



THE CHALLENGE OF JIHADIST RADICALISATION

In Europe and Beyond

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OF JIHADIST
RADICALISATION**
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2017

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PREFACE

Herman van Rompuy, *President, European Policy Centre*

Today Europe finds itself on the frontline in the fight against terrorism and jihadist radicalisation. Over the past fourteen months, the horrendous terrorist attacks that have taken place in France, Germany and Belgium, as well as in Turkey, Tunisia, and elsewhere around the world, have claimed hundreds of lives. As a Belgian national, the three bombs that were detonated in my country, in the departure hall of the Brussels International Airport in Zaventem, and at the Maelbeek Metro station, a few hundred metres from key EU institutions, was a particularly traumatic moment for me. In many ways, **the attacks of 22 March were Belgium's own 9/11**, representing the worst terrorist attacks committed on Belgian territory in the country's modern history. The attacks demonstrate a clear shift in the resolve and ability of jihadist terrorists to inflict mass casualties on urban populations, and are devised to **induce a high state of well-publicised terror**.

The attacks have highlighted the growing phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation in many EU Member States, and far beyond. As with the Paris, Rouen, Nice and Berlin attacks, the Brussels bombings were carried out in the name of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS/Daesh), by young people who had been radicalised with several of those involved having travelled to Syria to fight for ISIS/Daesh. While some of the attacks were carried out by **'lone wolves'**, others were **well-coordinated, complex attacks by groups of militants**. The carefully planned attacks have emphasised the elevated threat to Europe from a fanatic minority. A network of people born and raised in Europe, often radicalised within a relatively short period of time, have proven to be willing and able to act as facilitators and active accomplices in terrorism. The attacks exposed the failure of counter-terrorism policies across the continent which had left Europe particularly vulnerable. **The danger emanating from jihadist radicalisation has now become one of the most serious threats to European security**, and to the **values that the European Union was built on**, remaining on an upward trajectory.

The problem of tackling jihadist radicalisation has become a Europe-wide issue. It requires intensified **cooperation and intelligence-sharing across Member States** through enhanced cross-border cooperation between relevant counter-terrorist authorities, as well as with key

third countries and regions including Turkey, the Western Balkans, Northern Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf. Analysing objectively the work carried out by security and intelligence forces, as well as other governmental authorities, nationally and transnationally, in order to properly determine where weak spots are, along with re-evaluating integration and assimilation policies in Europe which have, to a large extent, failed is also of crucial importance. Member States need to **invest in education, housing, job opportunities** and the like to **foster the integration of Muslim communities living in urban banlieues**. There is also an urgent need to empower civil society groups and role models in Muslim communities and increase their resilience vis-à-vis the threat of jihadist radicalisation and the ensuing self-alienation from, and potentially violent antagonism against, European societies and values.

Futhermore, it will also require greater cooperation and input from the expert community and think tanks working on the issue, including the one of which I am President, the European Policy Centre (EPC).

Furthermore, it will also require greater cooperation and input from the expert community and think tanks working on the issue, including the one of which I am President, the European Policy Centre (EPC). In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, the EPC, in partnership with the European Foundation for Democracy (EFD), and in cooperation with the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), developed a research and event project entitled **'The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalisation for the EU and Beyond'** which resulted in this multi-authored book. The book, which contains contributions from a number of well-established experts, follows a series multi-stakeholder events that took place throughout 2016, focusing on the various dimensions of jihadist radicalisation, including the phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation, radicalisation in schools, mosques and universities, radicalisation and social media, the geopolitical aspects in key regions, and national counter-violent extremism experiences in some key EU Member States.

This book aims to provide relevant findings and policy recommendations for the EU and its Member States in order to address jihadist radicalisation. **Further EPC-EFD work on this topic will continue throughout 2017.** I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this publication along with my colleagues in the EPC who are managing this project, Amanda Paul, Andrea Frontini, Orhan Dede and Francesca Fabbri, and their counterparts from EFD, Roberta Bonazzi, Alexander Ritzmann, Demir Murat Seyrek, and John Duhig ■

PREFACE

Roberta Bonazzi, *Founder and President, European Foundation for Democracy*

When the European Foundation for Democracy (EFD) was established in 2005, the overall debate on terrorism and the phenomenon of radicalisation was in its early days but already showing signs of significantly polarised positions. The goal of EFD was to contribute to an **informed debate by developing in-house expertise and involving a broad range of experts and practitioners with different cultural and professional backgrounds**. Our efforts have focused on prevention of radicalisation and on supporting initiatives to strengthen resilience of communities by empowering credible pro-democratic voices.

Today, as the threats of terrorism and radicalisation have become more complex and multifaceted, we take pride in our close cooperation with the European Policy Centre (EPC) and the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) as we continue to share our expertise with the policy and other engaged communities.

Today, as the threats of terrorism and radicalisation have become more complex and multifaceted, we take pride in our close cooperation with the European Policy Centre (EPC) and the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) as we continue to share our expertise with the policy and other engaged communities.

Our joint programme has spanned one year, with its launch event taking place on the day of the Brussels terrorist attacks of 22 March 2016: a **poignant reminder of the need for all actors to learn from others across Europe and beyond its borders**. But also a stark confirmation that prevention of radicalisation needs to be at the forefront of any effective and comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy. This collection of papers reflects the diverse and multi-layered discussion in the debates which took place as part of this programme, highlighting the many dimensions of radicalisation and how we can address it.

The degree to which civil society is encouraged and supported by governments and institutions to undertake this work with vulnerable communities and individuals will be a key factor in ensuring that those on the cusp of being radicalised, or already radicalised, are supported in turning away from the path of violence and extremism.

The **role of prevention in protecting our societies from terrorist attacks cannot be overstated**. The degree to which civil society is encouraged and supported by governments and institutions to undertake this work with vulnerable communities and individuals will be a key factor in ensuring that those on the cusp of being radicalised, or already radicalised, are supported in turning away from the path of violence and extremism. This is one of the key ways to ensure that all our towns and cities become safer. The truism that **prevention is better than cure** has never seemed so apposite.

I would like to thank all colleagues at the European Foundation for Democracy, the European Policy Centre and the Counter Extremism Project for their **commitment, creativity and dedication in ensuring the success of this joint programme** ■

A ubiquitous challenge:

EUROPE AND JIHADIST RADICALISATION

On **22 March 2016**, two coordinated suicide attacks hit the city of Brussels. One targeted the departure hall of Zaventem international airport, while the other blew up a metro train carriage at the Maelbeek station in the **heart of the European quarter**.

The **deadly attacks killed thirty-two civilians** and deeply shook the daily lives of ordinary citizens, local authorities and the various international institutions that populate the capital of Europe. It represented yet another episode of a **disconcerting wave of terror** which has plagued Europe for more than two years now.

All this has abruptly put a long-underrated phenomenon under the spotlight, namely the one of (mostly home-grown) jihadist radicalisation across Europe, as well as its transnational ramifications within and outside Europe.

The deadliest instances have included a shooting at the Jewish Museum of Brussels in May 2014, the massacre at the headquarters of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine and elsewhere in Paris in January 2015, the coordinated attacks hitting the Bataclan theatre, the Stade de France, a restaurant and a bar, again in Paris during the following November, as well as the later attacks by lorries ploughing into crowds of people in Nice in July 2016 and in Berlin in December 2016. These were **accompanied by smaller-scale attacks or attempted attacks** in other European countries, including France, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom, pushing the **death toll to over 300 casualties in 21 months**.

This series of appalling tragedies came on top of other major terror attacks outside the European Union (EU), featuring among others the assault on the Bardo Museum in Tunis in March 2015, the bombing of a Shia mosque in Kuwait City the following June, the attack on Atatürk Airport in Istanbul and the shooting in a night club in Orlando, Florida, both in June 2016, along with the attack at the Reina night club in Istanbul in the early hours of 1 January 2017. All this has abruptly put a **long-underrated phenomenon under the spotlight**, namely the one of (mostly home-grown) **jihadist radicalisation across Europe**, as well as its transnational ramifications within and outside Europe.

Although its very notion, exact scope and underlying causes remain a subject of relentless debate in the expert community, radicalisation can be broadly understood as a “**socialisation to extremism**”, which does or has the potential to “**manifest itself in terrorism**”.¹ Once coupled with a violent Islamist ideology, such as (but not only) the one provided by the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS/Daesh), jihadist radicalisation can be regarded as a distinctive phenomenon with specific security, political and broader societal characteristics. These, and in particular its international dimension, due to the centrality of the ‘**Syrian cause**’ for the **recruitment of foreign fighters**, make jihadism rather different from other forms of violent extremism and terrorism as those provided, for instance, by the nationalist/separatist Irish Republic Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in the Basque Countries in Spain and France, or by the far-left Brigade Rosse (BR) in Italy and the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) in Germany.

Once coupled with a violent Islamist ideology, such as (but not only) the one provided by the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS/Daesh), jihadist radicalisation can be regarded as a distinctive phenomenon with specific security, political and broader societal characteristics.

As underlined by a significant amount of official and independent analyses, radicalisation seems to occur “at the intersection of [complex] individual pathways and a societal context”.² In that framework, a multitude of diverse and often interchangeable factors such as political or historic resentment, criminal background, kinship and family networks, the catalysing role of ideologies and socio-economic marginalisation, can all serve as drivers of the jihadist radicalisation process.³ The phenomenon can **affect vulnerable individuals or groups** in various real or virtual societal environments, including schools, universities, mosques, prisons, peripheral suburbs, and the easily accessible and **ever-expanding worldwide web**, particularly via social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, and others.

When it comes to Europe specifically, addressing jihadist radicalisation – and the ensuing violent extremism or fully-fledged terrorism it may generate – is a **high priority for policymakers in the immediate future**, for at least **four distinct but interconnected reasons**.

Looking at the **foreign policy** dimension of the phenomenon, the recent rise of ISIS/Daesh and the foreign fighters challenge, but als

o the past and sadly successful experience of Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations, clearly demonstrate the blurring of dividing lines between internal and external security and, thus, between the domestic and international dimensions of counter-terrorism policies. As such, effectively tackling radicalisation in Europe also entails a better understanding of local drivers in key regions outside Europe, such as in **North Africa**, the **Middle East**, the **Gulf, and beyond**, and more effective cooperation between Europe and the various countries concerned. Prevention and countering of radicalisation can thus offer a much-needed opportunity for Europe to become a stronger and more visible player in an **increasingly challenging international environment**, notably but not solely *vis-à-vis* its unstable Southern neighbourhood.

From a prominent **security** viewpoint, after a relatively long break since its bloodiest peak during the 1970s, **terrorism has come back to Europe with a vengeance**, posing a renewed, asymmetric and highly insidious challenge for European societies and governments alike. The radicalisation of vulnerable individuals – in particular foreign fighters waging jihad in the broader Middle East – provides a threat of a new quality and quantity, which requires a wide range of detection and prevention tools. This includes a truly comprehensive and cross-sector analytical framework by security establishments across Europe – spanning from police forces all the way to intelligence apparatuses.

From a **societal** perspective, as an issue affecting demographically growing but often socio-economically disadvantaged Muslim communities across Europe, **radicalisation provides a litmus test** of the persisting risks of **existential detachment, cultural alienation** as well as **political and religious polarisation** affecting many young individuals from the second or third immigrant generation. At the same time, by acting as a driver of potential societal insulation within Muslim communities, radicalisation can also act as a tangible obstacle to the further, crucial integration of those increasingly important and active sectors of European societies.

¹ See, in particular: Coolsaet, Rik (2016), “All Radicalisation is Local: The Genesis and Drawbacks of an Elusive Concept”, Brussels: Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations, Egmont Paper 84, June 2016, p. 23 available at: http://www.egmontinstitute.be/publication_article/all-radicalisation-is-local/, last accessed on: 6 January 2017. The definition was provided by an Expert Group’s report on radicalisation, submitted to the European Commission in May 2008.

² Coolsaet, Rik (2016), *ibidem*, p. 3.

³ See also: Maggioloni, Paolo and Varvelli, Arturo, “Conclusions” in: Varvelli, Arturo (2016) (ed.), “Jihadist Hotbeds. Understanding Local Radicalization Processes”, Milan: Edizioni Epoké-ISPI, pp. 153-163, available at: <http://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/jihadist-hotbeds-understanding-local-radicalization-processes-15418>, last accessed on: 6 January 2017.

Nonetheless, while the societal element remains important, research indicates that **neither poverty nor socio-economic depreciation are root causes for terrorism in Europe**, especially considering the individual biographies of European jihadists, who are mostly better off than their peers.⁴ In addition, the fact that only some specific, socio-economically marginalised communities produce large numbers of radicalised individuals, while others produce few or none⁵, needs to be considered.

Last but not least, the overall *political* significance of the radicalisation phenomenon, and the need to properly address it, have to be fully understood within the context of the **rise of several populist and extremist movements across Europe**. These movements are eager to exploit the headlines made by terrorism in order to inject a narrative of fear, aimed at undermining the credibility of the policy recipes by mainstream politics, while often scapegoating Muslim and other foreign communities across Europe. This **poisoning attitude** can, in turn, further undermine the already endangered social and political fabric in many European countries⁶ and lead to a '**circle of radicalisation**', where right-wing extremists and radical Islamists feed off each other, becoming even more radicalised in the process.

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Against the background of the geographically and sectorally ubiquitous challenge posed by radicalisation, the member states and institutions of the EU have adopted a number of measures since the early 2000s. These feature, in particular, the release, under the overarching umbrella of the European Agenda on Security from April 2015, of a Communication by the European Commission on "Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism" on 14 June 2016.⁷ The Communication aims to further mobilise and better connect EU tools and policies to support member states in meeting the challenge of radicalisation in seven specific areas, namely: supporting research, evidence-building, monitoring and networking; countering terrorist propaganda; addressing radicalisation in prisons; promoting inclusive education and common EU values; **favouring an inclusive, open and resilient society** and **reaching out to young people**; and **covering the security and international dimensions**

of the phenomenon. This follows earlier, important steps taken by the EU aimed at tackling radicalisation. This included the 2005 EU Counter Terrorism Strategy, the establishment of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in September 2011, and the European Commission's earlier Communication on "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response" of January 2014.⁸

However, despite the enormous pressure placed on many leaders across Europe by public opinion on the **urgency of resolving the terrorist threat**, radicalisation remains a complex and multi-layered challenge which demands comprehensive and long-term policies. Addressing some of the following, underlying questions remains essential: How to effectively define radicalisation? What are the ultimate drivers of such a process? How to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals and communities? How to effectively counter extremist propaganda? How does radicalisation concretely occur in key third countries and regions *outside* Europe, as well as in selected hotspots *within* Europe, such as in prisons, universities, mosques, or on the internet? What good practices and lessons can be identified and shared to tackle radicalisation in Europe? And how to move forward in facing such an insidious and multi-layered challenge?

⁴ See: Ranstorp, Magnus (2016), "The Root Causes of Violent Extremism", Brussels: Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Issue Paper, January 2016, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf, last accessed on: 10 January 2017.

⁵ Belgians with a Turkish and Sub-Saharan African background are equally or more marginalised in Belgium, yet they produce proportionally much fewer extremists or terrorists than some North African communities. See: Van Ostayen, Pieter (2016), "Database on Belgium Fighters - Syria and Iraq", December 2016, available at: <https://pietervanostaeyen.com/>, last accessed on: 15 January 2017. In Germany, while three quarters of Muslims are Turks or of Turkish origin, only one quarter of extremists are Turkish or of Turkish origin. See: Spiegel Online, "Jeder Vierte Ausgereiste Islamist Ist Türkischstämmig", 17 August 2016, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/islamischer-staat-jeder-vierte-ausgereiste-islamist-ist-tuerkischstaemmig-a-1108074.html>, last accessed on: 20 January 2017.

⁶ See, among others: Emmanouilidis, Janis A. and Zuleeg, Fabian (2016), "EU@60: Countering a Regressive and Illiberal Europe", Brussels: European Policy Centre, October 2016, pp. 10-11, available at: www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=1&pub_id=7020&year=2016, last accessed on: 6 January 2017.

⁷ European Commission (2016), "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism", Brussels: European Union, COM(2016) 379 final, 14 June 2016, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation_en.pdf, last accessed on: 6 January 2017.

⁸ European Commission (2016), *ibidem*, p. 2.

Taking a closer look at the phenomenon: RATIONALE AND STRUCTURE OF THE EPC-EFD PROJECT

In order to address these and other important issues, the European Policy Centre (www.epc.eu), the European Foundation for Democracy (www.europeandemocracy.eu) and the Counter Extremism Project (www.counterextremism.com) launched a joint project on *The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond* in early 2016.

The project aimed at promoting a series of multi-stakeholder, public debates in Brussels, Belgium, looking at the various dimensions of jihadist radicalisation, and the role of the EU, its member states and other national and international policy actors in tackling such an emerging and alarming phenomenon.

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The event series brought together experts and policymakers both from Europe and third countries with a diverse, Brussels-based audience comprising EU officials, diplomatic representatives, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. The EPC-EFD Policy Dialogues focused in the following themes:

- › On 22 March 2016, the day of the Brussels attacks, a Roundtable was held on *Defining the phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation: Drivers and catalyst, local and global*, with the participation of Rashad Ali, Head of Strategy, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Alexander Ritzmann, Chairman of the RAN Communication and Narrative Working Group and Executive Director of EFD, and Bakary Sambe, EFD Senior Fellow. (Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvRKF7vZujY>).

- › On 14 April 2016, the EPC, EFD and CEP organised a Policy Dialogue on *The Brussels terror attacks - Lessons learned and challenges ahead for Europe*. Speakers included: Jorge M. Bento Silva, Deputy Head of Unit for Crisis Management and Fight against Terrorism, Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission; Pieter van Ostaeyen, independent analyst on Jihadi movements; Alain Winants, Advocate-General at the Belgium Supreme Court and Former Head of the Belgian State Security Service; and Alain Destexhe, Member of the Belgian Parliament. (Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5HTZUBUZr0).
- › On 25 May 2016, a two-session Policy Dialogue took place on *The geostrategic aspects of jihadist radicalisation*, featuring: Huseyin Ba ca, Professor of International Relations, Middle East Technical University, Ankara; Vlado Azinovi , Assistant Professor, Department of Peace and Security Studies, School of Political Science, University of Sarajevo; Zahid Hussain, journalist and writer; Elham Manea, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Zurich; Ed Husain, Senior Advisor and Director of Strategy, Tony Blair Faith Foundation; Nouredine Fridhi, journalist, Brussels Bureau Chief of Al-Arabiya; and Clarisse Pasztory, Policy Adviser, European External Action Service (EEAS). (Videos available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoYBZ00IH4g> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4HtBJVLJ2A>).
- › On 28 June 2016, *Jihadist radicalisation in schools, universities, prisons and mosques: What challenges for Europe?* was the focus. Kick-off speeches were delivered by Rupert Sutton, Research Director of Student Rights, The Henry Jackson Society, Muhammad Manwar Ali, Chief Executive of JIMAS, Rodrigo Ballester, Member of Cabinet of Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, and Stefano M. Torelli, Research Fellow at the Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI). (Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nepe47Um-Yk>).

- › On 4 October 2016, a public event tackled “*Jihad 2.0: How to tackle on-line propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment?*” Andrea Plebani, Associate Research Fellow, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), Tahir Abbas, Senior Research Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), David Ibsen, Executive Director, Counter-Extremism Project (CEP), and Lucinda Armstrong, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission, provided presentations followed by a debate with the audience. (Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZbilcX3p0I>).

- › On 16 November 2016, the last Policy Dialogue of this series discussed *Prevention of radicalisation in the EU - National experiences and best practice*, thanks to the participation of Toria Ficette, Regional Coordinator on Polarisation and Radicalisation at the Brussels Observatory for Prevention and Security, Hazim Fouad, Analyst at the Unit for Islamism and Extremism, Free Hanseatic City-State of Bremen, Lucinda Creighton, Senior Consultant at the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), and Alexander Ritzmann, Chairman of the RAN Communication and Narrative Working Group and Executive Director of EFD. (Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNHotpqLVIs>).

Within this framework, the project also produced this multi-authored publication, drafted by leading experts and focusing on a variety of issues pertaining to the domestic and external dimensions of jihadist radicalisation ■

Summary of key findings

In Chapter 1 “Defining the phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation: drivers and catalysts, local and global”, Elham Manea provides a detailed overview of the present academic debate over the meaning and scope of the radicalisation concept. She focuses in particular on the vocal confrontation that recently occurred between two leading scholars, Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel. She then covers further contributions and theoretical models in the academic literature on the definition and root causes of jihadist radicalisation. She concludes by focussing on the ideological component of jihadist radicalisation, particularly Salafi Islamism in its Wahhabi version.

In Chapter 2 “The rise of extreme-right and jihadist radicalisation: How do they feed off each other?”, Matthew Goodwin holistically addresses the relationship between the two phenomena in the form of ‘cumulative’ or ‘symbiotic’ extremism, focussing on three fundamental modes: mutual radicalisation, recruitment and spiral of violence. By drawing on examples from the UK, South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Middle East, he argues that policymakers should start tackling cumulative extremism by developing greater clarity and knowledge in six related areas: behaviour types, community polarisation or isolation, patterns of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation, multiple interaction groups, relationship with citizens’ perceptions, and how opposing extremisms respond to each other.

In the multi-author Chapter 3, “The geostrategic aspects of jihadist radicalisation”, Vlado Azinovi, Marwa Farid, Demir Murat Seyrek and Amanda Paul provide distinctive and well-informed analyses and viewpoints on various themes, dynamics and relevant challenges pertaining to jihadist radicalisation and violent extremism in the Western Balkans, Tunisia and Egypt, and Turkey.

In Chapter 4, “Understanding the nature of online extremist narratives”, Tahir Abbas focuses his analysis on the use of the internet, and particularly social media, by jihadist organisations such as ISIS/Daesh, Al-Qaeda and others to radicalise vulnerable youths in Europe and beyond. He resorts to sociological phenomena such as individual alienation, search for identity against the perceived threats of globalisation, and ‘digital tribalism’, to help explain the leveraging points of jihadist propaganda. He then looks into different motivations (i.e. humanitarian cause, democracy, Islamophobia, eschatology and identity) for individuals to

embrace jihad, and analyses similarities and differences between Al-Qaeda's *Inspire* and ISIS/Daesh's *Dabiq* magazines. Finally, he criticises the current 'counter-narrative' and 'removal' strategies against online radicalisation, by advocating for more bottom-up and locally-specific approaches in this field.

In Chapter 5, "Radicalisation in schools and universities", Rupert Sutton focuses on the jihadist radicalisation phenomenon affecting educational services in the UK. He first reflects on the main rationale and goals in the revision of the PREVENT strategy in 2011, while reporting on a number of recent episodes of radicalisation in schools, colleges and universities. He then identifies and elaborates on the main vulnerabilities of the UK's educational services vis-à-vis radicalisation, and investigates the main psychological/existential factors contributing to the spreading of the phenomenon among Muslim youngsters in the UK. He concludes by reviewing the main UK policy responses to address radicalisation – namely, the protection of vulnerable youths and stronger resilience in the educational sector – and suggests further policy options that could be taken up by other EU member states.

In Chapter 6, "Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures in Europe: Results and challenges", Lorenzo Vidino identifies the key features of past and current CVE programmes across Europe. This includes general preventive measures, outreach/engagement measures, and individual interventions, focussing in particular on PREVENT and CHANNEL in the UK, Hayat in Germany and the city of Aarhus in Denmark. Thereafter, he points out the main common challenges to CVE national programmes, in particular the complexity of the radicalisation process, the need for partners and effective training, cooperation with credible and legitimate players in Muslim communities, and measuring effectiveness. He concludes by reflecting on the way forward, and the role of the EU.

Building on the key findings of each chapter, as well as on the main outcomes of the project's event series, the Conclusions and Recommendations, drafted by Andrea Frontini, Alexander Ritzmann and Amanda Paul, provide policy advice to the EU and its member states on how to better tackle the challenges of jihadist radicalisation in four main priority areas: addressing the ideological roots of jihadist radicalisation, countering extremist propaganda and promoting positive alternative narratives, maximising intra-EU cooperation on counter-terrorism and radicalisation, and further streamlining counter-radicalisation efforts in EU's foreign and security policy ■





**Defining the Phenomenon of Jihadist Radicalisation:
DRIVERS AND CATALYSTS—LOCAL & GLOBAL**

*Elham Manea, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science,
University of Zurich & Senior Fellow, European Foundation for Democracy*

“We are ISIS.”

This was the title of an article written by former Kuwaiti Minister of Information, Saad bin Tafla al Ajami, published on 7 August 2014 by the Qatari newspaper *al Sharq*.¹

The former Kuwaiti Minister was not celebrating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), nor the atrocities that it was/is committing against civilians and minorities in Iraq and Syria. He was reminding his readers that ISIS, while condemned by the majority of Muslims, is a product of an **Islamic religious discourse** that has dominated the Muslim public sphere over recent decades – a mainstream discourse!

ISIS “did not come from another planet,” he said. **“It is not a product of the infidel West or a bygone orient,”** he insisted.

No, “the truth that we cannot deny is: ISIS learned from our schools, prayed in our mosques, listened to our media... and our religious platforms, read from our books and references, and followed *Fatwas* (religious edicts) we produced.”

No, “the truth that we cannot deny is: ISIS learned from our schools, prayed in our mosques, listened to our media... and our religious platforms, read from our books and references, and followed *Fatwas* (religious edicts) we produced.”

The former Minister was addressing the role played by some Arab Gulf nations in mainstreaming a radical form of Islam, specifically **Salafism**, which provides, among others, the essence of Jihadists’ radicalisation religious worldview and narration.

Oddly enough, his message may well contribute to the on-going academic debate on the phenomenon of radicalisation and its root causes, namely the heated and controversial discussion between the two eminent French scholars, **Gilles Kepel** and **Olivier Roy**. How to define a phenomenon and its root causes is crucial to understand. It has clear ramifications if policymakers of the European Union (EU), US and Arab and Islamic countries are to succeed in confronting and defeating one of the main security challenges of the 21st century: Jihadi radicalisation. This task can prove to be difficult in a highly charged political context.

¹ Quoted in Manea, Elham, “Time to face the ISIS inside of US”, Human Rights Blog, 17 August, 2014, available at: <https://gmablog.org/2014/08/17/time-to-face-the-isis-inside-of-us/>.

This chapter will attempt to chart an outline of the main conceptual positions on the term radicalisation, Jihadi radicalisation, and its drivers and catalysts both on local and global levels. The aim is to highlight that while these positions differ, they may, more than often, complement each other.

The charged public debate between Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy will serve as a main discussion point to the issue. A section will follow with an overview of the definitions existing in academic literature and policy papers on the term radicalisation and violent radicalisation. The third concluding session will provide **a definition of Jihadi radicalisation** and how scholarly differences in defining the phenomenon reflect on the policy measures designed to address it.

An Islamisation of Radicalisation or the Radicalisation of Islam?

Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy – two distinguished French academics – do not need an introduction. Both have worked on the **broader phenomenon of Islamism** and offered valuable insights into violent radicalisation in Europe. Both have worked within the tradition of French sociology on radicalisation, have lists of books to their name, and years of on-the-ground experience in the Middle East, Central Asia and French suburbs. And both were colleagues and enjoyed a friendship over the course of their careers – one that came to an abrupt end with a public and messy confrontation.²

At the heart of their differences is a clash of analysis on the drivers and catalysts that pave the ground for the radicalisation and recruitment of French citizens of migrant background. Simply put, it is whether the spat of home-grown violence that gripped France in the last couple of years can be attributed to a **radicalisation of Islam** or an **Islamisation of radicalisation**.

Within their tradition of French sociology, Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy have influenced the study of radicalisation by describing its overall cultural and socioeconomic context. Both have identified the **marginalised dysfunctional French suburbs** (*banlieues*) as the pool from which second and third-generation migrants are being radicalised. And both in essence agree that radicalisation of these youths is a process that seeks to **reconstruct a lost identity** in a perceived hostile and confusing world.³

It is how and in which context this radicalisation takes place that seems to set them apart (with an emphasis on the word **seems**). That difference was leaked out of academic circles and publicly argued and fought on newspaper platforms.

More than a week after the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) Jihadists massacred 130 people in Paris, Roy, who teaches at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, published an op-ed in the newspaper *Le Monde* with the title 'Jihadism is a generational and nihilist revolution'. He argued that the young French Muslims who committed this atrocity "did so less because they were Muslim than because they were young". Radicalised French youth recruited by ISIS are seeking **"a cause, a label, a grand narrative on which to slap the blood-stained signature of their personal revolt"**. To him the real threat to France and the rest of the West is not ISIS, "which will sooner or later disappear like a mirage", it is "the nihilistic and revolutionary reflexes of a certain cross-section of alienated youths". They are **rebels seeking a cause** and, hence, what France and the rest of the West are facing is "not the radicalisation of Islam, but the Islamisation of radicalism".⁴

Mr. Kepel, a professor at the prestigious Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences-Po), reacted to Roy's arguments with an article published in the newspaper *Libération* titled "The King Is Naked", playing on the meaning of Roy's name in French.⁵

In a strong language, he suggested that Roy first visits the suburbs from which these terrorists emerged – which have turned into hothouses for Salafism. Roy, Kepel argued, was just echoing the analysis first proposed by American specialists who, "knowing neither Arabic nor Arabs, declared that these acts of terrorism were the product of ruptures with their dominant societies".⁶

² Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33-9, 2010, p. 799; Adam Nossiter, "That Ignoramus: Two French Scholars of Radical Islam Turn Bitter Rivals", *New York Times*, July 12, 2016. For some of their books see for instance: Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in Frankreich*, München: Verlag Antje Kunstmann, 2016; Kepel, Gilles, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997; Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

³ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, p. 799.

⁴ Roy Olivier, "Le djihadisme est une révolte générationnelle et nihiliste", *Le Monde*, 24 November 2015, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2015/11/24/le-djihadisme-une-revolte-generationnelle-et-nihiliste_4815992_3232.html. Cited in Robert Zaretsky, "Radicalized Islam, or Islamicized Radicalism?", *Chronicle of Higher Education Review*, May 26 2016.

⁵ Gilles Kepel, "«Radicalisations» et «islamophobie» : le roi est nu", *Libération*, 14 March 2016, available at http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2016/03/14/radicalisations-et-islamophobie-le-roi-est-nu_1439535.

⁶ Robert Zaretsky, *ibid*; Gilles Kepel, "Le roi est nu", *ibid*.

The school represented by Roy sees ISIS militants as no different from the members of the Red Brigades in Italy or Red Army Faction in West Germany during the 1970s: **“The same rebellion, the same rupture, the same rupture with violence”**.

Kepel considers this to be utter nonsense. To him, the **mantra of ‘radicalisation’** signifies **‘the absence of analysis’**. He insists that Roy did not “hear the actual words pronounced by Salafist preachers in the suburbs, just as he had failed to read the tweets and tracts they were broadcasting”. Salafism, Kepel argued, must be taken seriously – even if this leads to accusations of ‘Islamophobia’.⁷

He cites a text, ignored by Roy and his followers, called *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, which was written by Abu Musab al-Suri, a Syrian engineer and one-time functionary of Al-Qaeda who later broke with Osama bin Laden, and published in Arabic online in late 2004 or early 2005. That text offers a glimpse into what he termed in his latest book as **‘third-generation jihadism’**.⁸

First-generation Jihadism, which lasted from the 1970s to 1990s, was represented by the *mujahedin* in Afghanistan and the Armed Islamic Group (GIS) of Algeria. **Osama bin Laden’s** Al-Qaeda organisation represents the second generation of Jihadism, which took over at the turn of the millennium. Third-generation Jihadism, introduced by al-Suri’s text, changed Al-Qaeda’s model from centrally planned attacks against large and symbolic targets to a bottom-up strategy. A strategy privileging the **actions of independent and isolated groups**, who are already integrated in the West. The attacks in Paris and Brussels might well reflect al-Suri’s destructive influence.⁹

“If you want to comprehend their functioning, you have to understand their background; you have to understand the intellectual resources of Salafism”, Kepel commented to a New York Times journalist.¹⁰

Mr. Roy responded to the same reporter, scoffing at his colleague’s reliance on Al-Suri’s text: “Nobody is interested in al-Suri”. He added, when Mr. Kepel “talks of a ‘third generation in 2005,’ that is false, it is exactly the same profile as in the second generation – petty delinquency.”¹¹

While some argue that the public spat between the two scholars reflects in part the confrontational nature of French academia, often based on **“schools of thought, fuelled by personal or institutional animosity”**,¹² the divergence in positions is hardly unique among those researching radicalisation and its violent version.

JIHADIST RADICALISATION AND THE SEARCH FOR A DEFINITION

Kepel, as it transpired from the previous review, was not exactly a fan of the term radicalisation. He called it a **mantra that indicates an absence of analysis**. While his disdain of the concept may not be globally shared, many scholars would agree that it has its share of critique. Lorenzo Vidino argued in his policy paper on “Jihadist Radicalisation in Switzerland” that the term has become extremely fashionable in the counter-terrorism community over the last decade. Its critics, however, see it as a concept that is “inherently arbitrary, lacking a common definition and often simply used to negatively connote ideas one does not like”.¹³

The term “radical” started to be used in the 18th century and was often linked to the progressive values of the Enlightenment and the French and American revolutions of that period... Overtime, it also came to signify the support for an extreme section of a party.¹⁴

In his conceptual discussion and literature review of the terms radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation, Alex Schmid reminds his readers of the history of the term itself. The term “radical” started to be used in the 18th century and was often linked to the progressive values of the Enlightenment and the French and American revolutions of that period. It became widespread in the 19th century and referred to a political agenda advocating for systematic social and political reform. Overtime, it also came to signify the support for an extreme section of a party.¹⁴

⁷ Robert Zaretsky, *ibid*; Gilles Kepel, *ibid*.

⁸ Kepel, Gilles “Terror in Frankreich”, p.11-15. The Arabic text of al-Suri can easily be found on the internet.

⁹ Gilles Kepel, *ibid*; Robert Zaretsky, *ibid*.

¹⁰ Adam Nossiter, *ibid*.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² Robert Zaretsky, *ibid*.

¹³ Lorenzo Vidino, “Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland”, *Center for Security Studies*, Zurich: ETH, 2013, p.11.

¹⁴ Alex Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review”, ICCT Research, The Hague, March 2013, p. 6.

In other words, **the term radicalisation changes overtime**. It is a relative term. In the early 20th century, those who supported the Suffragette movement – giving women the right to vote – were called radicals. By the same token, what is considered radical in one culture may be considered moderate or even mainstream in another.¹⁵

The history of political ideas on the concept 'radicalism', Schmid argues, points to a definition of two main elements reflecting thought/attitude and action/behaviour, respectively:¹⁶

- › "Advocating sweeping political change, based on a conviction that the *status quo* is unacceptable while at the same time a fundamentally different alternative appears to be available to the radical;
- › The means advocated to bring about the system-transforming, radical solution for government and society can be non-violent and democratic (through persuasion and reform) or violent and non-democratic (through coercion and revolution).

"Vidino insists that radicalisation, despite its shortcomings as a term, is useful to describe the dynamics related to the field of political violence. He identifies the definition of Charles E. Allen, which he describes as one of the most complete definitions, as it encapsulates many elements used by most scholars. Hence, radicalisation is **"the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change."**¹⁷

Accordingly, scholars often distinguish two types of radicalisation:¹⁸

- › **Cognitive radicalisation:** defined as the process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a belief system that is completely different.
- › **Violent radicalisation:** occurs when an individual takes the additional step of employing violence to further the views derived from cognitive radicalism.

When radicalisation is connected to violent extremism, Randy Borum argues that the limited professional literature available has mainly focused on the question of **why** (and, to a lesser extent, **how**) – "someone comes to adopt beliefs and behaviours that support his or her engagement in subversive and terrorist activities, particularly violence toward civilian non-combatants".¹⁹

Since 1960, academic research on the issue has sought the answer by investigating terrorist activity at different levels: individual, group, network, organisation, mass movement, socio-cultural context, and international/inter-state contexts. While 40 years of research have debunked the idea that only **'crazy' people engage in terrorism**, most contemporary social scientists look at radicalisation and its violent outcome as a **dynamic** process. The nature of that process, however, remains poorly understood.²⁰

Dalgaard-Nielsen looked at radicalisation in its connection to militant Islamism. She defines militant Islamism as a **narrative of victimhood**. It "claims that Islam and Muslims are constantly attacked and humiliated by the West, Israel, and corrupt local regimes in Muslim countries". In order to return to a "society of peace, harmony, and social justice", this narrative calls on Muslims **"to stand up for their faith"**. Violence, including violence against civilians, is religiously sanctioned and brings the fighter closer to God.²¹

Dalgaard-Nielsen moves to identify two theoretical frameworks used in researching this dimension. First, the French Sociology School, which argues that there is neither a single explanation of violent radicalisation, nor one single profile of radicals in Europe. It offers classical sociological factors – e.g. socio-economic marginalisation, lack of education, neighbourhood solidarity and peer pressure – to explain radicalisation not only of individuals from Europe's lower social strata, but also of members of a well-off, apparently well-integrated Muslim middle class in Europe. This concerns individuals with no apparent lack of education, job opportunities, or resources to engage in constitutional politics.

The key contention of this group of sociologists is that "violent radicalisation arises out of the particular challenges faced by an increasingly Westernised generation of young Muslims in Europe, who attempt to carve out an identity for themselves".²²

¹⁵ Lorenzo Vidino, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Alex Schmid, p. 8.

¹⁷ Lorenzo Vidino, pp.11-12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Borum, Randy, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories", *Journal of Strategic Security*, Article 2, Volume 4, Issue 4, Winter 2011, p. 14-15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, p. 798.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 800.

While both Roy and Kepel belong to this school of thought, they came to clash, as explained in the prior session, on the role of **religious ideology in the radicalisation process of youths**.

Second, the Social Movement Theory and Network Theory, which focus on the specifics of recruitment and processes of violent radicalisation. Scholars such as **Quintan Wiktorowicz** and **Marc Sageman** argue that “violent radicalisation is about who you know—radical ideas are transmitted by social networks and violent radicalisation takes place within smaller groups, where bonding, peer pressure, and indoctrination gradually changes the individual’s view of the world”.²³

In other words, as Wiktorowicz’s research indicates, **grievances and discontent do not automatically lead to action, or outright violent actions**, for that matter. Instead, radicalisation is a **social process** that results from interaction with and within a radical group—a process by which **the individual is gradually convinced** that the perceived injustices require the individual to engage personally, and that violence is religiously sanctioned.²⁴

These approaches and definitions look at specific dimensions of violent radicalisation in connection to militant Islamism. They agree that it is a process of some sort and try to understand what motivates an individual to engage in violent acts, but there is little consensus or clarity about *how* and *when* this takes place.

These approaches and definitions look at specific dimensions of violent radicalisation in connection to militant Islamism. They agree that it is a process of some sort and try to understand what motivates an individual to engage in violent acts, but there is little consensus or clarity about *how* and *when* this takes place.

Acknowledging this divergence of opinions, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington-based think tank, constructed a framework for understanding radicalisation, based on **“three overlapping but distinct elements that motivate individuals to becoming radicalised or committing terrorist acts”**.²⁵ These are:

- › The ideas of the radical narrative that provide a filter for understanding the world;
- › The sociological factors that compel an individual to embrace this radical narrative; and

- › The psychological factors, characteristics, pathologies, and triggers that may prompt an individual to use violence in order to promote or consummate this narrative.²⁶

Psychologists and behavioural scientists at the Joint Military Information Support Center (JMISC) introduced a broader model. They surveyed existing conceptual models of radicalisation and associated empirical research and then presented their own model – one that highlighted the major components of the radicalisation process that different models appeared to have in common. The model identified the following, seven interacting components:²⁷

- › **Motivations:** Motivations may or may not be the ultimate *why* of violent activity. In this model, they function as an initial impetus. Motivations are composed of both push factors, such as grievances, and pull factors, which may serve as instrumental (e.g. money) or expressive (e.g. perceived importance) incentives.
- › **Socially-facilitated Entry:** Introduction to extremist ideas and to an extremist collective occur through family, kinship networks or social institutions (schools, religious training centres, prisons).
- › **Splintering/Progression:** Becoming a violent extremist is typically not an abrupt, one-time decision, but one that occurs incrementally over time. It should be seen as a gradual escalation, or as a series of discrete actions or decisions that prime an individual for what should occur at the next level.
- › **Intensification:** This is a group-based framework. It explains an individual's increase in extremism and deepening of commitment by in-group socialisation. Influence by a group leader and dynamics among its members shape an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours toward those of the group, and nurture intolerance for those outside the group.
- › **Ideology:** The role of ideology spurs heated discussions. At its core is a narrative that follows some forms of a script about something that is wrong/not right and some person or entity to be blamed for it.

²³ Ibid, p. 801.

²⁴ Ibid, 803.

²⁵ Borum, Randy (Winter 2011), "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: Conceptual Models and Empirical Research", *Journal of Strategic Security*, Article 3, Volume 4, Issue 4, pp. 43-44.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, pp.44-45.

- › **Threat/Defence:** An out-group threat is a key factor binding the in-group together (key element of the narrative) and it suggests that violence is necessary to defend the cause or the in-group, and rationalises offensive action as 'defensive'.
- › **Belonging/Identity:** This element recognises that people sometimes are drawn to violent extremist ideologies and groups because they feel a need for belonging. This model uses a **working definition of violent radicalisation** drawing from the work of **McCauley** and **Moskalenko**, which views radicalisation as an "increased preparation for, and commitment to, intergroup conflict and violence... driven by changes in beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify inter-group violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the in-group".²⁸

Jihadi radicalisation and implications for policymakers

The previous review has shown that, while scholars differ in their definitions of the terms radicalisation and violent radicalisation, most agree that the two refer to a process.

T. Stevens and **P. Neuman** sum up these definitions by saying:²⁹

"Most of the definitions currently in circulation describe radicalisation as the process (or processes) whereby individuals or groups come to approve of and (ultimately) participate in the use of violence for political aims. Some authors refer to 'violent radicalisation' in order to emphasise the violent outcome, and distinguish the process from non-violent forms of 'radical' thinking."

This paper's author agrees with the previous summary, defining **radicalisation as a gradual process** involving individuals or/and groups, which lead to an **indoctrination into extreme ideas**. It sees this process as a spectrum, in which resorting to violence is its last stage. Because the readiness to use violence is often experienced at the end point of that spectrum, an inherent component of this process is a **cognitive radicalisation and indoctrination shaped by narratives propagated of radical forms of Islam**, specifically Salafi Islam. Jihadi Islamism is, hence, defined as the violent form of radicalisation motivated and shaped by the narration of **militant Salafism**.

Salafism is an orthodox Sunni movement, which emerged in the 1300s and was later revived in a distinct form in the 18th century, especially in Najd (a region in today's Saudi Arabia) by founder of the Wahhabi movement Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab. **It advocates the strict practice of and absolute obedience to Islam** as decreed (according to their interpretation) by the Prophet and the early generations of his followers. These are known as the **Salaf**, or the forefathers – hence the adjective Salafi. It rejects any form of mediation between God and the individual believer, and it strictly forbids the use of shrines or sculptures – a position that often led to their destruction wherever the Salafis came to power. It takes an intolerant fundamentalist stance towards non-Muslims and non-Salafis, and it obliges Muslims to distance themselves from them. It considers it an obligation of Muslims to respond to the call for holy war/**Jihad** and defines the conditions for such a response.³⁰

Quintan Wiktorowicz, an expert on Salafism mentioned previously, differentiates between three strands of Salafism.³¹ The **purists** emphasise a focus on non-violent methods of propagation, purification and education. The **politicos** emphasise the application of the Salafi creed to the political arena, whereby the **Jihadists** take a militant position and argue that the current context calls for violence and revolution.

All of these three strands of Salafism, Wiktorowicz reminds us, share a common creed but offer different explanations of the contemporary world and, hence, propose different solutions. The splits, accordingly, are about contextual analysis, not belief.

All of these three strands of Salafism, Wiktorowicz reminds us, share a common creed but offer different explanations of the contemporary world and, hence, propose different solutions. The splits, accordingly, are about contextual analysis, not belief.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Stevens, T. and Neuman, P., "Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action," International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2009, p. 10.

³⁰ Elham Manea (2005), "Regional Politics in the Gulf: Saudi Arabia", Oman, Yemen (London: Saqi), p. 20–22, 73–74; for more information on Salafism and the principle of *al-wala' wa-lbara*, see: Said, Benham T. and Fouad, Hazim (eds) (2014), "Salafismus: Auf der Suche nach der wahren Islam" (Freiburg: Herder Verlag), p. 64–74; Brown, Jonathan (2011), Salafis and Sufis in Egypt, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

³¹ Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2006), "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, N. 29, London: Routledge, p. 208.

That said, the Jihadist form of Salafism is as much shaped by the teachings of Salafi religious scholars as by radical writers of the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, Ayman-al-Zawahiri refers in his book *Knights under the Prophets Banner* to Sayyid Qutb's concept of *Hakimiyya*³² as the "real spark of the Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam inside and outside Islamic countries".³³ Similarly, the book of Al-Suri mentions Qutb, his trial and execution as part of the Islamic revolutionary struggle against the enemies of Islam.³⁴

This brings us back to the significance of the 'Kepel vs. Roy' clash. Many observers, including this author, consider the clash overly exaggerated. In fact, the two complement each other.³⁵ Roy would like policymakers to focus on the behaviour and psychology of the Jihadists who committed these atrocities – i.e. individuals alienated by their society. Kepel, while not at all disputing the alienation dimension, wants to expand the focus and look at the ideological/religious roots that radicalise these youths – namely, Salafism and its religious structures and tools. To him, the atrocities committed in France and Belgium are an expression of an Islamist radicalisation that took shape over decades, festering on segregation and lack of integration. In other words, Roy would like to focus on the individual and local drivers, whereas Kepel would like to expand our scrutiny of a global factor – the transnational Jihadi Islamism that feeds on these local drivers. Roy's position provides a politically correct way to discuss a delicate issue, while Kepel would like to get to the bottom of it, even if that would offend the sensitivity of some Western liberal and leftist academics.

Interestingly, if not ironically, the assessment of the former Kuwaiti Minister of Information, Saad bin Tafla al Ajami, appears to support Kepel's position. When he reminded his readers of Gulf monarchies' mainstreaming of Salafi Islam, he was in fact stating quite clearly that their political survival tactics led to none other than a **radicalisation of Islam** ■

³² *Hakimiyya* is defined as the exclusive prerogative of God to fashion principles appropriate to the proper functioning of a social, political and economic order; God is the legal sovereign as well as the Lord of nature, see Qutb, Sayyid (1978), *Milestones*, Beirut: The Holy Koran House, p. 16 – 140; Calvert, John, "Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism", New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 224 – 225.

³³ Ayman-al-Zawahiri, "Knights under the Prophets Banner in Arabic", *Forum of Tawheed and Jihad*, first edition, p. 14.

³⁴ Abu Musab al-Suri, "The Global Islamic Resistance Call" in Arabic, p174.

³⁵ Robert Zaretsky, *ibid*.



The background of the slide is a dark blue gradient. In the center, there is a silhouette of a person holding a rifle with both hands. To the right, a white flag is partially visible, extending from the bottom right towards the center. The overall mood is somber and serious.

The Rise of Extreme Right and Jihadist Radicalisation: **HOW DO THEY FEED OFF EACH OTHER?**

Matthew Goodwin, *Professor of Politics and International Relations,*
University of Kent

One important but neglected area of research is what academics often refer to as **'cumulative' or 'symbiotic' extremism**. This refers to an interaction between two different types of violent or non-violent extremism that might each be motivated by very different factors but use one another to facilitate their own campaigns, recruitment and, possibly, to trigger an outbreak of violence and intergroup conflict. The underlying idea is rooted in work by the academic Roger Eatwell a decade ago, who observed how an **"important but neglected question in both the academic and policy spheres concerns how different forms of extremism are constructed in discourse by other extremists and how they relate in the more concrete world"**. Moreover, Eatwell was interested in how **"one form of extremism can feed off and magnify other forms"**.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, it appeared that right-wing groups were devoting more effort in targeting public anxieties not merely over immigration and Islam but specifically the rising salience of religiously-inspired terrorism.

This discussion of cumulative extremism sparked considerable interest as it arrived at a time when radical and extreme right-wing movements in Europe were increasingly modifying their narratives and electoral strategy to include a stronger emphasis on Islamist terrorism. In the aftermath of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, it appeared that right-wing groups were devoting more effort in targeting public anxieties not merely over immigration and Islam but specifically the rising salience of religiously-inspired terrorism. Some such as academic Leonard Weinberg even suggested that the next major wave of violence or terrorism in Europe could well be a form of **'backlash' politics among neo-nationalists who feel threatened by the rapidly rising rates of ethnic and cultural diversity**.

Within this debate, some have also pointed to earlier examples of cumulative extremism such as the **interplay between different groups in Northern Ireland or South Africa**, and also to the **interactions between right-wing extremists and anti-fascists in the United Kingdom** in the early 1990s that were often accompanied with low level violence and harassment. From this discussion flowed several areas of interest that continue to attract attention but are also in need of further work if they are to be useful to policy and security communities.

Perhaps the primary area of interest has been the interaction between religiously or Islamic State (ISIS)-inspired Islamist extremism, and the more politically motivated extreme right which was the initial area of focus of Eatwell. A few years after the publication of his essay, the **English Defence League (EDL)**, which was formed specifically in response to the perceived threat from local Islamist groups in the town of Luton, Hertfordshire, and appeared to lend credence to call for more attention to this interaction. Shortly afterward, between 2009 and 2012, the EDL inspired a number of similar movements across Europe that claimed to be campaigning specifically on a platform of **opposition to the 'Islamification' of Western societies**, and to the specific threat of **religiously-inspired terrorism**.

The underlying rationale behind this interest in cumulative extremism is to challenge a policy discussion that until now remained principally focused on examining individual forms of extremism in isolation, for example **radical Islamism or right-wing extremism, rather than the two in combination**. Though some government policies have been careful to discuss different forms of extremism at the same time, notably the **UK government's 'Prevent' agenda**, critics have often suggested that the emphasis on the extreme right is more tokenistic than sincere. Academics, meanwhile, have continued to work on Eatwell's initial proposition that it may yet become just as important to consider extremism in a far more holistic sense and to examine the various dynamics that are operating between and across different groups.

Since the initial discussion some researchers have sought to provide greater rigour to the concept of cumulative extremism. One example is work by **Jamie Bartlett** and **Jon Birdwell** who argue that **cumulative extremism can be applied to varying degrees and types of relationships that two groups can potentially have with one another**. These researchers have also shed light on the nature of possible interactions that policy and security communities may want to monitor. There are **three interactions** that are of interest – **mutual radicalisation, recruitment** and, at the more extreme end of the spectrum, a **spiral of violence**.

Considering the first type of interaction, it is often assumed that the relationship between religiously-inspired extremism and political extremism is one-dimensional, namely the political extreme right responding to the perceived threat of the **'Islamification' of European societies**, or to the actions of a violent Islamist group. Yet as Bartlett and Birdwell note, there is actually very little work on the extent to which the direction of travel may flow the other way. One of the

more notable examples might be **Anders Breivik** who, while tracing his own violence to the **perceived 'threat' from Islam and cultural Marxism**, was also operating in an environment (i.e. Norway) where he was **experiencing little interaction with Muslims or radical Islamist groups**. But to what extent might the growing electoral support of populist radical right parties across Europe be contributing to the radicalisation of settled Muslims who might view such trends as evidence that they are not welcome in Western democracies? There is little, if any, research on this question. Similarly, to what extent are the strategies of populist parties and their ideological narratives either inspiring radical Islamists or featuring in their own call to arms?

The second type of interaction concerns recruitment where there is a need for policy and research communities to explore the extent to which, if at all, cumulative extremism assumes a significant role in individual pathways into extremism.

The second type of interaction concerns recruitment where there is a need for policy and research communities to explore the extent to which, if at all, cumulative extremism assumes a significant role in individual pathways into extremism. For example, in the aftermath of major terrorist attacks, is there a **significant surge of recruitment into right-wing extremist groups**? And are radical preachers citing radical right groups and their support while encouraging Muslims to become more radical in their views? While there is some anecdotal evidence that hate crimes often surge following a terrorist attack, it is not entirely clear whether there is also a significant increase in the number of people who are pursuing a more radical response by enrolling in an extreme right party or defence league. Clearly, this requires thinking in very different ways about how we collect and analyse data relating to extremism.

The third and more direct form of interaction is the so-called **'spiral of violence'** whereby different extremist groups engage in a **tit-for-tat conflict** that escalates into violence. This is often rooted in the observation that while extreme groups publicly distance themselves from violence they also advocate narratives and ideologies that justify or legitimise violence under certain conditions. For example, it has been noted how **right-wing extremist groups** in Europe often **cultivate a narrative of ethnic or white genocide**, arguing that the very survival of the once dominant ethnic group is under threat, whether from immigration or Islam. This leads such movements to suggest that unless supporters take urgent and radical action then the survival of their

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children, grandchildren and race is not assured. At the most extreme end of the spectrum this might entail one extremist group bombing a location that is of symbolic importance to another extremist group (as regularly happens in Iraq and the Middle East), and that action triggering a counter-response. On a different level some academics such as Nigel Copsey argue that in earlier years, groups like the EDL sought to provoke violence and an over-reaction from minorities to foster segregation and divisions at the community level.

Beyond these arenas of interaction, however, are a series of additional questions that remain largely unresolved. A first question concerns the extent to which, if at all, narratives being cultivated by different groups are becoming entwined and **mobilising supporters against 'the other'**. To what extent are claims about the **threat of 'Islamic terrorism'** becoming just as important in the motivational vocabularies of the extreme right as traditional arguments over the perceived impact of immigration on Western democracies or the dangers of globalisation? Are we at, or approaching, a stage where the recruitment narratives are more focused on the activities of opposing extremist groups as opposed to broader complaints about the direction of society?

A second question concerns how security and policy communities can respond to the **'real world' manifestation** of this challenge. In recent years, the potential for this form of extremism to cause problems has been underlined by several events. In the summer of 2012, Islamist extremists were arrested before undertaking a potentially lethal attack on a street rally by the EDL in Yorkshire. Later, in 2014, the growing salience of cumulative extremism was reflected in the aftermath of the murder of drummer Lee Rigby in 2014 when the extreme right-wing groups Britain First and the EDL reoriented their social media campaigns and offline demonstrations against violent Islamists and ISIS.

Unfortunately for policymakers and security makers, it is not easy to know when to intervene in these processes. In earlier years security officials would often argue that effective policing was the most

appropriate response to a movement like a defence league that was viewed more often as a public order rather than **'extremist' threat**. Yet today such groups are also operating **across multiple platforms, both offline and online**, and so restricting the discussion of response to policing no longer seems adequate. The state of affairs is not helped by the **glaring lack of new quantitative and qualitative research** on the topic of cumulative extremism. To date there have been few detailed studies of this challenge.

In the short-term, and toward conclusion, one useful way forward has been outlined by **Busher** and **Macklin** who convincingly make the case for **developing greater conceptual clarity**. In particular, they outline **six proposals** regarding how the policy world can enhance the conceptual clarity of this debate about cumulative extremism. Their goal, rightly, is to encourage greater scrutiny of the claims that are made about this form of extremist activity and to avoid falling into the trap of it becoming **'explanatory fiction'** – an idea that appears to explain a great deal but whose explanatory value is largely lost because it is applied in a very liberal sense to explain a great deal! It is worth reviewing the following six areas.

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First, **Busher** and **Macklin** call for **greater clarity regarding the type of behaviour that is being examined**, namely whether it relates to **ideological radicalisation (the narrative) or to action**. Policy communities, they argue, should ensure that they explicitly describe what is or is not being treated as an indicator of cumulative extremism.

Second, policymakers should interrogate the relationship between the so-called 'spiral of violence' that can result from the **process of cumulative extremism and wider processes of 'community polarisation' or isolation**. In other words, rather than group everything together under one banner, policymakers should be sensitive to the fact that the core processes of cumulative extremism (i.e. an escalation of conflict between two groups) are quite different from the wider community processes, such as segregation or intergroup distrust, which these groups exploit and seek to worsen.

Third, those monitoring such groups should be careful to document in detail the various patterns of **mobilisation** and **counter-mobilisation**. These are likely to be **uneven and sporadic**, with 'peaks and troughs' arriving in **unpredictable patterns**. Providing a concise record of the interactions could help us understand the broader evolution of extremist groups and identify moments when an escalation or conflict is more likely.

Acknowledge that extremist groups may be interacting with a broader range of actors than a single opposing group. It might be, for instance, that a right-wing extremist group is engaging as forcefully with sections of tabloid media, or police, as it is with radical Muslim preachers.

Fourth, acknowledge that **extremist groups** may be **interacting with a broader range of actors than a single opposing group**. It might be, for instance, that a right-wing extremist group is engaging as forcefully with sections of tabloid media, or police, as it is with radical Muslim preachers. Focusing narrowly on the interactions between extremist groups may negatively impact on our understanding of how these groups operate within a broader milieu.

Fifth, work on cumulative extremism would be well positioned by also considering the way in which narratives coincide with wider popular perceptions of challenges in society, such as the **salience of immigration or grievances among settled Muslims**. As the environment changes, so too will the focus of the narratives and the potential for interaction and conflict.

Lastly, **researchers should examine not simply whether two or more opposing groups are responding to one another, but specifically how they are doing so and the differential impacts that these groups have on one another**. Is the response limited to narratives of mobilisation or is the response rooted more in symbolism or calls to action?

Within this area, therefore, **there remains much to be done**. With the issue of political violence and terrorism becoming more salient, those who are working in policy and security communities may want to **address these questions sooner rather than later** ■



The image features a dark blue, monochromatic background. On the left side, there is a silhouette of a person wearing a hooded garment, possibly a balaclava or a heavy jacket, and holding a long-barreled rifle. The person is facing right, and the rifle is angled upwards. The overall mood is somber and serious. In the center of the image, the title "THE GEOSTRATEGIC ASPECTS OF RADICALISATION" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, arranged in two lines.

**THE GEOSTRATEGIC ASPECTS
OF RADICALISATION**

THE GEOSTRATEGIC ASPECTS OF JIHADIST RADICALISATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Vlado Azinović, Associate Professor in the Department of Peace and Security Studies, School of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo

The foreign fighter phenomenon in the Western Balkans – key figures and trends

Overall, it is believed that from the end of 2012 until the beginning of 2016, up to **1,000 individuals from countries in the Western Balkans travelled to Syria and Iraq**. This figure includes people who are thought to have either remained there, returned home, or died, and also includes non-combatants such as women, children and the elderly. Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Albania, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) have provided the bulk of fighters in the Western Balkans contingents in Syria and Iraq.¹

BALKAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ 2012-2015 (SOURCE: ATLANTIC INITIATIVE, MAY 2016)

| COUNTRY | TOTAL 2012-2015 | RETURNED | KILLED | WOMEN | CHILDREN | STILL IN SYRAQ |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------|----------|------------------------------------|
| ALBANIA | 136 | 40 ¹ | 20 | N/A | N/A | 76 ² |
| BiH | 260 | 43 men 6 women | 44 men 2 women | 56 | N/A | 77 men 48 women 46 children |
| CROATIA | 1 | - | - | 1 | N/A | 1 |
| FYR MACEDONIA | 135 ³ | 80 | 20 ⁴ | N/A | N/A | 35 |
| KOSOVO | 314 | 110 men 1 child 6 women | 57 | 38 | 27 | 75 men 38 women 27 children |
| MONTENEGRO | Up to 30 | | 5 | | | |
| SERBIA | 42 | 9 ⁵ | 11 | N/A | N/A | 22 |
| SLOVENIA | 3+3 ⁶ | 2 | 1+1 ⁷ | 2 | 5 | 2 women 5 children ⁸ |

¹ Out of these, 33 are suspected of being engaged in fighting or military training.

² Out of this number, 24 are considered as fighters. The rest are family members or supporters.

³ Macedonian security services estimate that the share of women in this contingent is close to 10%.

⁴ The official figure is 17.

⁵ Three out of nine returnees are in custody, and are being tried before Serbian court. Another three FTF are being tried in absentia.

⁶ Three Slovenian citizens, and three men with either dual Slovenian/Bosnian citizenships or places of birth in Slovenia.

⁷ One Slovenian, Jure Korelec, and Denis Delanović, with dual Slovenian/Bosnian citizenship.

⁸ Two women married to Bosnian men, and their five children.

¹ European Policy Centre, as standard practice follows the European Commission in the usage of FYROM to denote the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The pace of departures of citizens from this region to Syria and Iraq slowed in 2015 and almost ground to a halt by early 2016. Returns from Syria and Iraq, however, also almost ceased completely in 2015, beyond a few extraditions from detention in Turkey. This decline in both departures and returns was potentially the result of intensified regional and international efforts to criminally prosecute aspiring fighters and returnees.² The reduction may also be linked to developments in conflict zones, which are now more difficult to cross into and out of.

Compared to contingents from other countries, the Western Balkans's detachment in Syria and Iraq is older (on average men were 31 and women were 30 years of age on the date of their entry into Syria) and includes more women. Among Kosovars and Bosnians, respectively, women make up 27% and 31% of each country's contingent – nearly double the European average. As a consequence, non-combatants make up far more (up to 55%) of the Western Balkans contingent than is true of other foreign contingents in Syria and Iraq. The character of the contingent can be attributed to the rhetoric of ISIL and calls to its followers to undertake *hijra* (migration). **In response, entire families, sometimes three generations, are migrating from the Western Balkans, and many have no intention of ever returning.**

Motivation and recruitment – key patterns and trajectories

Whilst a unique profile of the typical Western Balkans foreign fighter remains elusive, there are commonalities that can be understood as patterns: **(1) links to diasporas in the EU (particularly in Austria and Germany), and (2) pre-departure criminality.** Other factors that feature in the lives of many fighters include: lack of education, unemployment, dysfunctional or broken families, and mental health issues. A closer look into dozens of individual cases strongly indicates that motives for migration to Syria and Iraq most often include a **mixture of personal drivers alongside overarching ideological incentives.** Typically, people who depart are either escaping something (be it unhappy marriages, domestic violence, debt, criminal prosecution, alcohol, or drug abuse), or are seeking something (such as a spouse, an adventure, or a belonging and purpose in life). At the same time, they have complied with what they see as **a divine order.**

Ideological radicalisation and recruitment for departures to Syria and Iraq, at one time centred in traditional Salafi strongholds in the remote areas of BiH, FYROM, Kosovo, and Albania, has gradually but visibly moved into new and less formal communities and congregations, which have mushroomed over the last couple of years in and around major cities. This trend is especially apparent in BiH where many suburban areas around Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla, Travnik and Biha are now harbouring Salafi settlements, and similar developments have been observed in Kosovo and FYROM. Indeed, a whole network of small businesses, community centres, and charities are financially facilitating this relocation effort, with **“pop-up” mosques that increasingly provide spiritual guidance.**³

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Individual cases of radicalisation and recruitment are occurring by and large within closed circles that include only family and friends, during social gatherings that typically take place in the privacy of peoples’ homes. These gatherings are for religious purposes and thus amount to **“illegal” or “parallel” mosques, or “para-jamaats”** as the official Islamic Communities (ICs) in the region have labelled them. They are now considered by many as **hotbeds of radicalisation and recruitment** in BiH, Albania, Kosovo, and FYROM.⁴ In addition to the establishment of parallel religious communities, these groups are gradually setting

² The countries of the Western Balkans have been successful in arresting and prosecuting foreign fighters and members of their support networks. By late summer 2016, there have been 93 guilty verdicts in the region, with another 35 suspects on trial; Bosnia has found 12 people guilty and has another 8 currently on trial for participating in terrorist organisations and travelling to Syria in support of ISIL; Kosovo has indicted over 75 people and has obtained guilty dispositions in over 50 cases, with the rest facing trial; in Macedonia, there are now 18 guilty dispositions on foreign fighter-related charges; and in 2016, Albania convicted 9 people for recruitment and participation in terrorist organisations, and financing foreign terrorist fighters. Derived from the opening remarks of US Ambassador to Albania Donald Lu at the State Department and OSCE Table Top Exercise “Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Irregular Migration Routes: Prevention and Resilience,” Durres, Albania, 13-15 September 2016.

³ In BiH, these developments have been additionally reinforced over the last two years by an influx of tens of thousands of Arab tourist dollars and investments, mostly from Gulf countries. Bosnian Salafis are often hired to accommodate the needs of these tourists, serving as drivers, guides, and even real estate agents.

⁴ The Islamic Communities in Albania, BiH, FYROM, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia are non-governmental religious organisations that govern the practice of Muslims living in these countries that were once part of the Ottoman Empire.

up parallel structures in other vital areas, such as in education, social services and healthcare, thus filling the gaps left, in many instances, by fragile or dysfunctional states and by public services plagued by incompetence, corruption, and nepotism.⁵

The **radicalisation process typically begins through initiation with a “human touch,” meaning through personal interaction with a figure of authority.** It is then followed by peer-to-peer interaction, often with like-minded individuals, whereby a very specific worldview is reinforced through group dynamics. The role of social media and the Internet in individual cases of radicalisation in the Western Balkans appears to be only tertiary in importance, serving as a force multiplier.

The most critical stage in the radicalisation process, especially for the youngest recruits, is physical separation from their biological families and inclusion into a new ideological family. This new family provides them respect, care, support, and often money – things they may have previously felt deprived of.

The most critical stage in the radicalisation process, especially for the youngest recruits, is physical separation from their biological families and inclusion into a new ideological family. This new family provides them respect, care, support, and often money – things they may have previously felt deprived of. Once this **process of separation is complete, the biological family, the last and potentially most powerful force capable of countering or disrupting the radicalisation cycle, is no longer an obstacle, and the radicalisation process can continue virtually unhindered.**

Even a cursory look into this process strongly suggests that vulnerable, traumatised individuals with a history of unaddressed mental health issues are likely to fall easy prey to radicalisation efforts. Indeed, there are documented instances of such individuals seeking and receiving help for their mental health problems through **“alternative treatments” (known as *ruqya*, which is reminiscent of exorcism)** performed by **uncertified imams.** Dozens of individuals who have undergone such “treatment” have departed soon afterward to Syria and Iraq, where some have lost their lives.⁶

Overall, the motivations among indigenous Muslims in the Western Balkans for departures to Syria and Iraq, and generally for radicalisation into violent jihadism, differ from those in immigrant Muslim communities in the West, and cannot be attributed to the same driving factors,

such as economic deprivation, social marginalisation, or a failure to integrate. In many instances, the **incentive is identity-driven**, as increasing numbers of mostly Bosnian and Albanian (especially in Kosovo and FYROM) youth are told that their respective ethnic groups will only be safeguarded from further suffering and humiliation by adherence to what is sold as **“authentic Islam”**, practiced by the first generations of Muslims.

In essence, the overarching goal of militant Salafism in the region is to **hijack the ethnic identities of Bosniaks and Albanians**, each rich with centuries of tradition and a culture of tolerance, with the aim to eventually reduce them to nothing more than a **single religious identity**. To accomplish this, the rhetoric of radical Salafi ideologues is typically focused on eradicating pre-existing belief systems and cultural identities. Given the generally confrontational nature of the ideology and of many of its adherents, this is likely to remain a significant source of antagonism and conflict in the region even after the foreign fighter phenomenon subsides. Thus, radicalisation into militant Salafism should be expected to continue to produce new security threats in the Western Balkans.

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⁵ Bosnian law enforcement agencies are aware of at least one such “parallel” daycare center in a Sarajevo suburb that regularly shows ISIL videos of the beheadings of captured hostages from the West. Children attending the center are reportedly instructed to stand up and cheer these acts.

⁶ Husein Bilal Bosnić, who was considered one of the most influential Salafists in the Western Balkans until his arrest in the autumn of 2014, was well known for his performances of *ruqya*. People from outside BiH (from Slovenia, Italy, Austria, and elsewhere) sought out Bosnić’s “treatment.” In some cases, individuals reportedly departed to Syria and Iraq almost immediately after receiving *ruqya*, at least six of whom have died there. In November 2015, the Court of BiH sentenced Bosnić to 7 years in prison for publicly encouraging Salafi adherents to join ISIL. To watch a *ruqya* treatment given by Bosnić, see (in Bosnian): “Rukja – Liječenje Kur’anom – istjerivanje đinna/šejtana [Ruqyah – Qur’an Healing – casting out jinn and Satan], Bilal Bosnić,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW1-rXWfnuo> (accessed April 2, 2016).

Security risks and threats stemming from the foreign fighter phenomenon

Current security threats to the region emanate mostly from returned foreign fighters and from radicalised or ideologically inspired individuals, who have **tried and failed to travel to Syria and Iraq**. Even prior to the series of terrorist attacks that struck different parts of the world in 2015 and 2016, and which involved the participation of returnees from the Syrian and Iraqi war theatres, the return of foreign fighters from Middle Eastern battlefields had been anticipated with unease, and even some fear. Interestingly, however, it turns out that **individuals with a tremendous desire to travel to Syria and Iraq, but the inability to do so, may present an equal or even bigger security threat**. Some of these unaccomplished warriors, who were unable to set foot in ISIL-held territory, have carried out terrorist attacks in their communities instead. In fact, **ISIL propaganda frequently addresses such individuals**, offering the possibility of redemption to those who are faced with an unbridgeable gap between their desire and capability to heed the call to battle in Syria and Iraq, by encouraging them to deploy on the home front.⁷

In order to assess this security threat in the Western Balkans, it is important to **understand how ISIL perceives the region and its position in ISIL's plans to move forward**. The region does not appear to be among the areas identified by ISIL in strategic documents as requiring the use of mass and indiscriminate violence, as designated to France, Belgium and other Western European countries. On the contrary, **ISIL appears to see the Western Balkans as a "non-priority" area**, viewed as suitable for the rest and recuperation or recruitment of new fighters, and for their transfer to or from Western Europe, as well as for the acquisition of weapons, ammunition and explosives. Therefore, **ISIL does not seem to be encouraging Paris or Brussels-like attacks in BiH**, of an indiscriminate nature and directed against civilians, but rather limited strikes against selected targets (such as foreign embassies or diplomats, as suggested by ISIL's magazine *Dabiq* in August 2015).⁸

Nevertheless, religious authorities and security officials in the region may also become the focus of extremists. Moderation, or middle-path Islam, has for centuries been the cornerstone of the belief system, identity, and way of life of Muslims in the Western Balkans. This tradition, along with the secular states that enable and safeguard it,

could be further undermined and targeted by ISIL-inspired groups and individuals. In light of the ongoing crackdown on **para-jamaats** instigated by the ICs in Albania, BiH, FYROM, and Kosovo, a **possible retaliatory attack against representatives of these communities** cannot be excluded. In the words of a high-ranking counter-terrorism official from the region, **"I am afraid that the next terrorist attack will occur in a mosque."**⁹

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Antagonism toward moderate imams was vividly encouraged in the April 2016 issue of *Dabiq* magazine. ISIL followers were invited to **"kill the imams of kufr (infidels)"** and were reminded of their obligation to either **emigrate to the "caliphate" or kill infidels in other places**. The article went so far as to call these imams "justified and mandatory targets in accordance with Sharia Law, which should serve as examples to others."¹⁰

⁷ At the time of this writing, an armed group of at least seven militant Salafis, of whom three are returnees from Syria and at least one was prevented from travelling there, are in hiding in North-Central Bosnia, where they have evaded police for weeks. They are considered heavily armed and extremely dangerous.

⁸ In the August 9, 2015 issue of *Dabiq*, ISIL offered an additional rationale for "noble deeds" accomplished off the battlefield noting that: "the Muslim who is unable to perform hijrah...[can] strike out against the kafir enemies of the Islamic State... In addition to killing crusader citizens anywhere on the earth, what, for example, prevents him from...targeting the Japanese diplomatic missions in Bosnia, Malaysia, and Indonesia? Or targeting Saudi diplomats in Tirana, Sarajevo, and Pristina?" See: "From the Battles of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions," *Dabiq*, August 9, 2015. Available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/the-islamic-statee2809cdc481biq-magazine-11e280b3.pdf> (accessed October 2, 2015).

⁹ From an interview with a Bosnian judicial source who spoke under the condition of anonymity.

¹⁰ The article states that "one must either take the journey to dār al-Islām, joining the ranks of the mujāhidin therein, or wage jihād by himself with the resources available to him (knives, guns, explosives, etc.) to kill the crusaders and other disbelievers and apostates, including the imāms of kufr, to make an example of them, as all of them are valid – rather, obligatory – targets according to the Sharī'ah, except for those who openly repent from kufr before they are apprehended." See: "Kill the Imams of Kufr in the West," *Dabiq*, April 13, 2016. Available at: <https://www.clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf> (accessed April 23, 2016).

Future challenges and recommendations

With a significant high rate of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, Western Balkan countries have been considerably impacted by this phenomenon. Yet, **public awareness of the problem remains somewhat limited**, as well as **any commitment at the society level to actively prevent and counter radicalisation**. Efforts to educate and engage citizens to recognise and respond to radicalisation should be undertaken.

Countries in the Western Balkans have **not yet developed standardised risk assessment tools** to help differentiate the relative threat of returning foreign fighters. Like other countries faced with the same challenge, the region is suffering from a **knowledge gap** and must carry out more thorough evaluations of these returnees. A growing number of former foreign fighters, as well as their handlers and facilitators and those who aspired to join them, are being tried and sentenced to prison terms in the region. In spite of this, where and how these convicts should be placed within their respective prison systems remains uncertain, and clear policies standardising the treatment of this special population must urgently be put into practice so that **prisons in the region do not become new hotbeds of radicalisation**. Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for foreign fighters and their families must also be standardised and implemented post-haste.

It is becoming obvious that more research is needed on the intricacies of radicalisation and recruitment processes, which involve complex dynamics at various levels. With a lack of prior experience in dealing with these sorts of security related risks and threats, understanding of their causes and drivers is too often based on assumptions and not on researched-based knowledge.

It is becoming obvious that more research is needed on the intricacies of radicalisation and recruitment processes, which involve complex dynamics at various levels. With a lack of prior experience in dealing with these sorts of security related risks and threats, understanding of their causes and drivers is too often based on assumptions and not on researched-based knowledge. **Several international projects currently underway in the region**, ostensibly aimed at **preventing and countering radicalisation into violent extremism (CVE)**, are based solely on such

dubious assumptions. Whilst international assistance and know-how in CVE are welcome and at times invaluable, **locally-owned programmes and policy development projects** (involving indigenous experts with an authentic understanding of the local context, mentality, and tradition) **stand a better chance of producing effective and lasting results.**

An evidence-based policy development centre, perhaps with regional participation and focus, would also be a welcome addition to any genuine CVE effort. However, the likelihood of this seems rather unrealistic, for, as one high-ranking Western diplomat in Sarajevo recently observed, **“We do not support research. We only support policies.”**

Yet, this half-empty approach may be part of the problem. It is indicative that radicalisation into militant Salafism in the Western Balkans has been most prevalent and has occurred most rapidly in countries marred by fragile internal structure, administrative dysfunctionality, frozen conflict, and unresolved identity and governance issues. **Such states often produce underachieving and failing societies**, polarised and unfit to protect and restore the eroding system of common-sense values and norms on which they were once based. **To believe that such societies could alone produce an effective counter-narrative to deter extremist ideologies is as naïve as it is improbable.**

A more steadfast commitment to European Union accession may help countries in the Western Balkans restore traditional values by **providing a unified narrative** and, more importantly, the **prospect of a better future – a promise that still resonates with the vast majority of citizens in the region.** If met with an adjusted attitude regarding the integration process for these countries, still relying on conditionality but also recognising the need for pre-emptive action, real progress could potentially be achieved; for example, by enabling early negotiations on key EU Chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security). This would underpin the necessary and attainable goal of establishing societies based on **political accountability, competence and justice**, which would embolden efforts to prevent radicalisation into violent extremism. Before this happens, however, the EU will need to reinvent its strategy for Western Balkans accession, and political elites in the region will need to **evolve beyond hypocritical attitudes** to instead **work in the true best interests of their respective constituencies** ■

THE THREAT OF JIHADIST RADICALISATION IN TURKEY

Demir Murat Seyrek, *Senior Policy Advisor, European Foundation for Democracy*

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Introduction

Turkey is a secular country with a predominantly Muslim population. **Secularism has been the cornerstone of modern Turkey since the Republic was founded in 1923.** It is one of the core principles of the constitution and pro-secular groups remain quite strong, although in recent times they have come under enormous pressure. **Over the last 15 years secularism has been visibly weakened by the ruling conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP).** Yet, while many secular Turks see the AKP as a threat to the secular regime, **Jihadist organisations continue to consider Turkey under AKP rule as an un-Islamic Western country, and thus, as a target for attacks.**

Over the last three decades Turkey has been attacked by both homegrown (i.e. Turkish Hezbollah and IBDA-C (the Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front)) and international radical groups (such as Al Qaida and the so-called Islamic State (ISIS)). Such terror attacks are not new to Turkey but their dynamics and intensity have changed over the last two years as a consequence of the Syrian Civil War, with **ISIS becoming the most deadly foreign terrorist threat.** Other Syrian-based terrorist groups such as **Jabhat al-Nusra**, which has established links in Turkey, also hold the capacity to carry out attacks in Turkey, but so far have not done so.

As **Ankara intensified its involvement in anti-ISIS operations, the blowback from ISIS increased.** The first upsurge came following the agreement between Turkey and the US on 22 July 2015 on the use of the Incirlik airbase by the US and the coalition forces in the fight against ISIS. The threat increased further following Turkey's intervention in Syria with its Euphrates Shield operation in August 2016. Turkey became the only NATO country with ground forces fighting against ISIS. Urban and heavily populated areas have been key targets - including the Reina night club in Istanbul, which was attacked in the early hours of 1 January 2017.

In addition to carrying out numerous terrorist attacks, ISIS has used Turkey as a base for recruitment, logistical support and the transit of foreign fighters from Europe and elsewhere. According to official figures some **2,000-2,200 Turkish foreign fighters are estimated to have joined ISIS in Syria**, although the real number is potentially higher.¹ ISIS, other jihadist and Islamist groups in Turkey, Turkish foreign fighters in Syria and other foreign fighters connected to ISIS represent a major threat to Turkey.

The fact that the Turkish authorities only began to view jihadist radicalisation as a major threat some two years ago has allowed the group to strengthen and consolidate jihadist networks and cells in the country.

Moreover, there are **many ISIS sympathisers in Turkey**. In 2016, more than 1,300 people were arrested because of their links to ISIS.² The fact that the Turkish authorities only began to view jihadist radicalisation as a major threat some two years ago has allowed the group to strengthen and consolidate jihadist networks and cells in the country. Moreover, while now there is an **active fight against ISIS**, it is carried out from a predominantly security perspective. There is **no comprehensive long-term strategy to tackle this issue and address the root causes of radicalisation**. This needs to be urgently rectified if the authorities are going to successfully put an end to the almost back-to-back terrorist attacks that have plagued the country for the last few years and left hundreds of people dead. Furthermore, **if the Turkish authorities fail to counter the threat of radicalisation, it may have serious consequences for Europe and beyond**. In this sense, it should not only be a local concern, but also needs to be taken seriously by the EU, which should increase cooperation with Turkey.

¹ *Soufan Group* "Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq", 2015, p. 10.

² Statement by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Turkey on 28 December 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1342111-2016da-deasla-irtibatli-bin-313-kisi-tutuklandi>, last accessed: 12 January 2017.

Historical background

Radical views and movements have never played an important role in the Turkish understanding of Islam. Religious orders (*tarikat*) and other religious groups have played a significant role in Turkey since the Seljuk Empire (1037). They became important actors in social and religious life in the Ottoman Empire. However, the **Sufi tradition, a spiritual and tolerant understanding of religion, was at the core of all these orders and groups.** Radical views were not acknowledged in these organisations and the Empire's understanding of Islam. Although sultans regularly used the concept of jihad to conquer new territories, it was a way to justify imperial aspirations. Moreover, the term also brings back bad memories for many Turks because even though Ottoman Sultan Mehmet V declared jihad against the Triple Entente in 1914, the Arabs joined the British Forces against the Ottomans, which ultimately led to the end of the empire.

Modern Turkey was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a secular republic in 1923. Atatürk blamed the demise of the empire in part on the religious leadership, which had gained more power in the 18th and 19th centuries at the expense of the sultans and opposed the modernisation of the Empire. **The Caliphate was abolished in 1924 and all religious orders and lodges were closed and banned in 1925 as part of the reform process.** Turkish secularism is based on the separation of the state and religion, although the state organises and controls religious activities. **The Diyanet, the Directorate for Religious Affairs, has been responsible for implementing this since 1924.** However, major religious orders continued to exist. First, they functioned underground, and then they were tolerated by different central right and conservative governments from 1950 onwards with the multi-party system.

Not only were such organisations tolerated, they were sometimes even supported, in line with the Western strategy to counter communism and extreme-left groups from 1960s onwards. Moreover, **a strong ideological element was introduced with the emergence of political Islam at the end of 1960s.**

Radical terrorist groups as we understand them today began to emerge in the early 1980s with the appearance of **IBDA-C and Turkish Hezbollah.** Influenced by the **Islamic Revolution and regime change in neighbouring Iran,** their goal was to turn the secular regime into an

Islamic one. Many secular intellectuals and journalists, like Cetin Emec, Bahriye Ucok, Ugur Mumcu, Ahmet Taner Kislali, were assassinated by these terrorist groups in the 1990s. While these were Sunni groups, many researchers, including the assassinated intellectuals, claimed that they received support from Iran, in an attempt to export the revolution and destabilise Turkey. One of the most common slogans of secular groups in Turkey against such attacks and the rise of political Islam in the 1990s was **"Turkey will not become Iran"**. For Turkey's military-dominated establishment, the **Islamic Republic, a revolutionary theocracy**, was the **antithesis of Ataturk's secular republic**. Not only did it seek to overturn the regional geopolitical order but, in the eyes of the Turkish elite, it threatened the identity and very existence of the Turkish state.³

Erbakan's calls for Turkey's withdrawal from NATO and the introduction of an economy based on Islamic precepts was greeted with fear from the secular establishment, including the armed forces. This led to a raft of ultra-secular policies, with the direct and indirect involvement of the armed forces.

When Islamist Necmettin Erbakan, nickname Mujahid Erbakan, and his **Refah (Welfare) Party** came to power in June 1996 in a coalition government, it was the first time in the Republic's history that an **Islamist leader became prime minister**. Erbakan's calls for Turkey's withdrawal from NATO and the introduction of an economy based on Islamic precepts was greeted with fear from the secular establishment, including the armed forces. This led to a raft of ultra-secular policies, with the direct and indirect involvement of the armed forces.

The **military took a very strong stand against Erbakan and the Refah party**, with Turkey's generals openly voicing their discontent, even to the extent of reprimanding local administrators of the party and accusing Erbakan of trying to introduce an Islamic regime. The chief of general staff organised briefings to which top level bureaucrats,

³ Larrabee, F. Stephen and Nader A. (2013), "Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East", *RAND Corporation*, 2013 p. 1.

journalists and academics were invited and briefed about the **threat to the republic by the rise of political Islam** (including the incumbent government, the Islamist media, Islamist financial and economic institutions, and Imam-Hatip schools)⁴.

The armed forces carried out a political struggle not only against the government but also against Islamist groups such as tarikats, Islamic business and media. For example, the military urged the government not to allow Islamist companies to enter public bids and to ban purchases from these companies. **Tension between the armed forces and the government climaxed on 28 February 1997** when the National Security Council (NSC) convened for a regular meeting and the generals introduced **18 steps to eliminate the danger of Islamic fundamentalism**. The key elements were related to education reform, the reorganisation of religious education, stopping accusations against Atatürk, as well as public anti-secular activities, and redefining the relationship between Iran and Turkey.

One of the most important measures was the **closure of many of Turkey's publicly-run religious seminaries and Quran courses**. The NSC also demanded the government clamp down on all privately-run religious courses and ensure that they come under the direct control of the education ministry. There were **seen as centres of radicalisation and indoctrination**. Ultimately Erbakan was forced to resign. Some 11 months later the Refah party, which still had the most seats in the Parliament, was banned after the Constitutional Court ruled the party's religious platform contradicted Turkey's secular constitution. Although the military did not take direct control of the government, the **'28 February process' was named a post-modern coup**. These developments, along with the failures of centre-right political parties to provide solutions to economic problems and political stability in the country **paved the way for the emergence of the AKP**.

The era of the AKP

Since 2002 Turkey has been ruled by the **conservative AKP**, which has its **roots in political Islam**. This has brought about a different environment for religious orders, communities and groups because a key element in the continuing support for the AKP has been their empowerment of conservative Turks, and others who consider themselves to have been oppressed or sidelined under previous secular-orientated

governments. Being religious has become the most important qualification to rise through the ranks in Turkish bureaucracy. Most of these religious organisations have become very active in politics, bureaucracy and the judiciary, replacing secular people. Although the majority of these organisations cannot be considered as radical, those that could be considered as radical were not seen as a threat by the new political environment. The **motto of the new government was 'no harm could come from the ones praying'**. However, this **has proven to be wrong**, and has been recognised by the highest levels of government over the last few years. This was particularly the case with Fethullah Gülen and his movement, with whom the AKP had a close partnership until 2013. Yet the government's miscalculation went even further. Many ultra-conservative and Islamist groups could freely work, raise funds, promote their ideology, and **organise legal and illegal education channels for the indoctrination of many young people**. As recognised by the government, some of these groups now represent a major threat to Turkey.⁵

Nevertheless, despite the AKP government and the major changes in the country during the last 14 years, NATO member Turkey continues to be considered as an un-Islamic Western country by homegrown and international jihadists groups.

Nevertheless, despite the AKP government and the major changes in the country during the last 14 years, NATO member Turkey continues to be considered as an un-Islamic Western country by homegrown and international jihadist groups. In terms of the international dimension, the 2003 Istanbul bombings by **Al-Qaida**, which targeted two synagogues, a HSBC Bank and the British Consulate, was the first big attack. Although similar terror attacks were carried out by the **Kurdish Workers Party (PKK)** - an armed terrorist organisation, listed as such by the US and the EU, there were no terror attacks on this scale by jihadist radical organisations until ISIS began to target Turkey. **Turkey's fight with ISIS in Syria has made the country one of the main targets** of this terrorist group through their international network as well as its Turkish members and sympathisers.

⁴ See Mehmet Ali Birand, *Son Darbe: 28 Subat*, Dogan Kitap, 2012.

⁵ *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Keep away from politics", Diyanet Tells Religious Groups", 14 September 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/keep-away-from-politics-diyanet-tells-religious-groups.aspx?pageID=238&nid=103883>, last accessed: 12 January 2017.

New “Turkey”, the Syrian civil war and neo-Ottomanism

Poorly thought out foreign policy choices have played a key role in **Turkey’s deteriorating security environment** and the increased threat from jihadists.

During the AKP’s rule foreign policy has undergone significant changes. Until his resignation as prime minister in May 2016, Ahmet Davutoglu was the most influential foreign policy actor in decades. The AKP’s foreign policy was based on Davutoglu’s book **Strategic Depth**⁶, which argues that because of the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey should exercise influence in all these regions and be considered as one of the central powers. It was a **neo-Ottoman vision that saw Turkey as the potential leader of the Muslim world**. This approach was accepted by the AKP without question. This led to the **‘zero problems with neighbours’ policy**, and between 2007 and 2009 Turkey became a significant soft power actor in the Middle East, a region which had been ignored for years. Political and economic ties were strengthened, including with Syria, which became Ankara’s biggest success story. A strong personal relationship developed between the Al-Assad and Erdogan families.

This approach drastically shifted after the Arab Spring. This was reflected by Ankara’s unyielding and disproportionate support for the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammad Morsi in Egypt, as well as Turkey’s hardline position regarding Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Yet, this approach drastically shifted after the Arab Spring. This was reflected by Ankara’s unyielding and disproportionate support for the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammad Morsi in Egypt, as well as Turkey’s hardline position regarding Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The **AKP was the loudest and most consistent voice stating** that there was **no room for Assad in any shape or form in Syria’s future** and the most ardent backer of a number of Syrian militant opposition groups under the Free Syrian Army (FSA) umbrella – some of them linked to radical groups. While Turkey’s policy shift against Damascus seems to have been driven by ideological considerations, it also suggests that Turkish leaders believed that the Syrian regime would soon fall, just like the Libyan regime. At the time, Davutoglu said that **the fall of Syria’s government is “only a matter of time”**.⁷ This turned out to be ill-considered, ignoring the realities on the ground,

with the Assad regime remaining in power until this day thanks to **the steadfast support of Moscow and Tehran.**

Turkey made a number of other **serious miscalculations in its Syria policy**, not least the **open and relaxed border policy** which Ankara adopted between 2011 and 2014. There was a **visa-free regime between Turkey and Syria before the Syrian Civil War.** The country kept the border open at the beginning of the war for refugees and the opposition groups it supported. This made it very easy for foreign fighters, extremists, materials and cash to **flow across the Turkish border into ISIS-held territories and vice-versa.** Even after it was closed it remained dangerously porous for months. This was also the main route taken by foreign fighters from the EU member states.

However, the **flow of fighters is not purely Turkey's fault.** EU member states have ignored the issue for a long time. There had been a very **low level of coordination between Turkey and the EU on this issue until the ISIS attacks in Paris in November 2015.** Cooperation mechanisms were established between Turkey and the EU following these attacks but it remains far below the optimal level. According to Turkey's ministry of interior, so far more than **52,000 people from 145 countries**, including EU member states, have been **banned from entering Turkey**, while more than **4,000 people from 98 countries, including EU states, have been deported.**⁸

The emergence of ISIS in the Iraq and Syria was not viewed as an immediate threat to Turkey, despite ISIS taking the Turkish Consul in Mosul and more than 45 members of his staff hostage in June 2014. **Ankara's first priority was Assad,** then the **Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD)** and its armed **People's Protection Units (YPG)** – the sister organisations of the terrorist PKK, which were seen as a serious threat following its expansion in the north of Syria.

⁶ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, Istanbul: Kure Yayinlari, 2001, 206-208.

⁷ *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Damascus' fall matter of time, says Davutoglu", 20 December 2010, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/damascus-fall-matter-of-time-says-davutoglu.aspx?pagerID=238&nID=37239&NewsCatID=338>, last accessed: 12 January 2017.

⁸ Statement by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Turkey on 28 December 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1342111-2016da-deasla-irtibatli-bin-313-kisi-tutuklandi>, last accessed: 12 January 2017.

The emergence of ISIS in the Iraq and Syria was not viewed as an immediate threat to Turkey, despite ISIS taking the Turkish Consul in Mosul and more than 45 members of his staff hostage in June 2014.

Even when Turkey started to consider ISIS dangerous, it was merely viewed as a security threat while PKK/PYD was seen as an existential threat to the country's security. Turkey's military intervention in Syria should also be considered in this sense; it is directly against ISIS but indirectly against PYD to prevent the latter from controlling the whole of northern Syria. That said, the operation has successfully cleared ISIS from the Turkey-Syria border, creating a *de facto* buffer zone. ISIS can no longer use this border to smuggle in foreign fighters and logistical needs, and is looking elsewhere⁹. Moreover, Turkey also killed some 1,500 ISIS members in Syria in less than five months.¹⁰

Draining the ISIS swamp

While Turkey closed its 822km long border with Syria and is currently finalising the construction of a wall, many ISIS operatives are already in Turkey. The Turkish authorities estimate the existence of hundreds of sleeper cells and 3,000 people linked to the jihadists.¹¹ Online propaganda and websites, including ISIS supported websites and social media accounts, were also quite accessible until March 2015 when an Istanbul court ordered the closure of **Takva Haber, Turkey's leading ISIS website**. However, ISIS continues to be very active online through thousands of social media accounts.

In 2016 alone some **1,300 people were arrested in Turkey because of their connections with ISIS**. Moreover, according to a survey by pollster Metropoll in September 2015, 16% of Turks were sympathetic to ISIS.¹² Another survey by PEW, taken in November 2015, showed that 8% of Turks were favourable to ISIS.¹³ This is mostly linked to the discourse of the political elite and media, and how the developments in Syria were presented. Still, it is **difficult to come to the conclusion that there is deep-rooted support for ISIS in Turkey**.

In terms of the perception of ISIS, much has changed as a result of a major shift in Turkey's Syria policy, ISIS attacks in 2016 and Turkey's military intervention in Syria. However, these figures should still be taken

very seriously in terms of the numbers of radicals in the country and the potential for that number to increase even further. Radicalisation in Turkey did not start with the Syrian Civil War. It was an issue that has been largely ignored for many years. Yet **developments in Syria facilitated the radicalisation process and created an international network of radicals, as well as a cause to fight for.** According to recent report by expert Aaron Stein, "many of the key Turkey-based ISIS recruiters have links to the Afghan Jihads (1979 to 1989 and 2001 to present). They are well-known in their communities, often with links to small religious groups, and have created an interconnected network."¹⁴ Personalised recruitment networks (families, co-workers, and friends) along with informal group sessions in local mosques have also proven to be very successful in pulling recruits into jihadist groups.¹⁵

Furthermore, the foreign fighter issue is not a new phenomenon either. Hundreds of Turks fought in the Karabakh, Bosnia, the Northern Caucasus wars, as well as against the Soviets in Afghanistan. They went to fight for a variety of reasons including religious or ethnic loyalties. However, their numbers were limited compared to the number of Turkish ISIS fighters, and they were more focused on a local conflict, without having a global vision. **ISIS changed the dynamic of jihadist radicalisation by creating an international network, a *de facto* state-like entity, professional communication and a propaganda strategy, and a well-structured recruitment mechanism.** A study carried out by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue writes that "logistically it was very easy for Turks to travel to Syria, which accounts for the fact that Turkey is the fourth highest contributor of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq –

⁹ *Janes Intelligence Weekly*, "Islamic State adapting to loss of road access to Turkish border by drawing on co-operation from Jund al-Aqsa", 10 October 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/64480/islamic-state-adapting-to-loss-of-road-access-to-turkish-border-by-drawing-on-co-operation-from-jund-al-aqsa>, last accessed: 12 January 2017.

¹⁰ *DW Turkish*, "TSK: Toplam bin 518 IŞİD'li öldürüldü", 14 January 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/tsk-toplam-bin-518-ısidli-öldürüldü/a-37132010>, last accessed: 15 January 2017.

¹¹ "3,000 in Turkey linked to ISIL group, police intel report says", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 17 January 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/3000-in-turkey-linked-to-isil-group-police-intel-report-says.aspx?pageID=238&nID=77063&NewsCatID=341>, last accessed: 14 January 2017.

¹² Metropoll, "Türkiye'nin Nabızı Eylül 2015", Istanbul, October 2015.

¹³ Pew Research Centre, "In nations with significant Muslim populations, much disdain for ISIS", 17 November 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>, last accessed: 13 January 2017

¹⁴ Stein, Aaron (2016), "Islamic States network in Turkey: recruitment for the caliphate", Atlantic Council, <http://www.publications.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/islamic-State-Networks-in-Turkey-web-1003.pdf>, last accessed: 14 January 2017.

¹⁵ Stein Aaron (2016), "Islamic States network in Turkey: recruitment for the caliphate", Atlantic Council, <http://www.publications.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/islamic-State-Networks-in-Turkey-web-1003.pdf>, last accessed: 14 January 2017.

behind Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Russia.¹⁶ However, in terms of per capita foreign fighters, **Turkey is far behind many countries, including some EU countries.**

While ISIS will lose in Syria, radical groups and their ideology will remain strong. ISIS skillfully uses its powerful religious ideology to convince would-be recruits to join the group for terrorist activities.

The number of ISIS sympathisers is a warning sign for the future. While ISIS will lose in Syria, radical groups and their ideology will remain strong. ISIS skillfully uses its powerful religious ideology to convince would-be recruits to join the group for terrorist activities. **Social media has been at the core** of this process. It has been very skillfully used to reinforce the description of ISIS as a so-called movement devoted to protecting Muslims and to fighting an unfair global system. This will not disappear simply because the group has been defeated militarily. This means the **security threat from ISIS in Turkey and elsewhere will remain.** Turkey needs a long-term strategy to counter these groups and individuals and to prevent the radicalisation of new people. Presently **Turkey has two main programmes aimed at countering violent extremism: an outreach programme** coordinated by the police, which aims to prevent radicalisation in vulnerable communities, and a **special programme under the Diyanet** focused on countering jihadist messaging. This is done predominantly by the publication of sermons and reports that undermine ISIS' messaging and credibility but has only had limited impact.¹⁷ For example one of the reasons sermons in mosques have not been particularly successful is because mosques are not the main recruiting ground of those targeting potential jihadists. The **Diyanet should increasingly reach out through other channels.**

The way ahead

While specific programmes are urgently required, at the same time, getting the country back on a democratic track in terms of secularism, democratic values, pluralism and a Western education system seems to be the only long-term solution. **Religious freedoms should be guaranteed** but this should not mean tolerating radical religious groups and their activities. **Radical, Islamist and ultra-conservative religious groups and their common ideology, which poisons social coherence and indoctrinates young people, must be taken very seriously.**

The issue of radicalisation should not only be seen from a security perspective. This cannot be solved by simply implementing anti-terror measures that disrupt and destroy networks. Comprehensive and nuanced de-radicalisation and counter-terrorism strategies should be developed by **addressing the root causes of the issue and the ideology behind radicalisation.**

There should be a **comprehensive strategy against online radicalisation and online propaganda of radical groups.** While a domestic strategy is needed, it needs to be rooted within regional and global approaches to be effective. **Counter-narrative strategies should also be developed.** It is **one of the priorities at EU level,** but Turkey has not been discussing the importance of a counter-narrative in a comprehensive and structured way yet. This can be an important element for further cooperation with the EU, especially considering the number of Turkish-speaking people in the EU.

Furthermore, to make such strategies effective there needs to be **more interdepartmental data sharing.** For example, between the relevant ministries, the police and the intelligence service, the MIT.

Other steps could include:

- › the empowerment of civil society and role models to play an active role in counter-extremism efforts;
- › prevention of hate speech and discourses targeting the plurality of society (in this respect EU legislation could be a good model);
- › prevention of illegal and unofficial educational activities of religious orders or other religious groups;
- › identification and prevention of foreign funding channels that finance violent and non-violent radical organisations;
- › reflection on the current policing policy and other measures in areas that have become particular hotbeds of radicalisation;
- › development of prevention and de-radicalisation programmes to counter violent extremism by looking at best practices from other countries, including models from the UK, Denmark and Sweden which have developed effective approaches and policies;

¹⁶ *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, "ISIS and Nusra in Turkey: Jihassist recruitment and Ankara's response, How May Turkish jihadists are active?" 2016, pp. 7.

¹⁷ *US State Department*, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2015", Turkey, June 2016, pp. 159, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258249.pdf>, last accessed: 13 January 2017.

- › taking non-violent radical organisations sharing the same ideology and messages seriously;
- › strengthening secularism as an element to ensure plurality in the society as well as fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of belief;
- › and lastly, promoting democratic values to maintain civil liberties, not only for religious groups but for everyone including minority groups, non-believers and seculars.

Closer cooperation mechanisms between the EU and Turkey and other like-minded countries must be further developed and established in order to prevent short-term security challenges, like foreign fighters, as well as long-term dangers.

Jihadi radicalisation is an international threat, which requires an international response. It is positive that the **EU and Turkey have recognised the importance of the need to work closely together** to counter these threats by **strengthening cooperation** on information sharing, law enforcement and judicial cooperation, including cooperation in the field of terrorism-related deportations and the financing of terrorism. Closer cooperation mechanisms between the EU and Turkey and other like-minded countries must be further developed and established in order to prevent short-term security challenges, like foreign fighters, as well as long-term dangers ■

RETHINKING THE INCLUSION-MODERATION HYPOTHESIS: WHY RADICAL SALAFISM THRIVED UNDER THE RULE OF ISLAMISTS IN EGYPT AND TUNISIA, 2011–2013

Marwa Farid, *Head of Civil Society Programs, EDGE Foundation & Policy Advisor, European Foundation for Democracy*

The winds of change in the Middle East reignited the debate about whether the new political sphere could allow non-democratic players to use democratic means to establish non-democratic regimes; and whether it will moderate the views and/or actions of Islamist groups, particularly those with radical/Jihadi tendencies, and push them to participate in the political process. The **inclusion-moderation thesis** postulates that in order for an Islamist group to compete in and win elections, it would need to **appeal to a wider voter-base than their own**, which could help bring them closer to the centre. However, the theory does **not provide adequate hypothesis regarding the inclusion of groups that reject the ballot box together with other democratisation tools**.

In addition, proponents of political Islam often argued that political empowerment of moderate Islamists who emphasise non-violence and democracy can create a **'firewall' against violent extremism**.¹ This is presumably true when extremist groups are brought into the political process to help moderate them behaviorally and ideologically². This article aims to revisit the inclusion-moderation thesis. It examines the impact of moderate Islamists' policy of **inclusion towards radical and ultraconservative Islamists**. It also explores the causes underpinning the failure of the Islamists in power to stop or reverse radicalisation in Egypt and Tunisia.

¹ "House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2016), "'Political Islam', and the Muslim Brotherhood Review", *UK: Sixth Report of Session 2016–17*, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cm/affi/118/118.pdf>.

² Brocker, Manfred; Künkler, Mirjam (2013), "Religious parties: Revisiting the inclusion-moderation hypothesis 1-Introduction", *Party Politics*, 19.2. pp. 171-186.

The term ‘**Islamist**’ refers to various groups across the **spectrum of Salafism** which seek economic, political and social reforms through the application of **Islamic Law (Sharia)**. Salafism is an all-encompassing concept that brings together “**faith, law, rites, moral and ethical codes of conduct and ideals to political order**”³. It is important to distinguish three strands within Salafism. First, puritan Salafism is an apolitical doctrine that focuses on religious education through **Da’wa**⁴. Second, political Salafism involves working within the system to achieve the desired change in order to ensure that the legal system is fully Sharia compliant. Third, Jihadist Salafism involves violence and subversion⁵. While they differ in **modus operandi**, the three strands share a strict interpretation of Islam drawn from the Quran, Sunna (Prophetic traditions) and the actions of the Early Muslims **al-Salaf al-Saleh**⁶.

In this context, moderation occurs as a result of moving on a continuum from radical to moderate or away from more exclusionary worldviews⁷. According to **Samuel Huntington**, this process is called ‘**participation-moderation**’⁸ (1993), where groups who have been previously politically excluded become eligible to benefit from a political opening and accordingly they should modify “**their demands and moderate their tactics**”⁹. The main assumption underpinning the inclusion-moderation thesis is that Islamist actors should accept formal political, social and economic institutions; renounce violence; take part in elections; and operate through parliamentary arrangements¹⁰. This acceptance would entail moderation as a pragmatic way to appeal to a broader audience, which leads to more influence and power. In an inclusive environment, opportunity to mobilise supporters and debate controversial issues in public exist for all.

Acceptance would entail moderation as a pragmatic way to appeal to a broader audience, which leads to more influence and power. In an inclusive environment, opportunity to mobilise supporters and debate controversial issues in public exist for all.

In theory, inclusion should push Islamist actors towards moderation. In practice, it could lead to a phenomenon called ‘**the paradox of democracy**’. This is defined as:

“[T]he idea that democratic processes might empower non-democratic actors to reverse those openings and perhaps permanently. Acting as a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a group may present itself as committed to democratic process only to abandon that stance once it gained enough power democratically to overturn the democratic system entirely, or at least alter the process.”¹¹

Moderation in this sense is behavioural rather than ideological. If a group adopts a rigid worldview, can mere inclusion allow for its ideological moderation? Or at least help them accept that the views of others may be more viable than their own? From a behavioural standpoint, moderate Islamists have been or become moderate prior to their inclusion. For example, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) renounced violence after they were imprisoned during the rule of former Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the 1960s, MB members who continued to embrace Jihad branched off and created militant organisations. Meanwhile, the mother organisation capitalised on an opening provided thereafter by President Anwar Sadat, who came to office following the death of Nasser in 1970 to build its grassroots base through charity and socio-economic activities. Another opening for political inclusion was provided under President Hosni Mubarak's regime by allowing MB to run in the 1987, 2005 and 2010 parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, Tunisia's Ennahda started in the 1970s as an anti-democratic movement with a *tawhid*-based (principle of unity) perspective of politics and society, resolving to impose *Shari'a* to win at the ballot box. By the late 1980s, Ennahda had shifted its position to accept democratic tools.¹²

Furthermore, inclusion as a mechanism to support moderate actors is presumably aimed at depriving radicals of their base of support by making available a moderate alternative that operates within the system and by the accepted rules of the game. In Tunisia and Egypt, this approach did not have much impact on reducing the appeal of radical Islamism. In Tunisia, MB's pragmatism in agreeing to enact a constitution

³ Said, Behnam T; Fouad, Hazim (2014), "Einleitung", in: idem (eds.): *Salafismus. Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam*, Freiburg i. Br., pp. 23–51, pp. 30.

⁴ *Da'wa* "expresses the sense of 'call' or 'invitation'. It comes from the verb *da'a*, 'to call'". For full definition and explanation, see Kerr, David A. (2000), "ISLAMICDA WAAND CHRISTIAN MISSION: TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS", *International Review of Mission*, 89:353, pp.150–171.

⁵ Volks, Thomas (2015), "Islam-Islamism: Clarification for Turbulent Times", *Facts and Findings*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, pp. 164, available at: http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_40120-544-2-30.pdf?150219152955.

⁶ Ratka, Edmund; Roux, Marie-Christine (2016), "Jihad instead of democracy? Tunisia's Marginalised youth and Islamist terrorism", *Globalisation of Terrorism*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

⁷ Schwedler, Jillian (2013), "Islamists in Power? Inclusion, Moderation, and the Arab Uprisings", *Middle East Development Journal*, 5:1, pp.1350006–1–1350006–18.

⁸ Huntington, Samuel (1993), *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: OK: University of Oklahoma Press. pp. 165 - 170.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Schwedler, "Islamists in power? Inclusion, moderation, and the Arab uprisings", 2011.

¹² Cavatorta, Francesco; Merone, Fabio (2013), "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party." *Democratization*, 20 (5), pp. 857–875.

that does not mention that Sharia is the source of the law was widely perceived by the ultraconservative and Jihadi Salafists as a setback and the MB were viewed as traitors to the Islamic project. In Egypt, MB found themselves in competition with strong Salafist parties and movements, which ultimately pushed them to adopt further far-right positions, particularly on *Sharia*, in the 2012 Constitution. **Radical groups that already have large support bases did not see moderation as a go-to alternative.** Since 2012, both countries have continued to suffer from one of the worst waves of violent extremism.

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In Egypt and Tunisia, the inclusion-moderation thesis did not hold water during the Islamist rule. The emergence of radical Islamist movements and parties made moderation more difficult. The following sections will discuss why radicalisation gained traction under the Islamist rule in Egypt and Tunisia.

Tunisia: Testing the limits of inclusion

Although the birthplace of the Arab Spring, **Tunisia quickly transformed into fertile soil for breeding terrorism.** After the fall of Ben Ali's regime, the troika government (led by Ennahda¹³) adopted an '**engagement and dialogue**' approach towards the Salafist community whose presence was visible in politics, violent extremism and vigilantism.¹⁴ The majority of Salafists belong to scientific (educational) Salafism, which focuses primarily on *Da'wa* and charity work. Since the early days of post-revolution Tunisia, the Jihadi Salafist movement of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST) started to gain traction and had become responsible for the recruitment of many of the **5500 Tunisians to terrorism**.¹⁵ Meanwhile, small-sized Salafist groups formed vigilante committees to enforce Sharia law in the streets of Tunisia¹⁶.

Ennahda did nothing to stop the rapid spread of radical Islam and violent extremism in the country. The party was occupied with political bargaining to secure power. This left a vacuum in the religious

sphere, which was soon filled by Salafists. Ennahda firmly believed that moderation of the Salafists was possible through dialogue and political inclusion. Once moderated, the Salafists would join the ranks of Ennahda as a better alternative.¹⁷ Ennahda also believed that **repression triggered this radicalism and Salafi violence is nothing but an expression of anger due to the rampant structural problems endured by Tunisia**, including unemployment, poor economic conditions, lack of freedoms and marginalisation¹⁸.

The scientific Salafists created three ultraconservative political parties: **Hizbal-Asalah** (Authenticity Party), **Jabhatal-Islah** (Reform Front) and **Hibsal-Rahma** (the Mercy Party) to compete in the elections. The legalisation of the Salafist parties was only possible under the Ennahda-led government. The Reform Front had applied for registration at the Ministry of Interior under the transitional government of Sidi Essebsi. The application was turned down on the grounds that its bylaws were inconsistent with the law. Upon the election of Ennahda, the law was amended allowing for the registration of the Reform Front with its bylaws unchanged.¹⁹ Ennahda believed that marginalisation would only result in radicalisation.²⁰

The **legalisation of the Salafi parties was received favourably** with the view that their moderation could offset the growing radicalisation in Tunisia.²¹ A key motivation to establish political parties was the Salafi frustration with Ennahda's compromise on Sharia. Despite their efforts, they could not as of yet secure any seats in the Parliament. The **Salafist turnout in the elections was meagre**, which reflected a genuine disinterest among the Salafist constituencies in the newly found democratic opening.²²

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Lang, H. Awad, M. Juul, P. Katulis, B (2014), "Tunisia's Struggle for Political Pluralism After Ennahda", *Center for American Progress, Working Paper*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ratka and Roux, "Jihad instead of democracy? Tunisia's Marginalised youth and Islamist terrorism".

¹⁷ Lang et al., "Tunisia's Struggle For Political Pluralism".

¹⁸ Interview with the Lang et al., authors of the "Tunisia's Struggle for Political Pluralism After Ennahda" report, Center of American Progress, 2014.

¹⁹ Wolff, Anne (2014), "The Radicalization of Tunisia's Mosques", *CTC Sentinel*, 7:6, pp. 17–20.

²⁰ Moniquet, Claude (2013), "The involvement of Salafism-Wahhabism in the support and supply of arms to rebel groups around the world", European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

²¹ Reichinnek, Heidi (2015), "Salafismus und Jihadismus in Tunesien", *MENA direkt. Islamismus in Bewegung*, Marburg: Philipps Universität Marburg.

²² Lorch, J. and Ranko, A. (2016), "GIGA focus Middle East", *GIGA Focus Nahost*, 07(07), available at: <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publication/salafists-in-the-magreb-region-political-ambitions-in-the-aftermath-of-the-arab-spring>.

Meanwhile a more radical alternative had surfaced, delivering the type of discourse that resonated with Salafists and non-Salafist alike. In April 2011, Abou Ayad, a Salafi Jihadist formed Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST). Earlier in February, he was released from prison by a presidential pardon together with many other high-risk Islamist prisoners who were jailed prior to the 14 January 2011 uprising for terrorism and money-laundering crimes. Many Tunisian hardliners were allowed to return home.²³ Later, the returnee Jihadists helped establish the Uqba ibn Nafi brigade, the **Tunisian branch of al-Qaida in Maghreb** (AQIM) in the Chaabi Mountain, Kasserine.²⁴

Taking advantage of Ennahda's tolerance policy, they were allowed to organise rallies where Jabhet al-Nusra flags were raised, calling for Jihad.

From the onset, **AST considered state institutions and man-made laws illegitimate.** They controlled mosques and carried out propaganda activities to 'educate Tunisians about true Islam'. Taking advantage of Ennahda's tolerance policy, they were allowed to organise rallies where Jabhet al-Nusra flags were raised, calling for Jihad. They also preached in mosques, performed social activism, particularly in areas where the government had no reach.²⁵ They appeared on television to defend themselves and to ensure that people "hear from them rather than hear about them from others".²⁶ **AST felt that with the current lax and accepting climate, transition from preaching to Jihad in Tunisia was eminent.**

At first, the coalition government did not take any measures to regain control over the mosques that AST was using for jihadist recruitment. Furthermore, the radical wing of Ennahda not only joined the Salafist preachers in surrounding the mosques but also spoke at AST rallies in 2011 and 2012.²⁷ In a leaked video of Rashid al-Ghannouchi, the Intellectual Leader of Ennahda, he assured two Salafist figures that "the mosques are no longer under the control of the Secularists. They are in the hands of Islamists. You [Salafists] are free to use mosques, build schools, hold your *Da'wa* rallies and bring preachers from other countries because our people are ignorant of Islam."²⁸

Ennahda also turned a blind eye to Salafi vigilantism and violent extremism. **Vigilante Salafi groups** calling themselves the **League for the Protection of the Revolution** physically assaulted unveiled women, artists, NGO activists and club owners. They also protested against exhibitions and cinemas²⁹.

Ennahda always asserted publically, on every possible occasion, that it supported diversity and fundamental freedoms. However, reality tells a different story. The failure to suppress violent extremism is seen by its critics as complacency and implicit endorsement.

Ennahda always asserted publically, on every possible occasion, that it supported diversity and fundamental freedoms. However, reality tells a different story. The failure to suppress violent extremism is seen by its critics as complacency and implicit endorsement. Perpetrators of these offenses were not brought to justice. Salafi political party leaders and Salafi-linked civil society organisations remained sympathetic to the AST project and criticised Ennahda for designating AST a terrorist organisation.³⁰ **Hopes of Salafi moderation crumbled** as tensions between Salafist supporters of AST and Ennahda intensified³¹ and the government cracked down on AST after a series of political assassinations and heinous acts of terror targeting the US Embassy and secular politicians. It is noteworthy that Ennahda defended its inaction by pointing out that **hardliners were released by the transitional government** and the weakness of the police made violent extremism possible.³²

²³ Spencer, Robert (2011), "Tunisia's new government grants general amnesty to imprisoned Islamic supremacists", *Jihad Watch*, available at: <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2011/02/tunisia-new-govt-grants-general-amnesty-to-imprisoned-islamic-supremacists>.

²⁴ Zelin, A. Y., Lebovich, A., Gartenstein-Ross, D (2013), "Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb's Tunisia Strategy" *CTC Sentinel*, 6(7).

²⁵ Zelin, Aaron Y (2013), "Meeting Tunisia's Ansar al-Sharia", *Foreign Policy* 8.

²⁶ Rayed, Seif el-Dein (2015), "Former Official Spokesman of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia calls for dialogue with the Salafist Youth", *al-Quds al-Arabi*, available at: <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=421686>

²⁷ Interview with Walid Mejri, Journalist and Editor-in-Chief of Inkyfada in Ratka, and Roux, "Jihad instead of democracy?"

²⁸ Minute 2:50 of the Leaked video available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5vqhT8XRw>.

²⁹ Dettmer, Jamie (2013), "Tunisia's Dark Turn," *The Daily Beast*, March 17, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/03/17/tunisia-s-dark-turn.html>.

³⁰ "Dangerous Bedfellows, Ennahda party has declared Ansar al-Sharia a terrorist organisation but not all party members agree", *Correspondents.org*. Available at: <http://www.correspondents.org/node/3848>.

³¹ Lang et al. "Tunisia's Struggle for Political Pluralism After Ennahda".

³² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. "Political Islam, and the Muslim Brotherhood Review".

Egypt: From the centre-right to the extreme right

The 2011 revolution opened the political domain for a number of diverse Islamist actors to meaningfully participate in shaping Egypt's future. The country's transition was more dependent on electoral arrangements than building legal and constitutional frameworks to safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms, irrespective of who would come to power. The nature of the transition created a competition amongst Islamist groups along the spectrum of Islamism. The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) used the extremist worldviews held by the Salafi **Nour** party (the light) to win the votes of the undecided Islamist voters. In 2012, Islamists controlled approximately 70% of the short-lived parliament; 218 were won by FJP, and 111 by the Salafi Nour party. Ultraconservative movements were also able to establish and legalise political parties such as the Building and Development Party, the political arm of the former terrorist group **al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah** (the Islamic Group).

The rise of the Salafists represented a threat to the MB's position among its far-right constituency. However, on the flipside, MB believed that by allowing radical Islamist discourse it could help bolster its appeal as pragmatic and moderate in comparison.³³ The MB and Salafist parties enjoyed a complicated relationship. Initially, the MB accused the Salafist Call **Da'wa Salafiyah**, the preaching organisation to which the Al Nour party is affiliated, that the Mubarak regime used them to undermine MB's outreach and influence, while **al-Da'wa Salafiyah** accused the MB of prioritising pragmatism and political interests over the Islamic creed. Thereafter, they teamed up as a united Islamic front to ensure the Islamist domination of the Constituent Assembly. Finally this partnership of convenience ended with the **Nour** party siding with the secularists to remove Mohammed Morsi from power.

In 2011 and 2012, jihadism was reborn in the Sinai. More than 15 Jihadi organisations including al-Tawhid wal-Jihad and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), Shoura Council of the Mujahideen of Jerusalem, Salah el-Din Brigades and Ansar al-Shari'a amongst others³⁴ were created.

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el-Din Brigades and **Ansar al-Shari'a** amongst others³⁴ were created. Immediately after Morsi released the former leaders of the terrorist group the Vanguard of the Conquest **Tala'e' al-Fat'h**, Ahmed Ashush and Mohamed al-Zawahiri, brother of al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, from prison, both began to rebuild Jihadi organisations in Sinai. Seizing the opportunities offered by an Islamist president, security gaps and political tolerance or indifference, they recruited thousands of unaffiliated Salafists to form the Jihadi Vanguard Salafism or **al-Tali'a al-Salafiyyah** group, whose goal is "to support Islam and establish a rational Islamic Caliphate... [U]sing all available and legitimate means... [including] Qur'an and a sword"³⁵. Meanwhile, ABM managed to set up small cells along the Nile Valley tasked with intelligence gathering to prepare for imminent Jihad.³⁶

Extremist Salafists were given significant leeway to incite online and offline against the Shia. This was further facilitated by the anti-Shia campaign spearheaded by the Salafi Call, the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Azhar in reaction to Morsi's intention to allow Iranian tourists into Egypt.

Morsi was keen to **avoid antagonising any of the Islamist groups**, including al-Qaida or anyone else.³⁷ Pressured by the Salafists, the only group whom Morsi was prepared to suppress was the **Shia sect**. Extremist Salafists were given significant leeway to incite online and offline against the Shia. This was further facilitated by the anti-Shia campaign spearheaded by the Salafi Call, the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Azhar in reaction to Morsi's intention to allow Iranian tourists

³³ Tabaar, Mohammad Ayatollahi (2013), "Assessing (In) security after the Arab Spring: The Case of Egypt", *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 46:04, pp.727-735.

³⁴ Awad, Mokhtar; Samuel Tadros (2015), "Baya Remorse? Wilayat Sinai and the Nile Valley", *CTC Sentinel* 8: 8, available at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/baya-remorse-wilayat-sinai-and-the-nile-valley>

³⁵ Farghaly, Maher (2016), "'Ahmed Ashush za'im Ansarul Sharia fi Misr wa Shamal Afriqiyah', Ahmed Ashush, the Commander of Ansar al-Shari'a in Egypt and North Africa", *Al Bawaba News*, available at: <https://www.albawabnews.com/1992535>.

³⁶ Awad; Tadros, "Baya Remorse? Wilayat Sinai and the Nile Valley".

³⁷ Hope, Bradley (2013), "Plot to blow up western embassy keeps pressure on Egypt's Morsi", *The National*, available at: <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/plot-to-blow-up-western-embassy-keeps-pressure-on-egypts-morsi>.

into Egypt. **Four Shia were lynched by an angry Islamist mob** in Zawyet Abou Mosalem, Giza. Other sectarian attacks were conducted and the perpetrators were not held accountable.³⁸

In the early days following the 2011 revolution, an unidentified militant group carried out four attacks against Israel, including attacking natural gas pipelines. A year later, a video statement by the group revealed that the attacks were part of Jihad against Israel for **“giving gas to our enemies for free”**.³⁹ This rhetoric gained momentum as the Muslim Brotherhood’s Secretary-General Mahmoud Hysayn implied that Morsi’s diplomatic approach towards Israel was not necessarily shared by the MB organisation. He then affirmed that the **“ Hamas movement is considered part of the Muslim Brotherhood ”**.⁴⁰ A similar statement was articulated by the MB’s Supreme Guide, Mohammed Badi, who affirmed that it is the duty of **“every Muslim to strive to save Jerusalem from the hands of the rapists”**.⁴¹

The Jihadi public discourse began to intensify at the national level as the Syrian conflict unfolded. Framed as a war of Shia against Sunnis, hundreds of Salafi controlled mosques demanded Morsi to “authorise Jihad”. Thousands of Islamists took to the streets to voice their support for the ‘holy war against the Syrian regime’.

The Jihadi public discourse began to intensify at the national level as the Syrian conflict unfolded. Framed as a war of Shia against Sunnis, hundreds of Salafi controlled mosques demanded Morsi to **“authorise Jihad”**. Thousands of Islamists took to the streets to voice their support for the **‘holy war against the Syrian regime’**. One of Morsi’s presidential advisors stated that Egyptians are free to travel [to Syria] if they wanted to without officially endorsing jihad.⁴² Internal and external pressures on Morsi heightened to **“open the door for Jihad in Syria”**. On 15 June 2013, Morsi attended the Conference to Support the Syrian Revolution in Cairo Stadium, where two Salafist sheikhs called for Jihad in Syria. Observers believe that Morsi’s attendance and speech were perceived as an endorsement of the call for Jihad and a maneuver to win the Jihadists over to stand by his side against the 30 June 2013 anti-Morsi protests, when millions of demonstrators across Egypt lined the streets to **demand the president’s removal on the first anniversary of his inauguration.**

Conclusion

The cases of Egypt and Tunisia demonstrate that **radicalisation is more likely to occur under inclusion than repression**. The concept of inclusion-moderation becomes less relevant when ultraconservative Islamists are added to the political equation.⁴³ Rather, **Salafists appear to have pushed the moderate Islamists to be less moderate**. As a result, more radical groups may be encouraged to test the new limits by pushing them even further to the far-right so that it becomes a **vicious circle**. In particular, moderate Islamists operating in a political context whose rules are yet to be written are likely to be **pushed towards radicalism**, especially if Salafists emerge as a strong contender in electoral races or if more radical groups have large audiences. By analogy, **secularists may also feel pressured to move to a more religiously conservative centre**.

It is important to note that elections are an appropriate tool to settle political differences in democratically stable countries.⁴⁴ In transitional contexts, priority should be assigned to the **development of constitutional and legal framework through an inclusive consensus-based process**.⁴⁵ It will ensure that no single organisation, political party or institution has a monopoly over deciding the course of transition. Only with well-established rule of law, an independent judiciary, and impartial state institutions, can inclusion yield non-reversible moderation ■

³⁸ Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (2013), "Report on the Shi'a Massacre in Zawyet Abu Mossalem, Giza", available at: <http://www.eipr.org/press/2013/06/تقرير-عن-مذبحة-الشيعة-في-زاوية-أبو-مسلح-بالجيزة>

³⁹ E Mohy El Deen, Sherif (2016), "Youth Radicalisation in Egypt and the Complicated Relationship to Violence", *Policy Alternatives, the Arab Forum Initiative*, available from: <http://www.arab-reform.net/en/node/996>.

⁴⁰ Stein, Ewan (2015), "Jihad Discourse in Egypt under Muhammad Mursi", *Twenty-First Century Jihad: Law, Society and Military Action* 38. See also Al-Sharq al-Awsat (2012), "Khitab taklif al-safir al-Misrilada Isra'il yuthiru jadal-an siyasiyy-an" ('Letter commissioning the Egyptian ambassador to Israel causes political controversy'), al-Sharq al-Awsat, available at: <http://aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issue=12379&article=700429&feature=#:Un12aVNH58E>.

⁴¹ <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/brinkley/article/Morsi-s-silence-on-extremism-speaks-volumes-3723636.php>.

⁴² Tzvi, Rina (2013), "Thousands of Egyptian Islamists Rally for Syria Jihad", *Arutz Sheva*. See also AFP (2013) "Thousands of Egypt Islamists rally for Syria Jihad", *NOW*, 14 June 2013.

⁴³ Schwedler, "Islamists in power? Inclusion, moderation, and the Arab uprisings

⁴⁴ IDEA, "Democracy conflict and human Security", *International institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, 2008.

⁴⁵ Mady, Abdel Fatah (2015), "al-“al wa-al-tahawwul al-dimuqrātī fī Misr ba'da al-thawrah" ("Violence and the Democratic Transition in Egypt"), Cairo, Dar Al Bashir lel-ulum wal-thakafa.

The background of the entire page is a blue-tinted photograph. It shows the silhouettes of several people walking across a polished, reflective floor in what appears to be a modern building or office space. Large windows in the background offer a view of a city with various buildings and trees. The overall mood is professional and contemporary.

**Challenging vulnerability to radicalisation in Europe's
education sectors:
LESSONS FROM BRITISH CVE EXPERIENCES**

Rupert Sutton, Director of Student Rights, the Henry Jackson Society

Introduction

In recent months, the potential threat posed to Europe by terrorist plots utilising **attackers young enough to be in full-time education** has been demonstrated by arrests across Belgium, France and Germany.¹ With many of those held believed to have been in contact with **European-born Islamic State recruiters based in Syria**,² it is clear that European law enforcement agencies still face a significant challenge despite the numbers travelling to Syria falling.³ **Understanding and countering the Islamism-inspired radicalisation of young people** therefore remains a crucial policy challenge across the EU, and one where sharing past experiences and best practice will be vital.

In the United Kingdom (UK), the government has long-recognised that the school and higher education sectors are ones in which **young people can be given the skills required to increase their resilience to radicalisation**. However, there has also been a significant number of individuals convicted of terrorism offences, or who have travelled overseas to join militant groups, who were enrolled in full-time education at the time, suggesting that opportunities to intervene may have been missed. It can also be argued that the environment of educational institutions **may be particularly conducive** to many of the engagement factors which can draw people into involvement with extremist groups, causes or ideologies.

Since the revision of the Prevent strategy in 2011, the British government has continued to refine how **counter-radicalisation efforts** operate in schools, colleges and universities, and developed a number of legal and regulatory structures and requirements as part of this process. The response to this from extremist groups, public sector activists, and institutions has been instructive, and should provide other EU member states developing or refining programmes aimed at **countering violent extremism (CVE)** with lessons for the future.

¹ *International Business Times*, "Christmas Terror Attacks In Belgium? 10 Teenagers Arrested For Plotting Bomb Blasts", December 2016, available at: www.ibtimes.com/christmas-terror-attacks-belgium-10-teenagers-arrested-plotting-bomb-blasts-2462147, last accessed on: 19 December 2016; *BBC News*, "Did jihadist Rashid Kassim lure French youths to plot attacks?", September 2016, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37340697, last accessed on: 19 December 2016; *Daily Telegraph*, "Boy, 12, 'attempted to blow up nail bomb at German Christmas market'", December 2016, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/16/boy-12-attempted-blow-nail-bomb-german-christmas-market/, last accessed on: 19 December 2016.

² Zelin, A (2016), "GUEST POST: An Interview with Rachid Kassim, Jihadist Orchestrating Attacks in France", *Jihadology*, 18 November 2016, available at: www.jihadology.net/2016/11/18/guest-post-an-interview-with-rachid-kassim-jihadist-orchestrating-attacks-in-france/, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

³ *The Washington Post*, "Flow of foreign fighters plummets as Islamic State loses its edge", September 2016, available at: www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/flow-of-foreign-fighters-plummets-as-isis-loses-its-edge/2016/09/09/ed3e0dda-751b-11e6-9781-49e591781754_story.html, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

Identifying the risk of radicalisation in the UK's education sector

The UK's education sector has long been recognised by the government as one that is **vulnerable to extremist misuse**, and where individuals may be at risk of radicalisation. In 2011, the new coalition government review of the Prevent strategy declared that the purpose of Prevent was in part to **"prevent people from being drawn into terrorism"**, working "with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation".⁴

The strategy identified that, while there was **"no systematic attempt to recruit or radicalise people in full-time education"**, a number of terrorist plots had involved individuals who had become involved with violent extremism while at school. It also highlighted that a significant number of referrals to Channel, the government's programme to identify and support individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, were aged **between 15 and 19 years old**. The Prevent review also addressed the higher education sector, concluding that there was "unambiguous evidence to indicate that some extremist organisations [...] target specific universities and colleges (notably those with a large number of Muslim students) with the objective of radicalising and recruiting students".⁵

Following these findings, the report of the Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism set up in the wake of the murder of Lee Rigby by Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale concluded in December 2013 that more oversight was needed in some schools. It also highlighted that "[e]xtremist preachers use some higher education [sic] institutions as a platform for spreading their messages".⁶ This echoed the views of Charles Farr, then-Director General of the Home Office's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), who had told a parliamentary committee in November 2011 that extremists who stood **"against core UK values and whose ideology incidentally is also shared by terrorist organisations"** were able to address students regularly, and without challenge, at UK universities.⁷

In October 2015, the new Conservative government published a counter-extremism strategy, which it declared would guide the British state's response to all forms of extremism. When focusing on the education sector, the strategy highlighted that, within higher education, **"students are and have been influenced by extremist ideology and...**

some universities have been the focus of attention by extremist speakers". It also highlighted the risk posed to the small number of students studying in schools which extremists had attempted to gain control of, and by the lack of regulation of some supplementary schools and tuition centres outside of government control.⁸

The risk of radicalisation facing individuals within the UK's education sector has also been demonstrated by the number of students enrolled in full-time education who have been convicted of **Islamism-inspired, terrorism-related offences**, or travelled overseas to join militant groups in recent years. Research from the Henry Jackson Society published in January 2017 found that 33 individuals convicted of committing an Islamism-inspired terrorism offence between 1998 and 2015 (12.3% of the total) were enrolled as students at the time of their arrest.⁹

In April 2016, King's College London (KCL) student, Suhaib Majeed, was sentenced to life in prison for conspiracy to murder after planning an Islamic State-inspired shooting in London.¹⁰ Other recent offenders have included:

- › **Cuybeda Jama**, a student at Middlesex University arrested as he attempted to travel to Syria to join Islamic State (IS), and sentenced to three and half years in prison in July 2016;
- › **Yahya Rashid**, who used a forged educational certificate to fraudulently gain a place at Middlesex University, and received a five-year prison sentence in November 2015 for using his student loan to fund travel to Syria;

⁸ HM Government (2011), "Prevent Strategy", London, p. 1, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf, last accessed on: 20 December 2016.

⁹ HM Government (2011), "Prevent Strategy", London, pp. 67-68, 73.

¹⁰ HM Government (2013), "Tackling extremism in the UK", London, p. 6, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263181/ETF_FINAL.pdf, last accessed on: 20 December 2016.

⁷ Home Affairs Select Committee (2012), "Roots of Violent Radicalisation", London, p. 15, available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1446/1446.pdf, last accessed on: 20 December 2016.

⁸ HM Government (2015), "Counter-Extremism Strategy", London, pp. 13-14, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf, last accessed on: 20 December 2016.

⁹ Stuart, H (2017), "Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)", London: Henry Jackson Society, p. 942.

¹⁰ The Guardian, "Two British students jailed for plotting Isis-style drive-by shootings", April 2016, available at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/apr/22/british-students-jailed-plotting-isis-style-drive-by-shootings-tarik-hassane-suhaib-majeed, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

- › **Afsana Kayum**, a law student at the University of East London (UEL) who was given an eighteen-month sentence in March 2015 for possession of a record containing information useful in the commission of terrorism; and
- › **David Souaan**, a Birkbeck student convicted of preparing for terrorist attacks in Syria and sentenced to three and a half years in prison in February 2015.¹¹

Outside of higher education, in July 2015 a 15 year-old boy anonymised as 'Boy X' and attending a secondary school for pupils with behavioural issues was convicted of using the encrypted messaging app Telegram to incite a man based in Australia to **attack a police officer during an Anzac Day parade in Melbourne**. The boy was also in contact with a 16 year-old secondary school pupil from Manchester anonymised as 'Girl Y', who was convicted of possession of a record containing information useful in the commission of terrorism in August 2015.¹²

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, a number of students at schools, colleges and universities have also travelled to the country to either work with/fight alongside extremist groups, with several having been killed in action during such activities. The most well-known are likely to be **three school-girls who travelled from Bethnal Green in East London in February 2015**,¹³ but there have been dozens of others, including two clusters of students from Coventry and Liverpool who travelled to fight for IS in 2014 and 2013 respectively.¹⁴

The vulnerabilities of the UK's education sector

While the evidence is clear that **individuals enrolled in full-time education in the UK are vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism**, the unique nature of each person's radicalisation process makes it very difficult to come to any wider conclusions about the factors involved.

In the UK, the government has identified a broad process by which it believes vulnerable people can become involved in terrorism, with a person first engaging with a cause or ideology in the absence of protective factors before developing the intent and capability to commit harm. The British government's **Channel Vulnerability Assessment Framework**, released in October 2012 and used to evaluate whether support is required for individuals referred to the

programme, lays out a number of the engagement factors that might lead individuals to be more at risk of engaging with an extreme group, cause, or ideology.¹⁵ Including personal susceptibilities and motivations alongside individual circumstances and outside influences, many of the factors, while not specific to students, can be found at the heart of the student experience in school, college or university environments, suggesting that the **education sector provides fertile grounds for these factors to take hold.**

For new students in higher or further education, many of whom will have travelled away from home and the protective factors provided by family and peer networks, the move to university or college is one of the most significant transitional periods they will ever go through in their life. The Channel guidance highlights how “being at a transitional time of life” can be a specific engagement factor into involvement with a cause or group, and it is possible that the educational environment may also provide the impetus for the development of other engagement factors. These could include **“a need for identity, meaning and belonging”** or **“a desire for status”** following such a move, as well as **“a desire for excitement and adventure”** driven by the loneliness that many new students experience. In turn, these factors may leave students vulnerable to **“being influenced or controlled by a group”** or drive **“opportunistic involvement”** with extremist organisations.¹⁶

¹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, “Teenager who spent student loan trying to join Isis and used a ‘step-by-step guide to terrorism’ is jailed”, July 2016, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/28/teenager-who-spent-student-loan-trying-to-join-isis-and-used-a-s/, last accessed on: 22 December 2016; *The Guardian*, “Teenager who used student loan to join Isis in Syria gets youth custody”, November 2015, available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/18/yahya-rashid-used-student-loan-join-isis-syria-youth-custody, last accessed on: 22 December 2016; *Evening Standard*, “Jailed: London law student who advertised for jihadi husband and wrote to Abu Hamza”, March 2015, available at: www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/jailed-london-law-student-who-advertised-for-jihadi-husband-and-wrote-to-abu-hamza-10113447.html, last accessed on: 22 December 2016; *Daily Telegraph*, “Student David Souaan jailed after trying to join Isis in Syria”, February 2015, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11386271/Student-David-Souaan-jailed-after-trying-to-join-Isil-in-Syria.html, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

¹² Stuart, H (2017), “Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)”, London: Henry Jackson Society, pp. 895-901.

¹³ *BBC News*, “London schoolgirl who travelled to Syria to join IS ‘feared dead’”, August 2016, available at www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37053699, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

¹⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, “Second Coventry jihadist reportedly dies in Syria fighting with Isis”, December 2014, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11288139/Second-Coventry-jihadist-reportedly-dies-in-Syria-fighting-with-Isil.html, last accessed on: 22 December 2016; *Liverpool Echo*, “John Moores University students may be fighting with ISIS in Syria”, March 2015, available at: www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/john-moores-university-students-fighting-8768174, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

¹⁵ HM Government (2012), “Channel: Vulnerability assessment framework”, London, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118187/vul-assessment.pdf, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

¹⁶ HM Government (2012), “Channel: Vulnerability assessment framework”, London, p. 2.

Souaan was said to have become lonely after starting his studies away from the support networks provided by his family and girlfriend. While the engagement factors that played a part in his radicalisation were also likely driven by his personal connection to Syria, where members of his father's family faced serious violence.

After David Souaan was jailed in February 2015, it was highlighted that he had been **particularly vulnerable to radicalisation after he left home in Serbia to attend university in London**. Souaan was said to have become lonely after starting his studies away from the support networks provided by his family and girlfriend. While the engagement factors that played a part in his radicalisation were also likely driven by his personal connection to Syria, where members of his father's family faced serious violence, Souaan's isolation as a new student and subsequent involvement in protests organised by extremists linked to Anjem Choudary, a radical preacher imprisoned in 2016 for urging support of IS, highlight the impact the transition into an education environment can have.¹⁷

It is not just personal issues including loneliness and isolation which can make people particularly vulnerable to the engagement factors that may become part of a wider pathway into terrorism, though. Islamist extremists have often sought to target educational institutions over the years, and the increased exposure to external activists with a history of defending convicted terrorists, or claiming that the West is at war with Islam, may drive the development of these engagement factors. These can include the growth of **'feelings of grievance and injustice'** and **'feeling under threat'**, as well as the development of intent factors such as a growth in **'Them and Us thinking'**, the **'dehumanisation of the enemy'** and an **'over-identification with a group or ideology'** that can lead people to develop the intent to cause harm.¹⁸

The presence of these factors was particularly apparent on campus at two events in 2015. In February, speakers were recorded telling students at Queen Mary University in London that **Muslims are "feared and hated" in the West** and face a situation akin to the Jews in Nazi Germany. One student at the event was arrested in Turkey just weeks later after it was feared he was trying to travel into Syria. A second event in November, which took place in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), saw a number of speakers call for the release of terrorists convicted in open court, including Munir Farooqi, convicted of soliciting to murder, and Anis Sardar, convicted of murder. The event promotional material claimed that those imprisoned of terror offences

were, in fact, victims of **“fabricated accounts of terrorist acts produced through forced ... confessions”**.¹⁹ Prior to his arrest in 2014, Suhaib Majeed had also invited a speaker onto campus who had previously claimed a terrorist convicted of soliciting to murder and providing terrorism training had been **“locked up unfairly under false terror charges”** and encouraged people to campaign for his release.²⁰

The specific targeting of education institutions by Islamist extremists and subsequent vulnerability this brings to the sector extends beyond events organised with speakers.

The specific targeting of education institutions by Islamist extremists and subsequent vulnerability this brings to the sector extends beyond events organised with speakers. In early 2014, men connected to the banned organisation, al-Muhajiroun, targeted at least two London universities under the name **‘Need4Khilafah’**, later listed by the government as an alias for the proscribed group. They sought to engage students in discussion, providing a clear example of another way in which students, who may already have developed engagement and intent factors, can be exposed to radicalising influences.²¹

Later in 2014, meanwhile, the discovery of an attempt by a small number of activists to gain access to the structures within schools in Birmingham and use these to impose **“an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos”** highlights activity that can potentially have the same effect. The British government’s counter-extremism strategy documented the findings of Peter Clarke’s report on this activity, and also highlighted findings by the Department for Education and schools regulator Ofsted that pupils at a number of schools in East London may have been **“vulnerable to extremist influences and radicalisation”** due to the intolerant teaching they were receiving.²²

¹⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, “Student David Souaan jailed after trying to join Isis in Syria”, February 2015.

¹⁸ HM Government (2012), “Channel: Vulnerability assessment framework”, London, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷ *Daily Mail*, “Student left for Syria days after watching speech by head of notorious rights group in which he said Muslims were ‘feared and hated’ in the West”, January 2016, available at: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3391589/Student-left-Syria-days-watching-speech-head-notorious-rights-group-said-Muslims-feared-hated-West.html, last accessed on: 22 December 2016; “Brothers Behind Bars event at SOAS”, Student Rights, 3 November 2015, available at: www.studentrights.org.uk/article/2320/brothers_behind_bars_event_at_soas, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

²⁰ Screenshots archived and available on request.

²¹ “Al-Muhajiroun-linked extremists on campus in London (Update: Statement released by Queen Mary)”, Student Rights, 14 March 2014, available at: www.studentrights.org.uk/article/2189/al_muhajiroun_linked_extremists_on_campus_in_london_update_statement_released_by_queen_mary_, last accessed on: 22 December 2016.

²² HM Government (2015), “Counter-Extremism Strategy”, London, pp. 13-14.

Responding to vulnerabilities and lessons to be learned

Responding to the differing vulnerabilities demonstrated within the UK's education sectors has required policy-makers to focus on these two main elements of the problem: on the one hand, **ensuring that those students vulnerable to radicalisation can be identified and supported**; on the other hand, **making the sector more resilient to extremist misuse**. While local contexts will differ across the EU, these two broad challenges are the ones which most member states will face, as they develop CVE initiatives, and the evolution of practice in the UK can potentially provide some lessons for the future.

A key development has been the formalisation of the safeguarding narrative around radicalisation issues and the subsequent collaborative provision of services to those assessed to be at risk.

A key development has been the formalisation of the safeguarding narrative around radicalisation issues and the subsequent collaborative provision of services to those assessed to be at risk. Since the initial pilot of the Channel programme in 2007, in which the police led partnerships **"modelled on other successful multi-agency risk management processes such as child protection, domestic violence and the management of high risk offenders"**,²³ the UK's approach towards CVE has increasingly drawn on this language. The revised 2011 Prevent strategy made this clear, stating that **"preventing someone from becoming a terrorist or from supporting terrorism is substantially comparable to safeguarding in other areas, including child abuse or domestic violence"**.²⁴

Following the passage of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act in February 2015, this approach has become a statutory responsibility for schools and most higher education institutions, with the legislation giving institutions a duty to have **"due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism"**.²⁵ Guidance released for schools in June 2015 highlights how the sector should operate, saying that **"protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' ... wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation)"**.²⁶ As a result, a consistent framework for the provision of local authority support including mentoring, life skills guidance, cognitive behavioural therapies, and health/housing/

substance abuse support, is available to those assessed to be at risk,²⁷ while a network of regional Prevent coordinators specialising in higher and further education provide institutions with advice outside of law enforcement structures, and away from the language of ‘pre-criminal spaces’.

The focus on safeguarding also feeds into efforts to **challenge extremist misuse of the education sector**, making it **difficult for groups to undermine counter-radicalisation efforts** without positioning themselves in opposition to protective measures. In the UK, a well-organised campaign to see CVE efforts scrapped has developed, driven by extremist groups and public sector and student unions. Spreading misleading information about delivery processes and inflammatory claims about individual cases, the campaign’s primary themes include accusations that state-driven racism and anti-Muslim bigotry are an inherent part of Prevent; that the programme drives a chilling of political activism within Muslim communities in order to silence dissent; that the Prevent duty forces sector staff to spy on individuals within their care; and that there is no proof Prevent works, nor any academic backing/research behind it.²⁸

In the UK, a well-organised campaign to see CVE efforts scrapped has developed, driven by extremist groups and public sector and student unions

²³ HM Government (2011), “Prevent Strategy”, London, p. 57.

²⁴ HM Government (2011), “Prevent Strategy”, London, pp. 83-84.

²⁵ HM Government (2015), “Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015”, London, available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/part/5/enacted, last accessed on: 23 December 2016.

²⁶ UK Department for Education (2015), “The Prevent duty: Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers”, London, p. 5, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439598/prevent-duty-departmental-advice-v6.pdf, last accessed on: 23 December 2016.

²⁷ HM Government (2015), “Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism”, London, p. 17, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf, last accessed on: 23 December 2016.

²⁸ See Sutton, R (2016), “Myths and Misunderstandings: Understanding Opposition to the Prevent Strategy”, London: Henry Jackson Society, available at: www.henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Myths-and-Misunderstandings-PREVENT-Report-Final-29.09.2016.pdf, last accessed on: 3 January 2017, for more information on this campaign, the themes used in its criticism, and the principal actors involved.

With French activists already involved with this campaign, it is clear there is the potential for themes and tactics seen in the UK to appear in the EU,²⁹ and **challenging this campaign will be vital if Europe's CVE efforts are to be a success**. With this in mind, it will be important for member states developing programmes to ask if their procedures will:

1 - CHALLENGE MISINFORMATION

Any CVE programme should come equipped with a clear process by which misleading stories about delivery **face swift and robust rebuttal** from the relevant authorities. This could take the form of an engagement unit specifically designed to respond to media stories, with a clear line of communication to government departments most likely to see stories about alleged inappropriate delivery – something most common in the education sector in the UK. However, simply reacting to false claims will not be enough, and structures developed must also provide the **necessary support for practitioners to effectively respond to myths about the strategy during engagement**. Consultation events which give communities the opportunity to raise concerns with local delivery staff should go hand in hand with the creation of regularly updated material for staff rebutting the arguments used by opponents and addressing misunderstood aspects of the strategy.

2 - ADVERTISE SUCCESS

The extent to which un-evidenced claims Prevent has failed to stop people being radicalised are spread in the UK highlights the **importance of complementing engagement plans with the promotion of cases where CVE intervention has been beneficial**. While data protection must remain paramount, the development of an anonymised database of successful interventions could aid evaluation of differing practice and intervention provision, as well as being included in online training to give staff within sectors vulnerable to extremist misuse the chance to see the results of CVE delivery in context. Meanwhile, giving delivery staff the opportunity to recommend individuals keen for their case to be publicised may give local community groups the opportunity to engage with the programme beyond reporting or providing services.

3 - PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY

Finally, recognition within programmes that mistakes can be made and that inappropriate action may be taken by delivery staff will be vital. Ensuring any CVE programme comes with **an independent investigative complaint mechanism should therefore be a priority**. This could take the form of a separate division within the relevant regulatory bodies for those sectors involved with the programme, or in the creation of an overarching independent regulatory body similar to the **Office of the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation** in the UK. Ultimately, this should **aim to hold the programme to account**, as well as prevent concerns about delivery being taken to extremist campaign groups, rather than an accountable authority.

While developing counter-radicalisation efforts as part of wider safeguarding programmes and ensuring cross-sector consistency are a start, **developing structures which address these issues will be more of a challenge**, and require significant buy-in from local delivery staff. However, if EU member states are to effectively challenge radicalisation within their schools, colleges, and universities, **putting such structures in place early to head off the opposition** seen in the UK **should be considered a key part of any strategy** ■

²³ "PREVENT, Islamophobia and Civil Liberties conference programme", Students not Suspects, 10 May 2016, available at: www.studentsnotsuspects.com/, last accessed on: 3 January 2016.

A close-up photograph of a hand typing on a keyboard, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The focus is on the fingers and keys, with the background being a blurred grid pattern.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF ONLINE EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

Tahir Abbas, Senior Research Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

Introduction

In the current era, numerous issues arise from the **radicalisation of vulnerable youths** and the repercussions raised for securitisation, policing and intelligence. Of particular concern is the **internet as a space in which various forms of radicalisation occur**. However, while there is a role for the internet in radicalisation, the precise nature of the processes that inveigle young people and **'activate' their radicalisation** requires greater understanding¹. Nor is it possible to argue that the internet increases the rate or intensity of terrorism. Numerous studies demonstrate that the internet is merely a facilitator, not exclusively an enabler². Furthermore, the offline world cannot be disregarded as an important element, despite the **power of the internet to connect people and ideas**.

Importantly, the situation of young people who might be susceptible to radicalisation emerges within a particular social, cultural and political context. The restructuring of the economic base, from manufacturing to services, has resulted in a **'left behind' generation** of marginalised, disenfranchised, alienated young men (and women), both indigenous and a minority³. In Western Europe, the growth of far-right and Islamist extremism is directly associated with transformations to economy and society that have resulted in groups feeling unable to contribute to their individual existence, leading to alienation and anomie. In this context, anger and resentment is redirected against the 'other'. For far-right groups, theirs is a 'counter-Jihad' narrative that instrumentalises the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism, anti-immigration and anti-religion, namely anti-Islam⁴. In addition to politicising groups, this far-right, online world is an alternative reality that **serves individuals seeking knowledge** but also provides information on how to make bombs, for example. **Individuals can remain reclusive and undetected** in an arena where aggressive gaming is also an issue, permitting people such as Anders Breivik to move from a hard core gamer to a terrorist, for

¹ Anne Aly, *Brothers, Believers, Brave Mujahideen: Focusing attention on the audience of violent Jihadist preachers*. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2016 DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157407.

² Paul Gill, Emily Corner, Amy Thornton & Maura Conway, *What are the roles of the Internet in terrorism? Measuring online behaviours of convicted UK terrorists*. Brussels: VOX-Pol Network of Excellence, 2015.

³ Danny Dorling, *Inequality and the 1%*. London and New York: Verso, 2015.

⁴ Robert Ford & Matthew Goodwin, *Revolt on the Right: Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014.

example⁵. In the case of radical Islamists, their frustration is projected at a global level, where a sense of obligation to a self-transcendental cause is the defining characteristic. However, as anger surfaces in many young people, only very few move from the view that their group identity is under threat to actual instances of violent extremism.

Multiple digital and social media roles

Print and television media affects perceptions, but the role of the internet, and in particular social media, is vital to consider when understanding how media shapes opinion and behaviour. Social media is habitually anonymous, but can also be organised, i.e. 'astroturfing', comments on online articles and on social media that give the **impression of being from random members of the public when they are, in fact, part of highly organised and well-funded campaigns**. In the last decade or so, social media has grown immensely as an information and communication tool. The medium is used to provide regular updates on activities as well as commentaries on various topics and themes, some of which relate to sensitive areas. Radicalisers also instrumentalise the power of social media with slick media messaging, and a resource-intensive focus on **'grooming' vulnerable young people online**. With the lack of any regulations, a relatively open platform and the ability to hide behind a *nom de plume*, social media allows different individuals and groups to support and participate in radicalised activities⁶.

Twitter is one of the easiest and most flexible social medial platforms to use. It has become a favourite among individuals and organisations using it to lure potential foreign fighters willing to join the Islamic State, for example.

Twitter is one of the easiest and most flexible social medial platforms to use. It has become a favourite among individuals and organisations using it to lure potential foreign fighters willing to join the Islamic State, for example. Based on various national and international infrastructures, the Islamic State is able to organise its online activities despite temporary setbacks to its operations. **Back room staff put together tweets with YouTube videos and other documentation in an on-going process of communication, indoctrination and recruitment.** Much of this online platform is managed behind the scenes, not just

as mere acts of random online messaging, but as highly regulated output. Certainly, if soldiers attempt to communicate with family and friends outside of controlled territories, they are likely to face severe punishment. 'Twitter is used to propagandize for core **Jihadist** tenets that are translated into symbolic images for a generation of social media users who prefer pictures to text'⁷. This architecture of control is vital to understand.

Furthermore, although lone actor themes are important to consider in radicalisation, technically, when anyone supports the rhetoric of any particular online ideology that leads to violent extremism, they do so through '**digital tribalism**'. That is, group identities take on new meaning in the context of individuals connected through various nodes. The internet is crucial in helping to distil not merely the content of the message and the impact it has on perceptions, but also the processes behind the generation of those messages and what they mean for a digital presence. This affects Islamist groups but also far-right groups, both of which experience a sense of identity loss through globalisation. The latter projects it locally and nationally in reclaiming lost territory and projecting anti-immigration sentiment, and the former cast it nationally and globally, with reference to resisting integration in the West, foreign policy and the idea of reclaiming an **imagined 'golden past' ideologically hurled onto the present**.

Western media tend to focus on beheading videos as ostensibly the main output of Islamic State media, with other areas of content frequently ignored⁸. This includes the **utopian vision of the Caliphate**, which appeals to Muslims based on an obedience to authoritarianism, and that it is a rightful duty incumbent upon Muslims to join it. The **Inspire** magazine, produced by Al Qaeda, and thought to be behind the radicalisation and the participation of Western and Islamic world Muslims in violent jihad, is an important case in point. Aiming to resonate with Western audiences, much of its focused content documents instances of **terrorist violence in the name of Jihad**, but the magazine also contains wider discussions on the idea of Jihad.

⁵ Jacob Aasland Ravndal, Anders Behring Breivik's use of the Internet and social media. *JEX Journal for Deradicalization and Democratic Culture* 2, 172-185, 2013.

⁶ Gabriel Weimann, *Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

⁷ Jytte Klausen, *Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq*. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38(1), 1-22, 2015.

⁸ Aaron Y. Zelin *Picture Or It Didn't Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State's Official Media Output*. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9(4), 85-97, 2015.

The substance of the magazine changes with various events and themes. For example, the Arab Spring created particular junctures in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, shifting the publication's focus to regional and local matters. It suggests that how people read the magazine is not based on unambiguously accepting the call to radicalisation, but that an information-dissemination role is also enacted as well as consumed by their readers. Some of this may or may not ultimately lead to violent radicalisation⁹. Factors that affect whether an individual is turned to violent radicalisation are as much individual as they are specific to the circumstances in which these people find themselves.

Calling 'Jihad'

The complex and multi-layered structure of Islamic State social media output shows that the **movement has its finger on the aspirations of otherwise alienated and disconnected Muslims in Europe, and in parts of the Muslim world facing similar concerns**. The Islamic State is especially motivated to deliver a message accepted by certain conservative Muslims, but without always the need to emphasise violence or terrorism. Therefore, analysts and policy-makers working to eliminate the threat from such attempts to motivate young Muslims operate within a framework that contains a huge canvas of opinion. A significant part of it is outwardly extremist in nature, but not all of it emphasises violent extremism. Therefore, it is argued that "government resources would be better used in developing counter-narrative strategies based on **"reverse-engineering"** the core principles underpinning the strategic logic of IS's [Islamic State's] IO [information operations] campaign"¹⁰. Such strategies need to first dismantle the messages, work with messengers who can reach out to a diverse body of people, crucially bringing with them vulnerable people on the borderlines of radicalisation, and, finally, to actively work with media in order to promote the messengers and help to break down the negative messages¹¹. A specific counter-narrative strategy is to **adopt a 'Jihadi cool' narrative** that seeks to nullify, but then to also provide a direct alternative to a popular form of aggressive masculinity promulgated by the nuances of the digital media in question¹². This can take different forms depending on different opportunity frames.

Research on the experiences of Islamists radicalised online points to a number of underlying concerns. The following is a summary of the main

perspectives employed by the Islamic State to recruit foreign fighters through the '**digital superhighway**'. Each is a specific mechanism through which young minds are enticed to join the cause:

- › **Humanitarian:** at some basic level, the call to Jihad is motivated by a sense of duty with reference to the roles and responsibilities of active Muslims to help in humanitarian causes, particularly but not solely in Syria.
- › **Democracy:** The Islamic State argues that an inherent, unbridgeable and permanent divide exists between Islam and democracy, where incompatibility is the norm. It extends this argument to understand that living in *dar-al-kufar* [the land of the unbelievers] is un-Islamic and that the only answer is aggressive jihad.
- › **Eschatology:** The Islamic State promulgates the religious and political ideology that the 'end of times' is upon Muslims, and that it is a duty upon Muslims over the world to defend the Caliphate established for precisely this purpose.
- › **Identity:** The Islamic State tries to propel a particular Muslim identity, where its true essence is better formed and shaped in the Caliphate. This call to Jihad is based upon a utopian vision of a perfect society, created for Muslims to flourish as the ideal Muslims.

Therefore, in relation to the media messaging power of radical Islamists, it is important to deconstruct the content of prominent online magazines *Dabiq* and *Inspire*. Both focus on the idea of Islam as under attack and in crisis. The response is armed jihad against apostate regimes in the MENA region. The message compels people to join the '**vanguard of believers**', as part of their individual duty in Islam, with the overall goal of supporting the Caliphate. However, unlike the Islamic State, Al Qaida does not wish to become the sole leader of the global Islamic community, but simply a catalyst for change. In line with this aim, *Inspire* magazine focuses on attacks against Western targets through the 'lone wolf' individual at home. Currently, it also glorifies

⁹ Julian Droogan & Shane Peattie, Reading Jihad: Mapping the shifting themes of Inspire magazine. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2016 DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2016.1211527.

¹⁰ Haroro J. Ingram, The strategic logic of Islamic State information operations. *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69(6), 729-752, 2015.

¹¹ Omar Ashour, Online De-Radicalization? Countering Violent Extremist Narratives: Message, Messenger and Media Strategy. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4(6), 15-19, 2010.

¹² See Jytte Klausen, Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38(1), 1-22, 2015; Maruta Herding, Inventing the Muslim Cool: Islamic Youth Culture in Western Europe. Bielefeld, Germany, 2013; Laura Huey, This is Not Your Mother's Terrorism: Social Media, Online Radicalization and the Practice of Political Jamming. *Journal of Terrorism Research* 6(2), 2015. DOI: 10.15664/JTR.1159.

the battles in Yemen and celebrates martyrs. It provides 'open source jihad', such as how 'to make a bomb in your mother's kitchen'¹³.

In contrast, the central strategy for Islamic State is the creation and maintenance of the Caliphate, emulating the perfect city (Medina) model and the importance of migration to it (*hijra*). This is somewhat different from Al Qaida, whose core ideas are binary but also virtual, unlike the Islamic State, which, through the fortunes of war between existing Al Qaida-affiliate groups, instrumentalised the idea of the founding of a state. In particular, *Dabiq* presents the formation of the Islamic State as a success story, a perfect place for Muslims, delivering a utopian vision of the ideal home for Muslims from across the world, portrayed as having efficient services, excellent living conditions, bountiful food and complete freedom. The aim is to attract new citizens to the state. All the while, it hails the cause as a triumphant victory, while demonising the enemy, including Shias as well as all 'others'¹⁴.

In general, **Islamic State takes a mixed approach to its social media strategy, and uses many different platforms.** They range from the general message conveyed via popular platforms such as Twitter, finally moving to more **one-to-one targeted approaches using such apps as Telegram and the online forum, Ask.fm.** In this respect, Twitter is the gateway entry point; however, in recent periods, it has faced pressure from governments to take down problematic content, which has created challenges for Twitter and other major social media outlets. It calls into question how government policy is able to affect independent private companies whose modus operandi is based on interaction with the wider public.

The Islamic State drafts social media content and disseminates it widely to the public, for example, when a terrorist attack happens. The group promotes videos of the act for shock value, then lionises the attacker, pushes the message of fame to attract more people to do the same, ultimately using the attacks for later propagandist purposes in a bid to arouse others. This media output is of **professional production quality: no more grainy VHS recordings carried out in caves.** The Islamic State also produces videos re-enacting popular content such as scenes from the *Hunger Games* or *Saw films*. It is an attempt to engage target audiences through media messages, using references that are already familiar among consumers of contemporary Hollywood-quality production techniques. It is also a **skilful use of psychological processes.**

Prioritising research and policy agendas

A large body of analytical thinking, as well as evidence obtained from young people and research carried out by various credible institutions of government, academia and independent think tanks, continues to argue that the reasons why so many European-born Muslim youth are drawn to radicalisation in far off lands is because **their own countries have not done enough to integrate them**. However, such thinking excludes the role of catalysts or accelerators, but while the role of the internet has been established, how people are radicalised through it remains unclear¹⁵. Moreover, existing research does not fully address the systematic causation between the availability of Islamist digital and social media and people's uptake of it. As of yet, there has been no methodical way of measuring this influence either. In addition, **while the existence of online radicalisation is undeniable, how it links to offline radicalisation remains unidentified**. Furthermore, the notion of the **'lone actor'** is a misnomer; **inevitably, others are involved**. The **'lone actor'** is **not a single detached actor** but, arguably, an individual who is part of a wider network of similarly minded individuals – the **'digital tribe'**¹⁶.

There is also the issue of the **offending material taken down from one platform and then reposted elsewhere**, unless there is greater cooperation between private social media companies. Therefore, it is important to have a tacit understanding between social media companies, as well as taking the same approach to hate speech, making it easier for the public to report all of these incidents. Countering violent extremism policy is wedded to the idea of generating **'positive alternative narratives'** to help challenge and undermine the terrorist narratives. For example, for people trying to go to Syria to help innocent Syrians, governments could put out the message of alternative ways to help Syrians through bona fide charities. Arguably, civil society organisations are better placed to produce the narrative, but they do not have the resources to generate content on such a wide scale.

¹³ Andrea Plebani, Panel presentation, "Jihad 2.0": How to tackle on-line propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment? Brussels: European Policy Centre, 4 October, 2016.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Charlie Edwards & Luke Gribbon, Pathways to Violent Extremism in the Digital Era. *The RUSI Journal* 158(5), 40-47, 2013.

¹⁶ Aidan Kirby, The London bombers as "Self-Starters": A case study in indigenous radicalization and the emergence of autonomous cliques. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30(5), 415-428, 2007.

Small local approaches can be effective, with enough distance from governments to be credible. Nevertheless, it is necessary **not to target Muslims disproportionately, as it fuels existing Islamophobia**, making the original problem potentially worse. Islamophobia is part of a grand narrative that has many implications for Muslim communities, including legitimising far right sentiments.

The dominant strategy tends to be two-fold – **counter-narrative and removal. However, the efficacy of both strategies is unclear**. There is no real way of knowing whether they are working or not. Moreover, there are implications going forward as the CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) paradigm receives a significant injection of financial resources and political will from many governments in the West. In addition, the psychological dimension is an important area, namely the processes of online recruitment, from Orlando and Nice to Baghdad. **No longer is there any need for jihadists to travel**. This poses additional challenges for policy-makers. How is it possible to measure the success of government-led initiatives to combat extremist narratives online? Have any actually been measured? Do marginalised young people with existing grievances trust anything they think comes from the government? The chances are that they are more likely to rebel against it. What are the ethical implications of redirecting the public in this way? Does it help or hinder future efforts in online CVE content creation? In an ideal world, a solution would be to use content campaigns created and driven by genuine grassroots organisations, based on local success stories, that inspire constructive and useful debate around sensitive issues. The approach would have to be tailored for different cultural contexts, as a **one-size fits all approach is unlikely to be effective**.

The internet is an **'echo chamber'** for Islamist thinking, but the **internet did not create radical Islamism**. Nor does it mean that this thinking will necessarily lead to violent outcomes¹⁷. It is an important matter as repercussions result from policing this 'echo chamber' as a space from which to spread messages of hate and to target groups¹⁸. Therefore, the concern must be to **remove the messages but also the messengers**, but with the **need to remain mindful of the implications** of over-generalisation in relation to certain community characteristics, as well as the legitimate basis for resistance to policies deemed inappropriate by various groups ■

¹⁷ Kieron O'Hara & David Stevens, Echo Chambers and Online Radicalism: Assessing the Internet's Complicity in Violent Extremism. *Policy and the Internet* 7(4), 401-422, 2015.

¹⁸ Angela Gendron, The Call to Jihad: Charismatic Preachers and the Internet. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2016 DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157406.



The background of the entire page is a dark blue gradient. In the foreground, there are three dark silhouettes of people standing on a grassy hill. Each person is holding a rifle high in the air with their right hand. The person on the left is wearing a hooded garment. The person in the center is wearing a short-sleeved shirt. The person on the right is wearing a long-sleeved shirt. The overall mood is somber and threatening.

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures in Europe: **RESULTS AND CHALLENGES**

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Introduction

Over the last few years, largely motivated by the dramatic growth of the phenomenon of European foreign fighters traveling to Syria and the related wave of attacks seen throughout the continent, many European countries have introduced Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures.¹ This decision comes from a widespread understanding that **traditional law enforcement tactics alone cannot solve the problem** but need to be supplemented by measures aimed at **preventing radicalisation and at de-radicalising individuals** who have already undergone the radicalisation process.

The pioneer in the field is the United Kingdom, which, in 2003, launched an initiative called “Prevent” to implement a comprehensive domestic CVE strategy. Despite its many revisions and widespread criticism, Prevent remains a model from which the European Union and most European governments draw inspiration.²

While using different approaches and tactics, **in substance all CVE programmes seek to target the appeal extremist ideologies exert on young people.** Most European strategies are not limited exclusively to the issue of radical Islamist-inspired violence. Yet, in reality, the vast majority of initiatives and resources (arguably a disproportionate percentage) are devoted to **stemming Islamist extremism.** Some countries have experimented with CVE for more than a decade. The pioneer in the field is the United Kingdom, which, in 2003, launched an initiative called “Prevent” to implement a comprehensive domestic CVE strategy. Despite its many revisions and widespread criticism, Prevent remains a model from which the European Union and most European governments draw inspiration.² Countries like the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway also have a relatively long experience with CVE. Other countries, such as Spain and France, are relative newcomers to it. In some others, there is no or only a nascent debate on the subject.

¹ For a detailed overview of some of the most recent CVE-related trends and initiatives throughout Western Europe, see *Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response*, RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network) Collection: Approaches, Lessons Learned and Practices, First Edition, January 15, 2014.

² Lorenzo Vidino and James Brandon, *Countering Radicalisation in Europe*, International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, King's College London, December 2012.

Key features

European CVE programmes differ greatly from one another in terms of aims, structure, budget, and underlying philosophy, and each individual programme is deeply shaped by the host country's unique political, cultural, and legal elements. Nevertheless, certain key characteristics and challenges are common to all European CVE programmes. It can be argued that, in Europe as elsewhere, **CVE is somewhat of a catch-all term that encompasses three large macro-families of activities** that include:

- › **General preventive measures:** These initiatives aim to challenge extremist ideas and influences in society; promote tolerant, moderate and democratic principles; and address factors that can increase vulnerability to radicalisation. Some focus on economic integration, seeking to facilitate access to employment and education for disadvantaged groups. Others use mentors and role models to positively influence youths. Various programmes seek to promote self-awareness and critical thinking in young people. Few programmes have an overtly religious focus. An example is the **"Radical Middle Way"**, a British Foreign Office-sponsored project that connects Muslim scholars with predominantly British Muslim youth. While youths are the main targets of these initiatives, others seek to engage parents and women in particular. Included in this category are also counter-messaging/counter-narrative initiatives such as the work of the UK Home Office's Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) or the recently established French Government's website **Stop Jihadism** (<http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/>). **The effectiveness of these measures is often quite difficult to assess.**
- › **Outreach/engagement measures:** These initiatives aim to **improve communication and build trust between authorities and communities.** Some target prominent community leaders, while others proactively seek to cast a wider net, even seeking to establish a dialogue with potentially hostile audiences. Danish officials, for example, have long visited schools with many Muslim students to explain and dispel misconceptions about Danish society and foreign policy.³ In some cases, **authorities hope that establishing a trust-based relationship can also lead to increased intelligence originating from communities,** though this is often considered a secondary and incidental by-product.

› **Individual interventions:** Rather than targeting large population cross-sections, these initiatives **aim to “rehabilitate” people who appear to be radicalising to violence.** Countries that adopt such an approach invest resources in training a wide range of government employees and partners to recognise the common causes, risks, and manifestations of radicalisation. Officials receiving training include police officers, educators, university administrators, health professionals, social workers, housing officers, prison guards, and probation officers. These individuals are then expected to detect potential cases of radicalisation among individuals with whom they are in contact through their professional lives and refer them to authorities.

The body to which referrals are made varies from country to country. Under Great Britain’s targeted intervention scheme, known as the **“Channel Programme”**, referrals go to coordinators appointed for each local government district. These coordinators usually have a police background (though increasingly less so). In various Dutch and Danish municipalities, on the other hand, law enforcement agencies are not directly involved in the process, as the units who run interventions are composed of civil servants, psychologists and, in some cases, former extremists.

Once the at-risk person has been identified and referred, the evaluating body assesses the severity of the risk. If authorities assess a genuine threat, they craft targeted interventions aimed at swaying the individual away from militancy and back to a normal life. In most cases **the intervention entails the designation of a mentor, somebody who already has or could potentially establish a trust-based relationship with the radicalising individual.** This process, which is constantly monitored by authorities, is complex and varies from case to case. **Ideally, the mentor steers the radicalising individual away from violent extremism.**

³ *A Common and Safe Future*, Government of Denmark, January 2009.

Over the last few years, European authorities have displayed diminished enthusiasm for large, preventive programmes due to their high costs and difficulty in empirically determining effectiveness.

Over the last few years, European authorities have displayed diminished enthusiasm for large, preventive programmes due to their high costs and difficulty in empirically determining effectiveness. Individual interventions are, on the other hand, increasingly popular because, conversely, they are cost-effective and easier to evaluate. For security and privacy reasons authorities are reluctant to provide hard data on intervention success rates. Nonetheless, **officials throughout Europe consider targeted interventions an extremely useful complement to traditional counter-terrorism tactics.** While it is clear that interventions will not work in all cases, their threat-reduction effect is a much needed relief for Europe's overwhelmed law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Over the last few months, targeted interventions have also been increasingly used in cases of aspiring and returning foreign fighters. Indeed, **authorities in Europe face difficulties in obtaining evidence to prosecute those who seek to reach or return from Syria/Iraq or other battlefields, and monitoring the bulging numbers of aspiring militants and returnees.** Thus, officials have increasingly resorted to one-by-one interventions as a last resort tool in their effort to tackle the challenge.

In this regard, the approaches used by the **German "Hayat" programme**⁴ and the **Danish city of Aarhus**⁵ have attracted particular attention. Hayat is a nation-wide family counselling programme run by a non-governmental organisation with financial backing of the German government. The programme offers highly personalised and targeted interventions aimed **"to counsel and work with the relatives of radicalised persons to eventually prevent, decelerate and invert the radicalisation process."** Similar initiatives, many of them linked to telephone hotlines, have been created both by civil society organisations and government entities throughout Germany, with the goal of assisting individuals undergoing, or who have undergone the radicalisation process, along with their families.

Similarly prominent is the project implemented in Aarhus by the local municipality, in collaboration with the police, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), and various governmental entities. The program was created in 2013, after the city of Aarhus saw a very large number of residents (some 30) travel to Syria to fight. **The programme**

uses a variety of tools (mostly interventions by psychologists and religious leaders) to sway young people on the path to radicalisation and to rehabilitate returning foreign fighters. While it is arguably too early to make a definitive assessment, there are strong indications that the programme is quite successful, as **the flow of foreign fighters from Aarhus has significantly slowed down.**

The challenges

European authorities conceiving and implementing CVE initiatives are faced with several problems. Among them:

- › **The complexity of the radicalisation process:** Unfortunately for policymakers and practitioners, **radicalisation is a highly individualised process.**⁶ Efforts to simplify radicalisation into a linear, step-by-step process fail to recognise the complexity of the issue. As such, **attempts to disengage from violence, or even de-radicalise, an individual must be tailored to that unique situation.** Officials and community members must be flexible in their approaches, making it difficult to develop nation-wide, general programmes which, in turn, increases the difficulties of developing useful national programmes and sharing best practices.
- › **Finding partners:** Over time, European authorities have understood that, in order to obtain the crucial support of various stakeholders, they need to explain their strategy and aim to the public, the categories of professionals with whom they seek to work, **and, in particular, the communities they aim to reach.** Many potential partners, in fact, tend to be sceptical of the government's actions and refuse to cooperate or, in some cases, they actively undermine counter-radicalisation initiatives.

⁴ Daniel Koehler, "Family Counseling as Prevention and Intervention Tool against 'Foreign Fighters.' The German 'Hayat' Program," *Journal EXIT-Deutschland*, Issue 3/2013.

⁵ Bharati Naik, Atika Shubert and Nick Thompson, "Denmark offers some foreign fighters rehab without jail time – but will it work?" *CNN*, October 28, 2014.

⁶ See Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33, no. 9 (2010): 797–814; Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security*, 2011, 4 (4): 7–36; Michael King and Donald M. Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:4, 2011, 602–622; Manni Crone and Martin Harrow, "Homegrown Terrorism in the West," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:521–536, 2011.

This problem was particularly acute in the UK, where a variety of stakeholders initially condemned CVE initiatives and, in particular, its intervention scheme (Channel) as tools to criminalise young people for their views. Outlining the case of Hasib Hussain, one of the London suicide/homicide-bombing perpetrators in July 2005, Sir Norman Bettison of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), explained why interventions with radicalised individuals are conceived **“precisely to avoid them criminalising themselves”**:

“We started to unpick what was known about Hasib Hussain. He had never come to the notice of the police at any stage in his young life and therefore, in terms of opportunities for the police to intervene to prevent what went on to occur, there were just no hooks there. However, what we did discover is that as a model student whilst at Matthew Murray School his exercise books were littered with references to Al-Qaeda, and the comments could not have been taken as other than supportive comments about Al-Qaeda. To write in one’s exercise book is not criminal and would not come on the radar of the police, but the whole ethos, the heart of Prevent is the question for me of whether someone in society might have thought it appropriate to intervene. What do I mean by intervention? I do not mean kicking his door down at 6 o’clock in the morning and hauling him before the magistrates. I mean should someone have challenged that? They are the sorts of cases that get referred through the Channel scheme.”⁷

Increasingly aware of the need to be more inclusive, European authorities have begun to describe their efforts using the language of protection or, as the British say, **“safeguarding.”** Young people like teenage student Hasib Hussain undergoing a process of radicalisation are seen as vulnerable individuals harming themselves and, ultimately, in need of help. Radicalisation in this articulation is presented as a problem like gang recruitment, drugs, or paedophilia. Just as they would do if they detected young people falling prey to these social ills, community leaders and teachers have a duty to report cases of radicalisation. **This framing has become even more common over the last few months, as more and more cases of radicalisation involve individuals in their teens or even pre-teens.** Authorities have likened these instances of radicalisation to cases of child abuse, with online recruiters likened to internet paedophiles.⁸

- › **Effectively training partners:** It is not simple to set up a diffuse network of individuals with appropriate competences in effective intervention. **A few hours of training cannot easily make teachers or street cops attuned to the intricate dynamics of radicalisation.** Because knowledge is a crucial element of an effective counter-radicalisation initiative, clumsy actions caused by partners with limited competences can produce negative repercussions.

› **Complex dynamics in Muslim communities:** Counter-radicalisation efforts cannot succeed without the help of Muslim communities. Yet, Western Muslim communities are not monolithic. Authorities often struggle to identify whom to partner with from among a myriad of organisations, many of which compete against one another for political positioning. While dynamics change from country to country, **choosing many local partners with roots in specific communities – rather than relying on one or two large national organisations – is a more effective way to engage.** Creating partnerships with multiple organisations is more likely to harness the full potential of Muslim communities, without relying on a few self-appointed gatekeepers.

At the same time, issues of credibility and legitimacy are paramount. Which voices are listened to in the community, and can deliver a credible message? In this regard, a particularly controversial matter in Europe is the role of individuals and organisations linked to various strands of Salafism or to the Muslim Brotherhood's ideological family. **Should these "non-violent Islamists" be partners of the government against radicalisation?** Are they part of the problem or part of the solution? Opinions on this matter are divided.⁹

› **Measuring effectiveness:** Providing clear metrics that empirically evaluate a CVE programme's effectiveness is difficult. The challenge is particularly acute for preventive programmes, as it **entails proving a negative: the number of individuals who did not radicalise because of the programme.** De-radicalisation measures are, themselves, difficult to assess because determining when an individual has become "rehabilitated" is rarely a clear-cut call. Moreover, even empirical results can be interpreted in different ways. **Does a 50% positive rate in a de-radicalisation programme make it successful?** Critics might well argue it does not, and journalists will most likely focus on those subjects who, despite interventions, went on to become terrorists. Yet, law enforcement agencies might disagree, arguing that halving their workload is a remarkable achievement.

⁷ H.C. Communities and L.G. Committee, Preventing Violent Extremism, Sixth Report of Session, March 8, 2010.

⁸ Hayley Richardson, "ISIS 'Using Paedophile Grooming Tactics' to Lure Young Jihad Brides," *Newsweek*, March 16, 2015.

⁹ Lorenzo Vidino, "Europe's New Security Dilemma," *Washington Quarterly*, 32, no. 4 (October 2009): 61-75.

The way forward

The wave of radicalisation that most European countries have experienced over the last five years is unprecedented and unlikely to significantly diminish in the near future. **Improvements in the traditional counter-terrorism arena** (e.g. better intelligence-sharing, improved legislation, more manpower...) **are sorely needed throughout the continent.**

But it is the opinion of the vast majority of policy-makers and, even more tellingly, most law enforcement and intelligence officials, that **CVE measures are necessary components in a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.** They hardly constitute the silver bullet, and a lot of experience and research are needed to improve their effectiveness and better assess their results. **But it is clear to most observers that they are vital tools.**

The European Union has taken a proactive approach in this field. Even though CVE activities tend to fall within the jurisdiction of individual countries, the European Commission and, to a lesser degree, other European institutions, have sought to play a role in this space by funding CVE initiatives in individual countries and enhancing the exchange of best practices among member states. **The creation of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) is, in this regard, a major step.** RAN, in fact, seeks to be a clearing house for CVE-related matters and activities, bringing together officials and practitioners from throughout the continent to share their experiences. In its latest incarnation it also provides financial support to specific CVE initiatives in member states.

The necessity of boosting the CVE approach as a supplement to traditional counter-terrorism is made even more urgent by recent and likely forthcoming geopolitical events. **The Islamic State's loss of large sections and, possibly, all of its territory has resulted** (and will likely result even more in the future) **in the return of many European foreign fighters to their countries of origin.** While some will be arrested, authorities will likely lack the evidence to charge many of them. While monitoring remains the logic and main response to this dynamic, programmes seeking to rehabilitate them appear to be also crucially important ■



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The various contributions to this publication have underlined the multi-dimensional and highly complex nature of jihadist radicalisation, both across and outside of Europe. It has also drawn attention to the need for comprehensive, multi-stakeholder, long-term policy responses by governments and societies alike, in the EU and beyond.

Based on the analyses in this book, as well as the project's event discussions, several conclusions and recommendations for the EU and its member states could be drawn.

1 - COUNTERING THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF JIHADIST RADICALISATION BY BETTER MOBILISING EXPERT KNOWLEDGE, FUNDAMENTAL DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND CIVIL SOCIETY PLAYERS ACROSS EUROPE

Despite the lack of a commonly agreed definition of radicalisation and violent extremism, **radical Islamist ideologies arguably remain a powerful driver of such phenomena**. These ideologies skilfully exploit a wide range of perceived or real socio-economic, cultural and foreign policy grievances at a collective or individual level, via sophisticated narratives of **'victimisation' of Muslims in Europe and beyond**. As such, the ideological component of jihadist radicalisation needs to be promptly countered by better mobilising expert knowledge, the promotion of liberal democratic principles, and the empowerment of critical societal actors across the EU. Moreover, a more sustainable interaction to foster trust and understanding between Muslim communities and authorities is crucial. In particular:

- › Policymakers at member state and EU level should make better use of the important contributions on the founding elements and basic working mechanisms of jihadist ideology and propaganda when developing future counter-radicalisation policies. To this end closer cooperation between member states, the EU institutions and researchers during the programming phase could help make research even more relevant and practical for European policymakers.

- › Democracy – and the critical thinking it entails – provides the best antidote for open societies to stand against the destructive ideology of jihadism and terrorism, as well as *vis-à-vis* the vicious cycle of ‘cumulative extremism’ and ‘backlash politics’ coming from right-wing and anti-Islam counter-reactions in several European countries. Democratic principles such as **human rights, freedom of speech** and the **rule of law** should always be guaranteed and, whenever needed, legally enforced across Europe. This will help empower citizens to challenge the jihadist discourse in the public sphere, from schools and universities to the internet. As an essentially democratic and pluralistic project, **the EU has a special role to play in reinforcing the resilience of European societies and communities to prevent and challenge extremism in all its forms**. To strengthen the resilience of particularly vulnerable communities, credible pro-European voices from those communities should be empowered and included by the EU and its member states in policy analysis and stakeholder dialogues.
- › The key role of civil society actors, including grass-root organisations providing targeted assistance and support to vulnerable individuals or groups in Muslim communities across Europe, represents a key asset to be aptly acknowledged and leveraged by member states and EU institutions alike. Empowering civil society actors would also compensate for the inevitable downsides of the top-down approach dominating several counter-radicalisation programmes in Europe. **The EPC-EFD-CEP project** has sought to bring those voices closer to EU policymaking, and aimed to **create stronger synergies between these two worlds, in order to better tackle the jihadist radicalisation phenomenon**.
- › There is also a need for **local and national authorities** to take further steps **to engage with local Muslim communities** in order to **gain their trust** and **make them partners in the fight against jihadist radicalisation**. Depending on national and local circumstances, local authorities such as social services, elected officials and the police should work closely with Muslim communities, to identify areas of mutually beneficial cooperation.

2 - COUNTERING EXTREMIST PROPAGANDA AND PROMOTING POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

Jihadists' skilful use of online platforms and tools such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram and other social media, poses a multi-dimensional challenge to policymakers and the wider expert community in countering and preventing the indoctrination of vulnerable individuals. In particular, **Muslim youths from communities across Europe at risk of being converted to the ideology and turned into extremists are being targeted.** To counter extremist propaganda and effectively promote positive alternatives on a large scale, civil society should be allowed to take the lead. Empowering small non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or even engaged individuals by creating networks of pro-democratic activists will be key. Governments need to help create, support and maintain these networks, but should avoid taking the lead in these kinds of initiatives. **Individuals who are curious about extremist content are unlikely to listen to government-led messages.** Even more importantly, the credibility of civil society is at risk if it is viewed as being the state's mouthpiece.

Such a comprehensive effort should, among others, include the following elements:

- › **Disrupting propaganda:** Responsive measures must be established to promptly flag up, refer and have removed online jihadist propaganda. Responsible and participatory partnerships between public authorities, social media providers, hi-tech companies and the online user community should be promoted, with the aim of building a **'coalition of the willing' against online radicalisation.** This could be done, among others, by further developing the recently-initiated **EU Internet Forum** and strengthening **Europol's Internet Referral Unit.**
- › **Countering extremist narratives:** Highlighting flaws, lies and contradictions within extremist propaganda **can make those vulnerable to extremist propaganda re-think their views.** Narrative campaigns also need to be accompanied by additional efforts to connect with the target audience over an extended period of time. One-to-one digital interventions, a form of online social work, is a necessary follow-up to satisfy the individual's need for attention and (inter-)action, and to evaluate whether the campaign and intervention did have the desired impact.
- › **Offering alternative narratives:** Identifying and supporting credible messengers/role models, ranging from former foreign

fighters to imams, to youth leaders and sports heroes, is key in **promoting positive alternative messages and actions into a language being spoken and understood by targeted audiences**, whether online or in real-life situations. A strong focus should be placed on the **younger generation of vulnerable individuals** in schools and higher education institutions, including via EU-wide tools such as the Erasmus+ programme, as recently proposed by the European Commission.

3 - MAXIMISING INTRA-EU COOPERATION ON COUNTER-TERRORISM AND RADICALISATION, VIA GREATER INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION-SHARING, MORE REGULAR EXCHANGE OF BEST PRACTICE AND LESSONS LEARNT AMONG POLICYMAKERS, AND FURTHER SUPPORT TO DEVELOPING TRANSNATIONAL DEBATES WITH THE WIDER PUBLIC

The increasingly transnational nature of jihadist radicalisation in Europe underlines the need for stronger collaboration between and among EU member states on a variety of related policy areas, from counter-terrorism coordination to a more participatory debate among policymakers, practitioners, experts and the wider public. These could include:

- › **Greater intelligence-sharing** among European security apparatuses, as well as broader, multi-agency information-sharing both domestically and intra-EU, with the aim of maximising the availability of data, information and awareness of on-going radicalisation campaigns and their **potential to spur armed violence across Europe**. While bilateral cooperation is likely to prevail in this domain, EU institutions and bodies, including the European Commission, Europol and the European External Action Service (EEAS), can play a supporting/facilitating role in making coordination a much more spontaneous reflex among European capitals.
- › **Increased and more regular exchanges of good practices** and lessons learnt should be promoted among policymakers and practitioners. A special focus should be placed on the **crucial tasks of prevention and de-radicalisation**. Particular attention should also be given to **preventing radicalisation in prisons**, which remains a significant challenge across Europe and beyond, as well as on other shared challenges including criteria and benchmarks to identify and assess radicalisation processes, training for operators, and identification of suitable partners within and outside affected Muslim communities. For instance, the role of the **EU-created Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)** could be further strengthened with the aim of better

connecting relevant players across Europe, sharing knowledge and assessing national experiences.

- › **Beyond a purely institutional/official dimension**, transnational, pluralistic and open debates on the challenges posed by radicalisation, and the need for innovative and effective responses should be **supported by the EU and its member states**. The goal should be to better engage and connect the policy community with the wider public – not least, in order to dismiss many dangerous myths about the extent and implications of jihadist radicalisation. The EPC-EFD project represents an attempt to demonstrate the added value of promoting debates on such crucial topics, beyond the usual suspects.

4 - FURTHERSTREAMLININGCOUNTER-RADICALISATIONEFFORTSIN THEEU'SFOREIGNANDSECURITYPOLICY,THROUGHFURTHEREU CONTRIBUTIONSTOTHEGLOBALCOALITIONAGAINSTISIS/DAESH, THEMATICDIALOGUESWITHAFFECTEDTHIRDCOUNTRIES,ANDMORE EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

The 2016 Brussels attacks, along with the others which shook up Europe and other regions over the past two years, clearly demonstrate the **globalisation of jihadist radicalisation**, and the blurring between the internal and external dimensions of European counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies. As such, **counter-radicalisation efforts should be further streamlined** in the EU's foreign and security policy in the following areas, among others:

- › Although purely military solutions cannot destroy the radicalisation challenge, it remains crucial for the EU and its member states to **contribute to the defeat of ISIS/Daesh in Syria and Iraq**. The very existence of the so-called Caliphate provides an often over-looked source of empowerment and propaganda for the jihadist discourse and its terrorist aims. In that light, the EU should strengthen its **non-military partnership with the Global Coalition against Daesh**, notably in the form of long-term stabilisation, humanitarian assistance and counter-messaging. In parallel, the EU should **prepare for the likely blow-back that the forced dissolution of ISIS/Daesh in Syria and Iraq could generate**. This could take the form of further terrorist attacks in Europe and elsewhere, and the intensification of radicalisation campaigns directed towards vulnerable individuals, including Muslim refugees seeking shelter in the EU.

- › More regular and **deeper thematic dialogues** on the prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation should be carried out by the EU with affected third countries, with the full support of member states, reaching out to local governments and societies with the aim of **maximising information-sharing, discussing best practices and formulating possible solutions based on locally-specific needs and circumstances**. Geographic priorities should include the Western Balkans, Turkey, Northern Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf, whose home-grown radicalisation phenomena and their external projections are all susceptible to affect, to varying degrees of intensity, Europe's security interests. In that light, the recent focus put on counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies by the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy of June 2016, has the potential to bring about a **stronger role for the EU in this key policy area**.

- › Likewise, **stronger working relations on counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation** should be cemented between the EU and other international organisations, including the UN, NATO, the Council of Europe the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Organisation for the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the African Union (AU). This should **help maximise the expected – but still unfulfilled – added value of effective multilateralism** in addressing the global challenge of jihadist radicalisation.

Jihadist radicalisation provides just **one of the many and serious crises affecting Europe nowadays**, spanning from the economy all the way to migration and the rise of populism. Yet, as an insidious challenge cutting across ideological, socio-economic, technological and geopolitical domains, it **represents a litmus test for the ultimate political resilience of the EU and its member states**. It is also a test for the EU's ability to guarantee, citizens' security, the fundamental principles governing their democracies, and the essential cohesion of their evolving societies. As such, **effectively tackling jihadist radicalisation should become a defining mission for Europe in the foreseeable future**.

The **European Policy Centre** and the **European Foundation for Democracy** will continue to engage on these crucial themes in 2017, aiming to further contribute to the development of informed decisions and targeted policies by EU institutions and member states in the field of the **prevention and countering of jihadist radicalisation** ■

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The European Policy Centre (EPC) is an independent, not-for-profit think tank dedicated to fostering European integration through analysis and debate, supporting and challenging European decision-makers at all levels to make informed decisions based on evidence and analysis, and providing a platform for engaging partners, stakeholders and citizens in EU policy-making and in the debate about the future of Europe.

European Foundation for Democracy

The European Foundation for Democracy (EFD) is a policy institute that has been working with civil society, academic, governmental and other stakeholders on the prevention of radicalisation for more than a decade. With offices in Brussels and Berlin, EFD supports initiatives to strengthen resilience of communities in various countries by empowering credible pro-democratic voices to prevent radicalisation from gaining a foothold in our societies.

Counter Extremism Project

The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, international policy organisation formed to address the threat of extremist ideologies. It does so by uncovering financial support networks, challenging the narrative of extremists and their online recruitment tactics and working with governments and other stakeholders to create effective laws, policies and regulations. CEP has offices in New York and Washington DC.

