnings gathered at GCERF Forum 2019
[13] Quarterly reports submitted (2017, 2018,2019) from various grantees from Kosovo, Bangladesh, and Nigeria)

Students and parents widely requested and appreciated ICT skills (Information and Communication Technology), which was another key to sustainability and trust. In Kosovo, middle-year school students received training on the safe use of the internet while their high school counterparts were trained to use ICT professionally.[14] In Nigeria, students and teachers assessed the combination of ICT and PVE as an exciting experiment in tackling issues like online radicalization and recruitment in a manner that was interesting and attractive to students due to the transference of essential skills on ICT.[15] Again, going beyond PVE can be the most effective way to influence PVE.

One of the critical elements of PVE-E is to engage youth on topics such as peace, tolerance, and non-violent action. The lessons learned from the grants show that discussions on peace and tolerance are suitable for all student age groups. Discussions focusing on VE itself are better introduced at the high school level and seem to reach full potential only at the college/university level.

In fact, debates in colleges and universities were a critical tool to fully leverage these discussions on VE/PVE and were reported to develop the students' critical thinking and their capacity to express themselves. Debates were also an excellent vehicle to link students from different backgrounds and boosted their capacity to link with people from different backgrounds. That was especially important in Bangladesh, where the research identified the lack of social interaction, and often, prejudice against students from a specific type of educational institutions as a significant concern.[16]

In contexts in which violence is more prominently, such as Mali, the creation and nurturing of safe spaces were an excellent instrument to initiate conversations around conflict, violence, and PVE. In Nigeria, safe spaces were also a potent activity to start such conversations with girls, which, due to cultural norms, are more reluctant to engage in these discussions openly.

Finally, the work to support vocational training and entrepreneurship or small business creation is a resource- and time-intensive. Nevertheless, it can be a critical PVE tool, especially if it is not a stand-alone activity but directly complements other activities and focuses on vulnerable youth. It is a useful entry-point and can undermine the use of financial incentives as a method of

[14] Third-party monitoring report of CFM in Kosovo (2019) commissioned by GCERF
[15] End-of-grant report
[16] Perception Study of university students in Greater Dhaka region, 2018, commissioned by GCERF

recruitment to VE groups. In this case, the selection of at-risk participants is a challenge but also the key to success.

As for the results of such activities, in qualitative terms, third-party monitoring and independent evaluations reported a successful engagement of students and teachers and the wider community. Some anecdotal evidence of a few cases also suggested that recruitment to violent extremist groups was averted in both Mali and Bangladesh due to the programs in the schools.[17]

In Kosovo, participants of the projects displayed a higher sense of purpose and belonging than non-participants.[18] Although for this particular question there was no baseline data, in a midline assessment of a program in Kosovo that was particularly focused on drama and sports, 87.5% of the respondents that were participants reported that they did not think violence helped to earn the respect of the others, while the number was 64.9% for non-participants.[19]

There was also a substantial increase in participation of students in social activities within and outside the school after the projects: from 31% to 60% for madrassa students in one of the projects in Bangladesh; from 14% to over 80% for students in one of the projects in Nigeria; and 22% to 63% in one programme in Kosovo.[20] This suggested that the activities implemented by GCERF programs were likely contributing to an overall behavioural change for these students, increasing their interactions with their peers and the wider community. It is particularly important because violent extremist groups tend to prey on feelings of lack of belonging or inadequacy to recruit youth into their ranks.

However, those activities' success in promoting changes was not only due to the variety and due to the comprehensive nature of activities. Firstly, especially Bangladesh, there was an intention from the designing of the projects to promote activities that would build bridges between students from different backgrounds. Rather than being a school-only event, there was often cross-educational institution activities, or that involved teachers and parents, which likely contributed to the increase in social interaction outside the school.

17 Third-party monitoring report of CFM in Bangladesh and Mali (2018) commissioned by GCERF
18 Midline assessment (2019), commissioned by GCERF grantee in Kosovo
19 Midline assessment (2019) commissioned by GCERF grantee in Kosovo
20 End-of-grant report and final Results-Frameworks submitted (2019) submitted by GCERF grantee; Midline assessment (2019) commissioned by GCERF grantee in Kosovo

Another reason was the grantees' decision, especially in Bangladesh and Nigeria, to re-invigorate or establish student clubs inside the educational institutions and use them as a basis for their activities, which provided a space for continuous social interaction within the educational institutions. The benefits of creating or strengthening these clubs became quite evident during the research. In both cases, it also facilitated connections between the students and with teachers.

More importantly, the club-centric approach ensured that the intervention was not based on one-off interactions with students. Instead, the same group of students received support and were followed-up throughout the project and were encouraged to use their network in their schools and communities to spread what they have learned, leveraging the impact of the program.[21]

Lesson 5 - Address the gender challenge

One of the biggest challenges that were consistently reported by grantees when implementing the activities listed in the previous lesson was the challenge to incorporate a gender-lens while designing and implementing PVE-E programmes.

On the one hand, activities tailored to engage women and girls, such as the provision of certain types of sports or engaging young women and young men in separate groups, were highly effective in increasing female participation in the PVE activities.[22] For example, in Kosovo, providing soccer lessons for boys, and volleyball lessons for girls effectively engaged these population groups.[23] While in Mali, forming women-only groups before engaging in the activity per se ensured a high rate of participation and engagement.[24]

On the other hand, however, such approaches carried the risk of reinforcing gender stereotypes (e.g., specific vocational training as more appropriate for a specific gender, gender segregation), which might hinder the effectiveness of the programme in the long-term. It represents a challenge for programming, especially in more conservative societies with ingrained gender roles.

21 GCERF grantees' presentations at GCERF Forum 2019
22 Third-party monitoring report of Mali CFM (2018) commissioned by GCERF
23 Quarterly report (2019) submitted by GCERF grantee
24 Independent end-of-grant evaluation report of CFM in Mali (2019) commissioned by GCERF

Some GCERF grantees have tried to resolve this paradox by phasing in mixed-gender activities later in the programme after ensuring that girls and women feel encouraged and comfortable to join. However, this was only possible when the programmes had an extended timeframe, which allowed them to create this step-by-step approach.[25] Once again, this is a testament to the importance of long-term interventions for effective PVE-E.

Another successful approach was to plan activities suitable for both men and women, taking first the women's perspective into consideration. For example, in Bangladesh, due to some cultural norms, radio programmes were quite effective in generating buy-in from young women (while also attracting young men). They felt more comfortable engaging and expressing themselves through the radio in which they could use just their voice, than other forms of media in which they would be seen.[26]

Lesson 6 - Leverage PVE-E as a bridge to the broader community and policy domain

Finally, PVE-E does not occur in a vacuum. Experience has shown that GCERF-funded grants working on PVE-E can be an excellent catalyst for engaging with the local government. Community members and grantees engaged and mobilised officials and staff of educational authorities to discuss PVE and other topics, restoring trust and strengthening community agency.

In Kenya, the alignment with the government from the start enabled the project to coordinate efforts and benefit from other interventions planned by the local government. It also helped increase youth access to relevant affirmative funds for youth development, enhancing the impact of GCERF-funded programmes.[27]

Another way to leverage PVE-E is to create synergies. For example, in Bangladesh, the cultural and awareness-raising activities implemented in the communities proved essential to engage parents in PVE-E activities and thereby lowered resistance to addressing VE in schools with some parents becoming 'change agents' themselves.[2]

[25] GCERF grantees presentations at GCERF Forum 2019, direct observation
[26] Quarterly report (2017) submitted by GCERF grantee
[27] GCERF grantees' presentations at GCERF Forum 2019
[28] End-of-grant results reports (2019); Bangladesh Country Portfolio: Lessons Learned (2019)

Conclusion

The relationship between education and levels of violent extremism is not unidirectional, nor monotonic. The valid and pertinent question when understanding the role of education on PVE is not precisely how many years of education or what level of education a person achieved, but rather, the methods, content, and educational environment provided to youth to facilitate their learning and personal development.

This paper has presented some of the lessons learned from GCERF-funded PVE-E programs. Applying a bottom-up approach, these programmes focused directly at the school level by designing and implementing activities that engaged students, teachers directly, and principals, often less institutionalised forms of intervention. These activities were introduced as extra-curricular activities.

This contrasts with the usual approach of focusing directly and solely on the curriculum. The logic is that if the programme changes the national curriculum, it trickles down change to the local level. However, this often does not work due to lack of capacity of teachers and staff, lack of resources, natural limitation in terms of scope for official curricula, and discrepancies between national and local understandings of certain events and issues.

On the other hand, the GCERF approach does pose a challenge in terms of scalability – it is resource-intensive. One promising avenue that some GCERF grantees are starting to work on is the relationship between PVE-E and local governance. The projects and examples developed in individual schools could be scaled-up, at least at the subnational level, through constructive engagement with local governments and their governance systems in education, using the schools supported by the programs as role models.

The lessons presented here should dramatically increase the chances of a successful PVE-E intervention. They serve as a sound basis for PVE-E projects, but more research is needed to distinguish the marginal effects of specific approaches compared to others when undertaking PVE in educational settings.

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5

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN P/CVE PROJECTS IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT AFFECTED STATES

Rory MacLeod

The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change's Supporting Leaders programme aimed to build the resilience of communities against religious extremism by working with influential and trusted religious and community leaders to understand and respond to local needs and the complex drivers of extremism and conflict in Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt.

In 2018, the Institute adapted CARE International's Community Score Card (CSC)—normally used in local governance and service delivery contexts—to the setting of countering extremism for the first time. The approach was piloted through the Supporting Leaders project in Nigeria, in response to challenges experienced in verifying issues faced by local communities that posed a threat to peaceful coexistence. The CSC adaption has enabled a better understanding of the obstacles to social cohesion from the perspective of the communities themselves as well as the religious leaders who serve them. Practically, it also enabled community members and religious leaders to take greater ownership of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of action plans to address real and perceived issues. Emerging findings from the pilot suggest that the approach has the potential to make a distinct and significant contribution to understanding how religious leaders and local communities can interact to counter violent extremism (CVE) together. This essay aims to provide new insights and practical recommendations including the potential application of the approach – the Joint Community Action Plan (JCAP) – to shape community attitudes and behaviours towards a wide range of often contested structural and cultural factors within the fields of prevention/counter violent extremism (P/CVE) and peacebuilding.

Nigeria Conflict Dynamics

The conflict dynamics in Nigeria are incredibly complex and vary significantly between localised contexts across the country, involving and affecting a range of different actors at different levels. Violent Islamist extremism, largely perpetrated by Boko Haram in the Northeast of the country and over borders around the Lake Chad Basin, is often the focus of local and international media and experts, but what is important to remember is that this level of conflict does not exist in isolation. Rather, it sits within the context of a far richer conflict picture. Notably, this includes horizontal tensions that sit along identity-based cultural, ethnic, and religious fault lines within and between communities, as well as vertical tensions that exist between the government and those they serve. This is also in addition to resource-based herder-farmer and communal conflicts at play across the middle-belt and Nigeria's rife problem with banditry. These tensions and conflicts are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing, as violence fuels further intolerance and violence in other areas.

It is well-documented that intolerance of others based on identity is exploited by extremist groups to sow further division and enforce an 'us vs them' narrative. Boko Haram has frequently demonstrated this in their messaging, preying on the disconnect between government and communities to exploit political and economic grievances by peddling the narrative that they are a product of the state's targeted marginalisation of Muslim communities (Olojo, 2013). As an imam from Kano state reported in 2012, "People are supporting them [Boko Haram] because the government is cheating them" (Nossiter, 2012).

For such extremist groups, making and reinforcing the case that marginalisation is drawn along religious lines rather than other identities, such as ethnicity or geography, is advantageous, as it strengthens the argument for collective action that aligns with the religious underpinning of their ideology (Stewart, 2009, p. 70). In the case of Boko Haram, this refers to the pursuit of an Islamic state by means of violence in line with a Salafist-Jihadist ideology that is intolerant to those whom it deems as 'unbelievers' which includes Muslims who do not subscribe to the same extreme interpretations of scripture (Anugwom, 2019).

The narrative of targeted marginalisation is reinforced by the Nigerian government's heavy-handed militaristic approach to counterterrorism (Hamel & Namountougou, 2013), often accused of failing to discriminate between those vulnerable to radicalisation and the radicalised. There is also evidence

to suggest that these top-down vertical tensions that exist between government and communities are reflected horizontally across and within religious groups at a community level. These perceptions of top-down identity-based marginalisation fuel exclusivist and intolerant attitudes toward the other, often manifesting in further radicalisation and violence (Solomon, 2012).

This is well articulated in UNDP's 2017 report "Journey to Extremism," which reveals that 71% of surveyed former al-Shabaab and Boko Haram voluntary recruits claimed they joined as a result of government actions, including the killing, rape, and arrest of former friends or family members. These are the divisions and tensions that give oxygen to extremist narratives that are designed to radicalise and recruit, as well as sow and perpetuate social discord (Idahosa, 2015).

This illustrates the complexity of the context in which P/CVE interventions in Nigeria operate, outlining the need for a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by communities that threaten peace, in order for interventions to be effective. This is no mean feat, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected contexts. A reliable understanding of community issues requires input from the community members themselves, those who live within and contribute toward the dynamics of the environment. For sustainable change, it is the communities them-selves who must be at the heart of solutions to address issues, both in their design and their delivery, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness. Local communities are vital not only to improve understanding within the sector but as a mechanism to hold those in positions of power to account. This means avoiding top-down interventions that are based on external conflict analysis or engagement with a handful of key 'usual suspect' community stakeholders or elite groups, and instead exploring innovative bottom-up and inclusive methods to mobilise the whole community in the process.

Supporting Leaders

From 2014 to 2019 the Institute's Supporting Leaders programme equipped, empowered, and supported networks of religious leaders to counter extremist narratives and build social cohesion in their communities. Over this five-year period, the programme has worked with a total of 533 religious leaders, trainers, and facilitators, and over 29,000 community members across Egypt, Kenya, and Nigeria, with their most significant footprint in the latter. Our work in Nigeria has helped to build the capacity of local organisations to effectively

manage, monitor, and evaluate P/CVE interventions, and of religious leaders to identify and tackle religious extremism within their spheres of influence through counter-narratives and practical community action. The Supporting Leaders approach is illustrated in the simplified logical model below:

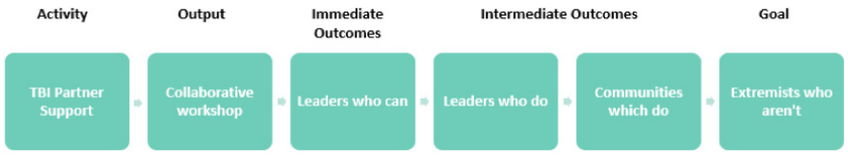

FIGURE 1 Supporting Leaders Logical Model

Through our partners in Nigeria, the Development Initiative of West Africa, and the Kukah Centre, we worked with Christian and Muslim religious and community leaders to develop scriptural literacy as a basis for understanding and countering the ideological roots of extremist narratives. The project approach equipped religious leaders with conflict transformation skills such as problem analysis, planning and project management, community mobilisation, dialogue, mediation, and communication. The model is sensitive to the underlying tensions both between different religious denominations and within them, and the need to build trust. Therefore, the programme aims to create 'safe spaces' for the incremental development of trust on both an intra- and inter-religious basis.

KEY STATISTICS		
NIGERIA	Trainers Trained	122
	Religious Leaders Trained	207
	Community Members Reached	20000
KENYA	Trainers Trained	20
	Religious Leaders Trained	42
	Community Members Reached	4000
EGYPT	Trainers Trained	30
	Religious Leaders Trained	112
	Community Members Reached	5000

FIGURE 2 Reach of the Supporting Leaders programme[1]

[1] Statistics on number of community members reached are estimates based on self-reported figures provided by participants.

Community action was at the heart of the Supporting Leaders approach. Each cohort of participants benefitted from the opportunity to put learning into community practice "sandwiched" between each of the training interventions. Participant religious leaders were recruited through the networks of local delivery partners, ensuring a variety of intra-religious sects and denominations are represented at a local community level. Participants' action plans included training local community members, vocational and scriptural training for those at risk of radicalisation, outreach through social and mass media, and locally resourced humanitarian and infra-structure projects.

The Challenge

The literature is full of evaluations that cite 'numbers trained' and 'participants' attitudes' changed as a result of an intervention. How participants self-report the extent to which their knowledge, skills, and confidence have developed as a result of training is relatively easily measured and is, of course, very important in assessing the extent to which a project achieved its intended outputs and outcomes. Yet, what participants say and do in the safe space of a workshop may be very different from what they are willing or able to say and do once they are back in the often-unsafe space of their own communities.

Supporting Leaders has cultivated a strong body of evidence to support its effectiveness in building the capacity of religious leaders to prevent and counter extremism in their communities. This includes powerful stories of change that demonstrate the impact religious leaders have been able to achieve when stepping down their learning in communities to address issues and augment intra- and inter-religious relations. However, until 2018, the programme was reliant on religious leaders' understanding of issues as a proxy for the perceptions of the broader community, as well as their self-assessments of the effectiveness of their own action plans designed to address these issues. This is a common limitation of sensitive programmes that operate in fragile and conflict-affected environments where direct access to communities is difficult. As documented in several empirical studies, including the Afrobarometer round seven data (2018), religious leader and community perceptions and attitudes do not always align. As a report from Conciliation Resources focused on Africa argues:

> Many of the elders and leaders are no longer in their communities and are making decisions on behalf of their community when they may

> no longer have good information; and they have their own biases and prejudices that can exclude certain groups from their decisions (Tucker & Mohammed, 2018, p. 4).

Therefore, there is a need for a means of verification that religious leaders and communities have a shared understanding of the issues driving tensions and violence. Additionally, facilitating a forum to surface and understand differences in perceptions across different social groups is needed if compromise and resolution is to be achieved. This is based on the proposition that for action plans to be effective in building community cohesion, the issues they address must be based on a shared understanding and purpose with community stakeholders. The wider community must be engaged in and participate in the delivery of action plans to promote buy-in and ensure those responsible for implementing actions can be held accountable. To be truly sustainable, solutions need to be inexpensive and leverage existing resources within communities. However, solutions also need to navigate a host of associated challenges and constraints that come with working in localised fragile and conflict affected communities in Nigeria. The challenges include:

- Ensuring engagement with community stakeholders who belong to different social and religious groups is conducted in a sensitive and constructive way without becoming a "finger-pointing" exercise that risks exacerbating tensions or creating new ones.
- Enabling an inclusive environment where everyone has a voice, while respecting often delicate sociocultural norms and navigating the horizontal and vertical tensions that exist within communities.
- Gaining access and visibility in communities due to sensitivities of 'outsider' involvement, particularly of Western interventions, meaning approaches need to be led by credible local voices and owned by communities.
- Limited technology infrastructure, including low levels of internet bandwidth and mobile phone ownership in communities, making remote access difficult.

Searching for Solutions

In the search for better ways to address the challenges above for the last iteration of the Supporting Leaders programme in 2018-19, we reviewed different methodologies used in similar contexts in the P/CVE space. This included,

the "Everyday Peace Indicators" (EPI), initially developed as a research project for the United Services Institute for Peace (USIP). The researchers worked with local NGOs to support communities in developing their own indicators to assess changes in peace and conflict in their local environment (Everyday Peace Indicators, n.d.). The approach is participatory and recognises that engaging communities and utilising their knowledge of their local context is essential in determining what peace means to them. It demonstrates that for reliable monitoring and evaluation of positive change, indicators of change are sometimes best defined by the communities themselves. MacGinty and Firchow, instrumental to developing this approach, argue that "everyday peace is context specific and involves the observations and decisions made by individuals and communities as they navigate their way through life" (2016, p. 309).

While the EPI approach has made an important contribution to understanding the significance of working with a community's own perceptions of the local issues that threaten societal cohesion, it does not work with communities to design, monitor, and evaluate actions to address identified issues. To date, we have been unable to identify an existing methodology in the fields of P/CVE and peacebuilding that suited the context and needs of the Supporting Leaders programme.

The Community Scorecard (CSC) developed by CARE International engages communities not only in the identification of issues and the development of indicators for positive change, but also in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of actions designed to address issues and achieve positive change. Typically implemented in governance and social development sectors, such as healthcare and education, the CSC is a participatory tool for continuous assessment, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of services. It was developed by CARE International through a project in Malawi in 2002 which aimed to identify innovative and sustainable methods to improve healthcare services. Since then it has become widely used across the development sector as a participatory governance tool. It convenes service users and service providers through facilitated dialogue to identify and address gaps in service provision. In their CSC Toolkit, CARE International outline that:

> The CSC approach can be used to facilitate good governance through promotion of participation, transparency, accountability and informed decision-making. The CSC approach brings together community members, service providers, and local government to identify service

> utilization and provision challenges, and to mutually generate solutions, and work in partnership to implement and track the effectiveness of those solutions in an ongoing process of quality improvement (2013).

The approach is intended to be inclusive and allow for the sharing of diverse views from representatives of different social groups including those who may not otherwise have opportunities to input in discussions on local issues related to service provision. Therefore, it is important that gatekeepers are identified who can provide access to community groups typically underrepresented in decision-making processes, including minority religious and ethnic communities, and women's groups.

If not done carefully and with sensitivity to existing tensions, the airing of a diverse range of views in a dialogue on community issues carries the risk of exacerbating tensions. As such, strong facilitators are required to drive the process and ensure feedback is collected in a constructive and systematic manner, without criticising individual providers or creating a conflict within communities. Local facilitators, who are known by the community but considered to be impartial in the community decision-making process, are responsible for the following five-phase process:

Phase 1: Planning and Preparation;
Phase 2: Conducting the Score Card with the Community (service users);
Phase 3: Conducting the Score Card with Service Providers;
Phase 4: Interface Meeting and Action Planning;
Phase 5: Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

The community and service providers are engaged during Phase 1 to understand, inform, and negotiate the process to ensure buy-in from the start. In Phase 2, the issues are identified and scored by the community, before being reviewed and scored by the service providers in Phase 3. The interface meeting conducted in Phase 4 is significant in bringing together the community and service providers to engage in an inclusive dialogue with the aim of agreeing joint action plans to address priority issues and implement in Phase 5. Follow-up committees are established to support and monitor the implementation of the actions. The five phases are repeated in six-month cycles. This allows for action plans to be monitored and issues to be reconsidered by communities and service providers during each subsequent cycle of the scorecard.

In 2018, the Institute partnered with CARE International to explore whether a wider application of the CSC methodology could be used to help religious leaders and communities jointly design local action plans for preventing and countering extremism. The CSC approach offers a simple mechanism to better understand the issues relevant to each specific community and, importantly, how best to address them using existing or untapped resources. ODI found that the CARE model can be adapted to different contexts and that there has been no single way in which change has been achieved (Wild, Wales & Chambers, 2015). This suggests that the CSC approach lends itself well to adaptation.

Evolution of Our Approach: From Community Score Card to Joint Community Action Plan

To adapt the CSC for Supporting Leaders and the context of peacebuilding and P/CVE, we needed to first understand the unique dynamics that exist between religious leaders and their congregants in local communities. The objective was to integrate a new tool to help implementing partners better deliver the outcomes of the programme, particularly the joint action plans, through facilitated dialogue between religious leaders and their communities. In collaboration with CARE International UK and our implementing partners in Nigeria, we piloted what became the JCAP in 2018-19 to determine whether this would add value to the programme, and the P/CVE sector more broadly. Data collected through the JCAP was intended to help us and our partners assess impact more objectively, based on the development and implementation of action plans which should better align with community priorities.

Vertical and Horizontal Power

One of the key considerations in adapting the CSC was how to work with actors who are not in a formal vertical relationship with each other. In service delivery contexts, the service provider is in a formal, vertical, and positional power relationship with the service recipients. The relationship between religious leaders, their congregants, and the wider community is more complex. Initially, we saw these relationships as more horizontal than vertical; however, because religious leaders are also members of the community themselves, and people generally choose which leaders they follow and where they worship, religious leaders exercise informal influence rather than positional power. While perhaps less visible, this power is generally exerted in

a top-down manner e.g. through preaching, and the roles they play in resolving conflict using traditional mechanisms or scriptural decrees. Moreover, in the fragile and conflict-affected communities in which the programme operates, religious leaders often fill state-service vacuums and therefore given their role as powerholders in the community, the CSCs grounding in traditional governance context was a strong part of its appeal.

With the JCAP, it is the communities who assume the role of service users and religious leaders the service providers; however, the approach recognises that this relationship differs from that of the traditional service delivery model on which the CSC was based. Cognisant of this, the JCAP was adapted to create spaces in which community members can work jointly with religious leaders in a way which respects the underlying social power dynamic. One of the key considerations in the adaptation process was to ensure that distinctions portraying one set of actors as more powerful than others do not have detrimental effects on the outcomes. For example, the first phase in the JCAP approach engages leaders and gatekeepers of different community groups to secure their support for the project. In early consultation with our partners in Nigeria, the process itself was rebranded as JCAP because it was clear that the term "Community Scorecard" would present some difficulties in local communities, as religious leaders may feel that they are being judged or scored, and therefore undermined.

While respecting local power dynamics remained a key consideration for the adaptation, it was also important to think about how the broader community could be given a voice in the process, including social and religious groups that may otherwise be excluded from community decision-making processes. A central tenant of the JCAP approach is that communities have an opportunity to identify the issues they believe pose a threat to societal cohesion and are supported to take an active role in formulating action plans to address them. Ultimately, the approach places ownership of the identification of issues, and formulation and delivery of actions plans, with the community. To be successful it is imperative this process is as inclusive as possible. Therefore, gatekeepers of different community groups were identified in each community to help ensure fair representation of women and minority religious and traditional groups.

The Supporting Leaders Theory of Change posits that cohesive societies are more resilient to extremism; the assumption being tested through the JCAP was, therefore, that greater cross-community engagement, through dialogue

and action, serves as a mechanism for building societal cohesion. For this to be effective, it is essential that stakeholders involved in the process represent the diverse range of social groups that make up the community. That is, societal cohesion requires equal, whole of society engagement.

Parameters for Issue Identification

Importantly, the CSC is not prescriptive and does not assume what the specific challenges faced by communities are; however, it does set clear parameters for what can realistically be expected to be achieved. Within these parameters, it is for communities to define the relevant issues. The process is adaptable to a diverse range of nuanced issues and the parameters are generally determined by the scope of the project.

The conflict analysis underpinning the design of Supporting Leaders indicated the need to address issues related to religious intolerance threatening social cohesion and risk violence. In the JCAP process, communities and religious leaders considered a broad range of issues including: a lack of trust between members of different religious groups or sects/denominations within religious groups, misconceptions of the religious beliefs and perspectives of others, and discrimination on the basis of religious identity. These issues sit in a sensitive nexus of religion and conflict, requiring a strong, experienced, and as far as possible neutral facilitator to lead the process and ensure a safe space is created for people to engage in dialogue on these topics in a constructive way.

Facilitators

The CSC requires a strong advocate in communities in order to achieve buy-in. Facilitators must be familiar to and trusted by both the congregants and religious leaders in a community, but also considered a neutral voice. The facilitators selected to implement the JCAP were drawn from delivery partner networks and were themselves religious leaders and trained alumni from previous cycles of the Supporting Leaders Nigeria programme. Facilitators were responsible for identifying the communities to implement the JCAP in Gombe, Kano, and Yobe. These states were also selected by delivery partners based on existing Supporting Leaders networks. In order to ensure they were viewed as more neutral figures in the process, facilitators worked in small intra- and inter-religious teams, which helped reduce the risk of bias or community perceptions of bias toward facilitators' own religion. A centralised 'super-

facilitator,' a staff member with monitoring and evaluation expertise, was embedded within the local delivery partner and supported teams of facilitators in each state.

Prior to delivery of the JCAP, the Institute and CARE International UK led a five-day training to equip facilitators with the skills to deliver the methodology, including modules on dialogue facilitation and conflict mediation. Facilitators were also provided with a handbook to support them in implementing the JCAP.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As the CSC approach lends itself to address issues related to traditional service delivery failure, monitoring and evaluation of actions arising from the process largely focuses on the measurement of more tangible outcomes such as improved access to healthcare centres or schools. In some respects, the JCAP is similar, in that it aims to develop practical action plans on the back of identified issues which do lend themselves to tangible outputs, such as workshops being delivered or reciprocal visits to religious institutions. However, the approaches differ in that tangible outcomes are generally the ultimate aim of the CSC, while the JCAP is more geared toward using action as a mechanism for driving attitudinal and longer-term behavioural change.

Because of this distinction, the approach to monitoring and evaluation fundamentally differs, and, with the JCAP, determining the effectiveness of action plans is more reliant on the qualitative assessment of abstract outcomes. Utilising the methodologies' iterative approach, with each new cycle comes an opportunity to get participants to reflect on the progress made toward achieving action plans designed to address issues raised during the previous cycle and determine the extent to which they have been effective. Therefore, data collection is done in the same focus group style format present in other phases of the approach.

In this regard, monitoring and evaluation relies on the subjective views of participants, which again underlines the importance of engaging a diverse range of community voices at both ends of the service user/provider relationship to triangulate findings and verify observations. Importantly the findings from the JCAP pilot provide a means of validating action plans that religious leaders participating in the Supporting Leaders programme have developed separate to this process.

JCAP Methodology

The JCAP broadly follows the five phases of the CSC. Community representatives are asked to identify, score, and explain the rationale behind issues (see example scorecard in Figure 3 below). The issues they are asked to consider are those leading to religious intolerance in their communities. The score given relates to the likelihood of the issue materialising in a way that is likely to cause violence and threaten community cohesion. The religious leaders then separately score the community-identified issues before both parties work together to develop and implement joint action plans to address the challenges. The reasons given for the score allow a detailed comparison of perceptions between religious leaders and communities.

ISSUE	WHAT CHANGE DO YOU WANT TO SEE?	SCORE *the risk it poses to community cohesion – high, medium, low*	REASON FOR THE SCORE	CONTEXT *to be completed as appropriate by Facilitators*
There is a lot of religious intolerance due to forced conversions.	Each religion should have freedom of worship.	High.	Forced conversions are likely to lead to retaliatory actions between different religions and this may lead to actual physical conflict.	Due to a number of recent forced conversions and an attack on the religious community, this is a topical issue which has caused violence and distrust between Muslim and Christians.

FIGURE 3 Sample Scorecard

Lessons learned from Supporting Leaders have shown the importance of intra-religious engagement as a pre-requisite to inter-religious training in contexts with high tensions and lack of engagement between religious groups. Therefore, the early cycles of the JCAP were conducted on an intra-religious basis to first build trust and understanding across sects and denominations. In total, there were two intra-faith cycles (1 and 2) and one interfaith cycle (3). Cycle 1 comprised a pre-cycle (1A) and the first full cycle (1B). This graduated introduction of the methodology allowed lessons learned from each cycle to be

incorporated into the next. The cycles were aligned to the Supporting Leaders "sandwich" training models which see the leaders return to their communities to put learning into practice between modules, over a seven-month period.

The qualitative data generated by the JCAP was analysed by the programme staff, who coded issues into appropriate themes and subthemes to illustrate the trends within selected communities.

Emerging Findings

The Significance of Intra-religious Tension

The conflict analysis conducted by partners and facilitators highlighted deep-rooted intra- and inter-religious tensions across our focus states in northern Nigeria of Gombe, Kano, and Yobe. This analysis was consistent with the issues identified by the communities in the first JCAP cycle. While the JCAP is based on the premise that there is a lack of common understanding between religious leaders and their communities, the issues raised, particularly by the participating Muslim communities, suggested a greater disconnect between the different religious sects than between the sects and their respective leaders. The issues further reinforced the need for intra-religious issues to be addressed before engagement with another religion. Consistently across the Muslim and Christian communities, intra-religious tensions and lack of intra-religious understanding were considered important issues for both the community representatives and religious leaders. Critically, the community-level data generated by the JCAP process gives a clear indication as to how intra-religious tension manifests itself within each specific community which expands on our previous programme analysis.

For example, in the first cycle (1A), 83% of the issues reported in the Muslim communities related to intra-religious tensions, stemming largely from an intolerance of other Islamic groups present in the community. As per the JCAP, intolerance had manifested at a community level in the form of hate speech, and the voicing of views that are dismissive of different cultures, values and traditions, intolerance of the other, and poor religious leadership. Some of the issues raised by the community include:

[2] Defined as issues which reflect conflict and/or disagreement between Islamic sects/Christian denominations.
[3] Defined as issues which are caused by a poor knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the other sect/denomination.

"Sufis allege that Izala have no love for the Prophet."

"The Izala doesn't follow us in prayer because they consider us idolaters."

"The Sufist making jest of the Izala for imitating the Prophet"
(e.g. raising the trousers and leaving the beards).

(Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018a)

These are also specific grievances against the other religious sects present within the community. In the issues raised, there appears to be a perception that the "other groups" are intolerant, giving a sense of perceived victimhood. The issues generated by the community suggest a real lack of engagement between different sects, traditions, and denominations within the same religion.

Because of the primacy of these intra-religious tensions, in the final Muslim intra-religious engagement (Cycle 2), the JCAP was adapted by Islamic partners in some communities to give greater emphasis on the issues generated by each religious sect separately (see figure 4 below). This meant it was possible to understand which sub-group was raising the issue – rather than taking the issues generated by the community collectively. A religious leader from other sects then scored these issues. In this adaption, the issues steming from either intra-religious tension or lack of intra-religious understanding manifest as 'intolerance of the other' and 'hate speech.' Compared to the previous cycles, this was a much narrower focus and did not reflect any issues related to religious leadership, but instead considered issues that challenged community-level engagement with the other sects.

The following issue, raised in Cycle 2, reflects the differing opinion between Islamic religious groups on the basis of intra-religious understanding.

Izala Generated Issue	The Darika call us "the enemies of the Prophet SAW"
Izala Score	High
Izala Reason for Score	Because the lack of love for the Prophet SAW can take somebody out of the fold of Islam.
Darika Score	Low
Darika Reason for Score	Because it is not provocative.
Facilitators Context	Darika parents in the past prevented their children from associating with the Izala kids on the grounds that the Izala are enemies of the prophet SAW. However, the situation is getting better.

FIGURE 4 Intra-religious Muslim scorecard

In this example, the issue raised by the Izala community reveals a lack of agreement with and tolerance for the religious beliefs of another Islamic sect. The context provided by the facilitators suggests the groups have little engagement with each other in everyday life. The insights from the community-generated issues show the need for facilitated dialogue between key representatives to bridge the gap between the groups.

For the Christian communities participating in the JCAP, the thematic areas are more varied. In the intra-religious cycles (Cycle 1 – 2), the most frequently cited issues related to intra-religious tensions (33%), this was followed by religious leadership (22%), and structural concerns (16%) (e.g. economic, social or political).

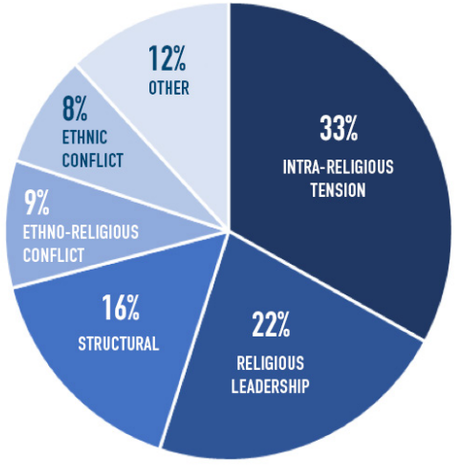

FIGURE 5 Types of issues raised by Christian communities

Some of the issues in the final intra-religious cycle which related to intra-religious tension included:

> *"Some Christians claimed to be more spiritual \ have more pride than others."*
>
> *"There are doctrinal differences based on prosperity gospel and gospel of salvation."*
>
> *"Lack of co-operation based on 'holier than thou' attitudes."*
>
> Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2018b).

Issues categorised as 'intolerance of the other' and 'poor religious leadership' are shown to repeatedly manifest themselves across the three Christian communities. This suggests that the lack of trust between different Christian denominations and the role of their religious leaders themselves is contributing towards a lack of religious tolerance in the community. Notably, the issues raised by Christian communities do not single out specific denominations and are much more generalised. This may be due to the Christian facilitation of the JCAP or that the issues present themselves differently.

In reflecting on the intra-religious cycles, our partners have commented that "each community has a peculiar manifestation of intra-religious tension."

They suggest this stems from ignorance of religion as the root cause. Many of the identified issues are areas that could be addressed through the training courses for religious and community leaders, which includes religious education and scriptural interpretation. Over the course of two intra-religious JCAP cycles, the Christian and Muslim facilitators observed a marked shift in greater tolerance towards other religious groups. The process is showing potential in having enabled religious understanding between groups to start to be addressed through dialogue and new ways of engagement. The JCAP has provided a platform for concerns to be listened to and collective action with shared responsibility take place.

Power Distance Between Religious Leaders & Community Members

The JCAP process suggests that the 'power distance' that exists between religious leaders and community members can often result in mismatched perceptions regarding sources of local conflict. A lack of everyday interaction between community members who are already on the 'fringes,' such as the youth population most at risk of radicalisation and the leaders wielding mainstream religious authority in the community, can further compound this issue. The findings from the JCAP suggest there is a disconnect between religious leaders and communities. It challenges the initial perception that there is a horizontal relationship between religious leaders and communities and instead confirms that an informal vertical power structure is at play.

Figure 6 below illustrates a lack of alignment between the perceptions of Muslim community members and religious leaders on the same issues. In this example, the community generally assesses issues as causing a greater threat to social cohesion than their religious leaders do. There are only two examples where the religious leaders score an issue as a higher concern. Of particular interest is the low score given by religious leaders to the issue of 'insulting, mocking and belittling of religious leaders of other sects.' It suggests that while the religious leaders themselves do not engage in this behaviour, communities themselves may insult religious leaders from other sects. Notably, the religious leaders appear to be more concerned by the lack of dialogue between sects than the community is, which may suggest that religious leaders value intra-religious dialogue more than the community members.

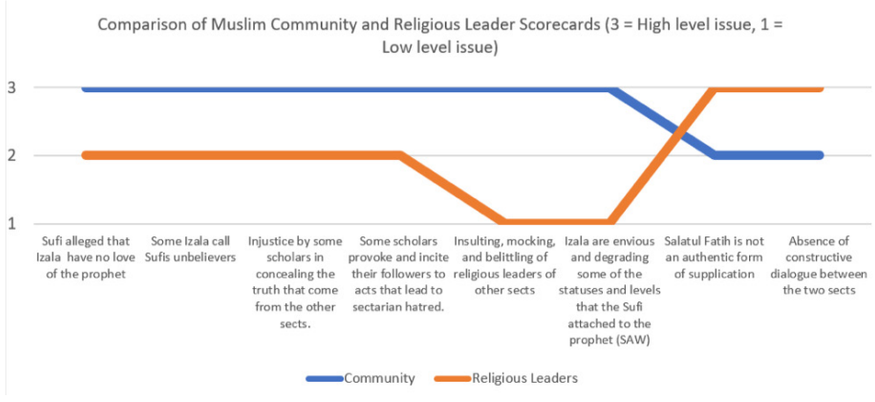

FIGURE 6 Graph comparing scores of Muslim Community and Religious Leaders

Figure 7 below shows a similar picture from the Christian perspective. This scorecard, generated in Cycle 2, shows the disparity between the perspectives of the community and religious leaders. Only two of the issues generated the same scores, with marked differences on the issue of 'tribalism' and 'sheep stealing.' Sheep stealing is a recurring issue and refers to recruiting congregants from other denominations.

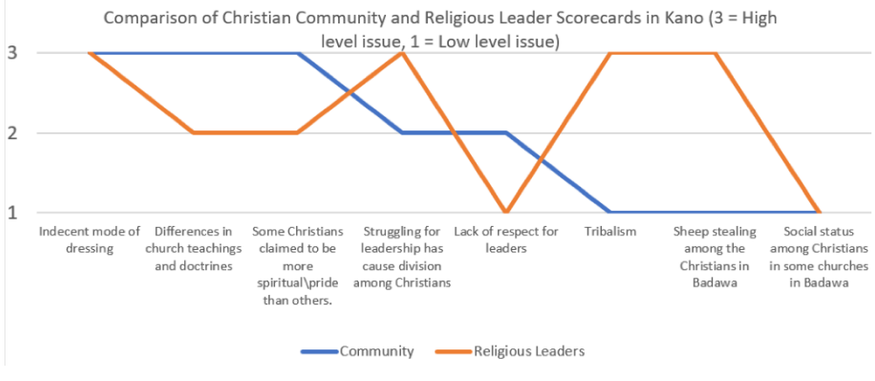

FIGURE 7 Graph comparing scores of Christian Community and Religious Leaders

The JCAP approach shows there can be different perspectives on the same issue, and the process challenges the leaders' assumptions of the issues present in their communities and their severity. As a result, the JCAP has the potential to shift the dynamics of communication between religious leaders and communities from top-down directional as typical of a traditional vertical power structure, to more of a two-way dialogue.

Inter-religious Dynamics

Similar to the intra-religious cycles, half of the issues raised during the inter-religious cycle referred to tensions between the Muslim and Christian groups, manifesting in hate-speech and discrimination. The inter-religious engagement during this cycle in itself proved challenging, and the majority of facilitators commented on the difficulty in achieving consensus between the two groups on any of the issues raised. While Figure 8 below illustrates a large disparity in Muslim scores for Christian-raised issues, the pattern is identical for issues raised by the Muslim community scored by the Christian group. Generally speaking, neither religious group acknowledged the issues the other had raised as being legitimate, nor did they accept accountability if it was implied they were partly responsible for the issue.

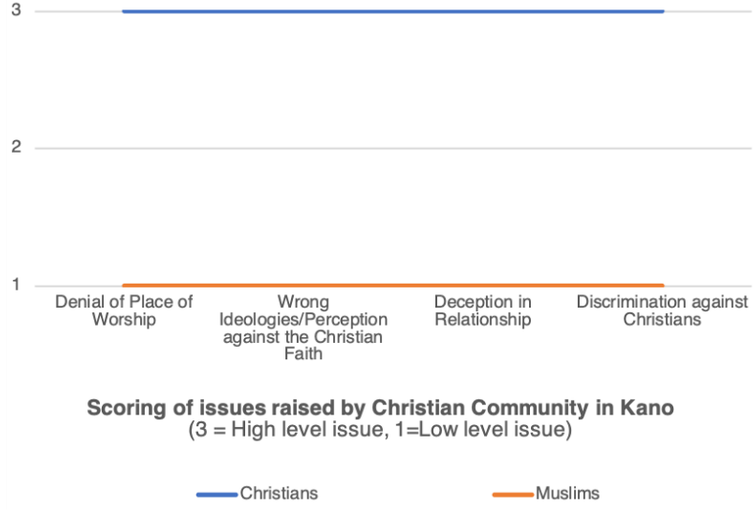

FIGURE 8 Graph comparing scores assigned by Christian and Muslim groups to Christian raised issues

Christian raised issue: *Provocative name-calling e.g., Arne (a term used to describe a pagan or someone who does not believe in a monotheistic God, generally used by Muslims to insult Christians in Nigeria) as well as threat to life of Muslim converts to Christianity.*

Muslim Response: *It is provocative but not all Muslims call Christians 'Arne'.*

In the above example, the Christian group raised the issue that they are on the receiving end of hate speech directed at them by Muslims in the community. When reviewing issues raised by their Christian counterparts, the Muslim participants indicated an awareness of the problem; however, because they believed it was not widely occurring, they did not consider it a high-level issue. During the interface meeting, the groups engaged in a constructive dialogue and made a joint commitment to raise awareness of the negative connotations of the offensive term in a bid to reduce inter-religious tensions. In a follow-up engagement 3 months later, community members and religious leaders involved with agreeing this action downgraded the severity of this issue from being 'high' to 'low', suggesting the actions taken were effective.

Muslim raised issue: *Quotation of Islamic texts taken out of context*

Christian Response: *Lack of access to Islamic texts*

The issue raised by the Muslim community emphasises the expressed need for greater understanding of the context of Islamic teachings. Given the tensions between Muslim and Christian communities in northern Nigeria and misconceptions of Islam, this is a high-level issue for Muslim participants. The Christian communities recognise their lack of understanding of Islam but do not recognise this as a concern. However, when convened together as an inter-religious group to discuss the issue, members of both religions were able to compromise and agree to address it by co-delivering a series of awareness campaigns delivered through mosques, churches, and local media.

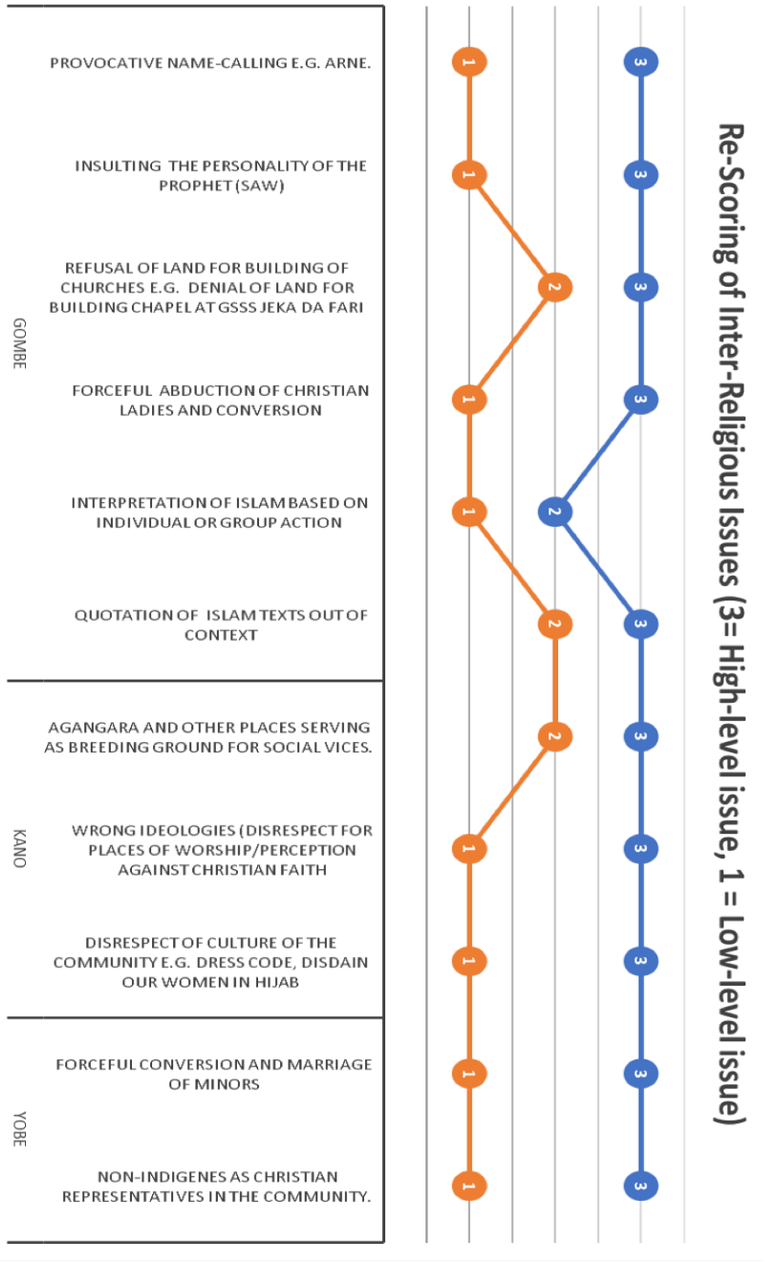

FIGURE 8 Comparison of original scores assigned to issues raised during the inter-religious cycle, with those assigned to the same issues three months later

As per Figure 9 above, a follow-up with participating communities conducted three months after the inter-religious JCAP, during which Muslim and Christian community members and religious leaders re-scored previously identified issues indicated there had been positive improvements on all issues across all states of operation. These changes are particularly encouraging given they were observed in a relatively short time period of three months, and actions were implemented with limited financial resources, which was raised as a challenge by participants. On the latter point, this does highlight the potential sustainability of the approach as a mechanism for reducing community level tensions. While more rigorous evaluation is required to demonstrate the longer-term impact on inter-religious relations, and determine the extent to which this is sustainable, these preliminary findings do suggest the JCAP has the potential to make a marked contribution in conflict prevention contexts.

Initial Lessons Learned

The findings from the JCAP suggest that the approach enables community and religious leaders to identify the issues that lead to tension and violence in their communities. Over the course of three cycles, we have gathered evidence that shows repeated engagement between and within communities and religious leaders has helped to reframe perceptions of the "other," dispel negative myths, and facilitate changes in perceptions and attitudes. Particular attention has been given to ensuring that the process does not reinforce pre-existing cultural or social divisions, for example, the dominance of a single ethnic group, the privileging of men, or "elite capture." The inclusion of a broad range of actors with differing viewpoints has allowed the JCAP the potential to contribute towards building community solidarity and social capital, and to rectify exclusionary practices and poor governance that may have been factors in outbreaks of violence.

Initial lessons include:

The need for adaptability: Communities participated in the process in different ways. This suggests a flexible approach towards the number of intra- and inter-religious cycles is needed to take into account the community dynamics in the future.

The need for local perspective: The issues of religious intolerance, identified by communities in the JCAP, were wide ranging and from an outsiders'

perspective the associated risk of violent extremism may not be obvious. This demonstrates both the porousness of issues that drive extremism and those linked to conflict more generally, as well as the importance of local knowledge and the need to work with facilitators who are familiar with the issues specific to that community.

Inclusive representation: To mitigate and improve gender balance, we recognised that multiple gatekeepers should be engaged in the community to ensure wider representation. These gatekeepers provided access to groups typically underrepresented in decision-making processes and as a result the number of women actively participating in the process increased over time.

The opportunity for sustainable engagement: The cyclic nature of the JCAP increases collective actions over time and there now exists continuous facilitator capacity to convene intra- and inter-religious dialogues locally. Earlier cycles helped resolve easier problems first, which provided a foundation of trust for later cycles to address more complex problems.

Potential for Wider Application

Initial findings suggest the JCAP can be used to help understand and shape a wide range of attitudes and behaviours. It has the potential to be particularly effective as a community mobilisation tool that tests with community stakeholders which tensions have the potential to lead to violence and how best to address them. The approach is adjustable to different tensions and conflict drivers within the community and has the potential for a wide range of applications. Our local partners have identified wider application for the JCAP both as an early warning and response system, and as an effective tool in helping to resolve land disputes. It also has the potential to be an effective tool for the implementation of an "action-research" approach designed to inform effective government and NGO policies and programmes that relate to long term behavioural change, as well as being an effective tool for helping such policies and programmes get sustainable traction at the community level. This is due to the utility of the tool as a means of both better understanding community issues from a research perspective, as well as serving as a mechanism to ensure practical action is taken to address identified issues. Therefore, the CSC could potentially be a useful approach to supporting governments in addressing challenges such as the reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, and former extremists into communities. Implementation of the JCAP in this context could perhaps improve understanding of the barriers to reintegration and simultaneously help shape the attitudinal, behavioural, and life-support conditions needed in order to enable and implement successful reintegration policies.

Conclusion

This essay has reflected on some of the insights from the Institute's adaption of the Community Score Card (CSC) as a new approach for achieving more effective project design and monitoring and evaluation at community-level in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The findings from the Joint Community Action Plan (JCAP) have shown the importance of bringing together community representatives and religious leaders to build a shared understanding of common challenges. Through the development of community action plans, the JCAP contributes towards redistributing responsibilities and accountabilities, mutually and horizontally among diverse groups. Emerging findings from the pilot of the JCAP suggest the approach has promise as a means of mobilising communities to identify and address issues that pose a threat to societal cohesion. However, further study of the JCAP in different contexts is required to better understand the utility of the approach in addressing a broader range of drivers and types of conflict.

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6

RESOLVING CONFLICT AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Jim Della-Giacoma

Introduction

Resolving conflict in Southeast Asia has been an important part of controlling violent extremism in the region for the last two decades. Ending communal violence and long running insurgencies with peace agreements has allowed violent extremism to become a manageable problem. Conducting a historical review of this period through key informant interviews and document study, this chapter finds that giving insurgents the hope of a future stake in government has encouraged some of them to shun extremist groups. Coming up with new subnational systems for governing formerly rebellious provinces has created resistance to the ideology of extremists and marginalized those still committed to their ideas and tactics. The future success of these arrangements could provide a viable alternative to those groups that continue to advocate extremist violence as the only way to achieve militant goals. The Southeast Asian experience shows that the old tools of conflict resolution, support for peace processes, respect for human rights, political inclusion, and peacebuilding are still central to aiding the present challenges of preventing violent extremism (PVE) in the region.

Framing of the Research

In Southeast Asia in the last two decades, peace and political processes have interacted with violent extremism. This chapter examines conflicts in Aceh, Ambon, Maluku, and Poso in Indonesia, and Mindanao in the Philippines. These case studies were chosen as they are examples of where political processes co-

existed with violent extremism and peace processes played a role in constricting, mitigating, or managing violent extremism. In each location, there were turning points when decisions were made that led to certain members of violent groups to disengage from violent extremism. The purpose of this research was to examine those factors that promoted resilience against extremists. It was intended to explore the strategic choices that insurgent groups made that led to resistance or rejection of violent extremists and their ideologies. From the case studies, these turning points, factors, and choices offer critical insights into preventing and countering violent extremism.

Research on disengagement of terrorists, radicals, gangs, or cults has found that a change in context or environment is one of the steps to leaving behind a violent group. As Chernov Hwang (2018) has written, disengagement is the process of an individual or group ceasing to use violence, leaving a movement, or migrating to a non-violent role to achieve political goals. It is a change in behaviour rather than ideology (2018, p.4). Chernov Hwang's research on Indonesian Salafi jihadists[1] has identified four factors that play a key role in disengagement: (1) disillusionment with tactics and leaders; (2) rational assessment that the rationale for violence has changed or the costs outweigh the benefits; (3) the establishment of an alternative social network of family, friends, and mentors; and (4) a shift of priorities towards work and family life (2018, p. 8). Sometimes, the factors that stop someone from being a radical, terrorist or extremist are simplified into a binary of "push" and "pull." According to Ali-Fauzi (2018), push factors are those such as disillusionment with the group or estrangement from the network, while pull factors include having a change of heart towards one's enemy or greater consideration being given to one's family and friends (2018, p. 2).

Long-time observers of Indonesia assert that the resolution of its regional ethno-religious conflicts was an important step in building its resilience to violent extremism. While violent extremism in Indonesia has not and may never be eradicated, it has been contained by more than just vigorous policing. The historical and environmental factors that have helped Indonesia prevent violent extremism include: (1) it is a Muslim majority country; (2) it does not have hostile neighbours; (3) it is a democracy that allows public advocacy in favour of Sharia; and (4) it has successfully resolved major ethnic and religious regional conflicts (S. Jones, personal communication, April 1, 2019).

[1] This term is widely used in Southeast Asia and Indonesian Salafi jihadists could also be described as religiously-inspired violent extremists (ICG 2004c, pp. 25-28)

Insurgent groups who negotiated an end to ethno-nationalist insurgencies in Aceh in Indonesia, and Mindanao in the Philippines, identify strategic choices that were made to resist or reject the involvement of extremist groups, sometimes many years before their peaceful resolution. They saw a successful strategy in defining their struggle as local rather than global. Enlisting and keeping onboard international allies such as Western countries, international human rights groups, and the United Nations was part of this. Any association with the transnational terrorist networks would have undermined these coalitions. For this reason, associating with violent extremists was deemed to be contrary to the long-term interests of negotiating an end to their conflicts (M. Liza, personal communication, April 7, 2019; A. Lingga, personal communication, April 28, 2019).

Violence has often been used to achieve political aims by governments and non-state actors in the three countries examined in this chapter and the more than twenty-year period it covers. One objective of this research is to examine the conflicts in Aceh, Ambon and Northern Maluku, Poso, and Mindanao to provide a brief and common understanding of how each conflict started, what was its impact, key turning points, and how it ended. This includes a mapping of the political or peace processes. The second objective of this research is to differentiate these conflicts by type. When it was convenient, governments were ready to label insurgents as "terrorists" (Davies, 2006, p.197) or threatened to list these ethno-nationalist movements as terrorist groups (Morada, 2004). Each struggle is unique and not always easily categorized. But how a government chooses to portray a conflict - as ethno-nationalist, inter-communal and extremist violence or terrorism - influences its policy response.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) in 2008 developed four characteristics for groups in the southern Philippines that can be used as a more general lens for Southeast Asia (ICG, 2008, p.2). The key distinction that guides this chapter is the difference between those willing to join a political process, especially a negotiated peace, and those who are not. These four are whether a group has chosen targets of violence, negotiable goals, political infrastructure, and control of a population and territory. Based on these four characteristics, the ICG has categorized groups as follows:

> Terrorists deliberately and systematically target civilians in pursuit of non-negotiable goals, and score relatively low on the other two indices – reflecting their lack of legitimacy. Insurgent movements with negotiable

> demands, political infrastructure, popular constituencies and territorial control are less likely to depend on terrorist tactics and are more readily held to account for their actions, especially when engaged in peace processes (ICG, 2008, p. 2).

This categorization has grey areas. Both insurgents and terrorists, for example, can rely on local communities for their support. This framework is a tool that should open up a discussion about a spectrum of policy responses when formulating a government's response to violence. Simplified, insurgents with grievances are better talked to, while extremists with unresolvable grudges should be treated as criminals that are subject to the law.

Research Methodology

This chapter is based on an extensive document review and more than 40 mostly semi-structured interviews conducted in Southeast Asia during April 2019[2] and a review of the existing literature on the subject. Interviewees were conducted with 36 men and four women, who were selected according to whether they had been directly involved in the conflict or its resolution studied it in depth. Given more conflicts were examined in Indonesia, the ratio between those interviewed there versus the Philippines was about 3:2. When they were willing, twelve key informants were subject to in-depth structured interviews because of their role as protagonists, peacemakers, or in directing the response of security forces. Of these, six were from Indonesia, five from the Philippines, and one had participated in conflicts in both countries. It should be noted that there is extensive published material in both Indonesia and the Philippines to draw upon, including books, academic papers, grey literature, media reports, and first-person accounts. In some cases, these contemporaneous sources are more reliable and necessary reference points because direct participants in the conflicts have died or moved on to other work. By their own admissions, some interviewees said they no longer remembered in detail all the facts.

The fieldwork was conducted over a period of 20 days, including during Indonesia's national elections, and has its limitations. Not all those the author wished to interview were available or willing to meet. It should also be noted that a side effect of this extensive body of written knowledge is that direct

[2] The author would like to thank the Regional Bureau of the Asia Pacific of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union for the funding to conduct this research as part of its Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Tolerance and Respect for Diversity project. He would also like to thank Sidney Jones and staff at the Institute for Policy Analysis on Conflict (IPAC) in Jakarta for collegial and field support during this research.

participants in the conflicts are suffering from "researcher fatigue" and they are no longer willing to talk to visiting foreign analysts. This research was conceived as only one part of a larger project being conducted by UNDP on preventing violent extremism (PVE) in Southeast Asia and was subject to a division of labour by a team of researchers. It was intentionally designed to be narrowly focused on conflict, peace processes, and violent extremism and not a comprehensive review or assessment of PVE in the region or during this period.

Research Results

Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – a liberation movement not a terrorist organisation.

The Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* or GAM) fought a multi-phase 30-year armed struggle against the central government in Jakarta (Schulze 2004). As an explicit psychological warfare tactic after 9/11, the Indonesian military tried to taint GAM's resistance, and Acehnese generally, "with the smear of an international terrorist agenda pursued by chauvinist ultra-conservative *mujahidin*" (Davies 2006, p. 218). But by the time the Government of Indonesia (GOI) came to end the conflict and negotiate the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with GAM in 2005 the presence of violent extremists within GAM was not an issue (H. Awaludin, personal communication, 9 April 2019).

The turning point that led GAM to resist and reject international and domestic extremist groups was made years earlier when the movement decided to orientate its struggle outwardly to the international community. First, GAM had to adapt to the unipolar world at the end of the Cold War. It turned away from Third World revolutionism and anti-Westernism and saw that its only real chance of obtaining independence was through international (mainly the United States and UN) support to pressure Indonesia. East Timor's independence in 1999 showed GAM that "human rights, democracy and referendum could be powerful tools of national liberation" (Schulze, 2004, p. 9). Tactically, GAM began to call for a referendum, UN-sponsored talks, and stepped up its operations to provoke a violent overreaction by the Indonesian military (Schulze, 2004, pp. 41-44).

After the September 11 attacks in 2001 and the declaration of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) by the United States, defining the struggle this way

and seeking Western patronage meant unequivocally rejecting transnational groups such as Al Qaeda (AQ) and its regional affiliates such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Like those who backed East Timor's independence as part of a UN-sponsored process in 1999, "Aceh's supporters were in the United States Senate," recalled one GAM negotiator (N. Djuli, Private communication, 11 April 2019). Keeping their independence also meant rejecting the assistance from Indonesian domestic jihadis, such as Laskar Jihad, who offered to send its fighters to Aceh. In an official press statement, GAM rejected the assertion that their struggle was a religious war rather than an ethno-nationalist struggle.

> Ever since the rule of the Sultanate of Aceh, the people of Aceh have been tolerant in the matter of religion and we are still living in peace and harmony with people of other religions. GAM cannot allow, and therefore opposes in the strongest terms, any attempt to radicalize the Muslims in Aceh by Laskar Jihad (Dawood, 2002).

"We are fighting to liberate ourselves and we want nothing to do with you," is how one GAM negotiator Muhammad Liza later recalled this exchange. "If you want to support our struggle, send us money and weapons, but don't send people and don't send your ideology" (M. Liza, Private Communication, 7 April 2019). GAM with its clear ethno-nationalist orientation had a strategic goal of negotiating its way to self-determination with the support of Western allies. To do this, it had to keep its distance from local and transnational religiously orientated extremist groups.

Maluku – communal violence not separatism

Triggered by a fight between a Muslim and Christian in Ambon City during the Idul Fitri (Eid al-Fitr) in 1999, communal conflict quickly spread throughout the Maluku and North Maluku islands. By early 2002, more than had been 5,000 killed and one-third of the province's then 2.1 million population was displaced (Cunliffe et al., 2009, p. 11). This was a magnet for local and global violent extremist groups, particularly those with an Islamic orientation. The term "terrorist" was applied to Muslims fighters drawn to the Maluku Islands, particularly after-9/11. It was more than just a perception and name-calling. JI was there from the beginning and they were a Salafi jihadist group committed to the use of violence, albeit still a clandestine organization. JI's decision whether or not to join the fight caused a major dispute in the secretive group, which had links with known international terrorists. Omar al Faruq from al-Qaeda, for example, was one of their trainers and he did take a small group of Indonesian JI members to Pakistan to train with Lashkar-e-Taiba in 2001 (S. Jones, private communications, 25 June 2019). When it came time to negotiate peace, the focus was on reconciling broken communities. Separatists and jihadis were excluded from the talks and neither the cause of Malukan independence nor the agenda of global terrorism were discussed (Prasetyohadi, 2002 & H. Awaluddin, private communication, 9 April 2019).

The Malino II agreement of January 2002 was a turning but not end point of the conflict or violence in the Maluku. It marked the re-establishment of the authority of the central government in the regions. Specifically, it called for the security forces to act professionally by following the law impartially. It mandated the disarmament of militias and the expulsion of outside groups (Indonesian Embassy, 2002). The deal allowed community-based peacebuilding that had been going on underground to come out into the open. The social fabric and Malukan identity were said to be strong in Ambon and more resistant to outside influence (J. Manuputty, private communication, 16 April 2019). However, it must be recognized that a major cause of the communal conflict in the first place in Ambon and Poso, which will be discussed below, was hyperlocal and involved the dilution of community identity caused by the influx of Muslim migrants that changed the demographic balance in both places and created new tensions. As Schulze (2019) has more recently argued, the violence orchestrated by Salafi jihadists was less persistent in Ambon than in Poso, and it was slower to start, due to lengthy internal debates among these groups, especially JI. This meant it was poorly organized and the groups present there were divided on strategy and tactics. The lessons learned in Maluku from this after-action analysis were soon to be applied in Poso in Sulawesi.

For participants in the Malino II process, the reasons why violence tapered off depended on where they sat. For the government negotiating team, it was the decisive leadership and patronage of Jusuf Kalla, who was said to have paid with his own funds to lease a ship to return jihadis to Java (H. Awaluddin, private communication, 9 April 2019). For those on the ground, it was because Malukans were culturally closer to each other than those who had come from outside to fight on their behalf (J. Manuputty, private communication, 16 April 2019). From the perspective of combatants, the fighting throughout the Maluku islands had sorted the respective communities into Christians and Muslims neighbourhoods (Manuputty, 2018, p.21). In the Maluku, and in and around Ambon, in particular, the communal conflict opened the door for ex-

tremist violence. Resolving communal conflict was the first step to shutting out extremists. More than a decade after it started, managing and mitigating ongoing communal tensions is still seen as the key to keeping this real problem being exploited again by extremist groups (ICG, 2011).

Poso – an open door for extremists

With the end of decades of authoritarian rule in 1998, long suppressed local communal conflict festered in multiple provinces in Indonesia. In Poso, influxes of Muslim migrants from other provinces had upset the balance with indigenous Christian communities. This triggered violence that attracted extremist groups from across the archipelago. In contrast to the situation in Maluku described above, Poso serves as an example of how hard it can be to eradicate extremism once communal violence has provided the opening for extremists to become involved in a local conflict. Changing the environment with a peace agreement will only go so far, vigorous law enforcement and long-term peacebuilding may still be required once militants and their ideology take hold.

Even though the conflict started after the one in the Maluku, Poso was the setting for the first Malino peace agreement forged in December 2001 (Indonesian Embassy, 2001). Key community figures, like Haji Adnan, who were closely linked with the JI fighters who had flocked to the region, were also involved in forging this peace agreement that shifted the nature of violence. After it was signed, it was somewhat effective in stopping in sectarian conflict (Karnavian, 2012, p. 90). But attacks on non-Muslims continued in the form of "mysterious shootings" and "bomb explosions," but these were blamed on "outside elements" that wanted to sabotage the peace process (ICG, 2004a, p.16). Between 2002-2007, these attacks included attacks on civilians and security forces and included the infamous beheading of three schoolgirls in October 2005 (Karnavian, 2012, pp. 93-96). The former head of Indonesia's Counter Terrorism police Tito Karnavian argued the radicalization can be explained by Richardson's (2006) thesis that disaffected people (Poso locals) with the help of an enabling group (JI) and a legitimizing ideology (salafi jihadism) can combine to result in violence (Karnavian 2012, p.115). He noted that while most community members supported the Malino agreement, after the accord militants, many who had not read it, perpetuated a widespread belief that it was biased against Muslims. They used this sense of injustice as an "after-the-fact" rationale for violence by claiming not enough of the Christian ring leaders responsible for infamous massacres had been prosecuted (Karnavian 2012, pp. 125-134).

For militant's intent on spoiling the peace process, the narrative mattered more than the truth. These perceived grievances were exploited by JI for its own larger goals, including developing Central Sulawesi as a safe base (*qoidah aminah*). It was here they wanted to see Sharia applied and a profitable economic base to support themselves developed (ICG, 2004a, p.16). The peace agreement also inadvertently spread terrorist violence as attacks were launched on those seen as responsible for the deal. The lead government negotiator, Jusuf Kalla, then the Coordinating Minister of People's Welfare, was said to have personally paid for some of these groups to return to Java (H. Awaluddin, private communication, 9 April 2019). For his role in forging these agreements, commercial properties his family owned in Makassar in South Sulawesi became the target of terrorist attacks (Solahuddin, private communication, 9 April 2019; Reuters 2003). It is important to remember that peace agreements on their own are not cure-alls once violent extremists have taken hold. As the World Bank (2018) argues, prevention is considerably cheaper than intervening during or after violence occurs (p.2). Karnavian (2008) documents the years of costly operations that it took Indonesian police to counter violent extremists in Poso. After they were deeply embedded in the Poso community, a significant law enforcement effort was required to dislodge militants from the main towns (ICG, 2007; Karnavian, 2014). To this day, small cells persist in the area, although much more marginalized and manageable than those groups active before the police raids of 2007 (Badrah, 2016). But operations involving thousands of troops have not dislodged them and groups like Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia (MIT) maintain links with global networks such as ISIS (IPAC 2020, pp. 1-2). While small, MIT is still relatively significant. Analysts note that at the height of deceased MIT leader Santoso's influence, around 2013, he may have had as many as 50 combatants, which is probably more than JI ever mobilized at one time in Poso (S. Jones, private communication, 25 June 2019). These groups are no longer supported by the local people, are found in only small areas, and appear larger than they actually are due to their active online presence (I. Ali-Fauzi, private communication, 4 April 2019).

The violence in Poso was complex and the conflict had three levels. At the local level, it was a personal and often bitter communal fight between neighbours. At the national level, it was fuelled by the rise in urban Muslims political consciousness and ambitious ethnic Bugis politicians from South Sulawesi, both freed after decades of suppression by Suharto's New Order. Laid over this was the international conflict promoted by groups like JI and AQ that saw Poso as one battlefront in a global jihad by Muslims against Christians (Kar-

navian, 2012, pp. 107-108). Nasir Abas, the former JI leader, described how it evolved from being a horizontal conflict (communal) to a vertical conflict (against the government). JI worked to educate and persuade the local people that struggle should be about creating an Islamic State, adopting a Sharia, and making the region separate (or even independent) from the Indonesian state (N. Abas, private communication, 3 April 2019).

The globalization of the conflict in Poso has been somewhat reversed in recent years and once again reverted to a local struggle. An important postscript to the conflict in Poso took place at the April 2019 Indonesian general election when former extremists adopted peaceful political tactics to achieve their goals. Rather than resort to violence, Indonesian Islamists have increasingly learned how to take advantage of the grey areas of the country's political system. "Democracy makes it possible that you can demonstrate for majoritarian purposes (such as Sharia) even though it is not really democratic," said researcher Ihsan Ali-Fauzi (private communication, 4 April 2019). In April 2019, the children of the prominent cleric Adnan Arsal, the "godfather" of a local extremist group supported by JI a decade before, ran for political office. Even more ironic was he joined political parties lead by former generals and Suharto family figures, who during the New Order had been responsible for suppressing Islamic politics. Previously, they rejected democracy as "forbidden" (*haram*) because it reflected submission to a political system created by humans and not by God – a kind of worship of false idols (*thaghut*), in their terminology. Because of this, former Muslim militants considered the Indonesian government to be comprised of "infidels" (*kafir*). But at the 2019 polls, promises of improvement through the electoral process tempted their faith (Ali-Fauzi et al, 2019).

While the former militants disengaged from violence by engaging in politics, their goal of Islamic governance remains. The role political parties can play in bringing in former militants and channelling their aspirations is worth noting, even though only one of the former militants who ran were elected to office (I. Ali-Fauzi, private communication, 9 October 2019) (See also the official Central Sulawesi election results 2019).

Mindanao – playing the terrorist card as a negotiating carrot

Muslim minority communities in the southern Philippines have resisted control by outsiders for centuries. First, they opposed rule by Spanish and American colonialists and then, after independence in 1948, resisted control by the majority Christian nationalist leaders in Manila. During the long peace process in Mindanao, the position of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) toward the presence of foreign extremists gradually grew more hostile but rejecting them was encouraged by the government through political means. In a strategy implemented by successive governments, the MILF was encouraged to keep talking to the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and disengage from extremist networks.

Since formal talks began in 1997, the basic principle guiding the MILF leadership was "that negotiated political settlement is the most civilized and practical way to solve the Moro problem" (Murad, 2012, p. 12). But the strategy was to talk *and* fight. "For me, these were two sides of the same coin. Without the armed units, there was no way to have peaceful negotiations. If there was no way for negotiations, then we would have had to use armed jihad," recalled former MILF negotiator Abhoud Lingga (private communication, 28 April 2019). The MILF was inspired and defined by ideas of liberation not extremism, he said. When using violence, they looked to conventional warfare rather than terrorism tactics. "The MILF was not attracted to those groups and their methods," Lingga said.

Self-defined as liberators and not terrorists, the MILF was sensitive to how others classified it. In 1997, the government allowed the U.S. State Department to list the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) as Designated Terrorist Organizations. After the GWOT was declared post-9/11, the GPH used this tool as a "stick" against the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA) and did not object to the US listing this group as terrorists in 2002 (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Ironically, at the same time, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration opposed any US moves to list the MILF as a terrorist group. The GPH was interested in exploring peace negotiations with the MILF and used this policy position as a "carrot" to bring them back to the table in early 2003 (Morada 2004, p. 2). As far as the Moro group was concerned, listing the MILF as a terrorist organization would have ended the peace process (Lingga, private communication, 28 April 2019). The inconsistent policies of the GPH with regard to the listing only underlines the arbitrary and subjective nature of this tool.

The MILF's commitment to negotiate with the government framed its relationship with extremist groups. The MILF and its composite factions had

many connections with international and regional terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and JI. These relationships endured many years through studying, training, and fighting together (ICG, 2008).

But the story worth recounting here is why the MILF severed these ties and made the foreign fighters unwelcome in Mindanao. As the GRP-MILF negotiations advanced, the MILF's tolerance for foreign Salafi jihadist groups diminished. These militants came to Mindanao through various routes and personal connections and were not officially invited by the MILF. Former JI trainer, and later head of its Mantiqi III region, Nasir Abas recalled how in 1993-94, when the group was looking for a training camp they first scouted locations in Rakhine State in Myanmar before deeming it too insecure and unsuitable for a permanent facility (Abas, private communication, 3 April 2019). They then settled on the southern Philippines, where they were invited in by Filipino veterans of Soviet-Afghanistan war they knew. These veterans, now back with the MILF, controlled more extensive territory that made for a safe space for a new training camp. At the time, Abas (private communication, 3 April 2019) noted, JI was a secret organization and they did not tell their MILF hosts their name or larger goals establishing Sharia across the region. It was not until JI was being pursued after the 2002 Bali bombing that the presence in Mindanao of JI as an organization was widely revealed and it quickly became problematic for the hosts. As the MILF restarted negotiations with the GPH, the pressure was put on them by the government negotiators to expel the foreign fighters. The GPH incentivized this by offering to keep the MILF off the terrorism watch list if they expelled the foreigners. When these factors combined, the activities of Indonesians were increasingly restricted making them unwelcome by the well-organized MILF. Under pressure, they either returned home or moving to areas controlled by other groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (Abas, private communication, 3 April 2019).

A peace process can take a long time to reach an agreement. This one lasted some 22 years, went through five presidents and more than a dozen government peace negotiators, and resulted in more than 100 signed documents (Murad, 2015). There were many disagreements along the way, including within the MILF. After the Philippines Supreme Court in 2008 rejected as unconstitutional the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) (Williams, 2010) and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo "lacked the will" to sign it (Iqbal, 2014), disgruntled commanders formed the breakaway Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), which held to this day holds to the idea of independence.

For the purposes of this chapter, there are two key issues to take away from the MILF peace process. First, the MILF was committed to talks as a means to the specific political end of self-determination and was never tied to any religious or extremist ideology. This defined them for many years as insurgents not terrorists. Second, the "final" peace process succeeded when it created the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao that went into force in February 2019. The new Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (BTA) is now led by MILF chair and insurgent leader El Haj Murad, who is its Chief Executive. Its success will be a key factor in preventing violent extremism in the southern Philippines.

Now that they constitute the regional government, the MILF and the BTA see themselves as partners in mitigating extremism and encouraging disengagement of other groups from associating with extremist ideology. A successful BTA is seen by many analysts as a key to reducing the appeal of ISIS in the region (IPAC, 2019). The BTA's Local Government Minister Naguib Sinarimbo agreed:

> The hope is that the peace agreement delivers on its promise of answering and responding to the legitimate cause of the Bangsamoro. If it responds to that, then, in effect, you are able to address the legitimate causes and, if the legitimate causes are not there, the extremists will really be hard put to recruit people and resist (N. Sinarimbo, private communication, 28 April 2019).

This had long been the GPH's perspective while it negotiated the peace deal. In the words of a former Philippines President, the Bangsamoro, or a homeland for the Moro people, could "form a perimeter of vigilance against the spread of extremism" (Aquino, 2014, p.34). This long but ultimately successful convergence of world views shows the importance of resolving conflict as part of a strategy of preventing violent extremism in a region of Southeast Asia that has seen centuries of deadly struggles.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Southeast Asia, patterns can be seen of how conflict opens the door for extremist and political processes can create favourable environments for disengagement, resilience, and resistance to extremists and their ideology.

Conflict can be an entry point for extremism: Communal conflicts are a magnet for extremist groups and a clarion call for their recruitment. Conflict undermines societal cohesion that is an important factor in creating resilience to extremism. In Maluku and Ambon, extremists were not present until after communal conflicts produced horrific crimes and persecution of co-religionists that led to their peers coming from elsewhere in Indonesia to not only defend their faith but also exploit the opportunity to advance their own cause on these new battlegrounds. In the southern Philippines, the large area of territory controlled by the MILF was attractive to Indonesian Salafi jihadists looking for a safe base for training.

Conflicts defined as ethno-nationalist can resist extremist groups. In Aceh, tightly defined ethno-nationalist struggles being waged on diplomatic fronts around the world saw a strategic advantage in rejecting extremist groups. Around 2003, the MILF eventually came to the same conclusion. Association with extremist global ideology and terrorist networks is a distinct negative for an ethno-nationalist struggle seeking international diplomatic legitimacy. For government negotiators, "carrots" should be used deftly to discourage insurgents from associating with extremist groups. While often quick to call ethno-nationalist insurgents terrorists, a distinction should be made between the use of particular violent tactics and political goals. Insurgents need to be given a strategic reason to resist or reject extremists.

Distinguishing between insurgency and extremism has been and remains important. Subtle use of labels for violent groups allows the prioritization of political tools rather than force when resolving violence. In the southern Philippines, the periodic excessive use of force prolonged the political resolution of that conflict. Labelling insurgents has not, therefore, aided resolution of these conflicts. Understanding legitimate grievances and resolving them remains an important part of conflict resolution and should be a part of any strategy to prevent violent extremism.

Violence is used by both sides as a negotiating tactic in peace processes. The Southeast Asian experience for insurgent groups is that military power is required to be taken seriously. On the government side, the Southeast Asia's experience is that military power has never been able to quash a political movement with a legitimate grievance. If defeated on the battlefield, as Aceh shows, the rebels lay low before rising again in the next generation. Insurgency violence has worked as a lever to apply political pressure and maintain the international profile of a cause. The long peace process in the southern Philippines underlines the importance of keeping political channels open and having mechanisms to minimize the harm to civilians.

The grievances of those unhappy with peace agreements can be exploited by extremists. As Poso demonstrates, perceptions about the unfairness and injustice of the Malino I agreement were exploited by JI militants. In the southern Philippines, foreign fighters and the ideology of IS have persisted in groups of disaffected or former MILF and MNLF insurgents. In a post-peace agreement environment, understanding the grievances of the disgruntled is important. In these cases, restraining the excessive use of force by the military and police is important to not inadvertently drive wavering groups back into the extremists' camp.

Insurgency and extremist violence do coexist. Insurgencies exist in diverse communities with different ethnic groups and clans. They are dispersed and comprised of semi-autonomous groups with divergent tactics. In efforts to engage groups or disengage combatants, understanding factions and differentiating responses rather than homogenising them is an important lesson drawn from the Southeast Asian experience. There may well be extremists amongst insurgents, but this association does not make all insurgents terrorists. Extremists see communal violence as an opportunity and use it as cover to infiltrate, build supporters, and expand their influence.

Protracted peace processes are frustrating, but can provide immunity against extremism. The successful peace processes of Southeast Asia were long, with many setbacks, before eventually being signed. By keeping alive the possibility of a future deal, insurgents policed themselves and minimized the role of regional and global extremists in their areas of operations. An ongoing peace process, with international engagement, should be understood as being a preventative factor in resisting extremism. During difficult periods, maintaining momentum, keeping back channels open, and not listing

parties to the negotiations as terrorist groups are all important lessons from Southeast Asia.

Allowing political involvement aids disengagement from violent extremism. Creating inclusive political systems is an important part of prevention as well as discouraging the use of extremist violence in post-conflict settlements. After a peace agreement, the atmosphere improves for political inclusion, and former combatants or violent actors should be allowed and encouraged to play by new rules of peaceful politics. In Aceh, a key part of bringing GAM into the political system was the central government's flexibility to allow local political parties at the provincial level. This gave its community supporters a stake in their own political system. In Poso, former militants have become local activists for national political parties. In Mindanao, the MILF has its United Bangsamoro Justice Party (UBJP) to channel its political aspirations. In Southeast Asia, offering political alternatives to violence has been an important part of a broad strategy of preventing violent extremism.

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7

ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN-FUNDED INTERVENTIONS OF PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH EDUCATION IN MADRASSAS: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

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Introduction

In Muslim history, madrassas[1] served as the religious learning institutions that aimed at building a generation of religious leaders, teachers and scholars titled as Imams, Qaris, Ulama, Muftis, and Faqih. Created for the Muslims of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947, Pakistan is by design a Muslim majority state (Ahmed, 2017a). At the independence from the British, today's India and Pakistan had witnessed a two-way mass migration of millions of people across the newly established international borders between India and Pakistan. In this process, millions of Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan, and Hindus from Pakistan to India. In the migration came a large number of Ulama (Islamic scholars) from Deoband – a small town in the present-day Uttar Pradesh in India – to Pakistan and established madrassas. Two of these madrassas are believed to have played a very significant role in bringing a rigorous form of Islam to Pakistan i.e. Akora Khattak and the Banori township of Karachi (Ahmed, 2009a).

As of January 2020, Pakistan is home to three parallel education systems. Other than madrassas, there are also public and private non-religious schools.

[1] At a madrassa, a student learns how to read, memorise, and recite the Qur'an. The madrassas in Pakistan are administered under different boards and issue certificates of various levels that are recognised by the government. The graduates are called Hafiz-ul-Qur'an (those who memorise the Arabic text of Qur'an) and Qaris (those who can recite the Qur'an with proper Arabic pronunciation). Finally, the ones with a high-level qualification in Islamic philosophy are given the titles such as Ulama (religious scholar), mufti (scholar competent in issuing fatwās) and faqih (scholar of jurisprudence) (Ahmed, 2009a).

Madrassas account for around 10% of the total educational institutions in the country. An interesting feature of the religious education system is that there are only three percent government-run madrassas, whereas the majority (97%) madrassas are owned by the private sector. Out of 2.26 million students enrolled in madrassas, there are more boys (64%) than girls (365) (NEMIS, 2018). Contrary to popular view, it has now been established that like non-religious private education institutions, madrassas in Pakistan are no longer a choice of only the poor households; rather, they cater to the needs of all income groups (Andrabi et al. 2005; Fair, 2014).

There are five distinct types of madrassas in Pakistan that are divided on sectarian lines and are dominated by the Deobandi and Barelvi sects. The largest group of madrassas belong to the Barelvi sect who openly oppose Wahhabism (affiliated with and sponsored by entities in Saudi Arabia). Deobandi is a revivalist movement of Sunni Muslims that emerged out of the Darul Uloom Islamic seminar in the town of Deoband, India, in the late nineteenth century. Similarly, Ahle Hadith (Salafi) and Shia Muslims have their own madrassas (Ali, 2009). It should be noted that these different kinds of madrassas have no or very little contact with each other, and do not have any sort of coordination body amongst them. According to an estimate, the number of madrassas has crossed 34,000 from less than 300 in 1947 (Pakistan Today, 31 July 2015). These madrassas are estimated to have between 1.5-2 million students (Delavande & Zafar, 2015, p. 248; Dogar, 2010, p. 8).

At the start of the 'War on Terror' in 2001, madrassas in general and Pakistani madrassas in particular came under the international spotlight in connection to propagating violent religious extremism. In this regard, there is no shortage of literature on the correlation between religion and conflict (Kakar, 1996; Seul, 1999; Shore, 2016). The focus of scholarship in this area shifted at the end of the Cold War but 'religion' was also a key factor in certain crucial episodes of the Cold War. Here it is important and relevant to highlight how the US and its allies, especially Saudi Arabia, promoted the concept of *jihad* (holy war) across the Muslim world for the recruitment of "jihadis" to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s (Ahmed, 2012). This also led to a sudden growth of madrassas in Pakistan. The growth of madrassas is also partly due to the financial support from Saudi Arabia and Iran (Grare, 2007). Besides the madrassa boom, the Cold War era also witnessed changes in madrassa textbooks. Simultaneously the country witnessed a socio-political transformation through Islamization under the military rule of General Zia-ul-Haq (Ahmed, 2017a).

According to an estimate, around 1,000 madrassas were established during that era alone to supply thousands of combatants for the war in Afghanistan (Iqbal & Raza, 2015, p. 28). All these factors played a key role in the proliferation of extremist ideologies through madrassas, the cost of which Pakistan continues to pay in the form of incidents of violent extremism.

The United States has also been encouraging madrassa reforms in Muslim states, including Pakistan (Delavande & Zafar, 2015). Since then numerous studies have been done on the connection between terrorism and violent religious extremism with madrassas (Ahmed, 2009a; Ali, 2009; Dogar, 2010; Khokhar, 2007; Rana, 2009). Consequently, many international organizations, such as the United States Institute of Peace, have been working with Muslim religious actors, such as Ulama and Imams, for peacebuilding through madrassas. This has changed the landscape of peacebuilding organizations in Pakistan with now an increasing presence of international donors and NGOs. In terms of engagement with madrassas, Washington-based International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy was among the first to engage with madrassas in Pakistan 2004-05 (ICRD, 2018).

Pakistan's approach to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) has largely been reactionary to this problem. While Pakistan had put into force its Madrassas Education Ordinance less than a month before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the law remained largely inactive for years. On the one hand, General Pervez Musharraf's government was under immense pressure from the United States to address the issue of extremism in the local madrassas, on the other his mantra of 'enlightened moderation' faced opposition from right-wing parties in the country (Hussain, 2007, p. 183). The government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz came in power in 2013 and formulated the National Action Plan (NAP) on CVE in the aftermath of the brutal terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in 2014 (Zia, 2015). One of the key agenda items under the NAP is to register all madrassas. Due to non-compliance under the NAP involving registration with the government, the provincial governments in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh have shut down 2, 13, and 167 madrassas respectively (Khan, 2016). However, the overall progress on registering and mainstreaming madrassas is not very encouraging, for example as of February 2020, there were only 208 madrassas registered with the government out of the total of 16,000 in Punjab alone (Butt, 2020). The government's authoritarian (aggressive) approach to addressing the problem of extremism in

madrassas is a result of the dominance of security officials in formulating and implementing policies such as what is contained in the NAP. A recent report in the Voice of America also points towards the military's lead role in recent madrassa reforms (Gul, 2019). The government has largely ignored the work done by numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the area of CVE in madrassas (Peace Direct, 2017), despite clear cases in which NGOs are working on madrasa registration and reform. This paper aims to add to the existing knowledge about the role of NGOs, both local and foreign, in relation to CVE in Pakistan. It is important to study such efforts to assess their effectiveness which can be useful to future efforts in this important area.

This paper presents the context and methodological details of this research, followed by an overview of madrassas and CVE interventions in Pakistan. The paper then discusses the lessons and insights from two independent madrassas focused peace education and CVE initiatives from Punjab, Pakistan.

Literature and methodological grounding

In the past decade, there has been some scholarly contribution from the global south on the factors contributing to violent extremism and approaches to CVE. Samuel (2012) establishes that youth are now being radicalized by the use of soft power i.e. propagation of narratives and ideas that help gain sympathy, support, and admiration of the youth. Acknowledging the proactive and preventive role of education Ghosh et. al. (2017) suggest that that education should be incorporated into CVE policies as a preventive measure that would not only make students resilient but will also counter the extremist narratives propagated by terrorists.

The scholarly work on violent extremism and radicalization in Pakistan (Khan 2013; Nayyar & Salim 2003; Noor, 2009; Sial & Anjum 2010; Siddiqa 2010) has focused on the role of education, especially curricula, in the propagation of violent narratives in the youth. Sajjad et al. (2017) argue that educated Pakistani youth are receptive to radical ideas mainly because these ideas are mixed with religion. They establish that the majority of the youth in the country is attached to religion and not radical extremism, therefore, a liberal religious approach to education would be effective in countering extremist narratives and de-radicalizing society. There is very little scholarly discussion on the opportunities offered by education, in general, and religious education, in particular, to countering violent narratives. This paper contributes to the discussion

on CVE through madrassas in Pakistan especially by focusing on the CVE approaches implemented by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international donor organizations.

Out of the two selected projects, one was implemented by a prominent local NGO, Paiman Alumni Trust, and the second project was managed by a well-established privately run madrassa, the Jamia Naeemia. The project of Paiman was operational at the time of data collection, whereas, the Jamia Naeemia project was completed. Likewise, the implementing organizations of both projects had good local presence thus were familiar with local context and needs. The Oxfam Novib's office provided PKR 2.1 million (approximately US$15,000) to Jamia Naeemia for a peace education project called "Conflict Transformation Workshops" for a duration of six months. In contrast, Paiman was given PKR 14 million (roughly US$100,000) for a one-year project by the USIP for a peace education project entitled "Women in Faith-Building and Social Cohesion."

This paper largely draws on primary and secondary data collected. The primary data was collected in Islamabad and Lahore during 2015-16 in the form of interviews. The interviews with project team members from Paiman and donor organizations i.e. European Commission, and Oxfam Novib, were carried out at their offices in Islamabad. The interviews of project teams, including trainers and participants, were conducted in Lahore. A total of 11 interviews were conducted including 4 from Paiman, 5 from Jamia Naeemia, one each from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Oxfam Novib. To maintain the anonymity of the research participants, we have randomly assigned each participant a number between P1 to P11. While the research team tried to capture the experience of some randomly selected participants of the projects under review, it could only obtain views of three participants from the two projects. We have later explained the reasons for that in our analysis in this paper. Both projects were also assessed using a matrix of key themes and parameters that covered theoretical, practical, and technical aspects of an effective peace education initiative. The matrix was developed by the lead author after a review of peace education contents, practices, and evaluation frameworks, and project evaluation tools used in the development sector (Foundation, 1999; Harris, 2004; Harris and Morrison, 2013; Page, 2008). Comparative analysis of both the projects on this matrix (in table 2), aids to explain how well these two projects are designed and executed to counter violent extremism through madrassas.

There is a lack of sustainability of CVE interventions in Pakistan in general and the ones implemented in madrassas in particular. This is due to the two main factors: (1) CVE interventions are donor driven and not initiated in response to local needs; and (2) the projects are often not developed with the spirit of a true partnership between the donor organizations and the local NGOs. While the first factor leads to over reliance on external funding for continuity of initiatives, the second is responsible for the lack of community ownership of the majority of CVE programs. There is no shortage of examples of donor organizations developing project ideas and then looking for partners in Pakistan to implement these projects. This was the case of the CVE project implemented through Jamia Naeemia. Here it is important to mention that this particular madrassa is considered moderate and its leader Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi was killed by the Taliban for speaking against terrorism (Javed, 2009). As it was found during interviews of some team members of Jamia Naeemia, they were unhappy about their donor breaking its commitment by stopping the promised funding midway during the project. Such incidents are also responsible for a growing trust deficit between madrassas and the international NGOs (INGOs). The funding challenge and trust deficit are also true for the local NGOs in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2017b).

Landscape of madrassas and CVE interventions in Pakistan

Delavande & Zafar (2011) pointed out an apparent disconnect between the madrassas and the rest of society, as there is very little cross-over. There is no denial of the fact that only a minor fraction of madrassas have extremist links and the majority continues to play an important role in society (Curtis, 2007. According to one estimate, there are between 10% and 12% madrassas in Pakistan with extremist links (Iqbal & Raza, 2015, p. 29). For centuries until the arrival of the modern systems of education with secular schools, colleges, and universities, madrassas were the most prominent and the only educational institutions in most of the Muslim world. In the Indian sub-continent, there were also prominent madrassas that played a key role in promoting education by producing doctors, lawyers, and engineers (Dogar, 2010), for example, the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a student of the Sindh-Madrasa-tul-Islam in Karachi. Thus, in the context of CVE, it is important to think of ways to revive the traditional status of madrassas.

Since 2004, there is an increase in foreign development assistance (FDA) to Pakistan (Salman & Hui, 2009; I-SAPS, 2012). Because of that, there has been

sudden and reactional growth of local organizations and programs on preventing violent extremism through education (PVE-E). While most of CVE initiatives were donor driven and linked to the mushroom growth of peacebuilding NGOs, there has also been recognition of its importance in public sector universities. There are over 100 Pakistani NGOs claiming to have been working on PVE-E,[2] and the following universities have postgraduate programs in peace and conflict studies: National University of Sciences and Technology, National Defence University, National University of Modern Languages, and University of Peshawar (Hoti & Ahmed, 2016). The Higher Education of Pakistan now recognizes the discipline of peace and conflict studies. The Forman Christian College University in Lahore has also been running some PVE-E courses through its Centre for Dialogue and Action. There are some other prominent universities, including the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), and Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) running short courses in this area.

For over a decade after 9/11, madrassas have been the center of CVE programs, which has also led in some ways to the stigmatization of these institutions by the public. A study conducted in Pakistan found that the public perceives madrassas as breeding places for extremism and violence, and therefore favors national plans on madrassa reforms (Devavande & Zafar, 2011, p. 3). An important contributing factor to this public perception is the lack of acceptance of madrassa graduates in society overall and the job market outside of madrassas (Ahmed, 2009a, p. 9). The employability of madrassa graduates could be increased by providing madrassa students skills that could secure jobs for them outside of the madrassa system. As the majority of the madrassa students come from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Khokhar, 2007), the government could start a scheme of providing free higher education to madrassa graduates. The stigmatization of madrassas also has to do with the garments of madrassa students and teachers, as many of them have a specific dress code, for instance, most of them wear turbans of a specific color (e.g. green, white, and black) or style that indicates their sectarian affiliation. These factors contributing to stigmatization are only reinforced by the focus on madrassas under the umbrella of counter-terrorism initiatives by the government.

The government needs to work with NGOs to address the stigmatization of madrassas. This can be done by highlighting the historic role and social

[2] For an extensive mapping of peacebuilding organizations in Pakistan, see: https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/pakistan/

purpose of madrassas. Madrassas are unlike other educational institutions because it is rare to see people other than madrassa students, teacher and administrators, for example parents. Another important observation is that madrassa students often do not have mobile phones, access to the internet, and newspapers. Thus, there is often not even a virtual connection with the outside world. A disconnect with the realities of the outside world shapes the worldviews of madrassa students. Consequently, there is a trust deficit between madrassas and secular elements of the society, for example, there are examples of madrassa administrations' mistrust of the NGOs as they receive funding from the Western sources. It should be noted here that the standard practice is that the local partner organizations do not publicly disclose the name of their funders, in contrast to international donors, which mostly require publicity or at least public disclosure of their funding.

Lessons from two projects focusing on CVE through Madrassas

When analyzed and compared with each other on a matrix developed by the authors, the two peace education projects engaging madrassas in Punjab present useful lessons and insights for similar initiatives.

Context and participants of analyzed peace education projects

The first peace education project that is analyzed in this paper was implemented by Paiman, which is a reputable peacebuilding organization in Pakistan. Established in 2006, many of the organization's projects have been implemented in collaboration with international donors. Paiman is headquartered in Islamabad and focuses mainly on KP. Paiman also formed a group 'Women Moderating Extremism' and worked with a Washington-based organization, Inclusive Security. In KP, Paiman's peace projects are focused on youth. It is on the basis of Paiman's reputation for peace education projects in KP that the USIP awarded the organization a grant to work in Punjab (P11, 2015). Paiman's peace education project in Punjab was based on workshops for the female teachers and students of madrassas mainly in Lahore. The female participants were mainly invited from madrassas of both Sunni and Shi'ite schools of thought. When requested by the researchers, Paiman did not provide further details of the number of participants and workshops. It gave the impression that the workshops were not well-organized. The participants belonged to different madrassas, including Ayesha Siddiqua Madrassa (Multan) and Jamia Tul Muntazir (Lahore).

The second selected peace education project was implemented by Jamia Naeemia, Lahore. It was a pilot project funded by Oxfam Novib. A total of 260 participants attended the workshops out of which 180 were male prayer leaders and 80 were female teachers of madrassas (seminaries). All of the participants were chosen from the Lahore district. In total 11 workshops were conducted under the project in six months. From the sustainability and ownership point of view, it is important to understand how the project idea was developed. When interviewed, there were conflicting remarks from the Jamia Naeemia and Oxfam Novib about who actually had come up with the project idea. While a member of Jamia Naeemia said that they had originally developed the idea of this project (P5, 2015), a member of Oxfam Novib's team said they had approached Jamia Naeemia to develop a project based on the concept they shared (P10, 2015). A member of the donor organization said: "Naeemi was open to the idea and receptive. He wanted to talk about peace. There was also an understanding that we should talk about this in the current environment" (P10, 2015). The main reason, however, was madrassa's history of speaking against extremist elements especially the Taliban. The madrassa came under the spotlight following the assassination of its head, Allama Dr. Sarfraz Ahmed Naeemi in a suicide attack in 2009. Allama Naeemi was targeted for being vocal against the Taliban (Ahmed, 2009b). Since then the madrassa was approached by numerous local and international organizations, such as the Pak Institute of Peace Studies, Peace and Education Foundation, and the United Nations, for participation in certain projects on topics including peace and women empowerment (P10, 2015).

It was important that the prayer leader of different mosques that were chosen in the project were graduates of Jamia Naeemia. A member of Jamia Naeemia said,

> We did not want to create a controversy by inviting people from other school of thoughts. We wanted to have fruitful discussions. Secondly, the graduates of Jamia Naeemia were easily accessible. We involved the graduates from 22 to 30 years of age group (P5, 2015).

Relevance, contents, and delivery of peace education projects

Both analyzed projects were, to some extent, responsive to specific local context and issues as they focused on countering extremism and violence. The syllabus of Jamia Naeemia's project was chosen responding to the issues faced

by the society in terms of violence. Therefore, the topics covered during the workshop included blasphemy law, polio drive, sectarianism, family planning, and Islam's concept of peace. A trainer (P7) in the project emphasized the need to improve the existing madrassa curriculum that is creating fissures on a sectarian basis. The lectures of different scholars also emphasized on the need to increase the literacy rate and enhance the quality of education, especially in public schools and madrassas to curb extremist approaches. An organizer and trainer of the Paiman project in Lahore commented that "the growing extremism in the country has culminated to violent extremism that is the biggest threat to our society. The children from 9 to 10 years of age are taught hate material in seminaries which is adding to the extremist mindset" (P2, 2015).

Comparative analysis of both the projects on peace education parameters (Table 2) indicates that the projects did not incorporate contents on a few key peace education themes and concepts, such as social justice, inter-cultural learning, equality, sustainable development, environment protection, child psychology, and disarmament. The central focus of both projects was on Islamic concepts of peace, peaceful co-existence, inter- and intra-faith harmony (sectarianism). The project managed by Paiman covered more peace education themes and contents compared to Jamia Naeemia's initiative. It appears that Paiman's contents were more extensive because the organization has been working on peace education for a much longer time in contrast to Jamia Naeemia. Moreover, Paiman's staff also participated in various peace and CVE related trainings, hence they were better able to make the project more comprehensive and inclusive.

Both projects lacked well-designed peace education material and guidelines for trainers and teachers. The project with Jamia Naeemia completely relied on indigenous material on peace and interfaith harmony which was developed by the madrassa staff itself. Thus, there were no toolkits provided to madrassa teachers, and trainings were conducted in the manner in which madrassas normally teach – an authoritarian mode of teaching. On the other hand, Paiman developed content for the trainers conducting workshops but these materials were in English. Paiman did not produce any supporting materials for the workshop participants.

Both projects adopted a similar implementation methodology that primarily focused on training and engaging madrassa teachers only. In both projects, there was no involvement of madrassa students or their parents. It is significant to note that peace education contents in both projects were delivered through a series of lectures. The comparative analysis shows that in comparison to Paiman, Jamia Naeemia lacked the required capacities and expert human resource as the organization engaged guest lectures to deliver lectures on selected themes.

Implementation constraints and challenges

The compatibility with cultural and social settings is an important feature to be considered while designing any project. In this regard, the syllabus and workshops under any awareness raising or training initiative must be designed responding to the requirements of the society where the program is being conducted (Bajaj, 2015). However, the project implemented by Paiman was not responsive to local requirements, as all the materials developed for the training workshops, and even delivery of the workshop, were in English, which was neither the first language of participants nor it was used as a medium of instructions in their madrassas. Though most of the female participants of Paiman's project were not accessible (even on telephone) to be interviewed for this research, the research team however reached out to one participant who attended one of Paiman's workshops on interfaith harmony and conflict resolution. This participant (P4) considered the workshop very enlightening and knowledgeable, but she highlighted that the language of the workshop (i.e. English) was a major hurdle in communication and discussion during sessions. She specifically said, "Over 75% of the participants could not understand the trainers due to language barrier and the terminologies used by them. They had to struggle a lot" (P4, 2015).

As for the second project, the implementing partners Jamia Naeemia and Oxfam Novib, both agreed on one aspect that the one-year pilot project was well planned. However, a senior member of the madrassa's team was unhappy that Oxfam Novib stopped the project funding just after six months. Referring to the discontinuation of donor support in the middle of the pilot project, Jamia Naeemia was not provided the funds required for publishing a planned book comprising all the lectures from the program. Consequently, the madrassa used its own funds to publish a book of these lectures (P5, 2015).

A key challenge faced by both the projects was the poor documentation and record of their outcome and impact. For the project implemented by Paiman, it was observed that the organizers had not documented the outcomes of the

workshops and the feedback of participants. Hence, they were unaware of the difficulty faced by the participants due to the language barrier. Similarly, the impact or outcome analysis of Jamia Naeemia's project was also not conducted considering that it was a pilot project that was discontinued before the completion of the planned timeframe.

Lacking scale-up and sustainability

Both projects also lacked any strategies or approach to ensure sustainability or scalability of their results and achievements after discontinuation of donor funding. Evidence from Cromwell (2019) suggests that transformation in attitudes and beliefs of peace education program participants lead them to design and implement similar activities that further contribute to the local peacebuilding. Both the projects reviewed in this paper, neither capacitated nor engaged their participants to make and implement action plans to further disseminate newly acquired knowledge and skills in their respective communities and wider social circles. The impact of both projects was also not maximized as there were no follow-on projects besides beneficiaries of both projects also did not take any initiative to replicate similar activities with others in their own madrassas and communities. Hence, unlike Cromwell's (2019) findings on youth peace building initiatives in Pakistan, the projects reviewed in this paper faced the challenge of a "ripple effect" (Salomon, 2011) for peace education, as both projects could not stretch beyond direct beneficiaries to influence others who did not directly participate in the project activities.

Along with this scale and expansion limitation, both projects also did not have any strategies in place to ensure sustainability and what Salomon (2011) refers to as "endurance" of the project effects that have been achieved in the short-term. Despite attending a couple of workshops with Jamia Naeemia, one of its participants (P8) endorsed the use of corporal punishment for teaching madrassa students. This reflects that the message about violent acts and their implications could not sustain for long after the project life. Based on this assessment, there does not seem to be any serious efforts from Paiman and Jamia Naeemia to ensure the sustainability of their projects. Jamia Naeemia made limited efforts to sustain some inputs of the project by publishing the lectures in the form of a book. Nevertheless, the results and impact could have been further sustained by introducing peace related class or lectures in the madrassa. This would have not only created a "ripple effect" but would have also increased "endurance of project results" (Salomon, 2011) by continuously

benefitting a large number of students attending the madrassa over a period of time. However, due to poor planning for sustainability and scale-up Jamia Naeemia's project ended in six months and Paiman's project closed after a year without any replication or scale-up. This is however a common problem in terms of international development.

Discussion

The concerns raised by the policymakers and the media on madrassa curriculum and registration ("Madressah reform," 2014) along with the negative incidents such as that of Jamia Hafsa (a female madrassa in Islamabad that was demolished following the military operation in 2007),[3] have led to the reinforcement of a widespread negative image of madrassas in Pakistan. This is despite the fact that evidence of terrorist recruitment in other institutions, especially universities, has been reported in Pakistan (Greer, 2016). What is not helpful in CVE efforts is labelling madrassas as the only root cause of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan. This is the exact mistake often made by some influential actors within and outside of Pakistan. Pakistan's army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, for example, has been vocal about modernizing madrassas: "I am not against madrassa education, but we have lost the essence of madrassas … So, what will they become: will they become Maulvis (clerics) or they will become terrorists? … We need to look (at) and revisit the concept of madrassas … We need to give them worldly education (Jorgic, 2017)." Such narratives in CVE policies and programs have compelled madrassas to be defensive and more introverted. While there is a popular opinion in favor of mainstreaming madrassas, there is also opposition to funding madrassas. This was the case when the provincial government of KP decided to fund Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak. This madrassa is blamed for producing terrorists and therefore the government of KP was criticized for supporting terrorism ("K-P govt clarifies stance," 2018).

On one hand, the government's counter terrorism operations have led to a significant decline in terrorist incidents. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2017, there was a 12% reduction in terrorism-related deaths in 2016 than 2015 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). However, this is not enough to address the widespread reach of extremist elements that are still able to radicalize people. The government's heavy-handed and half-hearted

[3] Jamia Hafsa was a female-only madrassa in Islamabad that was demolished following the military operation in 2007.

approach on madrassa reforms has done more damage than good. This has led to madrassas becoming defensive (Dogar, 2010). There is an example of General Pervez Musharraf's madrassa reform in which he had signed a presidential order assigning the Aga Khan Examination Board (AKUEB) the task to conduct an examination of private educational institutions including madrassas in the country. This triggered nationwide demonstrations by Islamists, mainly the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, that blamed the AKUEB for secularizing Pakistan (Hoodbhoy, 2014). This has posed challenges for NGOs focusing in this sector and, naturally, the majority of them have been pragmatic with reference to their CVE programs in madrassas.

NGOs that engage with madrassas have to work on the terms of the madrassa administrations. This often leads to modification in training contents and scope. As reported in previous research, madrassas avoid dealing with sensitive issues, such as sectarianism, in their training programs (Ahmed, 2017b). While there are prominent examples of NGO supported CVE programs in male madrassas, such as Jamia Naeemia in Lahore, there are also examples of some projects focusing on female madrassas like the one implemented by Paiman. While the majority of the madrassas in Pakistan resist quick reforms, it is important to devise strategies and policies that can be more acceptable. A first step could be to change the narrative that continues to link madrassas with violent extremism and terrorism because that is not the case of the majority of such institutions. Then modernization should not be at the cost of religious education because most of the madrassa teachers and students believe that learning Islam will reserve a place for them in heaven. Hence, an incremental approach is required to initiate curriculum reforms in madrassas.

The government needs a comprehensive strategy to modernize madrassas and to change their image or social status in the country. There is minimal or no interaction between the madrassa people and other segments of the society. Often madrassa students are more visible than ever before when they come out to collect funds, for instance, madrassas cancel Eid-ul-Azha holidays of their students to make them collect skins of sacrificial animal that are sold by the madrassa administrations for $4 to $50 (USD) depending on its size and quality (Lodhi, 2010). Rana argues that the interaction of people in madrassas, including administrations, teachers, and students, with the rest of the society is "nominal", and a madrassa teacher, in particular, faces the stereotypical restrictions imposed by society:

> His [madrassa teacher] participation in social activities is limited to certain ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death. His daily interaction with the people is confined to the mosque during prayer times. People expect a madrassa teacher to behave as a scholar who must keep some distance from society. His participation in sports and festivals is not appreciated. All these checks effectively confine him to the small social sphere of madrassa, mosque and house (2009, p. 4).

There is a shortage of studies highlighting some genuine problems with education in madrassas. The focus of such studies has been on the curricula and pedagogies. Here the particular focus has been to modernize madrassas' curricula that appears to be based on texts from the fourteenth century. In one such study, after acknowledging the social welfare component of madrassas, Dogar argues, "Madrassa education has remained frozen in time, failing to reform and update, in keeping with modern requirements (2010, p. 2)." Another study reports that extremist elements have funded and supported the development of madrassas in Pakistan by supplying them with curricula and textbooks propagating extremist ideologies in the form of religious intolerance and promotion of militant jihad (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq, & Lamb, 2015, p. 3). This has led to the ignorance of madrassas that teach modern subjects, such as mathematics and science (Park & Niyozov, 2008). As explored by the author, the CVE approaches in Pakistan especially those implemented by NGOs and INGOs have ignored the significance of using model madrassas to introduce modernization in religious teaching institutions that are stuck in the fourteenth century. Another limitation of the majority of the CVE programs in general and madrassa-based programs, in particular, is the ad hoc nature of these donor driven projects. The problems, such as the rote learning and lack of critical thinking (Ahmed, 2009a), that NGOs aim to address cannot be addressed through short-term programs that are usually not sustainable. This approach, however, cannot be easily fixed as local NGOs are heavily dependent on foreign funding that mostly comes on a short-term basis.

A key factor that influences the success of any development project is its relevance to local realities and needs. In most madrassas across Pakistan and in many other countries of the world, English is not the language of instructions. The majority of madrassas in Pakistan normally teach Urdu and Arabic. As found in this study, some participants reported difficulty in understanding the contents of training sessions offered by Paiman. This created huge communication gap between trainers and their trainees i.e. female madrassa students.

Owing to their limited understanding and proficiency of the English the female madrassa students faced difficulties in communicating with the trainers and understanding the concepts and information shared.

As far as the madrassa reform programs are concerned, most of the institutions that received the government's financial support belonged to the Brelvi school of thought by ignoring the more relevant Deobandi and Ahl Hadith madrassas (Dogar, 2010, p. 19). The programs run by NGOs are donor driven and therefore have predominantly focused on madrassas in KP comparing to other parts of the country. It is also important to mention that KP and bordering tribal areas, Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), have been at the center of the government's counter terrorism operations. There are examples of the Pakistan army's operations in 2009 in district Swat of KP province to eliminate the control of the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Orakzai, 2011), and ongoing operations in FATA. As most of the Pashtuns reside in KP and FATA, the focus of counter-terrorism has led to stereotyping of Pashtuns as terrorists. A renowned Pakistani scholar, Imtiaz Gul (2017), is of the view that the stereotyping of Pashtuns has to stop. This is also one of the demands of a recent Pashtun Tahafuz Movement[4] (Pashteen, 2018).

Despite their limitations, it is important to acknowledge that NGOs have achieved some success. While measuring the impact of educational programs is not easy, it is important to highlight the value of outputs. Many of the NGOs working on CVE in Pakistan have devoted much attention to developing contextually relevant textbooks and training materials. A variety of strategies were adopted by the local NGOs to produce content with wider acceptance in Pakistan. A prominent example is that of a textbook 'Peace education and Islam' produced by the Peace and Education Foundation in collaboration with the *Ittihad Tanzeemat* Madaris Pakistan. This book has endorsements of prominent ulama in Pakistan. This is an important strategy to ensure its implementation in madrassas across the country (N. Ahmed, Hanif, Hussain, & Bukhari, 2015). Similarly, there is another book produced in 2010 in Urdu *Peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Islam* by the United States Institute of Peace in Islamabad (Huda, 2009). The earliest example of producing curricula on Islamic teachings and practices is that of a curriculum *Peace Education: Islamic Perspectives* by the University for Peace, Costa Rica. There are numerous other examples of NGOs' material on Islam and peace education and that material can benefit national efforts on CVE in madrassas and secular schools in Pakistan.

[4] The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement is a non-violent civic resistance organized by Pashtuns across Pakistan. While the movement originally started to demand the removal of landmines from KP and FATA, it came under the national and international spotlight in January 2018 when it started a rally from Dera Ismail Khan in KP towards Islamabad. A trigger for these demonstrations was provided by the extra-judicial killing of a young Pashtun activist, Naqeebullah Mehsud who was killed by the police in Karachi in January 2018. The movement is headed by a young charismatic Pashtun, Manzoor Pashteen.

While NGOs have been playing their role in creating counter-narratives to extremist ideologies through textbooks promoting Islamic ideas of peace and non-violence, the government has also begun to pay attention to the need of counter-narrative. This shows the government's interest in shifting from its solely security-centered approaches to preventive measures. This has also been a recommendation by scholars such as Orakzai (2019). Here it is important to talk about Paigham-e-Pakistan (literal translation: the message of Pakistan) which is a fatwa[5] sought by the government as part of its CVE measures (GOP, 2018). The government has employed a couple of important strategies to gain wider legitimacy of its counter-narrative: (1) the document was prepared in collaboration with prominent madrassas, including Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabiyya, Tanzim-ul-Madaris Ahl-e-Sunnat, Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Salfiyyah, Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Shi'ah, and Rabitat-ul-Madaris; and (2) it has been working to gain the endorsement of prominent international Muslim clerics, such as the grand mufti of Egypt (Wasif, 2018). This initiative is relatively new comparing to earlier NGO programs evaluated by the author, therefore, it is too early to talk about its impact. The success of this fatwa will depend on its acceptance and application by federal and provincial governments through textbooks and new teaching pedagogies.

Conclusion

As argued in the paper, the approaches adopted by international donors largely demonstrate a typical case of enormous confusion on the issue of CVE and madrassas in Pakistan. The purpose of donor-driven efforts is not clear whether they are trying to take students out of madrassas or madrassas out of students. This clarity is needed to address the true challenges facing madrassas that have increased over time despite the growing stigmatization of these institutions in Pakistan. A key reality facing madrassa students is their socio-economic marginalization and stereotyping due to which they have very little or no interaction with other segments of the society. A comparative analysis in this research shows that both projects were relevant to their contexts but

[5] A ruling on a point of Islamic law issued by a qualified jurist. A jurist issuing fatwas is called a mufti and the act of issuing fatwas is called iftā'(Awass, 2019).

varied in terms of contents, delivery, and capacities of implementing organizations. In terms of the contents, it is noticeable that the Paiman project had well-designed peace educational material with a range of issues, such as the culture of peace, inter- and intra-personal conflicts, covered in the training. This is partly because Paiman is a well-established organization and has been implementing numerous such programs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, in the past. In contrast, it was the first time that Jamia Naeemia had engaged in a project on preventing violent extremism through education. What is however encouraging to see is that both organizations were not hesitant to focus on sensitive issues, such as sectarianism and sectarian violence, in Pakistan. Their style of training was also interactive compared to a teacher-center style of workshops organized by Jamia Naeemia. Both projects overall did not focus on sustainability which is the case of donor-driven projects in general in Pakistan. This was reflected in project design and delivery because the implementing NGOs did not ask the participants for any person actions plans or provided them with a required material, such as a teachers' resource guide, to ensure that they would be able to implement the knowledge and skills gained through these trainings. While both opted for training madrassa teachers, they also lacked scalability and sustainability. The donor practices were very divergent and lacked clarity of purpose and vision which also played a role in these projects not being comprehensive and sustainable. Consequently, there was very little contact between the implementation organizations and the participants of their projects, therefore, the research team could not interview many research participants. Based on the research, it is recommended that international donors should focus on long-term engagement with madrassas as that rapport would help build trust to achieve the desired structural and behavioral changes.

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ANNEXURES

Participant number	Organization	Location
P1	Staff, Paiman	Islamabad
P2	Trainer, Paiman project	Lahore
P3	Trainer, Paiman project	Lahore
P4	Participant, Paiman project	Lahore
P5	Representative, Jamia Naeemia	Lahore
P6	Trainer, Jamia Naeemia	Lahore
P7	Trainer, Jamia Naeemia	Lahore
P8	Participant, Jamia Naeemia	Lahore
P9	Participant, Jamia Naeemia	Lahore
P10	Representative, Oxfam Novib	Islamabad
P11	Representative, United States Institute of Peace	Islamabad

TABLE 1: List of research participants/interviewees.

Parameters	Paiman	Jamia Naeemia
Peace education contents		
Challenges of conflict and violence	x	x
Culture of peace	x	
Inter-personal peace	x	
Intra-personal peace	x	
Islamic concept of peace	x	x
Peaceful co-existence	x	x
Religious/interfaith harmony	x	x

Parameters	Paiman	Jamia Naeemia
Tolerance	x	
Sectarianism (Shia-Sunni conflict)	x	x
Peace education (practical skills)		
Critical thinking	x	
Conflict resolution		
Countering strategies		x
Personal action plans		
Support material for teachers		
Toolkit for teachers		
Ongoing peace education support		
Teachers' manual and student guide		
Collection of lectures		x
Methodology		
Indirect through teachers only	x	x
Direct with students		
With teachers & students		
Key project features		
Relevance	x	x
Trained teachers/trainers		x
Organization's capacity	x	
Seed funding for participants		
Sustainability	x	

TABLE 2: Comparative analysis of the selected projects

8

GANGS, CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION, AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM: EXPLORING THE CROSSOVER TO PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE

Carys Evans

Introduction

The terrorism threat in the UK remains substantial; a threat felt differently and to various extents across Europe and the rest of the world. In the United Kingdom, multiple programmes operate with the aim of preventing terrorism, often seeking to address the underlying causes – youth apathy, community division, isolation, racial, and economic inequalities – very often in schools and other settings where youth frequent. The following pages will explore how, through the identification of intersecting causal factors (especially, but not exclusively, in young people) counter extremism measures can extend to prevent other forms of serious violence, most notably gang violence and criminal exploitation. After an exploration of the significant literature on the topic, this paper will present an evaluative overview of a programme delivered by ConnectFutures and the St Giles Trust in the UK that seeks to tackle multiple forms of violence in young people, with a specific focus on extremist violence and gang related violence.[1]

Using the literature to provide evidence for intersection-based prevention work

ConnectFutures' desire to operate programmes that address and counter multiple forms of violence and exploitation is rooted in an evidence based approach, drawn from academic and policy literature, as well as insight directly from practitioners. It is not our desire to ignore the nuance that comes with prevent-

[1] ConnectFutures, the organisation that leads on this paper, is an organisation set up in 2003 with the aim of bringing different people together to discuss and overcome complex and difficult issues. The organisation is based in the UK but has worked for many years, both domestically and internationally, on projects to counter and prevent violent extremism and serious youth violence. The organisation develops projects and programmes tailored to the needs of communities and the people who make them up and has worked with over 48,000 young people and 6,000 adult learners.

ing violence, or to encourage practitioners and academics to treat extremist violence and gang related violence as one, because of course they are not. All violence has complex and difficult root causes with different (though often heart-breaking) consequences. Instead, we are seeking to acknowledge when there are intersections in the hope that we can do intensive and far reaching prevention work. The following pages will provide a thematic overview of the key arguments in terrorism and gang violence related literature that underpin the programmatic work ConnectFutures is doing in the prevention of violent extremism and youth criminal exploitation.

Understanding Root Causes

The academic study of terrorism and the study of gang and criminal exploitation is regularly used in the development of policy to counter both forms of serious violence. In examining the literature in relation to both topics, we see there are shared academic recommendations that encourage the analysis of the sociological, psychological and geographic conditions that contribute to causing both forms of violence.

Within the discipline of terrorism studies, we regularly see an encouragement by academics to understand the root causes of this form of violence (English, 2009). Whilst acknowledging the "awfulness of terrorist violence" (English, 2009, p. 28), scholars must seek knowledge surrounding what is regularly referred to as the "root causes" of terrorism with the desired outcome being further insight into how to prevent it. Frequently, we see these causes grouped into, sometimes unhelpfully general, themes like "psychological factors" or "structural factors." We see this approach mirrored in both policy and academic prose related to the prevention of gang related violence in the UK. The "Public Health Approach" to the prevention of knife crime and violence was adopted by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit in the mid-2000s and has seen a 50% reduction rate in the homicide rate (between 2008 and 2018) (UK Parliament, 2018). The Public Health Approach to serious violence and knife crime encourages, amongst other things, a clear and comprehensive investigation into the factors contributing to urban violence.

It seems that the Scottish case provides an example of the academic enthusiasm for addressing the causes of terrorist and criminal violence working successfully in practice. Upon further investigation, it is not only the suggested method of addressing root causes of gang and terrorist violence in prevention

work that are shared. The causes of both forms of violence very frequently intersect, offering an opportunity for those working in the prevention space.

Intersecting Vulnerabilities

Ross (1993) identified six "structural grievances" that contribute to an individual's engagement in terrorist or extremist violence: ethnic, racial, legal, religious, social, and economic. Some, including Leiter (2008), have claimed this list is incomprehensive, encouraging a more specific focus on societal issues like poverty, exploitation, and unemployment if we are to successfully counter extremist violence. Though caution is encouraged when discussing routes into extremist violence, the conversation usually returns to underlying factors, like the above, when discussing non-military violence prevention. Concurrently, there is much consensus amongst academics and practitioners that states gang and criminal violence is often rooted in factors related to institutional racism, economic disadvantage, and the formation of strong familial bonds (Simi & Bubolz, 2015). Here we see an overlap and intersection of many of the factors – or root causes – of both these forms of violence.

There is very little literature that identifies the common vulnerabilities leading to extremist and gang related violence, but it is a commonality acknowledged in practice, most notably by OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, a non-ministerial department of the UK government, responsible for the monitoring of all educational institutions). OFSTED claim that all children are vulnerable to all forms of criminal exploitation, including by extremist groups, with specific vulnerabilities contributing to a higher likelihood of targeted involvement, for example: special educational needs, economic disadvantages, social isolation or familial neglect (OFSTED 2018).

The, usually, political nature of proscribed terrorism in the UK is arguably one of the main differences between motivators into gang and extremist violence. In many definitions of terrorism, we see links to political grievance or a desire to undermine a perceived illegitimate governing power (Gurr, 1970; Wilkinson, 1976; Crenshaw, 2011). Political identity has a huge significance for many who engage in extremist violence, pointing us to the worth of identity theory in the study of both terrorism and criminal violence. Bubolz & Simi (2015) argue that people engage in gang and criminal violence due to unmet expectations of their life and identity, often rooted in structural factors linked

to political inequality. In order to rectify the perceived difference between where they are and where they should be, people turn to criminal violence for financial gain, physical safety as well as familial bond and the formation of a group identity. Bubolz & Simi's (2015) argument is useful in this context for two reasons. The first is it highlights the nuanced role political grievance plays in gang related criminality, highlighting another subtler connection between the two forms of violence discussed in this work. Though political grievance may not be a key motivator for the engagement in a criminal gang, political contexts that create the conditions of racial, economic, and social inequality have a direct impact on choices to engage in criminal activity. Both terrorism and gang related violence are political, whether overt or not. The second and most notable use for Bubolz & Simi's (2015) assertion is that it points to the very important issue of identity formation in both criminal gang and extremist group involvement. Identity can be manipulated by extremist and criminal groups in multiple ways.

The Role of Social Movement Theory

Group identity in gangs and extremist groups is paramount for their recruitment, operation and success. Della Porta's (2006) work on social movements claims that identity can evolve and change when an individual engages in collective action. Social movement theory is applied to terrorism and political violence in her work *Clandestine Political Violence*, where she makes the claim that individuals with a family member or friend already engaged in a violent extremist group are more likely to join themselves (Della Porta, 2013; Sageman, 2004). We see this to be the case regularly in the Far Right, identified by Busher (2015) in his work on the English Defence League, alongside cases of siblings radicalised to ISIS; most notably the three Zubair sisters who were radicalised together in 2015 travelling from the UK to Syria with their 9 children. When considering a significant "root cause" of engagement in violent extremism is social isolation, the role of familial-like bond makes sense and, in the same vein, can be applied directly to gang and criminal violence. Indeed, Bubolz & Simi (2015) claim one of the main reasons individuals struggle to remove themselves from gangs is the lack of alternative familial support systems outside of the group. The power of relationships in both extremist groups and gangs are significant when understanding the radicalisation process and thus the best means of preventing initial engagement.

Radicalisation and Recruitment

The process of radicalisation to terrorism is intricate and endlessly varied. Though some believe engagement in terrorism is more likely from individuals with mental health issues (Laquer, 2001), Silke (2004) has, through an analysis of quantitative data related to European terror attacks, indicated this is in no way universal and is, in fact, a dangerous assumption because it can undermine individual agency. It is important to acknowledge that many engage in both terrorism and gang related violence because they want to, as discussed, driven by dissatisfaction with their current state. When discussing youth engagement in these forms of violence, however, personal agency is harder to guarantee. In radicalisation to terrorist violence, it is argued by O'Neil & Alberts (2007) that terrorist organisations provide a mix of ideological and material incentives, tailored to the individual targeted by the terrorist group. Many practitioners rely on these findings to develop programme that undermines the exploitation processes of terrorist groups by dispelling positive myths and encouraging critical thinking skills in their young audiences. This approach is mirrored, once again, in practical guidance from UK children protection charity, the NSPCC. The organisation claims young people engage in gangs for a plethora of reasons, one of the most significant is the deliberate exploitation of individuals by gang elders to fulfil specific organisational needs (NSPCC, 2019).

Whilst this specific method of grooming and exploitation can be applied to both terrorist groups and gangs, there is an emerging argument in the literature that highlights how a criminal background makes individuals more vulnerable to terrorist grooming, indicating an even closer causal relationship between the two forms of violence. It is argued that the leap between extreme ideology and actual physical violence is too great to apply to all individuals who engage in terrorist violence (Crone, 2016). After collecting data between 2005 and 2015, Crone (2016) highlights how many of the terrorist perpetrators had a history of gang or criminal violence. Alongside this, we see a similar claim being made about individuals convicted on terrorism charges that highlights a history of inflicting gender based and domestic violence (Roberts, 2019). These arguments need development, but are significant and highlight the importance of developing programme to counter multiple forms of violence in the countering violent extremism space.

Gender crossovers

In both the study of gang related violence and terrorism, we see increasing attention paid to the role of gender. Literature on the topics spends time ascribing supportive roles to women and girls in gangs and terrorist groups, regularly commenting on how specific gender roles can support the clandestine aspects to terrorism and gang violence (Bloom, 2012; Firmin, 2009). There is also much debate surrounding the reasons women engage in these forms of serious violence, implying gendered assumptions; women's reasons are different to men's. One of the critiques levelled against this approach in terrorism studies tells us that narratives to explain female terrorist violence are created and circulated in many forms (through families, across the media and throughout history). These narratives most commonly go that women commit terrorism because they are protecting children or their community, that they are in some way damaged (perhaps sexually abused or have mental health issues) or that sexual and romantic relationships motivate engagement in terrorism (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). It is the post-structural feminist argument that these narratives exist to undermine political agency in women, which is important to consider when designing preventative programmes (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). With many of these narratives being applied to women and girls who engage in gang and criminal violence (often more adamantly than in cases of terrorism), it is important to acknowledge the crossover – supporting the development of gender inclusive preventative programmes.

SECTION TWO

Implementing programme: BRAVE (Building Resilience Against Violence and Extremism)

In response to findings in the literature, and supported by practitioner observation, ConnectFutures, in equal partnership with St Giles Trust, developed a programme that explores the intersections between gang and extremist violence. BRAVE (Building Resilience Against Violence and Extremism) is a 90-minute experiential learning course for youth ages 7-18. The focus of the session are the processes used by both gangs and extremist groups to engage and recruit people into their organisations, de-bunking stereotypes and harmful assumptions through storytelling, testimonial and appropriate knowledge sharing. The following paragraphs will explore how, through on-going evaluations, BRAVE is a programme that targets the intersections of violence to successfully build resilience against multiple forms of youth exploitation on a national scale.

Introduction to BRAVE

BRAVE is designed and delivered through a working partnership between The St Giles Trust and ConnectFutures. St Giles Trust are a UK based charity whose aim is to support individuals facing disadvantage to secure work, homes and tailored support. In the context of BRAVE, St Giles Trust's focus is gang prevention and gang exit work. Many St Giles Trust employees who engage in this field have lived gang or criminal experience. The 90-minute BRAVE programme runs in schools, education centres, pupil referral units and Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision across the UK. The overall aim of the project is to build young people's resilience to gang and extremist messaging through an exploration of online and offline recruitment and exploitation. These complex issues are explored in a youth friendly way through the use of experienced youth facilitators and practitioners with lived experience.

The sessions are delivered by two practitioners: one from St Giles Trust and one from ConnectFutures. Delivery is shared between practitioners equally, each leading on the respective area of expertise they hold. The St Giles Trust's approach focusses on dispelling positive myths and assumptions in relation to youth gang involvement, relying heavily on personal experience to provide

alternative, more accurate realities. ConnectFutures use video and case study to highlight extremist narratives, encouraging critical thinking to safeguarding against radicalisation to multiple and complex forms of extremism. BRAVE's independent review states the focus on specific cases and the realities faced by individuals who engaged in these forms of violence is what makes the programme most successful; it does not shy from difficult examples, even in areas most significantly impacted by these issues, but instead faces them head on using culturally competent voices and youth engagement techniques.

The assertions made in the following pages rely on the on-going findings of BRAVE evaluation processes, as well as short interviews with the BRAVE facilitators working with young people across the country. BRAVE's evaluation methodology is outcomes based, using pre and post questionnaires to gather data on participant learning, as well as employing qualitative testimonial gathering to enhance findings. Each educational institution that engages with the BRAVE programme is asked to complete a survey ahead of the programme that focusses on the needs of the students and staff within the institution. Questions surrounding their experiences with violence of all forms are asked, focussing specifically on the impact of violence on an individual student and contextual level – a micro and macro approach to understanding violence. Within a week of programme completion, professionals in the school are required to complete an evaluative questionnaire. The questions in this are both quantitative and qualitative; how many students engaged, how long did they engage for, how many times has the programme been discussed in school since? Equally, the questionnaire asks for student and staff testimonial, encouraging individuals to consider what they learnt, how they were challenged and in what way do they think differently as a result of BRAVE. The BRAVE project has been independently reviewed by The Centre for Trust, Peace and Reconciliation at Coventry University, whilst internal evaluation by ConnectFutures and St Giles Trust is on-going.

The importance of context: environments and safeguarding

UK gang violence is highly reported across national print and online media, regularly discussed on social media and in the classroom. Gang related violence and knife crime is reportedly increasing across the country, with a 71% increase between 2012-13 and 2017-18 (NSPCC, 2019). ConnectFutures has found that engaging young people in issues related to extremism has been successful when accompanied by a topic familiar to the young audience. BRAVE

facilitators, in interviews ahead of this evaluation, call this the "hook." By exposing young people to case studies, propaganda, and incidents of violent extremist activity alongside cases of gang violence that perhaps are already known, the issue becomes more accessible. The facilitators interviewed claimed that discussing both forms of violence together and thematically enhanced understandings of both. Here is an example of how the BRAVE programme seeks to understand local and cultural context to enhance its impact.

An exploration of contextual factors surrounding young people who engage in the BRAVE programme draws on contextual safeguarding theory, pioneered by Dr. Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire, UK in 2015. The contextual safeguarding model contributes to the landscape of child protection by calling on practitioners to consider the spaces and places young people might experience extra-familial harm (Firmin, 2018). Prevention projects that aim to stop young people engaging in extremist violence often refer to safeguarding practices, negotiating with Designated Safeguarding Leads and UK Prevent Education Officers. BRAVE incorporates the contextual safeguarding approach by engaging young people in conversations centred on the spaces and places, both radicalisation and criminal exploitation can happen, for example: the online space, public owned spaces, private restaurants, and within peer groups.

Understanding harmful relationships – The grooming line

The theory underpinning BRAVE is reflected in the literature; all children and young people are vulnerable to both gang and terrorist exploitation that is often deliberate and targeted. It is also rooted in the explicit desire of schools, colleges, and other educational establishments to meet UK Department of Education guidance that states:

> Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' and childcare providers' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences. (Prevent Duty, 2015, p. 5)

The programme attempts to break down these complex concepts into manageable and memorable information for young people through a description,

often through role-play, of the grooming line. The grooming line is a concept, traditionally used by youth practitioners, to understand the stages of child exploitation. It is rooted in an approach related to relationship development and subsequent abuse. BRAVE highlights how the grooming line can happen, relating the process directly to the young people in the room and then applying the concept to cases of individuals radicalised to violence and later, individuals who joined gangs. In BRAVE's independent evaluation process, conducted by an independent consultation company and a UK university it was found that this method was relatable, attention grabbing, and shocking, resulting in an emotional response from participants. In highlighting the deliberate exploitation of young people by gangs and extremist groups, BRAVE is instilling two important learnings in its young participants. The first is the need to question the relationships critically and the second is the understanding that this process of exploitation is very often deliberate. In interviews with BRAVE facilitators, it was reported this second observation was often the most shocking to audiences.

Cultural Competency and Youth Engagement

Both ConnectFutures and the St Giles Trust use facilitators with what one teacher called "cultural competency." Facilitators are selected based on their understanding of youth culture and language because they are best able to engage with the youth participants. All ConnectFutures' facilitators have experience working with young people in community or education settings, whilst each St Giles Trust facilitator has highly developed presentation skills and lived experience of engaging in criminal activity. During BRAVE, the St Giles Trust facilitator shares their testimonial; a story of how the first engaged with gang violence and then subsequently disengaged. Evaluation of the programme highlights the power this storytelling has on its audience. Testimonial is especially impactful when related back to the learning the programme has already covered – by sharing stories of their vulnerabilities, how they were exploited and contributed to the choices made, allows for young people to understand the impact of the grooming line and the real-world consequences of criminal activity – be that extremist or gang related.

Conclusion

The BRAVE programme uses the intersections highlighted in the literature review, not only to counter multiple forms of criminal violence and exploitation, but to deepen young people's understanding of how relationships, news media, and online communications can be easily manipulated to alter their behaviour. The programme confronts difficult issues head on, with confident facilitators modelling how respectful and critical conversation in relation to the topics can take place. Rooted in de-bunking the positive stereotypes associated with both forms of violence here discussed, BRAVE is continuing to run with positive feedback from young people and education authorities. It is a working example of how the intersections between multiple forms of violence can be explored in the prevention of both forms.

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9

ON THE ROLE OF SENSATION-SEEKING IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE

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Introduction

What inspires humans to use violence and sacrifice their lives for a cause? What are the psychological forces that contribute to people wanting to join violent groups? More than ever, there is an urgency to find rigorous answers to these questions in order to reduce the ability of violent groups to recruit new members in terrorist organizations.

In the last decades, the psychological analysis of violent radicalization has been carried out from multiple perspectives. However, few theories have thus far been able to integrate the richness of these perspectives into a unified model to take into account the complexity of this phenomenon. In recent years, a social-psychological theory has emerged that connects the nodes: The *Significance Quest Theory* (SQT) (Kruglanski, Bélanger, & Gunaratna, 2019; Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, et al., 2009; Kruglanski, Gelfand, Bélanger, et al., 2014). This theory proposes that the desire to feel meaningful is a fundamental human need (see also Frankl, 1959). Therefore, when people are deprived of significance, they are strongly motivated to initiate actions that allow them to restore a sense of purpose. And joining violent groups is often a vehicle to achieve this goal.

Several studies have found empirical support for this theory and demonstrated its relevance to the study of violent extremism, thereby shedding light on the psychological mechanisms involved in the search for significance. For instance, Lyons-Padilla and colleagues (2015) found evidence that organizations, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), attract vulnerable young people who lack personal significance by offering membership, status, and recognition to

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those who support the cause. Likewise, Dugas and colleagues (2016) showed that individuals are motivated to engage in costly self-sacrifices for a cause in order to achieve personal significance. As predicted by the theory, this phenomenon occurs especially after experiencing a loss of significance. Indeed, across different experiments and cultural samples, these researchers found that decreased personal significance (e.g. due to social rejection, poor performance in a test) was associated with greater willingness to self-sacrifice for a cause.

The search for personal significance also predicts other extreme forms of behavior, such as support for political violence. In a sample of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Bélanger (2013) showed that there is a relationship between terrorists' reported support for armed struggle and feeling of insignificance (i.e. small, worthless, and hopeless). Of note, this relationship was mediated by terrorists' willingness to self-sacrifice for their cause, which suggests that loss of significance predisposes individuals to support the ideology of a group and even risk their lives for it.

Connecting the Search for Meaning with Violent Extremism: The Role of the Search for Sensations

The SQT provides a framework to examine scientifically a hypothesis that has been dormant for years: the role of sensation-seeking in political violence. For decades, terrorism experts and government agencies have argued that one of the main attractions of terrorism might be the possibility of participating in an e*xciting* social movement (Atran, 2014; Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2015; Victoroff, 2005).

Decades of research have shown that sensation-seeking is a biopsychosocial construct that refers to "the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience" (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 27). It is considered a personality trait, but there is also evidence for situational variations (Gamble & Walker, 2016; Parmak et al., 2012). Sensation-seeking is positively related to a variety of high-risk activities, such as criminal behavior, youth crime, reckless driving, speeding, using illegal drugs, engaging in risky sports, as well as risky sexual behavior (e.g. Arnett, 1998; Horvath & Zuckerman, 1993; Taubman-Ben-Ari et al., 2016). The idea that sensation-seeking is a major driving factor for political violence is consistent with the observation that in recent years a huge number of radicalized youth (more than 30,000 according to UN's estimates) have traveled abroad to join the ranks of ISIS (Perliger & Milton, 2016). Likewise, retrospective accounts of individuals who have joined violent armed groups have often shown that the search for adventure was a primary motive for them joining radical groups (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Although the relationship between violent extremism and sensation-seeking has existed for many years, the support for this proposition has thus far been anecdotal and suffered from a lack of careful empirical examination.

In our research (Schumpe et al., 2018), we hypothesized that people who seek significance would be more opened to innovative, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions. Within the framework of the SQT, the search for significance (caused by a loss of meaning, humiliation, or a personal crisis) motivates people to seek novel, stimulating, or risky experiences (e.g. Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2004). Therefore, sensation-seeking –induced through the search for significance– could facilitate people's adherence to exciting new beliefs that include (but are not limited to) fighting for a political cause and even risking their own life for it. We tested these ideas in seven empirical studies, which we describe next, followed by a discussion on the CVE implications of this research for government agencies and policy makers.

Summary of Studies

Our research examined the role of sensation-seeking in political violence by integrating this construct in the framework of SQT (Schumpe et al., 2018). Expanding previous works on extremism (Bélanger, 2013; Dugas et al., 2016), Study 1 was conducted in Spain and found that the effect of search for significance on self-sacrifice and support for political violence was mediated by sensation-seeking. Study 2 replicated Study 1 using a longitudinal design. In a sample of people from Spain's general population, we demonstrated that the search for significance is associated with sensation-seeking, which in turn prospectively predicts support for political violence three months later. Studies 3 and 4 were conducted online with people from the USA. We conceptually replicated Studies 1 and 2 using different experimental manipulations of meaning in life, which impacted participants' level of sensation-seeking and support for political violence. Specifically, Study 3 asked participants to write about their legacies (i.e. something they will pass on to make a meaningful, lasting and energizing contribution to humanity). This simple manipulation reduced search for meaning, which subsequently reduced sensation-seeking and support for political violence. In contrast, Study 4 aimed to increase par-

ticipants' search for meaning by asking them to recall and write about a time when they were looking to find their life's purpose. Likewise, this manipulation confirmed the hypothesized relationship between variables. Studies 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, and 7 were conducted online with animal rights activists. In Studies 5a and 5b, we tested our hypothesis by asking participants to evaluate a violent activist group that tracks down and threatens researchers who use animals in their research. These studies show that our model transfers to a real-world context. Studies 6a and 6b sought to explore the underlying psychological mechanism related to the findings of Study 5. In line with our expectations, we found that the positive evaluation of the activist group by those with high levels of sensation-seeking was explained by the extent to which they believe the violent activist group is exciting.

After identifying that sensation-seeking is a predictor of extreme behavior, and understanding that perceiving violence as exciting is what attracts sensation-seekers to these groups, we tested an intervention to reduce activists' support for political violence. We set out to re-channel their desire for exciting experiences towards a peaceful objective. Specifically, in Study 7, we presented animal rights activists with an alternative peaceful activist group that was either exciting or unexciting. The exciting group was described as protesting with plays and music, whereas the unexciting group engaged in sit-downs and pray-ins. Results indicated that activists high in sensation-seeking preferred the former and as a result became less supportive of violence. Taken together, our findings indicate that sensation-seeking is a driving factor for people's interest in political violence, but it can also be redirected towards exciting peaceful groups.

Theoretical Implications

The Significance Quest Theory

One major contribution of this work consists of providing a fuller account of how the search for meaning unfolds. People who lack meaning in their lives are looking for novel ideas and stimulation in an attempt to fill their personal void. Sensation-seeking plays an important role in this process. Our results indicate that when people look for meaning, they become sensation-seekers. They also become increasingly attracted to extreme behaviors and ideologies including self-sacrifice and violence. Thus, they are at risk of joining groups that promise to fulfil this search for thrill and adventure.

However, the need for sensation does not necessarily turn people toward violent belief systems. In fact, there is evidence that people high in sensation-seeking are also more likely to become fire-fighters or work in rescues units (Gomà-i-Freixanet et al., 1988; Montag & Birenbaum, 1986). Thus, it seems important to find alternative (peaceful) sources of excitement to satisfy people's need for sensation and novelty. As shown in Study 7, support for violence in activists high in sensation-seeking can be reduced if they are presented with a peaceful, but exciting, alternative activism group. Here, violence is no longer the only means available to experience stimulating sensations, and therefore, it loses its appeal. Thus, our findings demonstrate that sensation-seeking is not necessarily associated with violence; it can be re-channeled towards peaceful social movements.

Sensation-Seeking Theory

The present research empirically demonstrates the link between sensation-seeking and political violence. Whereas the previous scientific literature placed a lot of emphasis on the relationship between sensation-seeking and more impulsive forms of violent behavior, here we show that sensation-seeking is also related to support for violent ideologies. In other words, sensation-seeking seems not only related to reactive, but also proactive (i.e. planned) forms of aggressive behaviors. Reactive and proactive forms of aggression (e.g., Dodge & Coie, 1987) work differently: while reactive aggression is often an impulsive and emotional reaction to provocation, proactive aggression is deliberate and premeditated.

Another contribution of this work is demonstrating that sensation-seeking is a construct subject to situational influences. Indeed, although the search for sensation gradually changes throughout life, it is generally understood as a biologically stable personality trait (Zuckerman, 1974). The present research enriches our understanding of sensation-seeking by providing evidence that there are situational fluctuations. In fact, sensation-seeking can be experimentally manipulated under controlled laboratory conditions (e.g. Gamble & Walker, 2016) and it also adapts to situational demands such as combat deployment (Parmak et al., 2012), or change as a result of intervention programs (e.g. Burnette et al., 2004). Thus, our research corroborates that sensation-seeking is not simply an impulse dictated by biological imperatives.

Practical Implications

The findings of this research have important practical implications for organizations working to prevent and counter violent extremism. In the following, we outline some recommendations.

Detecting Extremism

Our findings imply that practitioners should pay attention to people who are searching for significance and who show a propensity for novel and intense experiences. This implies paying increased attention to (1) individuals in situations that are likely associated with experiencing a loss of meaning (humiliation, discrimination, alienation); and (2) individuals who tend to be involved in behaviors that involve risks (e.g., extreme sports, delinquency, drug use), an indicator associated with sensation-seeking. These indicators can inform effective and timely prevention initiatives with a focus on groups that might be at risk.

Counter Messaging Strategies

Despite the prevalent use of communication strategies aiming to influence the "hearts and minds" of potential recruits, data supporting the effectiveness of these initiatives is lacking. Simply imploring viewers not to join violent groups, to "say no to violence," will likely create *psychological reactance* (Brehm, 1966), which increases the likelihood of joining a violent group. Our research suggests that it is essential to include peaceful and stimulating alternatives to excite sensation-seekers for prosocial (vs. violent) political causes.

Countering Extremism

Over the years, several initiatives have been proposed to separate people from violent groups (e.g., mentoring, creative arts, professional training, or sports). Our findings clearly suggest that interventions to counter violent extremism should be geared towards: (1) making people feel meaningful and significant; (2) redirecting their search for adventure towards exciting peaceful causes. However, more research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of such particular programs.

Conclusion

Our research helps to address some of the most pressing questions around political violence: Who joins violent groups, why, and how to prevent this from happening. In a nutshell, individuals searching for thrill and adventure are at risk of joining violent groups and accepting their violent ideologies. Violence is not attractive per se, but rather the excitement that is associated with it. Individuals who experience a loss of significance and search for meaning in life are especially likely to develop an attraction to violent groups. Thus, our results not only highlight relevant target groups for preventive efforts but also inform counter messaging strategies. Persuasive communication aimed at steering people away from violence and violent groups must include an exciting peaceful alternative to satisfy the need for sensation. Thus, governments, policy makers, and social workers are well advised to create and advertise peaceful exciting groups and activities that can satisfy sensation-seeking.

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10

MOVING BEYOND ISLAMIST EXTREMISM: COUNTER-NARRATIVE RESPONSES TO THE RADICAL RIGHT

William Allchorn

Over the past decade and a half, counter-narratives - defined as '[messages] that…[demystify,] deconstruct or delegitimise extremist narratives' (Tuck and Silverman 2016, p.65) - have become a key part of western efforts to combat terrorism. Placed at the softer end of counter-terrorism (CT) tactics, the use of strategic communications in order to disrupt organisations committed to violent extremist causes has come to occupy the 'upstream' space of preventative measures available to Governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and civil society actors wishing to counter political violence at the ideational level. This has become especially important to terrorist organisations as they have become more adept at using social media in order to radicalise, recruit, and disseminate their messages – thereby circumventing traditional forms of media and face-to-face encounters in order to spread and recruit others to their so-called 'propaganda of the deed.' Our current moment therefore calls for a 'war of words and ideas' as much as counter terror actions on the ground in order to combat the threat of radical right[1] extremist violence.

When compared with counter-narrative texts in general, however, little research has been devoted to the effectiveness of counter-narratives as part of CT efforts to stop radical right-wing terrorism. This is part of a wider lacuna within terrorism studies of research into radical right extremism (Schuurman, 2019) despite the increasing prevalence of radical right political violence in the USA (Haltiwanger, August 2019), Europe (Deutsche Welle, 2019) and Australasia (Hollingsworth, 2019). This research essay addresses this lacuna. Drawing

[1] Here 'radical right extremism' is used to describe a broad plethora of cognate paramilitary groups, groupuscules and lone-actor terrorists that could be considered as harbouring violent nativist, authoritarian and (sometimes) populist policy ideas (Mudde 2007). These include individuals and groups who actively 'espouse violence' and 'seek the overthrow of liberal democracy' entirely (Eatwell 2003: 14) rather than simply 'a critique of the constitutional order without any anti-democratic behaviour or intention' (Carter 2005: 22). These are historically referred to as the extreme right rather than the radical right, and range from lone-actor terrorists through to non-violent anti-Islam groups and finally to a range of formally constituted neo-fascist and neo-Nazi political parties that inspire terrorist action.

on three case studies and a review of recent texts as part of a new radical right counter-narrative project between the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) and Hedayah,[2] it examines what lessons can be learnt from recent radical right counter-narrative campaigns. It argues that effective counter-narrative campaigns need to move beyond traditional marketing techniques in order to penetrate the silos of extremist organisations themselves (Dafnos, 2014). Using slick, professional, and creative methodologies as well as alternative narratives, it will be argued that counter speech campaigns can achieve significant reach – as long as practitioners and NGOs are aware of the type of 'jujitsu politics' that they are entering into (McCauley, 2006).[3]

Background: Radical Right Counter-Narratives within a Broader CT Strategy

Defined broadly, CT relates to the possible policy options that can be used when responding to acts of political violence, and – as alluded to above - takes on both harder and softer hues. While the ends of both hard and soft strategies are similar (i.e. to save lives through eradication of terrorist groups and their propaganda), the methods for achieving this are distinct and separate. For example, the former refers to foreign and domestic policies and actions that seek to directly tackle terrorist groups and actors downstream, whilst the latter refers to a suite of more preventative educational and humanitarian interventions designed to inure and inoculate citizens (and potential sympathisers) from engaging in terrorist activities in the first place.

[2] This is a year-long project between CARR and Hedayah that is funded by the EU STRIVE programme. It is designed to create one of the first comprehensive online toolkit for practitioners and civil society engaged radical right extremist counter-narrative campaigns. It uses online research to map narratives in nine countries and regions (UK, US, Canada, Germany, Ukraine, Balkans, New Zealand, Australia and Scandinavia), proposes counter-narratives for these countries and regions, and advises on how to conduct such campaigns in an effective manner.

[3] Here, 'Jujitsu Politics' is used to describe terrorist and violent extremist's aims to elicit an overreaction that mobilizes new sympathy and support for themselves. We can see this in the 'dislike raids' highlighted in the #MoreThanRefugee campaign below, and can be bracketed alongside attempts to hi-jack counter-narrative campaigns.

FIGURE 1 Radical Right Counter-Narratives within a Broader CT Strategy
Note: *Adapted from Aly et al 2015*

As highlighted in Figure 1, here we can see that CT does not only operate at the hard end of responses – i.e. direct responses to terrorists and terrorist plotters themselves – but that states might also want to give alternatives to those considering terroristic violence. This latter approach taps into what terrorism scholar Ami Pedahzur (2004) calls an immunised approach to democracy. Here, the democratic system frees itself from the 'virus' of terrorism through educational and legal initiatives. In a pincer-light movement, this includes actions from below, that combat the binary, reactionary and reductive nature of terrorist ideologies, and legal initiatives from above, that proscribe, limit and de-legitimise action within such extremist organisations. We can see counter-narratives – or '[messages] that…[demystify] deconstruct or delegitimise extremist narratives' (Tuck and Silverman 2016, p.65) – playing a key role in countering radical right extremism, challenging tropes and messages that might be disseminated by violent extremist organisations.[4]
Added to this, we can see these approaches being targeted at three different

[4] As noted above, this is one of many ways to counter violent extremism. For a review of other approaches, see: Aly, A., Balbi, A-M. & Jacques, C. (2015) 'Rethinking countering violent extremism: implementing the role of civil society.' *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism 10*(1): 3-13, DOI: 10.1080/18335330.2015.1028772.

levels. One for those who are already members (top third), those attracted to such groups (middle third), and those who do not have any interest at all (bottom third). This more targeted approach is key in allocating resources and interventions correctly and successfully – with preventative efforts hitting the lowest common denominator at the bottom third of the pyramid and more targeted counter measures hitting those either sympathetic or active members at the top. Compared to other CT tactics, we can see how counter-narratives straddle both preventative and counter terror measures – with tailored and differentiated messages being aimed at a broader cross-section of society but also those who might be sympathetic to the key ideological pillars of far-right extremist organisations themselves (e.g. nativism, authoritarianism, and populism). Added to this, we can also see alternative narratives playing a role in 'off ramping' or diverting the latter, undercutting extremist narratives through providing a positive alternative vision of mainstream politics and society.

Literature Review: Radical Right Counter-Narratives as Part of Counter-Narrative Research

When compared with counter-narrative texts in general (see Figures 2 and 3 below), little research has been devoted to radical right counter-narratives. Whilst the majority of articles and studies are either agnostic or highly focused on Islamist forms of extremism, several recent articles and one Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) meeting note have sought to address this lacuna (Dafnos 2014; Ebner 2019; Poole et al 2019; RAN May 2019) – evaluating head on the utility of strategic communications campaigns directed at countering radical right mobilisations, both in the online and offline space.

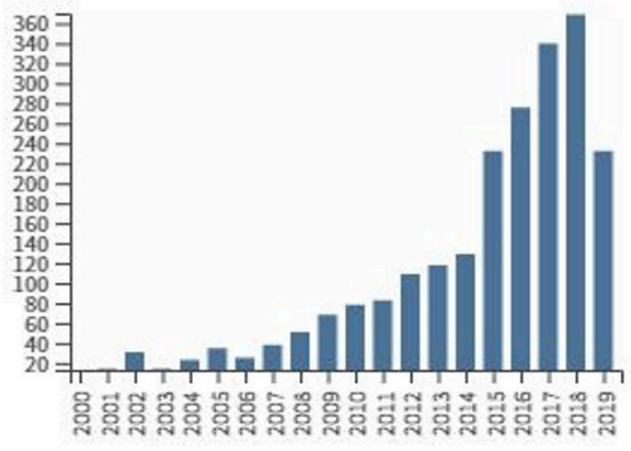

FIGURE 2 Total Publications Per Year on the Subject of 'Counter-Narratives', 1990-2019.
Source: *Web of Science.*

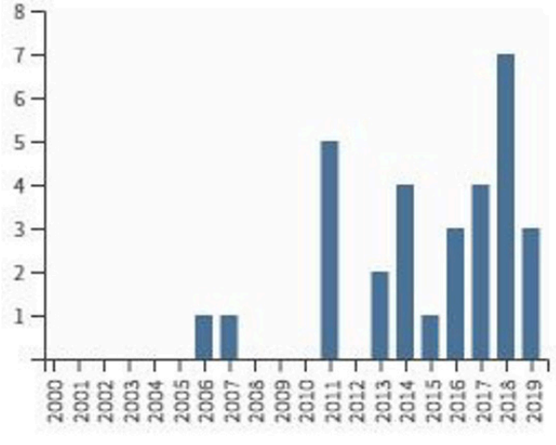

FIGURE 3 Total Publications Per Year on the Subject of 'Radical right Counter-Narratives,' 1990-2019.
Source: *Web of Science.*

Campaign 1: EXIT-Deutschland Trojan Horse T-Shirt Campaign (August 2011)

One of the first seminal studies to investigate systematically the impact of such campaigns on radical right extremist milieus is Andreas Dafnos' (2014) article in EXIT-Germany's own research journal, EXIT-Deutschland. Here, Dafnos focuses on a 2011 campaign by EXIT-Germany in collaboration with a Hamburg-based advertisement agency, Grabarz and Partner, who manufactured and distributed 250 T-shirts with skull and crossbones symbols reading the slogan: 'Hardcore Rebels - National and Free' (See Figure 4). These were given out to attendees at a rock festival in the Eastern Germany town of Gera and, once washed, revealed the message: "if your T-shirt can do it, so can you - we can help you to get free of right-wing extremism. EXIT-Germany." Nicknamed the Trojan Horse T-shirt campaign, the initiative became widely reported, with over 300 news outlets reporting the story worldwide and leading to free publicity equivalent of approximately €500,000 (half a million) (Dafnos 2014: 175).

FIGURE 4 EXIT-Germany Trojan Horse T-Shirt Campaign

Most importantly, the campaign demonstrated key lessons for radical right counter-narrative success. According to Bernd Wagner, co-founder of EXIT-Germany, the first was the simple, concise but powerful nature of the medium used. As noted by Fisher (1987) in Dafnos' article, the Trojan T-shirt message had both high narrative coherence and fidelity – resonating with a set of macro-narratives propagated by the extremist movement it was targeting and the personal, micro-narratives of individual activists therein. As noted by Dafnos (2014), the campaign was also smart, innovative, and creative. It stepped outside of the traditional bounds of poster advertising campaigns and subverted the control of gate-keepers within a particular extremist milieu, thereby keeping the campaign and the effects of the campaign in the news and within extremist circles long after the intervention had actually happened (p.171). Finally, and as argued by Dafnos (2014), the Trojan T-Shirt initiative also cleverly straddled the line between being both an alternative and counter-narrative campaign, planting a seed of doubt about the authority of the movement's leadership whilst also offering an alternative way of life for those involved at a grass-roots level (pp. 176-77).

Campaign 2: CAPE's 'Exit White Power' Project (2013-2015)

Another seminal study that has analysed and tracked recent, successful counter-narrative campaigns, this time in the online space, was a 2017 article by Stevie Voogt in the Journal Policing, Intelligence, and Counter Terrorism. This covered an Australian campaign by the NGO Community Action for Preventing Extremism (CAPE) launched in 2012 by a CVE NGO All Together Now. It aimed at debunking far-right extremist ideology and associated misinformation campaigns through its exitwhitepower.com website, with a subsequent Facebook forum established ('White Power? Discussion Page') for those also attracted to radical right movements. According to Voogt (2017), the number of Australians engaging with CAPE's website and forum 'significantly exceeded' the numbers originally anticipated by the organisation – with 22,000 unique views of its website between 2013-2015 and 2000 'likes' of its Facebook page in the first year alone (p.39). Moreover, of the (small) number of users who filled out evaluation questionnaires linked to main website, the majority claimed yet to be involved in a white supremacist group because of the intervention and for a subset already active, around half have reassessed their involvement with the extremist movements as a result of the intervention.

Looking beyond the evaluation questionnaires, one of the key innovations and successes noted by Voogt (2017) of the CAPE initiative was the tailored nature of the online discussions and the openness of CAPE to incorporate feedback from police, academics and former far-right extremists. For example, CAPE volunteers were able to use the Facebook page to post questions relating to radical right involvement (such as 'Do you share your opinions about white nationalism with your friends and family? Do you get a hard time for what you

believe?'). They were also able to differentiate responses for users using limited vocabulary versus those who link their extremist beliefs to more intellectual arguments about race, migration, and multiculturalism (Ibid: 38). Added to this, the addition of the online forum came in direct response to feedback given to the practitioners at a Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) meeting (ibid). This is obviously cruder than polling a wider pool of users but shows the importance of professional feedback and tailoring in the ongoing development of online counter-narrative projects.

Campaign 3: #StopIslam Twitter Campaign and Counter Campaign (2016)

Another radical right counter-narrative campaign that took on a more online and civil society dimension was the 2016 #StopIslam social media counter protests. As noted by Elizabeth Poole, Eva Giraud and Ed de Quincey at Keele University in their recent (2019) Online Library of the Humanities article, the #StopIslam hashtag started as a forum for spreading racialized hate speech on Twitter in response to the March 2016 terror attacks in Brussels – with 412,353 tweets (including both posts and retweets) using the hashtag in the 24 hours after the attack (p.2). It was then, however, 'hijacked' by counter speech campaigners to subvert and challenge the hashtag's original anti-Muslim message – gaining significant traction as a way of defending Muslims and Islam in the days after.

Analysing data associated with the #StopIslam hashtag, Poole et al (2019) found that the key characteristics of the counter-narratives were the use of infographics, URLs and memes to undermine the dominant racialized narrative perpetrated by right-wing extremist groups, using screengrabs of text from the Qu'ran to defend the peacefulness of Islam as well as text from articles comparing the US terrorist death toll by right-wing extremists versus Jihadists since 9/11 (See Figure 6) (p.23). Moreover, the top-shared tweet of the 2016 #Stop Islam twitter campaign and counter campaign came from counter-narrative side, with a top-shared tweet defending Islam being retweeted 6,643 times versus the top tweet attacking Islam being shared 1,500 times (ibid). Geographically, counter-narratives were shared mostly by tweeters in the UK (74% of the UK sample) and the MENA regions (86%).

Away from the statistics, a number of lessons, as noted by Poole et al (2019), can clearly be drawn from this more ad-hoc and voluntaristic grassroots radical right counter-narrative campaign. The first is the effectiveness of such

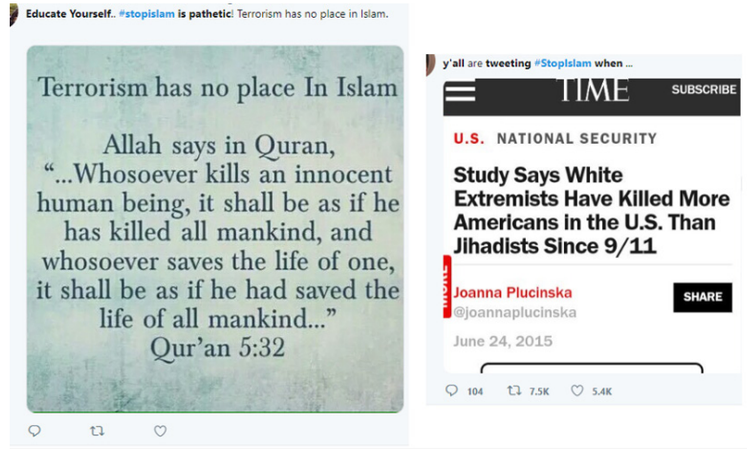

FIGURE 5 Examples of #StopIslam 2016 Counter Speech Tweets

campaigns in generating further free publicity. For example, 22 of the top 100 Twitter accounts disseminating information about the hashtag were notable and more established media organisations (p.26). Moreover, 64% of these institutions reported on the counter-narrative. According to Poole et al (2019), this adds further weight to the argument that the hashtag was successfully appropriated by a counter-movement in order to "gain visibility for anti-racist, inclusionary discourse" (ibid).

The second, in contrast, is the longevity of such spontaneous counter speech protests. While digital media platforms are useful in galvanising and creating the mass groundswell needed, Poole et al (2019) note the lack of cohesiveness and co-ordination of such campaigns in limiting their long-term effectiveness. A nodal analysis of information sharing networks (see Figure 6), for example, found that right-wing extremist activist networks were more tightly integrated and better established when compared to the #StopIslam counter publics – meaning that such movements were better at outlasting individual waves of activism using the #StopIslam hashtag. For example, there was little counter speech re-mobilisation in the face of online attacks on Islam following the 2017 terror attacks in Manchester and London (Poole et al 2019: 25). This leaves space for better co-ordination at the activist level and more organised attempts by NGOs and CT officials.

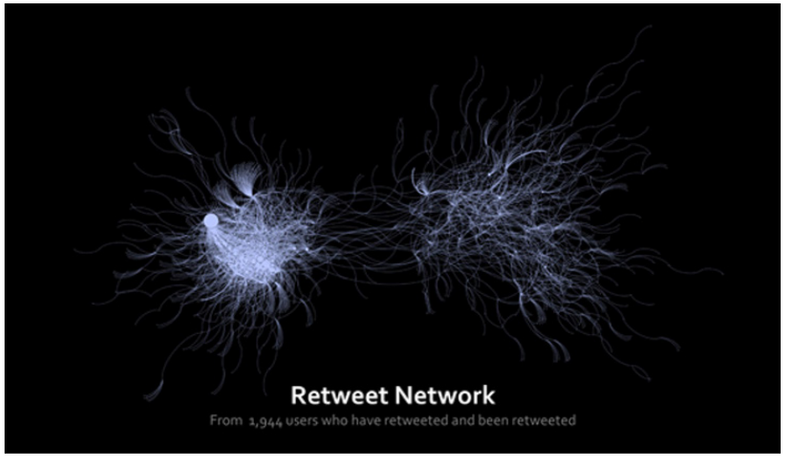

FIGURE 6 #StopIslam 2016 Retweet Networks
Note: *L: Right-Wing Extremist Twitter Network, R: Counter Speech Twitter Network.*

Recommendations I: Mapping the Radical Right's Online Eco-System

Another recent study of note to focus on the development of radical right counter-narrative approaches in the online space is ISD researcher Julia Ebner's recent (2019) contribution to Maik Fielitz and Nick Thurston's edited collection on 'Post-Digital Cultures of the Radical right.' In Ebner's chapter, she conceptualises present day radical right online activism as taking on three discrete but also interlinked functions that are important when thinking about online radical right counter-narrative campaigns (p.172). The first is to recruit and mobilise their own activists using messaging boards, online forums, and vlogs (such as Reddit, YouTube, and 8Chan). The second is to radicalise new followers and to co-ordinate 'influence' and 'intimidation' campaigns through encrypted messaging apps (such as Telegram, WhatsApp, and Discord). Lastly, the third is to actively mainstream their messages through the manipulation of social media and the comments sections of online news sites. In order to respond to this, Ebner recommends that practitioners need to get better at adopting an eco-systems mind-set when countering radical right messages in the online space – tracing and tracking how radical right content is moved and co-ordinated between different platforms and how it can be manipulated and massaged for different purposes (p.176).

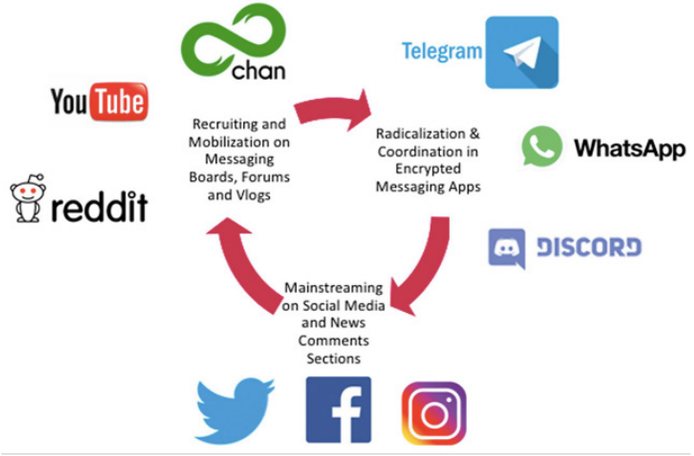

FIGURE 7 Ebner's (2019) Visualisation of Far-Right Online Influence Eco-systems

Another recommendation that Ebner gives, echoing Voogt's (2017) suggestion above, is that state and non-state actors need firstly to improve their ability to tailor counter messaging content to different audiences and secondly to be cognisant of the "swarm nature of radical right activism in the online space" (Ganesh 2018). Giving the below example of the June 2017 #MoreThanARefugee counter-narrative campaign, Ebner demonstrates how a "dislike raid" was formed by radical right communities on 4chan and Reddit that helped skew the reception of a counter-narrative video in a negative direction – adding 450,000 dislikes in an ad-hoc and surreptitious manner shortly after posting. According to Ebner, their reframing and mockery of the original message allowed them to spread their campaign on Twitter, where they were able to recruit more moderate users (p.177). This, therefore, provides a cautionary tale of a radical right counter-narrative campaign 'gone bad,' demonstrating the importance of 'opposition research' into organised efforts by radical right actors to subvert online counter-narrative campaigns.

Lastly, and ending on a note of co-operation, Ebner calls for the need for the creation of a global multi-agent coalition in the digital space to counter radical right content and messaging (p.177). This would involve researchers, policymakers, the private sector, and civil society working together to develop counter-narrative interventions that are dynamic, innovative, and bold, taking

proactive efforts that use out-of-the-box techniques in order to develop bold and fresh counter campaigns (p.179). Since June 2017, such innovative and collaborative efforts can already be seen under the industry-led initiative of the Global Internet Forum for Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), bringing together tech platforms, NGOs, academic experts, and governments to share knowledge, information, and best practices around tackling extremism in the online space (GIFCT Website 2019).

Recommendations II: Mapping the Radical Right's Core Narratives

A final piece of collaborative research, which has recently entered the cannon of studies on radical right counter-narratives, is a recent May 2019 Ex Post note by the EU's own RAN. Authored by Nikki Sterkenburg, Quinta Smit and Marije Meines, the results of this particular expert workshop identify the below five radical right extremist narratives that are particularly effective when such extremist organisations recruit potential participants (see table 1). In particular (and in resonance with Ebner's 2019 recommendations), the report suggests that counter-narrative campaigns need to use the same platforms as those used by radical groups (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Telegram). Moreover, it suggested that it is wise to use differentiated and tailored messages (such as viral memes of animals and other 'clickbait') in order to recruit a large and younger audience — just as radical and extremist groups tend to do (p. 7). Finally, it recommends that radical right messages can be most effectively countered by using counter messages that: 1) acknowledge (but do not repeat or legitimise narratives attached to) grievances, 2) educate citizens to think in a different way to extremist, populist or conspiracist interpretations of reality, and 3) highlight the risks and consequences of pursuing a violent path for an individual.

CURRENT NARRATIVE	POSSIBLE FUTURE NARRATIVE	ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE
1. Struggle for identity (e.g. national identities are under threat)	Failure of Radical right Extremist parties, decline in belief in political solutions.	Focus on justified grievances or understandable fears, and highlight the consequences of pursuing a violent path
2. Masculinity (e.g. societies are under threat because men cannot live 'according to their nature')	Feminists and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) activists are considered traitors, because their activism allegedly influences birth rates.	Create a new, inclusive definition of masculinity, in which feminists and LGBTI activists have empowered rather than emasculated society overall
3. Victimhood (e.g. Govenments favour ethnic and religious minorities over the majority white population)	Rising immigration results in increasing disadvantages for the majority white population.	Acknowledge the existence of grievances, without repeating the narrative. Educate citizens regarding what they can and cannot expect from their governments
4. Loss of Self-Government (e.g. Governments, the EU, NATO and the UN have too much power over us)	Fostering a distrust of governments and institutions, whose role is ostensibly to keep 'the people' down.	Governments govern with the people, not over them, supporting local engagement via NGOs and civil society initiatives
5. Eco-Fascism (e.g. the earth is running out of resources: they aren't adequate to meet everyone's needs.)	Overcrowding is a tangible threat. Not everyone will be able to hold out and we must ensure that 'our people' survive.	Demonstrate your commitment to saving the planet (i.e. you want the same result), without discussing birth rates

TABLE 1 Current, Potential and Alternatives to Radical Right Extremist Narratives, May 2019

Note: *Adapted from RAN (May 2019) 'Ex Post Essay: Current and Future Narratives and Strategies of Far-Right and Islamist Extremism.' pp. 5-7.*

Case Study Analysis: Countering Radical Right Messages in the Field

Moving from the more intellectual study of radical right counter-narratives to the more practical end of front-line interventions, again it can be said that while there are some fairly well developed toolkits concerning the construction of counter speech (Facebook Counter Speech) and counter-narrative campaigns in general (OCCI, 2016), there is far too little attention devoted to analysing both successful and unsuccessful counter-narrative campaigns targeted at the narratives and messages of violent radical right extremist organisations. In some instances, this is due to the political and security culture of a particular country (Aldrich & Rees, 2005) but, on the whole, one overriding reason is the difficulty of such evaluation exercises (Ferguson 2016), with similar issues encountered in relation to Islamist extremist counter campaigns (Braddock & Horgan 2016).

Turning back to the radical right lacuna, it is not surprising that interventions directed at radical right actors are on such a small-scale. Looking at fatalities alone (see Figure 8 below), the majority of deaths between 2002 and 2010 were due to (frequent) attacks by jihadist perpetrators. Such a threat environment has therefore added to the prioritisation of counter measures focused largely on the Islamist cause. Fast-forward to the proceeding eight year period (2011-2019), however, and the frequency of attacks (see Figure 9 below) and death count due to radical right extremist terrorism has increased and has, in fact, started to overtake Islamist extremist forms of violence in Western nations. In order to play the politics of catch-up, therefore, a better understanding of how policymakers, practitioners, and civil society can construct strategic communication campaigns and interventions that interdict this trend is sorely needed.

Below are three case studies (two of success and one of failure) that show the potential applications of the counter-narrative methodology to the radical right. The two successful campaigns (UnManifest & English Disco Lovers) were evaluated as such based on their ability to project their message in a positive way (e.g. free publicity for core message and mobilisation of a counter public) outside of the main campaign whilst the final 'failed' campaign (#MoreThanARefugee) was evaluated as such based on the ability of outside actors to hijack their main message and steer the campaign in a negative direction.

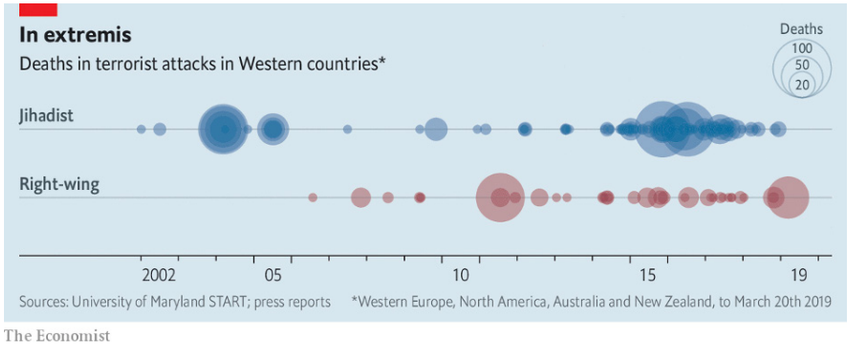

FIGURE 8 Death in Terrorist Attacks, 2002-2019
Source: *The Economist, University of Maryland START, Press Reports.*

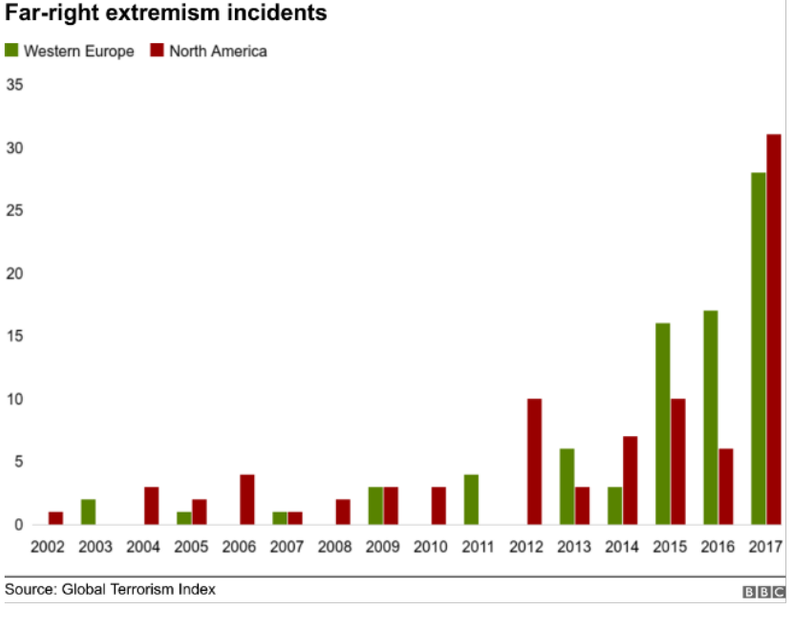

FIGURE 9 Frequency of Radical right Terror Attacks, 2002-2017
Source: *BBC, Global Terrorism Index.*

Case Study 1: Anonymous UnManifest (July 2011) Campaign

One of the first key instances of a radical right counter-narrative campaign directed at radical right terrorist action was conducted by the online hacktivist collective, Anonymous, in the wake of Anders Behring Brievik's July 2011 attacks in Utøya and Oslo, Norway. The campaign called for online users to deface Breivik's manifesto and create altered versions that used humour to mock its author and discredit his violent ideology. Digital disruption was used to mock Breivik's violent extremist manifesto, raising awareness among the general public about the issue whilst encouraging those at-risk to second guess what was the authentic version of the radical right extremist (see Figure 10 below). It also included a comedic element – encouraging people to affix comedic images and statements to Brievik's manifesto as well arguing that its goal was to "let Anders become a joke, such that nobody will take him seriously anymore"(CNET, 2011). The campaign created quite a media stir with the story of the campaign being carried on several online news sites (Sunday Morning Herald, 2011; Ramadge, 2011; Mead, 2011; & CNET, 2011). It was also an inversion of the process of 'versioning' after the Christchurch attacks five years later, where radical right sympathisers and those bent on propagating the terrorists manifesto created duplicated and different copies to avoid removal (Squire, 2019).

1. Operation UnManifest:
2. As Anders Behring Breivik wants to use the cruel action of killing over 90 young people to promote his 1516-page manifesto, also with the help of the internet, Anonymous suggests following action:
3. 1. Find the Manifest of Anders Behring Breivik : 2083 - A European Declaration of Independence
4. 2. Change it, add stupid stuff, remove parts, shoop his picture, do what you like to.....
5. 3. Republish it everywhere and up vote releases from other peoples, declare that the faked ones are original
6. 4. Let Anders become a joke, such that nobody will take him serious anymore
7. 5. Spread this message around the internet and real life, translate it
8. 6. Have a moment for the victims of his cruel attacks
9. We all are anonymous,
10. We all are Legion,
11. We all do not forgive murder,
12. We all do not forget the victims.

FIGURE 10 Instructions by Anonymous to Operation Unmanifest Participants

Case Study 2: English Disco Lover's (2012) SEO Campaign

A second online case of a radical right counter-narrative campaign are the English Disco Lovers. Initially founded in 2012 to satirise and eclipse coverage of the anti-Islam protest movement, the English Defence League (EDL), English Disco Lovers' most high-profile campaign was a "Google bombing" attempt – hi-jacking the EDL acronym to outrank its radical right equivalent on search engines and social media. The group's action attracted widespread press attention (see Figure 11 below) and, unlike the UnManifest campaign, was able to bridge the online-offline divide leading to copycat counter protest initiatives at EDL demonstrations in Brighton, Cambridge, and Birmingham. The campaign's light-hearted framing gave it wide appeal with many copycat iterations of its offline efforts appearing around the world. Such an easily replicable formula is ideal for a campaign that hopes to leverage its popularity against a fringe extremist movement and shows the power of informal grassroots organisations engaging in this sort of activism (Lee, 2019).

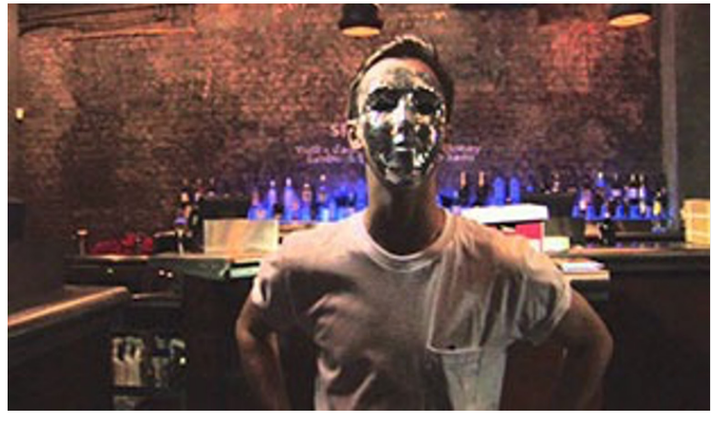

FIGURE 11 Screengrab from English Disco Lover's Promotional Video

Case Study 3: #MoreThanARefugee (2017) Youtube Campaign

The final case study is a cautionary tale of a counter-narrative campaign that did not go as planned. Using a video (2017) that featured stories of those fleeing their countries as part of Youtube's Creators for Change initiative in order to promote empathy and tolerance for refugees on World Refugee Day, the campaign featured the stories of three Palestinian, Sudanese, and Iraqi

refugees telling viewers about their interests and why they fled (see Figure 12). The campaign video accrued over 6 million views, 450,000 dislikes and 80,000 (largely negative) comments in first month.

FIGURE 12 Screengrab of #MoreThanARefugee (2017) Videos

The #MoreThanARefugee (2017) video attracted the attention of a radical right communities on 4chan and Reddit, and a significant counter campaign was co-ordinated shortly after its release. Using mockery and reframing of the video as a form of 'politically-correct propaganda', radical right activists spread their 'dislike raid' campaign on Twitter – encouraging moderate users to 'pile-on' and ridicule YouTube's attempt at challenging anti-refugee stereotypes (see Figure 13 below). Turning back to the video itself, many of the comments left were anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic in nature, containing numerous references to Nazism and Hitler, as well as opposition to refugees in general. Such a campaign therefore stresses the importance of opposition research and counter intelligence as well as the hazards of elite-driven campaigns (Ebner 2019: 176).

FIGURE 13 Screengrab of Tweet by UK-Based Radical Right Influencer, Paul Joseph Watson

Conclusion

When compared to Islamist forms of extremism, the field of radical right counter terrorism interventions surrounding counter messaging is a relatively burgeoning field. This has been frustrated by a broader lack of research into radical right terrorism, the (relatively recent) emerging concern for violent forms of radical right extremism by governments globally, and the lack of clarity around drivers for radical right extremist violence in general (Abbas & Awan, 2015; Macklin January, 2019; Schuurman, 2019). As this review has shown, this has been compounded by a lack of practical efforts to articulate, construct and deploy radical right counter-narrative best practice. Where such empirical studies and toolkits do exist, they are largely focused on the general public, educational sector and other statutory bodies rather than counter terrorism officials and practitioners per se. Similar to Islamist extremist counter messaging efforts, therefore, further research and development is needed in order to test what works globally and locally when tackling the ideas and discourses of violent radical right groups. A more global and counter-narrative-centric approach is therefore at the core of the CARR-Hedayah radical right counter-narratives toolkit – aiming to build the knowledge base around radical right counter-narratives and CT capacity across continents through country reports and guides aimed at equipping officials in countries with notable radical right extremist threats.

Recommendations

Already emerging from the above essay are several lessons that can be transferred into the practice of countering radical right narratives. Firstly, both online and offline campaigns need to be slick, professional, and creative in order to have a powerful effect on those engaged in extremist milieus. As noted by Dafnos (2014) and Ebner (2019), radical right narrative campaigns need to move beyond traditional, text-heavy advertising approaches and try to subvert – in a knowing, clever, and playful way – existing micro and macro narratives perpetuated by these groups. Secondly, and relatedly, a good counter-narrative campaign is one that can both deliver a message to demystify and delegitimise radical right messages at the group level but also provides an alternative path to individuals trapped within the predominantly authoritarian and cultic practices of an extremist milieu. A chief example of this working was EXIT-Deutschland's Trojan T-Shirt campaign but extends to other methodologies designed to attract and redirect individuals considering leaving a radical right extremist movement (Davey et al, 2019 & the Redirect Method, n.d.).

A third and final important lesson – that also acts as a note of warning – is about the longevity and validity of radical right counter-narrative campaigns. As found above, both centrally co-ordinated and grassroots counter speech campaigns can achieve significant free publicity when brought to the attention of media actors. This is helpful in both sustaining and increasing the reach of counter-narratives beyond its immediate audience. As noted by Poole et al (2019), however, those engaged in longer term counter messaging programmes need to be persistent and organisationally aware of the tightly networked and co-ordinated actions of radical right extremists over multiple campaign waves. Moreover, and as noted by Ebner (2019), practitioners need to be prepared to mitigate against extremists undermining their own counter-narrative efforts through 'dislike raids' and other strategic manoeuvres. This takes us back to the 'jujitsu' nature of engaging with such a form of politics – knowing how counter-narrative campaigns are being responded to in extremist milieus before they become problematic to the validity of the campaign itself or counterproductive in the round. Practitioners therefore need to be aware of such efforts and mitigate these risks as part of the design of future counter-narrative projects when dealing with the extreme end of the radical right.

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11

VIOLENT EGO-CENTERED SOVEREIGNISM AS A GLOBAL THREAT? THE CASE OF THE GERMAN "REICHSBÜRGER" AND IMPLICATIONS FOR P/CVE RESEARCH

Dr. Dennis Walkenhorst & Maximilian Ruf

Introduction

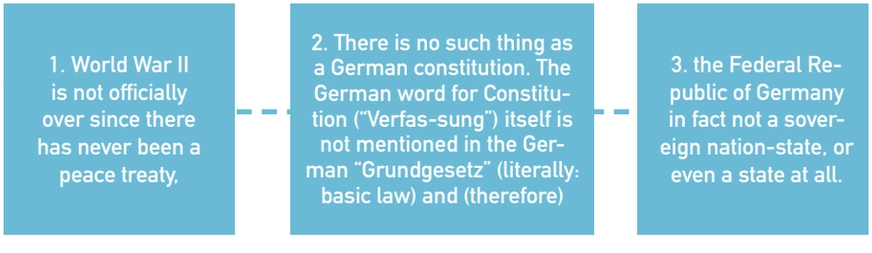
Sovereign Citizens, Freemen on the Land, Reichsbürger – names may differ, but the essence seems to remain the same. More and more countries around the world witness a number of their citizens claiming a distinctive kind of "ego-centered" sovereignty that, in its own logic, permits them to disobey social conventions as well as any kind of state authority. Besides from refusing to pay taxes, the creation of fake documents or their often *bizarre* (media) appearances, a more sinister aspect is overshadowed: the seemingly increasing use of violent means, especially against law enforcement officers. From a global perspective, obvious similarities between different kinds of sovereingists indicate that a new kind of extremism is appearing on the horizon.

Since sovereignism as such is an under-researched topic entailing a clear lack of empirical studies, this article is mainly based on secondary literature analysis and only aims to provide a first impulse for studying this field from a new and comparative perspective. Therefore, the case of the German "*Reichsbürger*" will be delineated and briefly differentiated from other known forms of sovereignism. Then, the case of sovereign citizens in the United States will be explored. The overarching objective of this exercise is to analyze if existing conceptualizations of different forms of extremism hold value as analytical frameworks to understand, study, and counter the highly under-theorized phenomenon that this article will define as "ego-centered sovereignism." The analysis will show that while similarities and clear loans from better-known forms of extremist ideologies do exist, these frameworks seemingly fail to capture the *essence* of this new complex. We will therefore introduce a provisional

theory-based definition for *ego-centered sovereignism as a new global form of extremism* that might be better suited to the phenomenon. Finally, implications for the practical P/CVE work will be drawn.

The Case of the German "Reichsbürger"

In Germany, sovereignism is mainly associated with one term: *Reichsbürger*. The term (literally: citizens of the "*Reich*") refers to the ideology as well as the arguments used by some of the most curious German sovereignists, who, in principal, see themselves not as citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany but of a "German *Reich*" (Hermann, 2018, p. 7). While sub-groups may vary significantly with regards to their exact beliefs and the conclusions they derive from them, most can agree on some key pillars of their ideology. This includes the belief that the "German *Reich,*" to which they claim to belong, subsists within either the borders of the former German Empire, or the German borders of 1937. Based on the supposed continued existence of some sort of "*Reich,*" *Reichsbürger* fundamentally deny the status of the Federal Republic of Germany (German acronym: BRD) as the legitimate successor state to the German *Reich* from 1949 onwards. Therefore, they do not accept any state authority derived from the Federal Republic (Hermann, 2018, pp. 7-10; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, n.d.). This very basic ideological skeleton is mainly built on three claims and supposed arguments:



All of these so-called arguments are based on the conspiracy-belief driven idea that a sinister power is aiming to suppress Germany and the German people by every means possible. More often than not, Jews are directly named as the driving force behind this, and in cases in which Jews are not referred to directly, anti-Semitic codes are used to obliquely reference them (Hermann, 2018, p. 10; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, n.d.). For example, they produce so-called research to construct a Jewish heritage of current and former BRD politicians and leaders. One of these alleged discoveries showed that former chancellor Helmut Kohl was Jewish and that current chancellor Angela Merkel is in fact his daughter (see the argumentation of Norbert Schittke: ZDF heute-show, 2016). This is also part of the motivation behind the use of terms like "the Rothschilds" and other anti-Semitic codes when talking about decision-makers in German politics (ZDF heute-show, 2016; Hermann, 2018, pp. 7, 9).

With regard to the legal status of present-day Germany as we know it, among *Reichsbürger*, a number of opinions and different ideas exist on what the Federal Republic of Germany actually is. For some, it merely refers to a territory still occupied by the Allies since World War 2 (or sometimes even World War 1) (Hermann, 2018, p. 8). Others claim that the BRD is actually a commercial enterprise, the BRD GmbH,[1] and that Germans are not citizens but rather employees of that company (Hermann, 2018, p. 33; Deutsche Anwaltsauskunft, 2018). This latter claim is based on the fact that the title of the German government-issued identification cards is *Personalausweis*, which sovereignists interpret as "*personnel* identification." Here again, personnel meaning employee. In fact, in the context of the German identification card "*Personal*" simply indicates that it is associated with an individual person, as in "*personal* identification." This is but one example of the creativity which *Reichsbürger* often leverage for their conspiracy-ideology-based arguments.

Sociological, psychological, and demographic characteristics

When it comes to gaining deeper knowledge on sociological, psychological, and demographic characteristics of the *Reichsbürger*, there are almost no empirical sources or datasets that can be utilized. An exception are the insights of the intelligence agency of the German state of Brandenburg that were published in a "handbook" (Keil, 2017). This handbook, in combination with exploratory interviews with experts in the field, is one of the main sources for the following segment. It is, however, important to point out that the interviewees do not constitute a representative sample.

The demographic structure of the cases that were identified by intelligence agencies in the state of Brandenburg shows that there are around 80% male and 20% female followers of *Reichsbürger* ideologies. The average age of this

[1] GmbH is a legal form for a commercial enterprise in Germany, similar to an American Limited liability company.

group is around 50 years (Keil, 2017, p. 60f), which, in combination with the fact that they had not come forward as *Reichsbürger* in the previous decades, could indicate that the process of radicalization occurs in the second half of life. It is important to draw attention to this aspect, since radicalization processes and engagement in crime or extremist groups typically occurs at an earlier age, at least this is true for other forms of politically or religiously motivated extremism (e.g., Carlsson et al., 2020, p. 74). The *Reichsbürger* identified in the Brandenburg "survey" usually live in social isolation with very few contacts outside their close family. Financially, they are often in debt, in many cases even bankrupt. For a lot of them, the only social interactions they regularly engage in are with their creditors, the judicial system, local authorities, or law enforcement (Keil 2017, p. 100). These encounters seem to become increasingly violent or at least aggressive as the *Reichsbürger* view officials such as police officers, judges, but also regular administrative clerks as active parts of a conspiracy directed against them and tend to escalate their aggression and eventually use of violence over the years (Keil 2017, p. 60ff).

An explorative psychological analysis of the same group (individuals considered to be *Reichsbürger* by the state of Brandenburg) demonstrated similar diagnoses of narcissism, schizophrenia, and paranoia are diagnoses among this subset in comparison to the general population. The same is true for different kinds of neuroses (Keil, 2017, p. 71ff). Hence, mental health issues seem to play an important role in a disproportionately large number of cases from this particular group of *Reichsbürger*. While these findings cannot be generalized, P/CVE work directed at this subgroup of *Reichsbürger* needs to reflect this characteristic of their target group in its programming.

As mentioned, it is questionable as to how representative these insights and numbers from the state of Brandenburg are for the broader German context, even more so for similar phenomena internationally. They are however, from a qualitative perspective, the best numbers available at present and may give first insights on what factors should be considered in comparative studies in the future. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that people that are now commonly referred to by the term *Reichsbürger* also constitute a diverse group. In his 2018 book "Eine Reise ins *Reich*" ("A Journey to the *Reich*"), Tomas Ginsburg explores this diversity of the movement by infiltrating a group of *Reichsbürger*. Although isolated older men indeed seem to constitute a significant part of most sub-groups, he finds people from all age groups as well as all social backgrounds to identify with these ideologies.

Sovereignists, Self-Administrators and Reichsbürger – Delineating Various Forms of Sovereignism in Germany

As previously noted, various forms and variations of what is commonly referred to as *Reichsbürger* exist across Germany. The federal domestic intelligence agency (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*; BfV) differentiates between two major strands of the phenomenon: "self-administrators" and "*Reichsbürger*" (literally: citizens of the *Reich*) (Bundesamt für Verfas-sungsschutz, n.d.). As described above, the latter claim citizenship of a form of the former German *Reich*, sometimes in its form of the German Empire (until 1919) or Germany of 1937. Self-administrators, on the other hand, do not necessarily refer to the historical forms of the German nation state, but rather declare their own nations by announcing their personal "withdrawal" from the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*; BRD) while designating their own homes or other properties as independent, sovereign nations (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, n.d.). Another way to categorize these different phenomena was proposed by Hermann (2018), who introduces the overarching terms of *Reichs*-ideologists or *Reichs*-ideological milieu with four different submilieus:

The first sub-milieu mainly strives to re-establish Nazism and the so-called *Third Reich*, while the second – the infamous *Reichsbürger* – believe that a form of the *Reich* in fact continues to exist, World War II (or even WWI) never actually ended, and that Germany in the current form of the BRD is an illegal construct (Hermann, 2018, p. 8). While these two subsets generally refer to a *Reich* of some form, the latter two notably do not. Self-administrators claim that the BRD is an illegitimate state and therefore feel entitled to declare their own, sovereign nations often in the form of imagined princely states or kingdoms (Hermann, 2018, p. 8). Most often the nation-defining individuals declare themselves rulers of these new states. Similarly, the fourth subset, sov-

[2] Here, "right-wing extremist" was used as a term in order to most accurately translate the original German "*Rechtsextremisten*". In the following, we will use the term "far-right" instead, which is understood as the over-arching term for the right-wing political sphere beyond the mainstream right, itself divided into the radical right and the extreme right (for a more detailed discussion of these categories, see also Mudde, 2019).

ereignists, believe that the current German nation state lacks legitimacy and is not a sovereign, independent nation. However, in contrast to the other forms, sovereignists neither presume the subsistence of a previous *Reich*, nor seek to establish entirely new states, but instead aim to make Germany as it is a sovereign nation again (Hermann, 2018, p. 8).

	REICHSBÜRGER	SELF-ADMINISTRATORS	SOVEREIGNISTS
Reference to the Reich?	Yes	Not necessarily	No
Sense of illegitimacy of the Federal Republic of Germany?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sense of entitlement to create a new German state/represent subsisting former German state?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Used for self-aggrandizement of creators/leading figure?	Yes	Yes	Yes

Hermann (2018) categorizes all four subsets under the term *Reichs*-ideologies. And yet, the latter two phenomena (self-administrators and sovereignists) do not seem to fit that specific term, as none of them refers to the concept of a German *Reich*. Based on this, a classification as *Reichs*-ideologies does not hold analytical value. The element that instead seems to be inherent to the two categories identified by the BfV (self-administrators, *Reichsbürger*) and the latter three identified by Hermann (*Reichsbürger*, self-administrators, sovereignists), is a sense of illegitimacy of the current German nation state paired with a feeling of entitlement as to the creation and/or representation of (new or old) forms of states within Germany's current or former borders, independent from the current German authorities (see figure 1). Based on this, and on the fact, that while some commonalities exist among many of them, most German

Reichsbürger, self-administrators and sovereignists have not succeeded in establishing larger movements or even groups of significant sizes, it appears these ideologies and resulting "nations" often serve as vessels for the self-aggrandisement of their creators. The one feature unifying all of them, is therefore not the reference to a *Reich*, but rather the fact, that they all adhere to a form of *ego-centered sovereignism*.

The following sections will explore, if this particular essence can be identified within similar ideologies and groups around the globe, which would mark ego-centered sovereignism a global phenomenon – and a global threat.

A Global Phenomenon?

Although the idea of the German *Reichsbürger* appears quite unique, some elements seem to exhibit surprising similarities to groups in other national contexts. This is true not only for the functional elements of the ideology, such as the ego-centered essence of these beliefs, but also for demographics and even psychological profiles.

Apart from the Austrian version, dubbed *Staatsverweigerer*, or state-deniers, whose ideology is very similar to the German case (Das Gupta, 2019), the most obvious are the infamous "Sovereign Citizens" in the United States, Canada, and even Australia (Hodge, 2019; Baldino & Lucas, 2019). Similarly inclined to conspiracy theories, paranoia, and most importantly, avid anti-governmental sentiments like the German *Reichsbürger* and other forms of sovereignists, they seem to have first appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. However, only in the years following the financial crisis of 2008 did they assume a more prominent role, at least in the American context (Hodge, 2019). While the precursor groups of the contemporary American Sovereign Citizens movement, such as "Posse Comitatus," were initially often perceived as an extreme form of the anti-tax movement, aiming to limit the US American federal government's influence on the financial and land properties of ordinary citizens, their apparent ideological similarities and the respective cross-referencing of arguments and ideas of openly far-right militia groups, or racist movements like "Christian Identity" necessitated reconsideration of these assumptions (Hodge, 2019). Soon, the movement became to be viewed as being predominantly far-right.

Today, Sovereign Citizens have become a widely public phenomenon. On YouTube, one can find numerous videos mocking their often bizarre court

appearances or celebrating police officers already used to their made-up arguments and fake driver's licenses (e.g., DDS TV, 2020; Van Balion, 2018; Lane Meyer 2017). As Berger (2016, p. 3) has outlined, the most important pillar of contemporary sovereignist ideology in the United States is based on an alternative understanding of American history. Centered around the 1868 14th Amendment, designed to award citizenship to former slaves, sovereignists believe that this created a form of second class citizenship and that the United States in general are no longer a constitutionally governed republic (Ibid, pp. 3-4). However, in their worldview a common law, derived from the original constitution or even the bible, exists, which supersedes the illegitimate legal framework of the current United States, which, in fact, are run by bankers who overthrew the legitimate government in secret and transformed it into a corporation, thus binding US citizens by a new set of now commercial laws (Ibid, p. 4). This illegitimate system, according to their beliefs, has created "fictitious persons" (often named in all capital letters on official documents such as driving licenses, etc.), which are then associated with the real "lawful being," as which Sovereign Citizens identify themselves (Hodge, 2019; Berger, 2016, p. 5). Through a "declaration of sovereignty," they aim to dissociate themselves from the "fictitious person" and everything associated with it and claim the rights and privileges of a citizen under common law (Berger, 2016, p. 5). Similar to the cases studied in Germany, sovereignist ideology in the United States often seems to appeal to persons, who have fallen to financial problems (Berger, 2016, p. 5), and for whom the ideas of sovereign citizenship may appear like a means out of debt.

While the basic framework of contemporary sovereign citizens in the United States does sound similar to that of sovereignists and *Reichsbürger* in Germany (including absurd reinterpretations of historical facts) the assumption that the government is illegitimate and even a corporation, conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism, another core features stands out as surprisingly similar: While a core ideological skeleton unites them in principle, so does their tendency to fill the gaps with individualistic themes, based on their own personal ideas (Berger, 2016, p. 3), making this a highly diverse scene rather than one unified movement. Sometimes individual figures stand out, advocating for their own interpretations and attracting a certain following, but in general, similar to the cases in Germany, this type of sovereignism seems to appeal to persons looking for a framework in which they can fulfill their own, ego-centered aspirations at leadership, truth, and wisdom, making them distinct from a majority of "ignorant sheep."

These similarities are striking at first view and surely deserve deeper investigation in terms of comparative studies. While this article can only take a comparative view in a precursory way, the following section will explore how one might define violent ego-centered sovereignism as a distinct type of extremism, prevalent in many countries around the globe.

Defining violent ego-centered sovereignism

Existing conceptualizations of sovereignism appear to lack clarity or are only able to capture elements, rather than provide a comprehensive analytical framework. Astonishingly, there have not been many efforts that aim at comparing international cases of sovereignism and related phenomena until today. Furthermore, most of the case studies that exist are merely descriptive, focusing on the articulated ideology and/or specific arguments, and lack any theoretical foundation. For example, there are no sociological studies that focus on the similarities between sovereignist phenomena in different countries. In addition, near to no research has been conducted to answer the question what specifically distinguishes sovereignism from other forms of extremism. Oftentimes, sovereignism is just assumed to be another form of the far-right, due to certain overlaps in ideologies and persons (e.g., Hodge 2018; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, n.d.;). Similar to comparative studies, psychology has, until today, been largely neglected as a discipline that has the potential to generate important insights into the world of ego-centered sovereignists. One of the few exceptions is the explorative analysis of individuals in the state of Brandenburg that Jan-Gerrit Keil (2017) provides. While these types of (non-representative) explorative psychological analyses are definitely promising to understand individual cases in regional contexts, a broadening of the perspective to the international scale is nevertheless necessary to advance the understanding of this complex phenomenon. In doing so, a sufficient number of cases could be included into the analysis and therefore produce a broader empirical foundation for (psychological) analysis.

As mentioned, this introductory article can only aim at providing first impulses towards a more accurate definition of the phenomenon. To sketch such an initial definition, it is helpful to first explore differences and commonalities with other familiar and previously defined forms of extremism.

Essential differences to religious or political extremists

Oftentimes, ego-centered sovereignism has been linked to the far-right. And on personal and/or institutional levels, connections to the far-right scene seem to be obvious in many cases especially in Germany and in the United States (Hodge 2018; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, n.d.). However, remarkable differences between politically and religiously motivated extremism and ego-centered sovereignism can be identified when taking into account how they *perceive and interpret the roles of politics and religion in society.*

Political extremists (right *and* left wing) fundamentally challenge the (democratic) system, but they do *not* challenge the value of political authority as such, meaning its essence. Their aim is a *different* kind of political authority (fascism, communism, authoritarianism, i.e.) – they want to change the *way* the political system works, meaning the way collectively binding decisions are made, but not the *role* of the political system itself. Religiously motivated extremists, in contrast, aim at *replacing* the political system with one based on their religious doctrines. They usually try to reestablish religion and literal interpretations of religious texts as the only sources for collectively binding decisions. The one legitimate authority, in their eyes, is God. In this sense, laws can only be derived from religious sources, which puts religion (resp. religious scholars) in the position of lawmakers.

These different perspectives on how extremists view the role of politics and religion in producing collectively binding decisions are key in understanding the essential difference to ego-centered sovereignism. In contrast to known forms of extremism, ego-centered sovereigntists largely do not seem to accept political or religious authority whatsoever. The center of their attention is first and foremost the *self*, the *ego*. The only legitimate source of authority is, implicitly or explicitly, their own *individual person*, which is then consequently no longer obligated to follow any collectively binding decision that was produced politically or religiously. In this sense, ego-centered sovereignism is ideologically much closer to anarchism than to any other political or religious extremism. Additionally, ego-centered sovereignism should be interpreted as a phenomenon that, unlike other extremisms, is in its essence post-modern. As processes of individualization accelerate even after ongoing modernization and globalization, individualism poses a challenge especially when it comes to processes of identity formation. Analysis that take a post-modern constellation into account might be even more suited to explain what makes ego-centered sovereignism with its *absolute* individualism attractive nowadays.

So while the numbers of identified followers of sovereignist ideologies seem to be constantly rising, the individualized sovereignists seem to fail at forming any coherent movement, unlike political or religious extremists. This inability to cooperate and create broader structures as a movement is inherently caused by the individualized nature of ego-centered sovereignism as an ideology but seems to also be supported by highly narcissist personalities as well as claims to absolute authority, as Keil (2017, pp. 86-87 has shown for the Brandenburg sample. While they refuse to accept political authority, they also refuse to accept any other individual authority (other than themselves), leading to the impression that the so-called *Reichsbürger* movement is not really a movement but more an accumulation of individual leaders without a high number of followers. This fact, again, highlights the seemingly ego-centered characteristic of many of these individuals, supporting the argument that at the core of most of these phenomena lies an inherently ego-centered sovereignism that seems to be much more similar to cults than to any kind of political or religious extremism.

Similarities to Cults

Cases observed in Germany seem to bear remarkable similarities to smaller cults and sects, as some authors have previously noted (see e.g. Rütten, 2016a; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, n.d.; Rohmann, 2018, p.7; Hermann, 2018, p.15). Also, internationally, similarities between Sovereign Citizens and cults or cult-like groups have previously been identified (see e.g. Colacci, 2015; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). The social structure of their groups as well as the special kind of self-empowerment the leaders apply is remarkably similar to what we know about cult structures. The patriarchal leader of small and tightly knit ego-centered sovereignist cells is in a comparable position as any cult leader (Hüllen/Homburg 2017, p. 42). Loaded language and milieu control, for instance, through the heavy use of highly complex, impossible to fully understand conspiracy theories, designed to keep the followers within the group and mindset, are tools of cults (Rohmann, 2018, p.9), that can also regularly be observed with groups of sovereignists. Sometimes, (former) members of such groups even try to use the cult-argument in their favor. In 2012, a supposed *Reichsbürger* in Germany, charged for the possession of large quantities of chemicals, which could have been used to build explosive devices, claimed to be the innocent victim of a cult, thus not responsible for his own actions (Rütten, 2016a).

One more prominent example, Peter Fitzek, declared himself king of the Kingdom of Germany and actually managed to attract a decent and financially capable following. At least 558 persons had handed over around 1.2 million Euros to him by 2014 (Rütten, 2016b). In addition, to enlarge the physical bounds of his so-called kingdom, he had his followers donate their own land possessions (Rütten, 2016b). During the earlier days of his endeavor, Fitzek charged his followers for seminars which he held (Rütten, 2016b). While he uses certain symbols and arguments commonly associated with the *Reichsbürger* scene, Fitzek, as apparently many others, is focused mainly on his personal self-aggrandizement by engaging in his own perceived right to declare sovereignty and himself as the ruler, rather than cooperating with others who hold similar views (Rütten, 2016b).

Similarly, to the case of Fitzek, Berger also notes individual "'gurus' or 'experts'" within the American Sovereign Citizen scene and highlighted the fact that certain groups and individuals seem to have created ways to financially profit off their followers, by, for example, hosting instructional seminars or selling pseudo-legal filing kits suited to the complex pseudo-legal processes in which they would have to engage (2016, pp. 5-6). Using their followers for personal financial gain based on a presumed all-encompassing authority of one singular authority figure has been one of the key elements of many prominent cults over the past decades.

While overlaps regarding followers and ideologies between ego-centered sovereignists and political or religious extremists do certainly exist, many of the mechanisms, especially the focus on self-aggrandizement and self-empowerment paired with the inability to cooperate beyond the fraudulent extraction of money from followers, appear to be more familiar from cult and cult-like groups. Therefore, and in order to understand the phenomenon properly and in all its facets, it might be worth taking a closer look at possible links and similarities to determine whether or not the current trend of portraying this type of ego-centered sovereignism as merely another subset of "the far-right" is accurate.

Challenges for P/CVE

Usually, discussions with ego-centered sovereignists are the opposite of what one would call "productive." Their aggressive, compulsive and often disabusing attitude makes it nearly impossible to reach common ground. While this is

in essence true for every conspiracy theorist, the element of self-exaltation that ego-centered sovereignism obviously brings with it seems to add an extra layer of resistance towards other opinions as well as to ambiguity in general. While it seems to be much easier to initiate a first contact to ego-centered sovereignists than to other target groups, their level of indoctrination and missionary motivation is often significantly higher.

This is one of the reasons why working with ego-centered sovereignists for the purposes of prevention and deradicalisation brings many challenges. One of them is the age of the target group. Usually, radicalization processes take place at an early age (this is also why most prevention programs focus on target groups of 15-25 years). With ego-centered sovereignists, however, the opposite seems to be true. From what we know from the Brandenburg sample, many cases of ego-centered sovereignists seem to be older (white) men (Keil 2017, p. 100). As cynical as it may sound, when deradicalisation work usually focuses at making plans for the future and exploring options for a "healthy" life after distancing oneself from extremist groups and ideologies, this is not nearly as relevant to people in their late fifties or sixties than it is to "youngsters" that practitioners in deradicalisation typically work with.

Another challenge is the social isolation that some ego-centered sovereignists live in. Most deradicalization initiatives work with a systemic approach, meaning they include relevant persons from the social environment of the client in the work. This is especially important when it comes to any effort of reintegration or rehabilitation. With the target group of ego-centered sovereignists, however, a social network often is nearly non-existent or includes only very few close friends and/or family-members who themselves might be drawn to the ideology of ego-centered sovereignism, often as part of the made-up "government" that a patriarch created for his family. This is why the identification of persons who might be able to assist any deradicalization process is by far more challenging for cases of ego-centered sovereignism. Additionally, ego-centered sovereignists are often considered troublemakers in the eyes of the judiciary system as well as the public administration (Keil 2017, p. 56; Hodge 2019). This makes their involvement in rehabilitation processes challenging, especially when they already have been victims of the so-called paper terrorism conducted by an individual[3].

The ideologies ego-centered sovereignists follow often seem absurd or at least obscure to the outsider. However, their fundamentally deep connection to con-

spiracy theories makes sovereignist ideologies attractive alternatives in light of the complexity and ambiguity of modern life. Believing in sovereignist ideology means having answers to all the big questions while at the same time leading to an individual self-exaltation as the (only) one knowing the "truth." What comes with this is a massive reduction of complexity and a newfound position as a privileged, "enlightened" person. While deradicalization work usually focuses on identifying functional equivalents for what an extremist scene offers the individual, this kind of certainty and self-exaltation is extremely hard to replace.

Conclusion and Implications for (Future) P/CVE Research

Throughout this article, we have argued that severe gaps in current research can be found when it comes to the case of ego-centered sovereignism. First and foremost, the phenomenon itself is in need of definitions as well as theory-based case studies. We need to understand what makes ego-centered sovereignism special – what drives these target groups and what functional differences as well as similarities to known extremisms are observable. Second, comparative studies are duly needed. We identify different forms of the phenomenon in many countries, for example Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, the United States, and Australia, but until today, no comparative case studies have been conducted. The main focus of researchers is often on different kinds of obscure arguments ego-centered sovereignists use, but not on the psychological and sociological implications of their behavior and the phenomenon in general. This is why researchers who usually focus on descriptive studies of right-wing extremism analyze ego-centered sovereignism as just another type of right-wing extremism. Instead of merely echoing their arguments (the same thing the media does constantly), theory-based analyses of potential root causes, functional mechanisms, and dynamics are needed.

After understanding causes, mechanisms, and dynamics of the phenomenon, implications for P/CVE might be much easier to identify. What we know today is that the target group is at least challenging for P/CVE practitioners who try to engage with them. Although often interpreted as just another kind of extremism, tools and methods from working with right wing extremists do not necessarily prove to be effective with ego-centered sovereignists. This is why the development of innovative and specified tools and methods for working with this target group should be one of the main priorities of any future P/

[3] Paper terrorism is defined as "the use of bogus legal documents and filings, or the misuse of legitimate ones, to intimidate, harass, threaten, or retaliate against public officials, law enforcement officers, or private citizens." (Pitcavage 1998)

CVE research. As many P/CVE practitioners already articulated, radicalization at a later age and a deep-rootedness in conspiracy theories constitute challenges for other forms of extremism. So, the development of specified tools and methods for cases of ego-centered sovereignism might also benefit P/CVE in general. Furthermore, there seems to be a lot to learn from adjacent fields, especially cult studies.

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12

WHAT WOMEN SAY: THE INTERSECTION OF MISOGYNY AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Saeida Rouass

Rationale

There is a growing interest within public discourse concerning the intersection of misogyny and violent extremism, yet little scholarly research on how, or even if, they interact. A symbiotic relationship between the two is often presented, with cross-pollination occurring as a result. Within this public discourse misogyny acts as a catchall term and can include ideas such as toxic masculinity (Walker, 2019), aggressive masculinity, a crisis in masculinity and aggrieved entitlement (Kimmel, 2018), patriarchy, gender norms, violent misogyny (Wilson, 2018), domestic violence (Smith, 2019), violence against women and girls (VAWG), and global masculinism (Nicholas & Aguis, 2017). A cursory glance at these discussions indicates misogyny is used to characterize the attitudes and behaviour of men who hold extremist beliefs, are associated with extremist movements or/and have committed violent extremist (VE) acts. Often this does not include the first-hand experiences of women who have been impacted by or contributed to violent extremism in some form. Yet, their voices may offer significant insights into the realities of violent extremism and how misogyny, gender, and VE manifest and overlap.

The increasing recognition of white supremacy movements as posing a threat to national security (Geltzer, 2019), and the trend towards classification of subgroups within those movements such as Incel (involuntarily celibate), Proud Boys, as well as the growth of the Manonsphere has resulted in heightened interest in links between misogyny and white supremacy. For example, the Southern Poverty Law Centre started to track 'male supremacy' on its hate map in 2018 (SPLC, 2018) following an increase in terrorist acts committed by mem-

bers of the Incel community; Hope Not Hate included 'societal misogynies' in their 2019 State of Hate annual report (Hope Not Hate, 2019), while the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) have reported on the recent online resurgence of 'miscegenation' as a manifestation of the overlap between misogyny and white supremacy (CARR, 2020). Lux and Jordan (2019) note despite the existence of some studies, much of the available sources of literature regarding the interplay between misogyny and white supremacy are journalistic commentary.

This paper seeks to contribute to existing understandings of the relationship between misogyny and white supremacy by injecting into the conversation on the experiences of three women who have lived at that intersection. It argues, in order to develop robust and sound policy and practice responses to the increasing risk of white supremacist VE, we must understand how it manifests in the lives of women.

In doing so it aims to ensure the presence of women's experiences and voices and to avoid rooting our understanding in the male experience exclusively, which may create a gender bias in our understanding of and responses to white supremacist VE.

Research Methodology

Primary Research

This paper is based on a broader research project, provisionally titled "Women Fighting Violent Extremism: From Victim to Peace Advocate," conducted through the Churchill Fellowship, a yearlong program run by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (WCMT). The three case studies presented in this paper are based on primary research consisting of qualitative in-depth interviews with individuals who have contributed to and/or been impacted by white supremacy movements and ideas.

The three case studies were selected from a body of thirty-six interviews with both men and women in the USA, who have direct experience of white supremacy VE movements in a range of ways. This includes former members or associates of such movements, victim-survivors, community and faith leaders, psychologists working directly with survivors of white supremacy violence, and individuals who have lost loved ones in white supremacy motivated terrorist attacks.

A Feminist Research Approach

The research for this paper is rooted in feminist research epistemology and used qualitative semi-structured interviews and participatory observation methods. This approach takes the epistemological position that: "Conventional standards for 'good research' discriminate against or empower specific social groups" (Harding & Norberg, 2005, p.2).

Feminist methodology does not prescribe a single research method. It aims to improve the way we know society, while acknowledging that value-free research is an unachievable goal. DeVault (1996) argues that research practice has resulted in:

> *The omission and distortion of women's experiences in mainstream social science, the tendency to universalize the experience of men (and relatively privileged women), and the use of science to control women, whether through medicine and psychiatry, or through social scientific theories of family, work, sexuality, and deviance (p.3).*

While feminist research is not a unified or singular epistemological position and methodology and is continuously engaged in a critical and reflective process of change, the research for this paper is rooted in three of its core points of focus:

1. Shifting the focus of standard practice from men's concerns in order to reveal the locations and perspectives of (all) women…to "bring women in," that is, to find what has been ignored, censored and suppressed, and to reveal both the diversity of actual women's lives and the ideological mechanisms that have made so many of those lives invisible.
2. Seeks a science that minimizes harm and control in the research process.
3. Seeks a methodology that will support research of value to women, leading to social change or action beneficial to women (DeVault, 1996, p.6).

Fundamentally the research and this paper seek to disrupt the marginalization

of women's voices, experiences, and perspectives within the CVE research space and inject those voices, experiences and perspectives into the growing interest in the intersection of misogyny and violent extremism. Through doing so it aims to contribute knowledge to this current trend that makes women visible and benefits them, along with others who may have been historically disadvantaged or marginalized.

Limitations

This paper presents preliminary findings based on an initial analysis of the body of interviews. A full analysis of the data is yet to be completed. Therefore, while it offers value to existing discussions and research, there are clear limitations to what can confidently concluded and recommended. The paper also does not aim to draw conclusions about forms of violent extremism other than white supremacy in the USA nor does it argue that any learning from the presented research project can applied to other violent extremist movements and places. Finally, those interviewed are not representative of a particular demographic and therefore wider conclusions cannot be drawn about the demographic they may appear to belong to.

What Women Say

The below case studies present the experiences of three women who were once affiliated to or members of white supremacist VE groups or movements in the USA. All women have since left the movements and have been given right to reply, reviewed their case studies and may have made modifications.

Case Study One

In this segment of a longer interview the interviewee (a former member of a white supremacy gang) describes how she became involved.

> I guess I should start by saying I was raised better than that. I mean some people are raised in it, they are brought up in it, they think it's normal. They have these phenomenal ways of explaining away a white man in the Middle East, making how Jesus was possibly white. But, I was raised going to a primarily black church in inner city Detroit. My parents were not racist. My mother is, she's not even American. My grandparents on my mom's side are from Nazi occupied Netherlands, they are Dutch survivors of the Holocaust. So, it's nothing that my parents weren't horrified by. It started with a boy, like how so many awesome decisions do. I had a really nasty childhood; I'm an incest survivor. So, I did not have a safe home life. I was constantly; you know home was where you were supposed to be safe. I didn't have that. He is still alive, but I had an older brother that was horrible and I think that's what…well I know that's what drew me to all of this. I met a boy that was a skinhead and he loved me. I was young, I was 13 or 14, like really young. And, from there on out…he ended up not being white by the way. I think we all knew, but we were like 'yeah you want to hate people, that's cool.' It started out with me hanging out with him and then meeting other people. So, I got into this relationship with him and it was a very unhealthy relationship. I'd have to say that almost anyone I knew that was in with that skinhead crowd and the white supremacist kids, all of the men were abusive. But, all of the women were insecure and seeking so I think that because all of the men were like that we just kind of accepted it. You know, like that's just how they are.
>
> While I was involved with him, I went to Indiana and I met another couple of skinheads down there. They were very, very involved with, I can't remember if it was the Aryan Brotherhood or the White Aryan Resistance, whichever one was based out of Indiana at the time. So, I ended up with – I flyered. I would hand out flyers and stickers for the white race, which is ridiculous. What is that going to change? I was probably about 14 years old. And, when I look back at it in retrospect, we were all kids. Not even 20, like 20-year-old kids, like children. And, the predatory nature of the people who were higher up, I can't imagine thinking – it's the same as any other grooming, people see someone who is vulnerable and they start to say what they need to say, the ends justify the means, like oh you're so pretty, you have blond hair and blue eyes, and these things. We need you. I hadn't been needed for anything like ever. And I hadn't ever been treated as an autonomous person. I had wonderful loving parents, but they were…my dad was a pastor and the element of reality you need to raise children, I think was missing from my childhood. God would protect me; you don't do this because the bible says. And so there wasn't a whole lot of communication that would have been a way to protect me from my own naivety.
>
> I never, I am going to be all over the place, I never went to rallies because I was so, so young, I couldn't have faked going to a friends for the weekend. I never went to rallies but I had, there was a significantly older man, he was probably already in his late 20s or early 30s, that was from England and he was friends with all of the racist rock stars over there, like Screwdriver and on a regularly basis we would go over to this guys house so we could talk to Ian from Screwdriver on the phone. And I look back at that and I think that is so messed up. Because we were children, if my 14 year old was like 'I talked to a really nice 28 year old man,' I'd be like what? Of course, I was never sharing any of this with my parents because they never condoned anything anyway, but I found people that accepted me and were going to keep me safe. And I had never, and you know my parents failed to keep me safe because the worst thing was happening in our home. And so there were these third parties who were going to keep me safe and love me. All the women just took their lumps because you know, they were kept safe. It's such a backwards thing because there was no love in it at all, like at all. I was actually with the same guy from the start until about the age of 21, but we had a very weird relationship. He cheated on me all the time so I would reciprocate by cheating on him. I hooked up with a guy, he was the second person I

had ever had sex with and he basically turned around and tried to pimp me out to the rest of the skinheads. I didn't get that that was what was going on because I didn't know anything about men at all. I just thought that maybe they thought I was pretty. I had a little bit of a trauma when he snuck me out of the house one night and he took me to a party with older…I mean 20 year old skinheads are cute, 40 year white supremacists are gross and dirty and he took me to one of their parties and put me in a bedroom with one and I remember him saying 'oh this girl, she'll sleep with you,' and he left me there with a man I had never met. And the guy was coming onto me and its then I figured out exactly what my purpose was there. Fortunately, he was respectful and probably didn't want his third felony. And, I said 'do you know I am fourteen,' and he said 'are you serious?' and I said 'yea, I am only fourteen years old.' So, fortunately he did take me home. But, that could have gone much worse, much, much worse. Yea, I still remember where the house was and what it smelled like. But, that was, it should have been more of an eye opener than it was but it wasn't and I continued to stay with the boyfriend I had at the time and this other guy who did eventually get busted more than once for statutory rape.

I have, obviously through recovery and meeting different women on a program, I made a couple of really close guy friends who are like 'I can't believe I didn't treat women better, I can't believe that I didn't think…that this was wrong.' But it was sanctioned; it was like keep your woman in line. You know, and as I understood it, the glass ceiling, the best that you could do was baby breed for the white race. There is no love; there is no love in that. I am sure there are some people who do love their women, but there was no love in what I found. It was just ownership and not even in a protective way, in a 'do as I say,' in a hey I will drop you off at a party so some creepy old man can have sex with you.

Case Study Two

In this segment of a longer interview the interviewee (a former member of a white supremacy gang) describes how she left the movement.

That's when I started to get tired of it. If they couldn't find anyone to pick a fight with when we went out, then they would just fight each other. At that point I was like, you guys this is just stupid. What are you doing? Do you need a fight that bad that you must beat each other up if you can't engage someone else? A lot of it was just boredom I think, wanting to do something and feel something intense and not having it. I don't know, I guess…I wasn't involved in the violence, but I always felt safe. I knew I could go anywhere with them, and even if they weren't there, people knew I was part of that group and people were not going to mess with me. I had struggled with feeling afraid on my own of…of…whatever, as a woman you always have to be wary of men, but with them I didn't have to worry about anything because everybody was afraid of them. All the kids in the scene, and all of us were probably in our young 20s to early 30s. Some were older, but most of us were in our early 20s. There, they ran the city. I don't think it's still like that now; I think it's changed.

I quit hanging out, I had a falling out with a couple of people and so one of the guys, his wife decided she did not like me. She thought that I was after her husband, which I wasn't. We were friends, but I wasn't after him at all. But, she got that into her head and she was quite scary, she was the toughest woman I had ever met. She punched guys out effectively. I was really worried…it just became too uncomfortable, I was afraid she was going to come after me at some point. I kinda started not hanging out with them. I ended up getting married and then a friend of mine who was really involved too, he didn't like my husband, he didn't think he was good enough for me, (and maybe he also liked me as well). So, we got in a huge fight and me and my husband were out of the group. My husband was kinda in the group before we met, but not as much as I was. They were my friends, rather than his, but he would hang out and I met him through them. He lived in a different city and he just wasn't into it as much.

So, at that point I was afraid to go out again because I was now on the other side of this. And, I didn't want to get caught out and have something happen because they were brutal, they were ruthless, they put people in the hospital. It was dangerous and it would have been dangerous to go out. It was a really depressing point of my life, it was awful, I felt like I had lost my gang and my social life. I was excommunicated from the gang, it was really hard. I didn't have any other friends. My best friend from childhood had gotten married and moved to the U.K. at the same time I had moved to Georgia. She wasn't around anymore, and I was desperately lonely and felt like a shut in.

I started getting into politics, I can't really remember how. At that point, I was probably around 25, I was working full time, but never really able to get ahead. The same with my ex-husband, we could never really make it and all this time we were told it's because Mexicans have taken your jobs and I was thinking, literally never has that happened once. Literally, never was I denied a job because a Mexican person took my job – it never happened. I started thinking about it more and after that first crack in the facade, the whole ideology started to unravel. The first time Obama ran for president, my mind-set had changed enough that I voted for him.

Once I realised that the whole racial thing wasn't as I previously believed it to be, I started reading more and more about it, I suppose a lot of stuff I read online, but I read books as well. Once I went that way, I went all the way into it and one thing led to another and I realised the whole racial thing is just stupid. First off with the history, black people in the South, of course they are going to feel that way, of course they are going to hate white people. Their parents and grandparents were subjected to horrible injustices and violence! Why would they not feel anger and distrust? I would if I was in that position. And so, I was able to understand that, and just grow up more, and realise as an adult, it's not just my tiny little view of the world, I was able to understand more of the bigger picture and it made sense to me. So, now I am completely opposite, totally opposite. Back then, to see myself now, I would have thought I was a race traitor.

It was a long time of involvement during a very formative period of my life, 13 to my mid-twenties, and it was a long process out of it. But, I had a lot of time to think in my house, when I was too afraid to leave. I had a lot of time to read and think about things. If that fall out hadn't happened, I don't know, I really don't know. I mean I hope I would have eventually left, but who knows. My white supremacy was really strong; it's hard for me to know myself because I believed it so hard. I think that is why I was so easily accepted into racist groups. I was never technically a skinhead, I was more punk rock, but my convictions were very strong and I was really sharp witted and sarcastic and able to espouse those types of views easily and effectively. I was really into the music and it was just easy for me. And, I was cute and young, which tends to grant you extra privilege anywhere in life. I was able to move through all those groups really easily. I myself was so misogynistic at the time. I am still grappling with that. The racism, I am passed that, but it took a long time to recognise that in myself. I always hated other women; I felt that they were weak. I think a lot of it was me having bad self-esteem and projecting on other people. I always hung out with guys; almost all my friends were guys (aside from my very best friend). I was very much a part of that culture of hating women, because definitely that was a big part of the white supremacist ideology. Calling them names, talking down to them, and certainly some of those guys were violent with their girlfriends. It's weird because my mom was a really strong role model as a woman, she did not take rubbish from any man. I think I felt that way about myself but for some reason I didn't for other woman. I did not respect other women or see them as strong. But, I also think it is part of our culture too, like Southern culture, women just aren't…I don't know, just aren't respected as equal. The men higher up in the skinhead group would say women have to submit to the white man, you have to have white babies, you are here to support us. That bit too was what made me never technically join because I was like, no way. I didn't even want kids. I was like; I am not here to have babies for you guys, no. But, at the same time I was such a jerk because I was fine for that to happen to other women. I didn't care, but for me I was like no, I am better than that.

Case Study Three

In this segment of a longer interview the interviewee (a former member of a white supremacy gang) describes how she left the movement.

P: I mean everything I was doing was like risky behavior. There's a lot of really twisted and so much of it does not make any sense, you cannot make it make sense. What I think is just so crazy now and what a lot of people on the outside don't necessarily jump to is the contradictory roles that women are placed in.

I: What are the contradictory roles?

P: Well there's that whole traditional you know 'women's place' kind of expectation but women are also expected to be very tough, to be violent if necessary, to be like

well versed on all this propaganda and the conspiracies, the whole belief system. Women are told "you're our most precious commodity" "you're the mothers of the white race," "you're going to be cherished" and women are placed on a pedestal in this way but then at the same time you say the wrong thing and you get a backhand and you know there is a lot of abuse especially intimate partner violence but it's not always just that. There was one time that I was visiting with some skinheads in Atlanta and there was a girl I had beat up a couple years before that the leader of this group knew and we started talking about it and he was like "oh yeah I heard about you and what you did to her you know that was messed up" and I was like "well what did you hear because she deserved it and I did it because this one asked me to" and he got to a point where he was like "I don't want to talk about it anymore just shut up" and I'm not that kind of person like "you don't talk to me like that" so I told him to shut up he got up and BAM (slapped me) and the other people there were like "I'm telling you right now if you want to stay breathing you need to just shut your mouth, we are taking you into this room and you're going to go to sleep and not come out, he's not going to see your face again tonight and you may stay alive" and I was like "I will knock him right upside his head" but that's the kind of stuff that happens and that group was the Hammer Skins and they're supposed to be this great big or they were you know a very well known well-respected group but that's the kind of stuff that happens. Everybody that I've met who was a former they were looking to fill some other need, they may not have known it and maybe not a need like acceptance or belonging, something like that but sometimes people who have issues like you know they're narcissists or they need to have a certain amount of power or something like that. I have never met a completely normal person who's healthy and happy that gets involved in that stuff.

Case Studies Analysis

In 'When Women Are the Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy,' the Anti-Defamation League (2018) argues:

There is a robust symbiosis between misogyny and white supremacy; the two ideologies are powerfully intertwined (p.5).

In the above case studies provide examples of how that ideological relationship manifests in the lived experiences of three women. They demonstrate how the ideological interplay of misogyny and white supremacy enforces particular group dynamics, often acting as a mechanism through which white female members can be controlled, exploited, and manipulated. The third case study is a good example of this, where white female members were revered on condition of adopting 'traditional' roles, and experienced physical violence for behaviour perceived as transgressing their gendered place. The existence of a mythological white female

figure who female members strived towards becoming combined with violent retaliation for non-conformity created group dynamics that allowed male members to maintain control over female behaviour. In this instance, the relationship between misogyny and white supremacy served purposes related to the distribution of power within the group. Case study one reports a similar experience when describing how '*all the women just took their lumps because you know, they were kept safe*.' The price paid for the perceived benefits of group membership, safety from out-group dangers was a lack of safety from physical harm from within the group. While it is well established that white supremacy VE promotes racial hierarchy, the lived experiences of these women indicate it also creates gender hierarchy, placing white female members of such groups as inferior to white male members with misogyny potentially offering the ideological justification for that inferior place.

J. Daniels argues, "*controlling sexuality is a key feature of white supremacy*" (2009, p.75). In the case of the three women interviewed Daniels assertion rings true. In each case the women experienced group influence over their sexual experiences, including sexual exploitation and trafficking (case study one), internalised misogyny towards other women (case study two), and for all three the coercive steering of female sexual relationships towards traditional roles, control over reproductive choices, and the provision of sexual services to male members. Again, the case studies provide illustrations of what the intersection of misogyny and white supremacy looks like in women's lives and how misogyny creates a gender dynamic within white supremacy movements that exploits female members in order to serve the perceived interests of men. The intersection functions at an ideological level, but is fundamentally rooted in the distribution of power. Gender is weaponized against women to ensure power flows towards and is held by male members giving them freedom to assert their will as they see fit both in the group and in private within domestic relationships with female members.

Finally, it is worth noting that in two of the case studies, pre-group membership gendered violence or societal gender standards were articulated as influencing factors in their membership to white supremacist groups. Though not included in the excerpt for this paper, case study three also articulated gender violence as an influencing factor in her future membership in the longer interview. In case study one, experience of sexual abuse within the home and silence around that abuse amongst other family members created an adverse childhood experience that potentially made her vulnerable to influence in your teenage years to grooming by white supremacist groups as they offered a feeling of safety she lacked in childhood. While, in case study two, gender norms linked to Southern USA culture

desensitised her to ideas around traditional gender roles so that exposure to them within the movement, did not cause adverse reactions. It is important to highlight that while the three women's experiences suggest misogyny and white supremacy are significantly connected, gender bias and societal misogyny potentially create conditions that make being drawn into such movements less turbulent for women vulnerable to radicalisation towards white supremacist VE.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to draw out lessons for policy makers and practitioners on understanding and responding to the links between misogyny and white supremacist VE. Relying on case studies of three female former members of white supremacist groups it has argued:

1. Women who have lived experience at the intersection of misogyny and white supremacy potentially offer important insights into how the interplay between the two manifests in reality.
2. Misogyny and white supremacy are linked both ideologically and in VE group structures, culture, and dynamics.
3. Misogyny acts as an instrument through which male members can assert their will over female members. Misogyny functioned as a way to assert gendered power in the lived experiences of the women in this study.

Recommendations

Based on the case studies presented this paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Women with lived experiences at the intersection of misogyny and white supremacy VE should be engaged in research and policy circles in order to better understand and respond to the threats such movements pose.
2. Further mapping of the multiple ways in which misogyny and white supremacy VE interplay is needed to develop dynamic understandings and robust responses.

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13

ADDRESSING THE THREAT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH HIGHLY-TARGETED, FEMALE-SPECIFIC ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM NORTHEASTERN SYRIA AND AL-HOL CAMP

Alistair Harris

Gender Mainstreaming in P/CVE Programming

The rationale for seeking to reach women and girls in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) communications programming is unambiguous; it ensures efforts are both more effective and equitable. As the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) outline, "An effective CVE approach recognizes and promotes the significant and varying roles of women and girls at all levels, including in families, communities, civil society, educational institutions, the private sector, and in government" (GCTF, 2014). The GCTF conclude that women and girls "can help formulate and deliver tailored CVE responses that are more localized, inclusive, credible, resonant, and there-fore sustainable and effective" (ibid).

This paper is based on The Stabilisation Network's (TSN) experience of operationalizing the intent to mainstream gender in a highly challenging environment - Syria. Some aspects of this have been outlined in the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security – Implementing Strategic Outcome 6: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (2018). This insightful resource details the key steps required to mainstream gender in P/CVE programming. The starting point is a gender-sensitive conflict analysis of the violent extremist context. This is comprised of several facets, including understanding existing gender inequalities and gender-related grievances in the Violent Extremism (VE) context; the gendered ideologies of Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) and how they are using gender in their recruitment strategies; whether, how and why the VEO is perpetrating gender-based violence (GBV); the roles played by women/girls/men/boys in VEOs, and; the

impact the VEO is having on gender relations and gender equality. The report goes on to recommend women's meaningful partnership and leadership in program delivery and the need to "recognize and respond to the ways that gender impacts on individuals' identities and agency; how this relates to their grievances, opportunities, resilience and vulnerabilities in contexts where Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) operate" (HM Government, 2018: p.5).

In seeking to elucidate from a practitioners' perspective how TSN proceeded to target women with P/CVE communications in Syria, a couple of caveats are necessary at the outset. This paper will primarily focus on online communications, with some reference to and conclusions about hybrid or linked online/offline approaches. Purely offline communications activities with vulnerable women are not the focus of this presentation, despite the enormous merit of that approach. The data used for this paper is drawn from action research over the last three years across Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, largely for project design or evaluation purposes. The primary focus of the paper is, however, Syria. In the interest of safeguarding program participants, partners, beneficiaries, and donors, it has been necessary to obscure some identifying details relating to the program. We do not believe this materially detracts from the utility of these insights for others seeking to access vulnerable and hard-to-reach women in conflict-affected and unstable environments using online communications.

Our experience in Syria confirmed the following. A (gendered) conflict analysis does not stop at the main perpetrators of violence. Examining the multiplicity of roles played by women, we need to ask (as feminist theorists such as Cynthia Enloe have done before), who are those (presumably male) perpetrators most intimately associated with? What do their wives/mothers/sisters think about their actions? The more conservative a woman is, the more likely this conservativism will have an impact on other relationships in her life, e.g. the relationship between religious conservatism and reduced support for democratic institutions is stronger for women than for men. Gender is relational – men and women jointly co-create their identities, and indeed, women are central to the construction of masculinities (Goldner, 1991; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Myrtinnen, Naujoks and El-Bushra, 2014). Whilst there is a knowledge gap relating to gender roles in P/CVE, emerging data suggests women play active roles in P/CVE efforts, and are not just passive victims, as assumed (Alexander, 2019; Winterbotham, 2018). TSN's data shows that many women, including those in typically conservative and/or war-torn societies, aspire to exercise active roles in society, including in the labor force, as a means to contribute and also to achieve P/CVE objectives. Finding space to speak to these women, individually and in plenary, can encourage offline pro-social action (Winterbotham, 2018).

There is however a knowledge gap in the strategic communications and marketing sectors about female behaviors online (choice of language, platform etc.) in Arabic, and specifically in the Levant. Most Arabic and English research on this matter is focused on the Gulf, where internet penetration can reach as high as 100% in some countries (Kemp, 2019). Messaging gender-focused content to a public platform with a mixed (or predominantly male) audience can function in some contexts. However, it most often faces risks, such as further entrenching stereotyping of women, limited engagement, a backlash from the established (and potentially hard-won) online (male) audience and the possibility of reinforcing gendered roles or doing harm (Birchall, 2018).

From Problem Analysis to Solutions Design

The operational impetus to begin to understand this issue was low female reach and engagement rates on otherwise high-performing P/CVE strategic communications pages. TSN was achieving around 12-18% female reach in Syria, despite targeted campaigns on public platforms. Elsewhere in the region was better, but still not ideal; 30% female reach in Lebanon (but 20% female reach in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon) and up to 40% female reach in some communities in Iraq, but much lower figures in rural communities, conservative areas, and/or areas directly ruled or impacted by Daesh. In some situations (including active conflict areas) it was not always possible to reach women offline. Depending on the context and time period, reaching women offline can be expensive, time consuming, risky, not as scalable, and hard to track in terms of an objective evidence-base for measurement. As such, TSN needed to devise alternative approaches for more effective targeting of women online in Syria.

TSN began its approach to devising alternatives through a literature review in Arabic relating to female-specific uses of language online (with a focus on Levant audiences), gendered behaviors online and female preferences on digital media in the Levant in Arabic. This confirmed there was limited academic, digital, communications or marketing data on which to draw. To supplement this, TSN undertook sentiment analysis of thousands of online comments and interactions on social media pages developed as part of our campaigns,

conducted network analysis of female Twitter accounts in Arabic, and interviewed female activists and page followers to begin to build a picture of female preferences to be used operationally.

Research Results

Analysis of the research conducted in north eastern Syria confirmed that women prefer to communicate in a networked way, their primary preference being with individuals they already know, and their secondary preference being with those (women) who bear social, environmental or ideological similarities. Women also tend to use a more informal rendering of Arabic online, whilst men write more formally. Additionally, vulnerable women in the target audience (Levant-based, vulnerable to violent extremist narratives) prefer to discuss topics in plenary that are more personal, whereas males in the target audience prefer to discuss 'harder' topics such as geo-politics, war, religion and insecurity. Women feel safer discussing what they consider to be taboo subjects in a closed, structured group, because they fear speaking about such matters in public could incite online harassment and manifest as offline violence. Of note, this conclusion has also been corroborated by research from Amnesty International (2018).

Vulnerable women's access to digital media varies at different times in a conflict trajectory. Access to social media alone implies the female target audience has some relative degree of social privilege – access to a smart phone or the internet – as well as being literate. They also potentially have the approval of men in the household to view social media. However, from TSN's data, these women are often the first to wish to engage more rigorously in public life and give back – and so arevaluable target audience members. When women do have access to social media, their preferences are Facebook and WhatsApp.

Operationalizing Research

As a result of a nuanced understanding of the female Target Audience's (TA) online behavior, TSN's local female partners created online safe spaces as components of strategic communications projects in targeted locations in the Levant. The spaces were curated by a team of administrators, who not only provided content but also stimulated audience self-creation of content, and engaged in one-to-one mentoring and conversations with particularly vulnerable TA members. This included conversations that were taken off the already

closed group, into WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. These private spaces predominantly broadcast P/CVE content in an authentic, locally-appropriate manner, but also met information needs by providing texts, online learning modules, films (that can be collaboratively watched), and links to learning, important local information or other types of information e.g. health. In addition, culturally appropriate discussions relating to women's role in Islam and Islamic history were introduced, indirectly countering 'idealized' portrayals of 'appropriate' women's roles perpetuated by VEOs. The evaluation of this endeavor was done by case study approach and observing the interactions of group members over time.

The impact of the project was the creation of a highly active digital community, with up to 1000+ user-generated pieces of content per month. Dialogue was successfully generated and curated amongst vulnerable women. A closed female group among the target audience also completed online learning modules designed to promote agency and build individual resilience. Female audience members also reported feeling more confident about engaging in decision-making in the home and in civic life, reporting anecdotal incidents of change. Women reported feeling more confident in their ability to protect their children from violent extremist influences, particularly in regard to manipulation, brainwashing, and trauma. In perhaps the single biggest indicator of success, the platform still functions one year after project closure and is completely user-led with no external material support. These outcomes confirm that "grassroots Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) are able to reach out and interact with vulnerable individuals to offer them purpose and a strong sense of belonging. WROs are also able to provide different interpretations of religious references" (HM Government, 2018, p.11). The results are also in line with one of the good practices on women and CVE recommended by the GCT, namely that women "are well placed to effect change, especially at the community-level, and should be empowered to take ownership in the development and delivery of inclusive narratives to violent extremism and terrorism" (GCTF, 2014, p.11).

On the one hand, there is a need for increased research into the use by vulnerable females of digital media, expanding to include dark social (particularly WhatsApp and Telegram), but also Facebook Messenger (bots). On the other hand, there is a need to undertake further evaluations of female-focused, targeted online communications/safe spaces against P/CVE outcomes, compared to online/offline hybrid communications campaigns. This will help con-

tribute to the growing evidence base of knowledge surrounding women's role in P/CVE.

The Case of Al-Hol Camp

There is a pressing necessity to take the lessons of programs such as this in designing communications programming in the al-Hol camp in Syria, which serves as an incubator for violent extremism. Al-Hol is located on the Syrian border with Iraq in northeast Hasaka province. Originally created to house Iraqi refugees fleeing Daesh, the population of al-Hol increased over 680% during the military campaign against Daesh in Baghouz. Since December 2018, more than 60,000 people have arrived in the camp having suffered significant trauma through exposure to intense hostilities and life under extreme deprivation and repression. At the time of writing, the camp pop-ulation numbers approximately 68,000 residents, 94% of whom are women and children (48,000 children, including 20,000 under the age of 5). 86% of the residents are either Iraqi (45%) or Syrian (41%). 11,000-plus foreign women and children are based at the camp, from as many as 62 countries. 7,000 of the foreigners are children. 65% of the foreign-held individuals are under the age of twelve, 3,500 children do not have birth documents. To date, approximately only 1,400 foreign women and children have been repatriated (Zelin, 2019, p.3).

While a small percentage of the women who fled to the camp were the foreign wives of Daesh's leaders, the majority were poor, often illiterate, Syrian women who had resided through-out Daesh's former Caliphate – over 90% in Dayr al-Zawr. While most of these women are not hardened Daesh supporters, the density and scale of co-location of individuals with exposure to Daesh's influence, together with appalling camp conditions (from January 2019 to the beginning of September 2019, 409 children died in the camp) and ineffective security, create a potent enabling environment for a hardening of grievances that leads to the risk of radicalization.

In the camp, an estimated 3,000 female Daesh supporters and 7,000 children are housed in annexes. Despite efforts by Kurdish forces, there are continued security incidents in these sections of the camp, including violence against Kurdish guards and other women. While mobile phones are strictly prohibited in the annexes, women manage to evade restrictions through bribery and smuggling. As such, Daesh supporters in the annexes remain able to access the

group's propaganda and messaging, mainly through closed Telegram groups. With few counter-narrative efforts targeting these women, they remain a captive audience in a communications space dominated by Daesh.

Going back to the start of 2019, multiple TSN partners reported that women affiliated with Daesh held 'secret' meetings with other 'civilian' women in al-Hol (TSN project team, personal communications, January-February, 2019). Initially, this was conducted by sharing voice recordings and sermons from Daesh ideologues on smartphone messaging applications, including talks on Islam by former founder of the Islamic State in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Ibrahim Al-Rubaish, a former senior leader of Al-Qa'eda in the Arabian Peninsula. Following this grooming phase, the women meet surreptitiously to discuss the Islamic State, where they attempt to recruit more women by justifying and explaining Daesh's ideology. More overtly, Daesh-affiliated women harass other women for not wearing niqabs, a continuation of the work of the all-female al-Khansaa Brigade, the Hisbah morality police created by Daesh. Transgressions are punished by stabbings, beatings, and the burning down of the tents of the transgressors. The group's new strategy of insurgency lends itself well to exploiting lax surveillance and scrutiny of fully-veiled women to propagate Daesh's ideology, and in certain circumstances the smuggling of illicit material into the camps. Indeed, in most cases being a woman privileges free movement and activity in the camps. However, when it does not, Daesh-affiliated women bribe Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) guards to allow freedom of activity and movement. Multiple TSN sources (TSN project team, personal communications, January-February, 2019) have reported that Daesh members are the most well-off and have bribed guards to allow this sort of activity, and in some cases both male and female Daesh members have escaped to the Turkish border near Tal Abyad.

Daesh's oft-repeated unofficial slogan was *baqiya wa tatamaddad* (remaining and expanding). It is very clear that the 'expanding' part of this slogan is over, at least for now, and it is in this context that the *baqiya* element and the relevance of women for the group takes on increased importance. Women have played a central role in Daesh's propaganda machine and for this idea of *baqiya*, both ideologically and for the 'caliphate'—a 'state' needs women and children raised 'correctly' to remain and expand. On February 25 last year, a reporter in al-Hol filmed groups of women being transported from al-Baghouz shouting from the trucks, "*al-dawla al-Islamiyya baqiya*," (the Islamic State will remain). Another reporter documented a woman proclaiming, "My son

will grow up to become a jihadist," after stepping off the back of a truck that had transported them from al-Baghouz. This highlights the very real and remaining convictions of many female Daesh members to jihad and to the Islamic State's ideology.

As Daesh shifts towards insurgency, it may be that these apparently expanding ranks of women either sympathetic to, or full supporters of, Daesh will provide the group with not just propaganda as in the past but also ranks of fighters in the future. This strategy will aim to exploit socioeconomic and political grievances to set the conditions for its future resurgence and its hoped-for eventual return to territorial control. It is very possible that the work being done by women in the camps will aid Daesh in executing this new strategy.

Based on TSN's primary sources and analysis of Daesh propaganda, it was possible to confirm that the group positions its female members as 'victims' of the Kurdish SDF and the West in an attempt to raise funds and recruit men by playing on men's need to defend and regain 'honor' (TSN Spot Report, March 2019). Women have also become the group's enduring base of support to ensure the ideology lives on as they give birth to and raise the next generation of fighters. In a TSN report from March 2019 we concluded that "Female Daesh supporters may be of more importance than men in the group's coming phase of insurgency by reproducing, upholding, and spreading the group's ideology." In short, women are vital to the group's survival.

A dive into the analysis of current Daesh propaganda further illustrates this. After the fall of al-Baghouz, TSN's sources on the ground (TSN project team, personal communications, March, 2019) reported that Daesh Telegram accounts circulated an image of an SDF member giving bread to a group of female Daesh members with the caption, "This is the case of our Muslim sisters who are held captive in the infamous PKK camps…This atheist pig is… humiliating them in return for the bread and food of their children who suffer from diseases, hunger and poor health care." Another highly circulated and gruesome image that received more than 4,000 views in a Telegram group of only 700 followers showed the completely charred corpse of a young woman in a tent in al-Hol camp. The caption, which received more than 5,600 views, read, "The burned-out tent of one of our sisters held as a prisoner with her children in al-Hol camp, which led to the death of her 7-year-old daughter as a result of a fire inside the tent…Save your Muslim sisters and do not let them down!!" Other images used 'humiliated' women as a strategy to support

Daesh's calls for financial support. As reported by TSN's sources in the camp, members of Daesh-affiliated Telegram channels also shared images of young boys praying while commenting that these are the next generation of Daesh fighters that are going to avenge Daesh's losses in Iraq and Syria. In an open source video, a female Daesh member stated directly, "we left so we can give birth to the next generation of *mujahideen*…our men have died, but our women haven't. With the permission of God, we will bring up this generation, and with the will of God they will become *mujahideen*." Despite the objectively terrible living conditions in al-Baghouz and the Islamic State in general, men and women were driven by generally the same ideological desire to actually live in an 'Islamic State.' Indeed, one woman who surrendered outside al-Baghouz stated, "Our tents were like palaces because they were in the Islamic State" (Sanchez, 2019). These ideological motivations persist for many women.

So what are we doing collectively to address this issue? High profile cases include that of Shamina Begum in the UK – who was stripped of her nationality with her child subsequently dying in the camp. To date, hundreds have died in al-Hol and other camps from malnutrition, dehydration, disease and neglect. In Begum's case, she was a child when she was radicalized and left to join the Islamic State in Syria. Many nations fear they lack the legal framework to process returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) (Stigall, 2020). As such, the international response to date is incoherent.

Whilst we collectively consider our options, events are changing on the ground. The US military pull-out and Turkish incursion placed massive pressure on the SDF. As the conflict hit the Ain Issa camp, hundreds of women and children linked to Daesh fled and the camp is now closed. Dozens, potentially hundreds, of Daesh-linked families have begun to flee al-Hol since the SDF reduced personnel at the camp, prioritizing the more existential task of fending off the Turkish incursion. This increases the risks emanating from al-Hol and reinforces concerns about it serving as an incubator of extremism. Daesh has a long track record of breaking people out of prisons (e.g. the Breaking the Walls campaign in Iraq in 2012 and 2013 (Peritz: 2019)) and if they detect the SDF are vulnerable, there will likely be an attempt to liberate the families from the camp. In September 2019, the now deceased Daesh leader Baghdadi himself stated:

> On behalf of your brothers and sisters, act in order to save them, and destroy the gates that hold them. "Release the captive" is a command

> and advice from your prophet. Therefore, do not fall short in rescuing them, if you are determined to break their shackles by force. And lie in wait in every ambush for their butchers, the investigators and judges and those aggressors who afflicted them. How can a Muslim accept to live while Muslim women are suffering in the displacement camps and the prisons of humiliation…while they receive nothing from those who claim and profess to bear the issues of the umma but abandonment, slander, backstabbing, defacement and incitement against them! O God, free the captives…and grant the best deliverance to the prisoners…return them to their loved ones safe and sound, and keep for them their religion and make them steadfast on the truth (Al-Baghdadi, 2019).

Outside al-Hol, Sunni Arab tribes feel betrayed. Their fear of imminent military attacks from the Syrian regime, in the event that the regime regains control over North Eastern Syria, has led Arab tribes to consider affiliating with Daesh – to be afforded the group's protection. A non-public quantitative survey was conducted with 600 adults between 13-25th October 2019 in Raqqa and Hasakeh. 57% agreed that "living under Daesh would be preferable to living under the control of Assad" (ORB, 2019). It is Assad gaining ground more than the withdrawal of US troops itself that increases the chance of Daesh (or something similar) returning. According to the same survey, 62% of respondents said it is 'very/somewhat likely' that Daesh will increase their control again in the coming months. As long as conflict persists in Syria (and Iraq), Daesh will opportunistically leverage the situation in their favor.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper addressed the importance and the challenges of reaching women in Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) with effective Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) messaging. The paper concludes that, when operationalizing the intent to mainstream gender in a highly challenging environment such as Syria, and especially al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria, there are critical aspects to consider about the way vulnerable women prefer to communicate. It was an evidence-based, nuanced understanding of the Target Audience that generated the opportunity for an impactful project with the creation of a highly active digital community and the effective promotion of female agency and gender sensitive individual resilience.

It is very easy to list the challenges, but what should be done rather than simply admiring the problem? Taking the lessons from TSN's broader work in Syria, it is clear the international community and its partners should be working directly in al-Hol to undermine Daesh's narrative and build resilience among vulnerable individuals in the camp. In order to do this we need to 1) understand the grievances and vulnerabilities and how these affect radicalization pathways; 2) build resilience among vulnerable populations through offering positive alternative pathways and opportunities for building confidence and social support; and 3) undermine Daesh's narrative of victimhood and suffering through targeted strategic communications as well as providing psychosocial support for women and children whilst enhancing service delivery in the camp.

Interventions elsewhere, online and offline, have demonstrated that targeted P/CVE strategic communication campaigns can reduce the risk of radicalization and recruitment amongst vulnerable women, promote resilience, and inoculate target audiences. There is now an urgent need to take these lessons and apply them to perhaps the single largest concentration of critically vulnerable women and children: the residents of al-Hol camp in Syria.

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This edited volume aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on P/CVE, providing the latest evidence from different regions of the world. The essays in this volume were written by academics and practitioners covering a variety of thematic and regional areas, as well as providing recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and future research.

Hedayah

countering violent extremism