



Concepts and Analytical Framework

Debating Notions and Approaches to Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

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CONCEPTS AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Debating Notions and Approaches to Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

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CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS AND MODELS	3
Problems	3
Definition and Review	4
Attempts to Define Terrorism	5
Defining Terrorism Remains a Social Construction	6
From Terrorism to Radicalism	7
Radicalism and Violent Engagement	9
Models and Analogies	9
Linear Approach, Heuristics and Equity	10
Process Approach, Static or Dynamic	11
The Multifactorial and Interdependent Variable Approach	12
Continuum and Process	14
DRIVERS	15
The Micro Level	15
From Pathology to the Role of Emotions in Radicalization Processes	15
Material and Non-Material Resources	17
Does Gender Matter?	18
The Meso Level	19
Socialization Process and Group Thinking	19
Territories or Relational Contexts	21
The Macro Level	22
Poverty, Frustration and Discrimination	22
Political Opportunity Structures	25
Ideologies, Cognitive Drivers and Education	26
PREVENTION AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE	28
TAKING CVE PROGRAMMES TO THE MENA AND BALKANS REGIONS	34
CVE in the Balkans	34
CVE in the MENA Region	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY	38



Definitions and Models

PROBLEMS

Radicalization is undoubtedly regarded as one of the key issues impacting the evolution of our societies. Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, it has become central to public policy-making, and subject to extensive media coverage and academic attention (Cesari and McLoughlin, 2005). However, radicalization as a concept remains quite elusive. Its proximity to other concepts such as engagement, political activism, extremism and terrorism raises many questions and turns any attempt of definition into a challenge. Moreover, this occurs in a context of global uncertainty as nation-states struggle to define political and cultural identities in concert with processes such as decentralization and globalization (Abbas, 2012) but also political instabilities.

A second obstacle to the conceptualization of “radicalization” is found in academic research. Well established and respected scholars whose research specializes in terrorism are quite negative when assessing the results of four decades of research on the topic (Van de Voorde, 2011). This criticism is not new. Already in 1988, Gurr (1988) stated that “most of the terrorism literature consists of naïve description, speculative commentary and prescriptions for ‘dealing with terrorism’ which could not meet minimum research standards in the more established branches of conflict and policy analysis” (1988: 115). According to Zulaika (2009), “terrorism discourse creates its own reality”, since “what needs to be established is that the system had sufficient evidence to know about the upcoming plot yet it *preferred not to know that it knew*” (2009: 2). For a decade now, many scientists have pointed out the serious empirical weakness of studies in the field (Jackson et al., 2015), essentially based on secondary sources (Sageman, 2014). Recent reviews tend to show that this lack of field research still remains (Vergani et al., 2018).

A third obstacle lies in the fact that a very important part of the literature on radicalization focuses on Islamism and this trend is not new. The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 highlighted the power of a political interpretation of Islam as a source of reformulation of the political order. From that moment there was a gradual construction of a “Muslim enemy” in the international sphere that would be accrued in the following decades (Vidal, 2018). The civil war in Algeria in the 1990s and its exportation of fighters and terrorist attacks both in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and in Europe, together with the war in the Balkans, further deepened this negative construction. And, finally, the various terrorist attacks led everywhere in the world since 9/11 by political organizations affiliated to Al-Qaeda, which instrumentalized Islam as a justification for its action, finished up equating violence with Islam. This both reflects Western interests and the domination and power relations existing in the production of the most prominent academic literature and neglects other forms of violent extremism (VE) produced by extreme right and/or nationalist movements.

Consequently, when addressing the issue of radicalization, public debate often confuses “a way of life inspired by Islamic fundamentalism” with “a politico-religious ideology (in the sense that religious concepts are re-read and re-interpreted with a given political purpose) which implies the use of violence (albeit to varying degrees) against a State considered illegitimate, societies considered enemies, or population groups regarded as deviant or to be subjugated” (Torrekens, 2019). This point leads to an inevitable reflection on the relative nature of the term. While Salafist Islam is considered to be “radical” in France, republican and secular thinking is precisely what may

be given the same label in Saudi Arabia or Iran (Crettiez, 2016). In addition, not every radical behaviour is necessarily violent, and establishing an automatic link between strict religious conduct (Salafism) and violent engagement (Jihadism) would amount to a dangerous leap that does not take into account the many forms of Salafism (Amghar, 2008; Meijer, 2009; Adraoui, 2013). Finally, not all violent radicalization is necessarily of a terrorist nature when it is expressed. The term “radicalization” has also served to discredit certain forms of political protest undertaken by social movements that do not have terrorizing ambitions (Crettiez, 2016). This is certainly true in countries where authoritarian regimes can exploit the notion of radicalization and/or terrorism as a way to de-legitimize social movements and political opposition asking for democratic reforms and social justice.

Linked to what was just described, the fourth major obstacle to defining “radicalization” is the risk of creating suspect communities (Choudhury and Tufyal-Fenwick, 2011; Kundnani, 2012) since an important part of the literature addresses Jihadist radicalization processes and lacks a historical or comparative perspective. Consequently, a part of the literature could lead to the general perception of Muslims as a homogenous group. Indeed, in Western societies, some second- and third-generation youths of Muslim culture are often presented as a specific group, that of “Muslims”. This tendency conceals all the complex processes of internal fragmentation and differentiation, reducing them to an “integration” issue (Ragazzi, 2014). Also in the Balkans, countering violent extremism (CVE) programmes tend to reproduce the idea of a Muslim suspect globally, what can be called the homogenizing tendency, in spite of the fact that the specific mode in which this exists is shaped by local conditions (Sadriu, 2019). Muslim communities in non-Muslim majority countries are treated as all suffering from the “threat of potential ‘bad Muslims’” and “current CVE agendas are premised on the notion of a homogenized Muslim subject in need of containment and treatment” (Sadriu, 2019: 438). We will come back to this in the *Prevention and Social Resilience* section.

4

This point raises the question of the “Muslimness” of Muslims in relation to political violence and extremism. It combines a range of cultural, political, theological and sociological debates around identity and belonging, as well as immigration, integration, intelligence, counter-terrorism, policy-making and security issues, in the process of “enlarging” an already besieged group of people (Sayyid, 2003). As Edwin Bakker (2015) highlights, the topic of terrorism entails a high complexity, subjectivity and political sensibility (2015). Though it is a phenomenon with a global impact, it is “not a self-evident category of political violence, but a social construction” (2015). Depending on which definition and methodology is used, the figures on terrorism acts vary. One of the goals of the CONNEKT project, and especially of this conceptual paper, is to raise this comparative and historical perspective with other forms of radical engagement in space and time. In order to clarify our understanding of, and response to, the contexts of extremism in MENA and Balkan societies, the present paper will go through different terminologies (terrorism, radicalization, violent radical engagement, political violence), the many variants of existing models and analogies to describe these same contexts and, finally, question the idea of a continuum between radicalization and terrorism in order to stop associating sympathy for violence with involvement in its creation (Khalil et al., 2019).

DEFINITION AND REVIEW

In the frame of the CONNEKT project, the term radicalization has been defined as “the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs” and VE as “ideologies which oppose a society’s core values and principles”. This practical attempt comes amid the fact that VE is a diverse phenomenon with no universal definition as acknowledged by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General’s Action Plan at the UN, which in order to

enable international cooperation in this field, pursues a practical approach to the prevention of violent extremism (PVE), without venturing to address definitional issues. However, it is stated that “in the absence of an agreed definition, countries should define VE in their national context ‘but’ warns that such definitions should be consistent with s’ obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law” (Fevé and Dews, 2019).

This idea has been criticized by some authors (Ganor, 2002; Bakker, 2015) who have highlighted the importance of a common definition. According to these authors, a common definition would help strengthen international cooperation, develop an effective international strategy, collectively mobilize, and enforce international agreements. At the same time, it would also limit governmental abuses that take advantage of this absence and improve the quality of university research. The problems caused by the absence of a definition have also been cited by Dean and Yonah Alexander (2003, cited in Schmid, 2004) as the first factor likely to encourage future terrorism.

Attempts to Define Terrorism

The journal *Terrorism and Political Violence* analyzed 73 definitions of terrorism from four leading journals in the field of terrorism to come up with a definition of terrorism based on the lowest common denominator. The resulting definition was the following:

“Terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role” (Weinberg et al., 2004).

5

However, the definition does not say anything about the victims or the perpetrators, nor does it mention anything about terror, fear, or the goal or nature of the tactics. In Schmid’s words (2004), “the price for consensus on terrorism has been a far-going reduction of complexity” (2004: 381).

Walter Laqueur (2001) used a broader definition: “Terrorism is the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective by targeting innocent people.” This definition, however, uses terms such as illegitimate and innocent which, like terrorism, can be defined relatively. In short, both narrow and broad definitions are problematic as “unfortunately, terrorism has become such a diverse phenomenon that either it disappears under a host of precise definitions or it is covered by too broad an umbrella” (Mockaitis and Reich, cited in Schmid, 2004: 402).

A comparative study carried out by Alex Schmid of 88 terrorism definitions from national government sources and international organizations vis-à-vis a sample twice as large of definitions from academic and non-governmental sources found the following: the elements of terror, coercion and the illegal or criminal nature of terrorism were far more present in governmental definitions than in academic ones. Instead, references to psychological warfare, communication and strategy or tactics frequently appeared in academic definitions but were mostly absent in governmental definitions. So was the political character of terrorism, present only in 25% of the government’s definitions. Consequently, Schmid (2004) proposed a definition based on an academic consensus in 1980 resulting from listing all those elements on which many of the experts he consulted could agree. He came up with sixteen elements which helped him define terrorism in the following way:

“Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby, in contrast to assassination, the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main targets (audience[s]), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought” (2004: 382).

Mitchell's (1991) negative approach to terrorism is also worth taking into account as he provides with a list of eleven elements that cannot be considered terrorist acts excluding, for instance, mere acts of property damage; acts of (collective) political violence which are spontaneous, as in riots; or acts of war which do not qualify as war crimes (1991, cited in Schmid, 2004).

Defining Terrorism Remains a Social Construction

Schmid (2004) provides four reasons why the concept of terrorism is so difficult to define. First of all, he argues that terrorism is a contested concept. He says that the famous “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” points at moral relativism and leads to dual standards since it is difficult to apply the concept to specific groups. According to R.E. Rubinstein (1990), “terrorism is just violence that you don't like” (1990, cited in Schmid, 2004: 397). Indeed, terrorist groups prefer terms such as freedom fighter, guerrilla, insurgent and revolutionary. Bin Laden, for instance, distinguished between good and bad terrorism. He argued that terrifying innocent people unjustly is objectionable but terrorizing oppressors and thieves was necessary for people’s safety. Terrorism directed to tyrants, traitors and enemies of God was right. Second, the definition issue is closely linked to (de)legitimization and criminalization; listing an organization as terrorist impacts both the group and the permanence of the situation. Third, there are many types of terrorism. Europol, for instance, distinguishes five types: 1) religiously inspired; 2) ethno-nationalist and separatist; 3) left-wing and anarchist; 4) right-wing; 5) single issue. There could also be a sixth and seventh category according to Edwin Bakker (2015) including those groups with a vague political idea and state terrorism. Finally, the fourth reason is that the term has undergone many changes of meaning during its long years of existence. While it originally described state terror during the Robespierre regime, it changed to describe anti-government use of political violence from the 19th century.

When it comes to the Maghreb countries, they have adopted a broad definition of terrorism that includes political dissent (Tamburini, 2018). As pointed out by Begorre-Bret (2006, cited in Tamburini, 2018), this is due to the fact that it is not used to describe an act but rather to condemn it. Egypt was the first one to come up with a definition in 1992 and described terrorism “in such vague terms that it could jeopardize political and civil freedoms, as well as human rights” (Tamburini, 2018: 1237), an approach copied by the other anti-terrorist laws in the Maghreb. Algeria followed Egypt’s jurisdiction approach in 1992 in the frame of the Algerian army seizing power.

As for Tunisia, an article of the penal code was modified (art. 52) to state that “*a terrorist act was any infraction in relation to an individual or collective enterprise with the scope of bringing harm to people or properties*

through intimidation or terror" (Tamburini, 2018: 1238). The incitement to hatred or racial or religious fanaticism is also condemned as "terrorist" (Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, 1993, cited in 2018: 1238), being a message to Islamic radicalism also found in the Tunisian 2015 law and which allows for a wide interpretation of fanatic religiosity. Again, the word used in Arabic is 'al-ta sub which also means intolerance, which could make a huge difference in real application.

In September 2001, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) required all member states to take steps against terrorism to ensure that terrorist acts were considered serious criminal offences (Dhamapala, 2007; Murphy, 2015; Rosand, 2003, cited in Tamburini, 2018). Though Maghreb states' response to the Resolution was not homogenous, all anti-terror laws share a general and ambiguous definition of terrorism and, in almost all cases, strayed away from the initial purpose of maintaining security to controlling dissent and political opposition, with absent checks-and-balances preventing abuses on civil and political rights (Tamburini, 2018). In a similar vein, definitions and laws on terrorism in the Middle East are also consistently broad and vague and are also used to repress dissent. However, "each country has a different socio-political context and institutional history that influences which laws suit the goals of the repressive government in question" (Ben Hassine, n.d.: 29). When it comes to Jordan, the state uses the newly amended Anti-Terror Law of 2014. While the old definition regarded terrorism as "any intentional act committed by any means that leads to the death of a person or causes bodily harm or damaging public or private property ... with the goal of harming public order and subjecting the peace of society or its security to danger" (Human Rights Watch, 2014), the amendments introduced provisions like "disturbing [Jordan's] relations with a foreign state," a charge present in the penal code which is used to persecute peaceful criticism (Ben Hassine, n.d.: 17). Thus, the conceptual debate and approaches to these issues remain largely a state competence, with limited space for scholars and civil society actors to contribute.

Regarding the Balkan region, the term "terrorism" was already heavily used in former Yugoslavia in the 1990's by political elites "to either describe the opponents on the other side of the ethnic divide – often employed to describe a whole nation – or to portray threats in general against the respective nation" and terrorism acts were mainly "motivated by ethnicity and/or national identity" (Bieber, 2003: 40).

As for present conceptions and legislation, Bosnia passed a law on "foreign terrorist fighters" in 2014 discouraging its citizens from fighting abroad, and in Kosovo, "the US embassy lobbied heavily for parliament to pass a law banning Kosovars from 'engaging in foreign wars' – and helped draft the law – despite local opposition" (Jakupi and Kraja, 2018: 23). When it comes to definitions, Kosovo introduced some changes to the UNMIK Regulation 2001/12, which was the regulation prohibiting terrorism after the former 1977 Yugoslav Criminal Law. The changes, which were done in the frame of the Criminal Code of 2004, modified the former definition of terrorism as "a threat to public order", to a "destabilisation or destruction of basic political, economic or social structures of Kosovo, of a country or international organisation" (Demolli, 2008: 118), making the definition more subjective. Also in Bulgaria, the definition of 'terrorism' remains "vague and overly broad" (Amnesty International [A], 2016) as it is defined under the Criminal Code art.108a as "anyone who, in view of causing disturbance or fear among the population or of threatening or forcing a competent authority, a representative of a public institution or of a foreign state or international organization to perform or omit part of his/her duties commits a crime... [and] shall be punished for terrorism..." facilitating the targeting of "political opponents, ethnic and religious minorities, human rights defenders, and environmental,

LGBTQ, and other activists” (AI, 2016). In brief, contemporary counter-terrorism policies “cannot be separated from the historical legacies of imperial agendas in the Balkans” (Sadriu, 2019).

As we see, defining terrorism is a social construction. Social constructivism acknowledges that terrorism “is not an unproblematic, stable and unique type of political violence that can be objectively defined, categorized, explained and solved. Instead, the way terrorism is defined, represented and studied is an intrinsic part of how ‘terrorism’ itself came to exist as a social phenomenon. How we study terrorism has a range of important real-world consequences” (Jackson, 2011). How terrorism is defined directly affects the response to it and therefore can impact a particular situation and affect the whole society and politics. Counter-terrorist measures change enormously if one understands terrorism as perpetrated only by non-state actors than when one acknowledges that states can be terrorists too. Or when the definition distinguishes occupation resistance movements from terrorist organizations. Since the concept of terrorism is a social construction, in a situation where interests and values are confronted, definitions reflect the interests of the defining powers. “The question of defining a term like terrorism can therefore not be detached from the question of who is the defining agency” (Schmid, 2004: 402). As Foucault (1991) highlighted, “production of knowledge, particularly knowledge for policy is never a neutral process but is intimately connected to structures of power in society” (citing Foucault, 1991, cited in Jackson, 2011).

In view of the lack of consensus on the need to produce a definition of terrorism and the difficulty of producing one, we will focus on analyzing the different terminologies through the evolution of thinking. Indeed, literature put causes of terrorist acts at the forefront and paid attention to the processes much later, as Randy Borum (2011) pointed out, when calling on researchers to focus less on why people engage in terrorist activities and more on *how* they are involved. Similarly, John Horgan (2009) explained that, rather than studying the causes of terrorism in the hope of deriving typical profiles, it is more appropriate to focus on the processes of adherence to values and terrorist acts on the part of the actors.

From Terrorism to Radicalism

In his article “Thinking Radicalization”, one of the essential references in European literature, Xavier Crettiez (2016) puts forward several explanatory and probably cumulative hypotheses on the reasons explaining the public success of the term radicalism rather than terrorism in defining and/or conceptualizing VE. Radicalism, incidentally, has been defined as a “buzzword” by Peter Neumann and Scott Kleinmann (2013). This is primarily for political reasons since, following 11 September 2001, many academics will no longer dare to evoke the “roots of terrorism” out of fear of giving the impression of a sociological reading of violence. As a result, they will rather insist on heavy determinants of extremist engagement. Moreover, it constitutes a pivotal point between the first works that have aimed at analyzing radicalization trajectories and have apprehended at-risk individuals as potential subjects of mental disorders (Silke, 2011), and those that, following this observation, nuanced the psycho-pathological approach. We will come back to this later in the section devoted to micro drivers with the pioneering work of Martha Crenshaw (1981) as well as other more recent works (Bigo et al., 2014).

The public success of radicalism rather than terrorism is also rooted in epistemological reasons. Most research agrees on the difficulty of drawing a typical portrait of “the radicals”. The use of the term “radicalization” will thus make it possible to move from why to how people engage and then become involved in terrorist activities. (Horgan, 2009). Anxious to break with an analysis centred on the “why” and adopt an approach based on the “how”,

many specialists in the phenomena of terrorism or political violence have abandoned the field of international relations and security studies to draw on the toolbox of the sociology of mobilization and collective action, thus leaving the notion of radicalization in place.

And, finally, the success of “radicalization” over “terrorism” also has a cyclical reason: the Madrid (2004) and London attacks (2005), unlike those in New York four years earlier, introduced the notion of home-grown terrorism into political and media discourse. Being a highly Western-centric debate, from that moment the terrorist threat was considered internal and the notion of radicalization sought to better grasp it and be able to understand how apparently integrated individuals turn against the society in which they live.

RADICALISM AND VIOLENT ENGAGEMENT

The concept of radicalization aims to highlight a process, a linear trajectory. Indeed, many models analyzing radicalization set out phases and stages through which all individuals seem to go regardless of social and cultural capitals, the country in which they live or the group to which they belong (Moskalenko and McCauley, 2016). Our point here is to sketch out a critique of what many authors have called a continuum, in which radicalism is the path to terrorism and terrorism is the climax and the expression of violence (Lombardi et al., 2014), as will be tackled in the following section. In the same line, Rik Coolsaet (2016) criticizes the concept of radicalism as being broadly interpreted in a way that emphasizes the role of ideology at the expense of broader political, economic and social “root causes”. According to Sageman (2018), the notion of radicalization as a process is generally acknowledged. However, theories differ regarding what the final stage of the process is: embracing “radical” points of view that contradict local norms (but do not necessarily advocate for violence), sympathy for ideologically justified violence, or immediate involvement in committing violence. Therefore, some authors like Crettiez, define radicalization as follows:

“A progressive evolution toward adopting a rigid way of thinking that involves absolute and non-negotiable truth, the logic of which structures the world view of actors. They use it to assert violent repertoires of action, most often within clandestine, formalized, or virtual structures that isolate them from ordinary social referents and reflect back a grandiose perception of themselves.” (Crettiez, 2016: 712).

This approach to radicalization is thus based on three elements: its evolutionary dimension; the adoption of sectarian thinking; and the use of armed violence. Others such as Torrekens (2019), following the pioneering work of Sommier (2012), prefer the notion of radical engagement, focusing on understanding how and why individuals socialized in a given society are seduced by a religio-political ideology that involves the use of varying degrees of violence against a state that the author describes as illegitimate, against societies described as enemies, or against population groups apprehended as deviant or to be subjugated (Torrekens, 2019).

MODELS AND ANALOGIES

Subscribing to a practice of detecting radical involvement or establishing standard profiles is nowadays out of the question. Hence, researchers have developed analytical models of radicalization processes and, thus, suppressed the false issue of unexplained switchover. We suggest addressing the topic as follows: to start with, we will introduce the linear approach of the 4-step model defined by the author himself as heuristic (Borum, 2003).

Then, we will examine the staircase model, where perceptions of fairness are what matter the most (Moghaddam, 2005). The processual approach will be introduced going from a static model of the pyramid (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008) to a dynamic model: the ABC Model that regards attitudes and behaviours as distinct (Khalil et al., 2019). Finally, the multifactorial approach, with its puzzle metaphor (Farez, 2015), will be looked into, as it allows the interdependent nature of radicalization variables to be highlighted.

Linear Approach, Heuristics and Equity

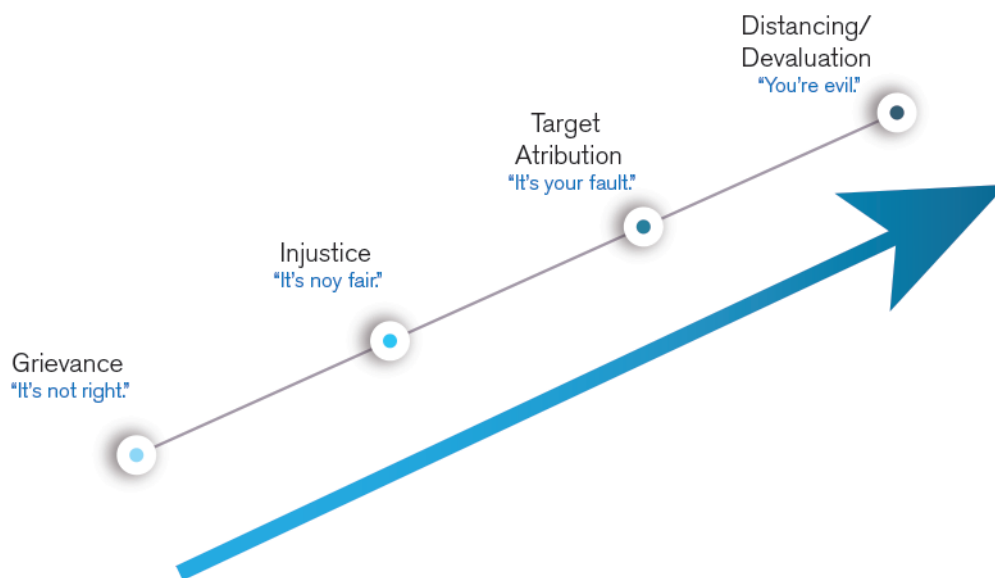
Randy Borum (2003) has developed a four-step model that he presents both as a heuristic and as a model that appears to frame a process applicable to many individuals and groups. In contrast, Fathali M. Moghaddam’s (2005) staircase model explicitly recognizes that fewer and fewer individuals reach each step. Although these have been criticized (Khalil et al., 2019) for not being explicit enough to render reversible and non-linear their trajectories to violence, they both make an important contribution to understanding radicalization processes. The first stage in Borum’s (2003) four-step model is for the individual or group to identify an undesirable event or condition (described as “it’s not right”), which may, for example, be economic. The second labels this undesirable event or condition as unfair (“it’s not fair”) on the grounds that it does not apply to everyone. Thirdly, the injustice is blamed on a target policy, person or nation (“it’s your fault”). Finally, the person or group being responsible for the injustice is considered “bad” (“you’re evil”), as this step is supposed to facilitate violence by de-humanizing the target.



Own production. Source: Borum’s Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset. Borum, R. (2011) Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4. 10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2.

Moghaddam’s (2005) staircase model “is designed as having a ground floor and five upper floors, with behaviours on each floor characterized by particular psychological processes” (2005: 161-2). As noted, he

observes that “perceptions of equity are what matters most” for the large populations occupying the ground floor, rather than the actual conditions they experience (2005: 164). On the first floor, behaviour is particularly shaped by the perceived opportunities of personal mobility by “individuals” willing to improve their situation, and by their impressions of procedural justice (2005). The author goes on to say that “individuals who develop a disposition to physically displace aggression and who actively seek opportunities to do so eventually leave the second floor and climb more stairs in an attempt to act against perceived enemies” (2005: 162). On the third floor, “potential terrorists now find themselves engaged in the extremist morality of isolated and secret organizations dedicated to changing the world by any means at their disposal” (2005: 165). With respect to the fourth floor, he argues that once an individual has “entered the secret world of the terrorist organization, there is little or no possibility of leaving it alive” (2005: 165). At the top, “individuals who reach the fifth floor become psychologically prepared and motivated to commit acts of terrorism, sometimes resulting in multiple civilian deaths” (2005: 166).



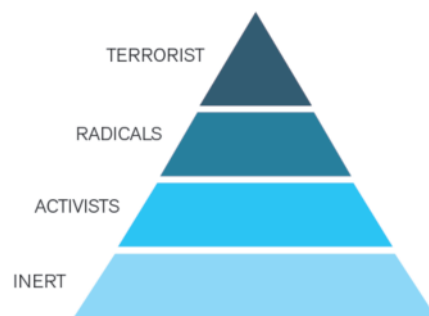
Own production. Source: Moghaddam’s Staircase to Terrorism. Borum, R. (2011) Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4. 10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2.

Process Approach, Static or Dynamic

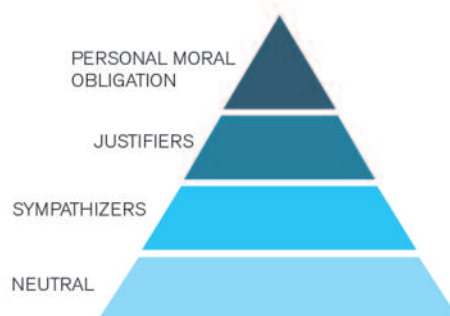
While all these models offer a way to simplify complex realities into “digestible” abstractions, these simplifications often tend to distort reality (Khalil et al., 2019). Perhaps, most noteworthy, is the fact that many variations of these models and analogies associate sympathy for violence with actual involvement in its creation. In practice, those who sympathize with ideologically justified violence very often remain outsiders to its production, choosing instead to “profit” from the actions of others (Khalil et al., 2019). Marc Sageman similarly observes that:

“[...] many people say very violent things, but very few of them are followed by violent actions. Thousands of young people brag about being mujahedeen, especially on the Internet, but very few of them really end up committing acts of violence. Law enforcement officers in the West appear to be very concerned about how to distinguish between those who talk and those who act “(Sageman, 2011: 117).

In this respect, the pyramid model presented by Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko (2017) deserves particular attention, as the authors acknowledged the limits of their first analogy (2008) by pointing out that “radicalisation towards extremist opinions is a psychologically different phenomenon from radicalisation towards extremist action” (2017: 18-19). Indeed, based on this observation, McCauley and Moskalkenko then developed their two-pyramid model, which “represents the radicalisation of opinion separately from the radicalisation of action” (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2017: 19). From the bottom to the top, their “pyramid of opinion” is composed of “neutrals”, “sympathizers”, “writers of wrongs” and “those who feel a personal moral obligation to use violence to advance the cause”. From the bottom to the top of their “action pyramid” are the “inert”, followed by “activists”, “radicals” and “terrorists”. In the first model developed in 2008, the base of the pyramid was made up of all those who sympathize with the objectives that terrorists argue they are fighting for. In Northern Ireland, for example, the base of the pyramid of support for the IRA was made up of all of those who agreed that “the British should get out.” From the bottom to the top, the upper levels of the pyramid are associated with a decrease in numbers but an increased radicalization of beliefs, feelings and behaviours (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008).



Own production. Source: Action radicalization pyramid. McCauley, Clark & Moskalkenko, S. (2014) Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual From Radical Opinion to Radical Action. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26. 10.1080/09546553.2014.849916.



Own production. Source: Opinion radicalization pyramid. McCauley, Clark & Moskalkenko, S. (2014) Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual From Radical Opinion to Radical Action. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26. 10.1080/09546553.2014.849916.

The Multifactorial and Interdependent Variable Approach

As shown, the main recent models of radicalization analysis admit the importance of distinguishing between sympathy for VE and actual involvement in its creation. We will get back to this with The Attitudes-Behaviors Corrective (ABC) Model of Violent Extremism (Khalil et al., 2019), which places this concern at the centre of its analogy, positioning it as one of the major developments in the conceptualization of radicalization.

Nevertheless, we argue that the puzzle model (Hafez, 2015) marks a strong turning point with its willingness to break away from the hitherto predominant narratives of a radicalization “process”. Indeed, Hafez (2015) proposes that radicalization analysts adjust their frame of reference away from uniform and linear processes and, instead, adopt the multifactorial and contextual approach implied by the puzzle metaphor. Just as similarly structured puzzles may reveal different images once their pieces are connected, cases of radicalization may show great diversity even when the variables of radicalization are recurrent. The puzzle metaphor is also useful to emphasize the interdependent nature of the radicalization variables, where one piece of the puzzle contains elements from adjacent pieces. The reality is far too complex to provide a single, parsimonious explanation, and certainly not one that could identify aspiring radicals on the path to VE (McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2011).

Plainly, “we have the pieces of the puzzle, but we lack the representative picture that informs us how best to put them together. The pieces of the puzzle consist of grievances, networks, ideologies, and enabling environments and support structures” (Hafez, 2015: 959). Each puzzle piece may have a stand for a different element, just as puzzles of similar structure may reveal different images once their pieces are connected (2015). Like the ABC model, the puzzle metaphor questions and attaches as much importance to involvement in violence issues as it does to sympathy for violence: “Why and how do individuals living in relatively peaceful and wealthy societies come to adopt extremist ideologies emanating from distant places?” (Hafez, 2015: 959). Seen through the ABC model, we need to understand what motivates sympathy for violence because sympathizers are more likely to become involved in its production (Khalil et al., 2019).

In addition, sympathy for violence may indirectly contribute to the creation of violence in cases where communities of supporters confer a status on perpetrators. Perpetrators may, in turn, encourage the involvement of others. In contrast, non-sympathizers are often strongly involved in motivating and facilitating the de-radicalization and disengagement of others (Khalil et al., 2019).

The key point of this model is that many of those who sympathize with violence are not directly involved in its creation, as we have seen earlier. Conversely, those who contribute to its production are not necessarily sympathetic to its ideology and apparent goals, rather, they are often motivated by economic incentives, adventure, belonging, status, fear, etc. (Khalil et al., 2019). Nonetheless, Khalil et al. (2019) point out that disconnection between attitudes and behaviours is only partial: those who sympathize with such violence are more likely to be involved in its creation, all things being equal.

As the authors state, this seems consistent with findings in social psychology: Christopher J. Armitage and Julie Christian (2003) observed that “in terms of the attitudinal-behavioural relationship, strength of attitude is considered a key variable moderator: strong attitudes are likely to better predict people’s behaviour than weak attitudes” (2003: 188).

Unlike Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalkenko’s static model (pyramid and double pyramid), the ABC model is explicitly dynamic, acknowledging the possibility for individuals to change their attitudes and behaviours over time (Khalil and al., 2019). This model, though, makes no assumption about the speed or intensity with which these processes occur, as these dimensions vary considerably depending on each case (Khalil et al., 2019).

CONTINUUM AND PROCESS

Many researchers use the term “process” to describe the phenomenon of radicalization (Sageman, 2018) while acknowledging that a clear description of this alleged process remains difficult to produce (Hafez, 2015). According to Mohammed Hafez (2015), radicalization implies the adoption of an extremist worldview, which is rejected by the majority of society and regards as legitimate the use of violence as a method to bring about social or political change. There are debates about how to best conceptualize radicalization but the consensus is that there are three key elements in defining the phenomenon.

“Radicalization is generally a (1) gradual ‘process’ that entails socialization into an (2) extremist belief system that sets the stage for (3) violence even if it does not make it inevitable” (Hafez, 2015: 960). Recently, two studies on radicalization completely abandoned the use of the term “process” (Hafez, 2015). On the one hand, McCauley and Moskalenko (2014) conceptualize radicalization as “the development of beliefs, feelings and actions in favour of any group or cause in conflict” (2014: 70) and, on the other, Rabasa and Benard (2014) define radicalization in its European context as “the rejection of key dimensions of modern democratic culture that are central to the European value system” (2014: 3). Examining the existing literature has allowed us to observe an evolution in the analysis of the concept of radicalization.

While moving from a linear approach to a processual approach and then to a multifactorial approach, we have gone through various ways of questioning the individual’s radicalization but some questions remain: Why does one radicalize? To whom does one radicalize? How does one radicalize? Because of that, we have focused on the study of attitudes and behaviours, insisting on the need to consider them as distinct but linked. The main issue of this approach is that it offers definitions and, at the same time, potential explanations for radicalization (Hafez, 2015).

Indeed, the terms radicalism and terrorism have long been conceptualized along a continuum in which radicalism is the path to terrorism and terrorism is the end of the expression of violence (Lombardi et al., 2014). According to this view, radicals undergo a specific process that begins with a cognitive opening and ends with the final stage of “doing something” (Klausen et al., 2016).

The ABC model allows us to move beyond this imperfect concept of “radicalization” by focusing more precisely on sympathy for, and involvement in, ideologically justified violence, as two distinct but related phenomena (Khalil et al., 2019). Given that those who are most interested in the radicalization phenomenon are the counter-terrorism specialists (Hafez, 2015), radicalization specialists should pursue the modest goal of identifying the conditions under which extremism thrives, and resist the temptation to search for radical archetypes based on supposedly observable attitudes and behaviour (Hafez, 2015).

Drivers

The first theoretical framework of the radicalization process apprehends the individuals tempted by violent actions as troubled by mental disorders (Horgan, 2005). But the work of Martha Crenshaw (1986, 1992, 2000) and more recent research (Silke, 2001, 2008, 2011; Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010) significantly challenge such a narrow psycho-pathological view (Bigo et al., 2014). The frustration and relative deprivation theory that explains radicalization by factors such as poverty and lower education (see Gurr, 1970; Krueger and Maleckova, 2003) has also shown its own limits since it has been proved how several individuals committing VE acts and members of radical groups are highly educated and come from middle and upper socio-economic categories. Their motivations can thus not be based on economic and material (lack of) conditions only (Kepel, 2004; Khosrokhavar, 2005; Bigo and Bonelli, 2008; Della Porta, 2012) but rather on a gap between their education level and their expectations in terms of socio-economic status, on the one hand, and their objective situation in terms of job opportunities, on the other (Sieckelinck and Gielen, 2016). Recently, new research has developed more complex and comprehensive case studies illustrating the socialization process that violent radical groups permit, with issues of codes of honour, prestige, redemption, meaning and rewards being stressed (Abbas, 2007; Bartlett and Miller, 2009). Radicalization then appears as a multiple driven process based on different categories of both individual, contextual and societal factors whose importance depends on each individual trajectory (Slootman and Tillie, 2006; Crettiez, 2011; Ranstorp, 2010; Pauwels and Brion, 2014).

The goal of this chapter is to present the current state of the art regarding the different drivers of violent radicalization processes identified in the scientific and academic literature by exploring the different macro, meso and micro levels and their interplay. CONNEKT's aim is precisely to "connect" the drivers, acknowledging the benefits of interdisciplinary approaches in revealing the interconnection dynamics of these different factors as advocated by authors like Della Porta (1995). Nevertheless, for the sake of the reading, the different levels will be presented separately. Moreover, taking into account that an important part of the literature is concerned with Jihadist radicalization in the frame of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, proof of the general political interest of Western countries in this matter, CONNEKT will be endeavour to apply the findings to other forms of radical ideologies as well.

THE MICRO LEVEL

From Pathology to the Role of Emotions in Radicalization Processes

As stated earlier, the first wave of analysis of (massive) political violence was rooted in the relevance of psychological drivers (Taylor, 1988; Victoroff, 2006). The underlying assumption was two-fold: firstly, such an amount of violence or such terrific political acts can only be led by "abnormal" persons (Silke, 1998) and, secondly, if only very few people placed in the same socio-economic conditions do radicalize, then it must be linked with individual psycho-pathological troubles (Horgan, 2008). Crenshaw (1981) was one of the first to complexify this psychological attention set on radicalization processes. In her landmark article "The causes of Terrorism", she established one of the best-known causal model of the first generation putting an emphasis

on the context and stressing the general idea that researchers must take into account the wider circumstances in which terrorism occurs and evolves (Van de Voorde, 2011).

However, this has not led to the general disqualification of psychology in the explanation of radicalization processes. As stated by Horgan (2008), though less relevant for counter-terrorism initiatives, psychology can improve understanding of terrorism within an interdisciplinary framework. This leads to considering the emotional dimension of the attraction to radical discourses (Zembylas, 2019) such as the presence of some emotional vulnerability, in terms of feelings of anger, threat, aggressiveness, alienation and disenfranchisement. A relevant dimension is that of humiliation feelings, which has been underlined in several pieces of research. In the case of ETA for instance, Agote (cited in Crettiez, 2010) shows that the feeling of humiliation linked to the inaction of several moderate nationalist movements led ETA militants to step forward and raise their head again by using violence). Also in the case of Jihadist radicalization, Khosrokhavar (2006) speaks of humiliation by proxy, which also includes the identification with victims in international or national conflicts, either real in terms of personal victimization or less tangible (Horgan, 2008). This latter element was very clear in an important part of the Jihadist propaganda stressing the disastrous treatment of Palestinian or Rohingya people in order to facilitate the identification of the individual with a global threatened group, here what is perceived as the *Ummah*. This identification trend also appears in several extreme right discourses such as the Eurabia complotist myth according to which Western, white and Christian nations are threatened by a demographic invasion of coloured and culturally Muslim massive immigration planned by Western elites (Carr, 2006). This emphasis on identification processes pushes us to take into consideration the role of ideologies in radicalization outcomes, a role to which we will come back later.

Related to considering the role of emotional vulnerabilities in radicalization processes is the young average age of radicalized people, which some authors have highlighted using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In their article, Neumann and Basra (2020) stressed that the average age of their studied population was 24 when they engaged in violent radical movements. Consequently, being young appears to be a risk factor which could be explained using psychological data, by the critical transitions and subjective precariousness moments encountered during adolescence and young adulthood (Benslama, 2016). In their paper aimed at assessing future trends of Salafist-Jihadism in Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and using a multidisciplinary approach incorporating security and terrorism studies, child development, and survey data, Baffa et al. (2019) assess the “youth bulge” as being salient in the radicalization of Generation Z compared to past generation. The World Bank (WB) defines youth bulge as a socio-economic phenomenon common in developing countries where infant mortality has been reduced but which maintain a high birth rate, resulting in a rapid population growth, with children and young adults comprising a large share of the population (Yifu Lin, 2012). Based on a collaborative research project combined with community dialogue initiatives carried out in 2017/18 in four Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia), Morina et al. (2019) indicated that participants sensed lack of awareness and critical thinking skills among youths and few opportunities to develop such skills by the (secular and religious) education systems. More particularly, the Kosovo case study hints at a correlation where the degree to which an (increasing) demand by young people for participation remains ignored or unmet has an influence on the affectedness of a community (Jakupi and Kraja, 2018).

Finally, some authors underlined the psychological stress put by radical ideologies on vulnerable individuals in terms of unattainable ideal behaviour to conform (Benslama, 2016), especially regarding gender attitudes and desires that legitimise the use of violence (Guenifi, 2014; Mills et al., 2019). Indeed, psychological

vulnerability caused by mental problems and precarious living can certainly not completely be left out of the equation (Jasper et al., 2019) but stressing the role of emotional and psychological factors, especially for young people does not imply this role will constitute an automatic impact. On the contrary, CONNEKT recognizes and raises the importance of taking into account the resilience capacities and agency of young people, especially in resisting the emotional appeal of radical ideologies.

Material and Non-Material Resources

Several authors have underlined the retributive dimension of the engagement in radicalized groups and political action. Martha Crenshaw (2010), for example, argues that material or non-material gains may play an important role in the radicalization process by convincing individuals that the benefits from extremist activities outweigh the heavy costs (e.g., death, imprisonment, isolation from society) (Jensen et al., 2018). This retributive dimension of the radicalization process can thus be divided into two categories of material and non-material drivers.

Firstly, some scholars have shown the very material dimension of the involvement in radical groups. As stated by Kfir (2014) for the case of Pakistan, when individual basic security is limited as the state is institutionally weak, joining radical groups represents one material and rational dimension of the radicalization process since these groups are providing both security and services. This applies for weak, fragile or failed states in other regions such as MENA. Flanigan and O'Brien (2015) have revealed the same dimensions of social aids and services provided by radical groups in the context of the Palestinian Occupied Territories. In their paper based on the Balkans, Morina et al. (2019) indicated that due to the unfinished process of state-building, Western Balkan countries remain fragile, with conflict-affected societies having lost the ability to manage governance and provide the key services for all citizens. Consequently, material rewards refer here to incentives or benefits that are physical or real, or perceived to be physical or real by the individual (Jensen et al., 2018).

Beg and Bokhari (2009) have revealed the role of poverty and the possibility to financially support one's family with the involvement in Jihadist networks in Pakistan. Crettiez (2006) has highlighted the role of money and possibilities to become richer for some Corsican nationalist militants. Finally, being involved in a radical group can be the result of strategic and rational decision-making of status seeking (Verhaus, 2010). However, resources are not always material, and social recognition, esteem and escaping are also widely acknowledged. As posited by Jensen et al. (2018), in order to fulfil a search for personal identity, or to overcome a sense of vulnerability or diminished personal self-worth, individuals derive meaning and value from community membership or identification with a cause greater than themselves. This is already leading us to a meso or collective driver, the role of socialization in a group, which will be analyzed later.

Promising approaches towards radicalization processes analyze the phenomenon using the notion of (lack of) recognition (Crenshaw, 2011; Post, 2007; Khosrokhavar, 2006). Lindemann (2010) proposes to define the feeling of recognition as the congruence between the way we see ourselves and the way others see us. Consequently, radicalization processes could be characterized by a quest for personal significance (Kruglanski et al., 2009). This vision argues that extremists are motivated by the activation of the significance quest, defined as the "fundamental desire to matter, to be someone, to have respect" (Jensen et al., 2018: 3). While personal circumstances, such as blocked ambitions or job loss, can lead to the loss of significance, traumatic experiences in childhood, such as experiencing abuse or parental abandonment, often play a role in fostering

a sense of insignificance (Jensen et al., 2018). Being involved in a radical group and using violence can thus be a way for some people to assert their agency by playing their own life and that of others in order to compensate their social incapacity (Crettiez, 2016).

The warrior motivation of violent actors would then be closely related to their quest for social esteem and desire for recognition (Lindemann, 2013). Roy (2004) has revealed the reinvention by Jihadist militants of a glorious and seducing identity that is translated into the engagement in an armed group in opposition to a “moderate” and “practical” Islam perceived as being dull. Radicalization can thus be a way to valorize the self, especially when a movement can appreciate the criminal past of its sympathizers in terms of abilities to find arms, easily make money, and stay out of the radar of police and security forces (Neumann and Basra, 2020). Indeed, previous criminality is mentioned as a factor of radicalization in *Jihadist Hotbeds* (Varvelli, 2016) but without any data on the degrees to which criminality correlates with extremism or violence. Azinovi and Jusi (2016) have provided a more complete picture from BiH, based on police and court documents, showing that 26% of people who have travelled to Syria and Iraq as foreign fighters had criminal records. Hassan (2001) and Post et al. (2003) have also underlined the dimension of social reward for several Jihadist martyrs, meaning the way families were respected and honoured after the sacrifice of one of their members. This could also be true for extreme right militants for whom an important part of the discourse is focused on what François (2009) calls a “resentment socialism”: certain to be the victims of a social injustice, their engagement in radical extreme right movements is a way to reassert their social esteem.

Finally, and more pragmatically, several researchers have underlined the escapist dimension of radicalization processes (Crettiez, 2016). Here, attention is paid to the intense pleasure and sense of adventure individuals can get from being engaged in radical actions that are far from a routinized daily life. Consequently, radicalization can sometimes also be understood as a way to evade difficulties and problems.

Does Gender Matter?

Although, as stated by Eggert (2018), most mainstream publications on political violence continue to overlook gender, this dimension is also closely related to individual and micro characteristics. Perpetrators of political violence, in particular, are often assumed to be male (Kuhn, 2004; Gruenewald, 2011), with women frequently being cast as victims of violence or advocates for peaceful change (Eggert, 2018). Moreover, Waddington and King (2009) have shown that the riots led in France and Great Britain by young men can be explained by a feeling of social downgrading in front of women (sisters, mothers and friends), who sometimes can be more educated, better integrated in the job market and whose potential role as mothers provides better social esteem. However, the role of women in the perpetration of terrorist acts or their ideological support must not be ignored. Speckard (2008), for example, considers that female suicide terrorists do not differ significantly from their male counterparts in terms of individual motivations: although societal oppression may play a minor role in their self-recruitment to terror organizations, women do not bomb themselves primarily to drive a feminist cause. She adds that radical groups find it to their advantage to use female bombers as they receive more media attention, increased sympathy for the terrorist cause, are able to pass security measures more easily than men, and are more dispensable because they are rarely in leadership positions (Speckhard, 2008).

Consequently, as Eggert (2018) posits, if the existence of female perpetrators of violence is considered at all, claims on their motivations are often rooted in essentialist gender stereotypes. This is problematic, as it is not

possible to fully understand non-state armed actors' behaviour without taking all actors involved into account (Eggert, 2018). One element of explanation raised by Bodin et al., (2005) is the difficulty to apprehend the violence produced by women when many of them are at the same time the object of different forms of violence. In their paper, Baffa et al. (2019) highlight the impact of the #MeToo Campaign in the radicalization processes in Arab countries. Indeed, the campaign led to a recognition of a longstanding culture of harassment and also produced sister movements (#MosqueMeToo). But for Baffa and al. (2019), these movements could represent for some a threat to their ways of life and values, potentially driving people to embrace more fundamentalist views. For men who are feeling emasculated for losing jobs or social status to women, Salafist-Jihadist ideologies provide a means to reclaim their masculinity (Baffa et al., 2019). This can certainly be extended to other radical ideologies such as shown by Bodin et al. (2015).

These different categories of individual micro drivers constitute the subjective predisposition to sympathize, legitimize, tolerate and (in certain cases) finally use violence. This part of the analysis rejects the individual pathologies thesis to rather think about the psycho-social conditions that facilitate the erosion of moral barriers (Crettiez, 2010). They are what Horgan (2008) calls an "openness to socialization" into terrorism in order to highlight why, if two people are exposed to the same conditions (and even come from the same family), one may step toward involvement in terrorism and the other may not.

THE MESO LEVEL

Socialization Process and Group Thinking

According to Vergani et al. (2018), one of the most cited pull factors in the literature is group dynamics, described in terms of peer pressure, the formation of strong bonds with like-minded people, the fulfilment of belonging and identity needs, the total identification of the individual with the group, and the influence of family and kinship ties. The importance of networks was primarily raised by Sageman (2004) and later by Campbell (2013). More recently, Perry (2016) also confirmed the importance of social connections in the radicalization process. She noted that individuals who are vulnerable to radicalization are poorly integrated in society and feel socially excluded. This literature derives from social identity models of radicalization emphasizing how people's membership in identity groups (e.g., race, gender, religion) influences how they perceive the social world, how they see, think, and feel about themselves and, perhaps most importantly, behave (Jensen et al., 2018). Empirical research on right-wing extremist homicides, for example, found that in most cases they happen in group settings (Vergani et al., 2018).

Particularly important to social identity theory is the idea that identity groups provide members with norms and values that distinguish the group from other social categories and provide clues about how to think and act in particular social communities or situations (Jensen et al., 2018). Clubb (2014) has illustrated this important role provided by communities in processes of engagement and disengagement in radical groups. Consequently, examining the role of socialization processes in the engagement in radical groups allows us to come back to the role played by emotions we have earlier underlined. Indeed, emotions are not only a question of personal behaviour and/or individual predispositions. Socialization theories insist on the role played by emotions in social interactions. In other words, radical groups provide a sense of community, of belonging to a wider group to people who encounter identity issues. In a certain way, they form new "tribes" unified by injustice feelings, grievances and world visions. Consequently, several authors establish a connection between

group dynamics and ideology (a driver we will develop later) because in group settings (especially small groups) individuals are socialized to violent ideologies (Vergani et al., 2018). In a study undertaken by Be irevi (2016), participants related feeling a sense of brotherhood, social support, and friendship with other militants, and they welcomed the potential of finding suitable marriage partners and employment opportunities, in contrast to the social alienation they felt before.

However, online groups can also fulfil this role (Vergani et al., 2018). Even if the thesis of self-radicalization through the internet is heavily criticized (Ducol, 2015; Benson, 2014), this latter constitutes “emotional communities” providing a militant socialization and a sense of belonging to a group, promoting information and practical advice, furnishing narratives in order to encourage mobilization, giving a positive image of the fighters and militants via discourses but also esthetical images (Weimann, 2006; Seib and Janbeck, 2010). Indeed, Varvelli (2016) insists that peer-to-peer interaction can take place online via social media and secure messaging applications, but more often occurs in person. In their literature on radicalization in the Balkans, Becirevik et al. (2017) highlighted the lack of research evaluating whether cases of radicalization had been driven purely by online interactions, even though online spaces are so frequently cited as being significant in radicalization processes. Azinovi and Jusi (2016) also discuss the influence of online interactions in the radicalization and recruitment of Bosnian women to Salafism. For them, online exchanges between men and women contribute towards romanticizing the idea of marrying a Jihadist and joining the “caliphate”. For the Arab and Muslim world, several authors also stressed the role of globalization and the internet among Muslim communities towards the creation and development of platforms for discussions fuelling the feeling of common and shared grievances and the metastasis of in-group versus out-group mentalities (Hassan, 2003; Moghaddam, 2008).

In the same line, a special role is attributed to charismatic leaders and recruiters who inspire and sometimes even coach violent extremists throughout their radicalization path, creating a special relationship with the recruits (Jensen et al., 2018). This relationship is described in the literature in terms of traditional recruitment networks, but also in more loose terms of charismatic authority (Jensen et al., 2018). The presence and influence of one or more charismatic figures already committed to the Jihadist cause is another key driver to radicalization identified by Soufan and Schoenfeld (2016) in their research. In the same line, in her paper related on the militants having joined al-Shabaab, Botha (2014) insists on political socialization that not only explains how a person politically develops, but also sheds light on the role internal (personal) and external (environment) factors play in the radicalization of an individual and his/her enrolment in a violent organization.

Consequently, certain political socialization agents will play a more prominent role per individual than others (Botha, 2014). For Botha, identifying these role-players while appreciating that not all people experiencing the external stimuli will decide on the same course of action is essential in developing effective counter-radicalization strategies (Botha, 2014). Then she stresses the importance of families as primary socialization processes of group categories and distance/difference between them. Indeed, she explains that, within the family, a young person (from infancy) starts to develop his or her identity, but it is also here that a national identity is formed (Botha, 2014). This role of the socialization process of group differences, often based on ethnic communities’ social distance, has also been stated by Brubaker (1988) for nationalist movements, and by Fearon (2000) and Brass (2003) for the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India.

Finally, family socialization to radical involvement is also stated by several authors showing how aspects like belonging to a bloodline of fighters appears to be the “simple” encouragement to enter into armed fight, or the role played by a clannish and violent culture (White, 2002, Crettiez, 2016). The discontinuity and/or rupture of family socializations is a first axis. Works such as those of Pels-De Ruyter (2012), Truong (2017) or Moreras (2018), insist on this idea of analyzing the dimensions and conditions in which this family socialization is carried out, in most cases ignored or despised by educational institutions like school. Family and religious socialization in Western Europe is conditioned by the way in which the Islamic field has been configured in each national territory, and families are not always able to respond to the situations that arise from being located in these societies (see Sedgwick, 2015). In this context, the studies carried out by Stijn Sieckelinck and his colleagues (Sieckelinck and De Winter, 2015; Sieckelinck, et al., 2015; Sikkens et al., 2016; Sieckelinck et al., 2019) allow us to understand in more detail how the interaction between families and educational institutions is established and to evaluate the transitional journeys into and out of extremisms. However, families are certainly not the only place where the radicalization process can occur. In their trilogy of access to violence, Della Porta and Bosi (2012) insist on the solidarity path and the density of solidarity networks in the neighbourhood. In addition, Sageman (2004) argued that the power of friends' networks in the probability to engage in a radicalization process was higher than the role played by ideologies. These are some of the contexts that the project CONNEKT will attempt to identify.

Another interest of social identity theory of radicalization focuses on the idea that increased group cohesion can produce dangerous group biases, such as group polarization; group-think; in-group/out-group bias; diffusion of responsibility; and rule compliance; that lead members to adopt increasingly extreme beliefs or engage in extremist behaviours (Jensen et al., 2018). Indeed, a unified group forces the respect of its internal dynamic and mantra and forbids any phenomenon of individual “free rider”. Inspired by the rational choice theory, the notion of free rider refers to the idea that some sympathisers of radical groups will be tempted to parasitize the efforts of others, allowing them to avoid the potential costs of the involvement in the group and its actions such as being injured, going to prison or death (Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007; Khalil, 2014; Levi, 1997; Moore, 1995). In this sense, group pressure conforms the militant to the collective law and prevents breaking the group dynamic (Crettiez, 2016). However, conflicting data exist on this issue. Indeed, in their research based on four Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia), Morina et al. (2019) indicated that a strong sense of national identity can reduce the risk of radicalization. In this sense, inclusive approaches to nationalism can serve as a counterweight to religious or ethno-political VE by binding citizens to one another through a common identity. For Kosovo, they highlighted that cities frequently involved in national celebrations and other rituals of remembrance were fostering a strong national identity feeling. Such rituals bind community members with one another and lead to lower perceptions of isolation or marginalization, which could have been conducive to the socialization of extremist ideology. This could demonstrate that a solid and stable identity contributes positively to PVE (Morina et al., 2019).

Territories or Relational Contexts

The study of radicalization processes among young people is one more example of empirical weakness in the field of extremism prevention. Access to the field of study in most cases has been done after a police action or a direct act of terrorism or violence, hence the data obtained casts doubts from the epistemological point of view. In addition, the type of empirical data obtained (through the study of the biographies of those who participated in such actions, interviews or surveys carried out with those serving sentences, or preventive

justice reports) serves to prejudge a certain type of radicalized or radicalizable youth profile, and may be extrapolated to other youths who would have resided in the same neighbourhood as those youths. Thus, both in the media and in other supposedly scientific studies, certain neighbourhoods or towns (Molenbeek, Clichy-sous-Bois, Toulouse, Casablanca or Ripoll) end up being stigmatized through the trajectories of young people who committed acts of violence. The context, it is said, explains the reasons that led these young people to radicalize and commit these actions. But what these erroneous arguments ignore is how it is possible that other young people, known even to those who became terrorists, did not follow their path (Moreras, 2015; Truong, 2017).

In her study on the bibliography referring to the radicalization among young people, Isabelle Lacroix (2018) refers to this empirical gap and the predominance of the question of social contexts (both physical and virtual) as a way of explaining radical behaviours of young people. She suggests the need to observe a multi-causal and procedural approach to the radicalization of young people. In the contextual dimension, Lacroix (2018) highlights four elements to consider: the university and the street as vectors of radical political socialization, the prison that acts more as an accelerator than as a cause of radicalization, the relative role of mosques, and the internet as a place of militant socialization rather than a factor of radicalization.

The work of Slotman and Tillie (2006) also starts from the hypothesis that the forms of radicalization correspond more to a process of mutual influence among equals than to the external effect of radicalizing agents (mosques, imams, family members, the internet or others). Interviewing individuals who were on the periphery of the Hofstad group (of which Mohamed Bouyeri, the confessed murderer of filmmaker Theo van Gogh, was part) and making participant observations in different mosques in Amsterdam, the work of these researchers tries to show the profiles, motivations and actions of those individuals who are part of that social context that allowed the violent radicalization of the members of that group. The search for meaning, stability and respect in relation to their life trajectories, the fact of sharing a new subculture that creates a community of reference, and the expression of a grievance regarding the situations that are lived by certain populations - in the case of the mainstream literature, Muslims - are some of the arguments expressed by these young people. The proposal of these authors for reversing these dynamics does not attend to the particular, but rather tries to understand the effect of radicalization on social structures and regards increasing social and institutional trust as a way of facing the attractiveness of the rupture of radicalism.

THE MACRO LEVEL

Poverty, Frustration and Discrimination

Terrorism is frequently argued to be the product of poverty and poor levels of economic development (Piazza, 2009). In line with what we already described on the role of material resources, there is an extensive literature on the economics of crime which offers some reason to believe that poverty and lack of education are connected to illegal activity (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003). However, studies that have tried to use the effects of macroeconomic indicators on terrorism failed to prove that poor or underdeveloped countries experience a higher rate of terrorism, or produce more terrorists, than do middle or high-income countries (Piazza, 2011). The same has been found for more deprived regions and areas within countries (Krueger, 2007, Piazza, 2009). Moreover, empirical research has not found that terrorist perpetrators are more likely than the average person to come from a lower socio-economic background or to be uneducated, unemployed and

economically distressed, and survey research has also not determined that economically deprived people are more likely to support terrorism (Piazza, 2011). In her article, Botha (2014) noted that economic circumstances were not identified as a factor driving radicalization with reference to militants joining al-Shabaab in Kenya. Berebi (2007) stated that with regard to the societal economic condition no sustainable link between terrorism and poverty and education could be found, which he interprets to mean that there is either no link or a very weak indirect link. In contrast, suicide bombers tend to be of higher economic status and higher educational attainment than their counterparts in the population (2007). Interestingly, in his article using cross-national data of 172 countries from 1970 and 2006, Piazza (2011) shows that poverty is not a significant predictor of domestic terrorism; on the contrary, countries with higher levels of economic development experience more domestic terrorism than do poorer countries.

However, Piazza (2011) also stated that discrimination does matter. Firstly, countries that permit their minority communities to be afflicted by economic discrimination make themselves more vulnerable to domestic terrorism in a substantive way (Piazza, 2011). Secondly, while aggregate poverty, or rather affluence, within society does affect the amount of domestic terrorism a country suffers, the overall economic status of a country has a smaller effect on terrorism than does the economic status of a country's minority groups (Piazza, 2011). In his paper examining the distribution of terrorist attacks and casualties due to terrorism across the states of India, the same author demonstrates that the phenomenon of terrorism is not a clear product of poor economic development but is rather exacerbated by unresolved and poorly managed political conflict (Piazza, 2009). Poorer states in India are not necessarily more prone to terrorism, but states that have outstanding and poorly addressed political disputes do experience a disproportionately high level of terrorist activity (Piazza, 2009). This study examines six sources of political conflict that contribute to terrorism in India: separatist movements, ethnic conflict, communal conflict, the presence of scheduled castes and tribes, high population growth, and the phenomenon of stateless areas (Piazza, 2009). Consequently, the work led by Piazza forces us not to look at poverty per se but rather to search for dynamics of economic discrimination and exclusion processes that concern particular populations within a country or a region. Abbas (2012) has also raised the importance as a driver of the insufficiency of equality politics in a country. This is similar to some conclusions of the DARE project, which stresses that "socio-political inequality as a driver of radicalisation is more relevant than economic inequality. The link between inequality and radicalisation is context-dependent, if not case-by-case dependent. Inequality (such as poverty, marginalisation, disenfranchisement, etc.), at the level of individual experience, does not consistently explain radicalisation. Indeed, feelings of victimisation, a sense of injustice and lack of human rights protection may also play a role, both at individual and group level" (DARE, 2019: 1).

Regarding this lack of evidence and correlation between economic status, poverty and the involvement in radical groups, one major and highly debated theoretical framework in the field of radicalization studies, the relative deprivation theory represented by Gurr (1970) sought to complicate the reflection. The main idea behind the relative deprivation theory is that collective violence results from a sudden, important and intolerable distance between the expectation of a group (or many) and the possibilities to satisfy them (Wieviorka, 1981). Davie (1962) for example showed that revolutionary violence is produced after a long period of increasing expectations followed by a short but intense period of reverse momentum during which the distance between expectations and gratifications intensively deepens. The project CONNEKT will also pay particular attention to the analysis of perceptions and expectations as a transversal variable of drivers. Indeed, for Gurr (1970) any gap between social expectations and their possibilities of realization is a source of anxieties, frustrations

and anger that could possibly lead to violent behaviour when a certain level of tension is reached (cited in Wieviorka, 1981). From this perspective, the more the discontent is important and the frustration both strong and largely shared among a population, the more intense is violence and produced on a large scale (Wieviorka, 1981). In other words, it is not the socio-economic status of a person or a group that counts but rather the gap existing between the expectations and desires of socio-economic realizations of an individual or a group and the real situations and potential possibilities.

This relative deprivation theory of a social group has been used in the literature as a push factor in terms of injustice both for Jihadist and extreme right activists (Pisoiu, 2015), inequality (Orsini, 2013), marginalization (Scorgie-Porter, 2015) and grievance (Botha, 2014). According to Vergani et al. (2018), in the case of Jihadism, numerous articles mention as a push factor the increasing frustration and sense of injustice derived from the aggressive foreign policies of Western states in Muslim majority countries, such as the Global War on Terror, the war in Afghanistan, and other global conflicts that are understood as Western attacks against the *Ummah*, Western colonization of Muslim-majority countries and more generally the perception of Western dominance in world politics. Interviews conducted with former Colombian insurgent Florez-Morris (2007) highlight that the most popular motivation to engage among them was their preoccupation for injustice and socio-economic inequality. Consequently, poverty seems to be cited as a push factor of radicalization exclusively in qualitative articles that look at radicalization in Africa with the exception of one article that finds an association between low income and right-wing extremism in Russia (Vergani et al., 2018).

However, one of the most frequently cited push factors of radicalization is unemployment. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report (2017), for instance, stated that radicalization rises in contexts of multidimensional poverty where unemployment is a daily lived experience and a major source of frustration identified by those who have joined extreme violent groups. The relationship between unemployment and radicalization is usually explained in two ways: first, unemployment can be a source of frustration that triggers individual's anger in combination with other factors (Vergani et al., 2018). Second, unemployment can be a factor indicating a biographical availability (i.e., more free time and more practical availability to recruitment into VE) (Vergani et al., 2018) or an individual predisposition as already outlined above.

Baffa et al. (2019) noted in their report that, even if there is no direct connection between unemployment and radicalization, failed expectations can lead to a sense of discontentment, depression and restlessness that feeds radicalization. In their literature review related to the Western Balkan, Becirevic et al. (2017) also posit that there is a certain degree of consensus in the literature that social exclusion and a lack of opportunity in deprived areas are drivers of radicalization. In Macedonia, Selimi and Stojkovski (2016) highlighted the role of exclusion, unemployment and a lack of opportunities for youths too. In addition, in 2015 a UNDP study identified the lack of upward mobility, governmental oppression and rising inequality as drivers of radicalization. Azinovi and Jusi (2016) further discussed poverty and deprivation as reasons for some recruits to depart for Syria in the Bosnian case. And in their paper aimed at assessing the future trends of Salafist-Jihadism in Generation Z, Baffa et al. (2019) indicated that 56% of Arab youths now view the Arab Spring uprisings negatively after disastrous civil wars and political and economic inertia, even if the experiences in Sudan and Algeria in 2019 could indicate a renewed drive to enact social change through peaceful demonstrations. They add that if Arab youths continue to perceive social, economic and political mobility as unattainable, some might see VE as the only means of asserting agency and engendering change in a stagnating Arab world.

Political Opportunity Structures

Another important and interesting part of the literature examines the connection of the support to violence with the wider political context and opportunity structures, following the argument of Tilly (1973; 2003) regarding the scarcity of violence and logics of obedience that are linked to the political system and the state capacity for repression. More precisely, political opportunity structures refer to the propensity of a state to repress contestation and opposition movements, to the openness of political institutions towards social movements and to the trust and confidence in several political and social institutions and, by opposition, refer also to authoritarian trends and political anomie and (dis)engagement. The work hypothesis behind this framework is that individuals who see the possibility to raise their claims inside the opportunities offered by the political system and institutions have fewer risks to support violent actions, ideas and groups.

The functionalist sociological model was one of the first to explain how institutions have the function to canalize the claim in order to reduce risks of social and political explosions of discontent. Consequently, when they dysfunction, they open the door for more frontal, radical and violent mobilizations. As stated by Horgan (2008), dissatisfaction with their current activity, whether it is political or social protest, and the perception that conventional political activity just does not work or produce results may lead to violent reaction of some individuals. The Italian extreme left movement was, for example, partially explained by the institutional blocking provoked by the convergence of the Christian Democracy and the Communist Party in the 1970s (Wieviorka, 1981). Crettiez (2016) has shown for the Northern Irish case that the political marginalization of a particular group can lead to radicalization, especially if it is perceived as the result of an intentional attitude from the state and political elites. This is even more true when this political marginalization is coupled with a strong communitarian polarization based on an unequal access to resources (Crettiez, 2016). This is also posited by Goodwin (2006), who wrote that violent radicalization is the result of extreme social polarization between groups. The same explanation was mobilized regarding the Corsican activism: the clannish and clientelist political structures have kept away from the local political arena an entire generation in search of political expression (Crettiez, 2016).

According to Vergani et al. (2018), corruption is sometimes cited as a push factor regarding the attraction provided by radical groups in several African countries. Buijs et al. (2006) compares the views and political convictions of second generation Moroccan Dutch youths who are active in democratic political movements and those who are part of Muslim groups linked to different branches of the Salafiyya. One of the first findings of this comparison, and perhaps in itself very significant, is that both groups express a certain disillusionment at their inclusion in Dutch society. Both groups share the same perception that the foreign and security policies of Western countries significantly harm Muslim populations in the world, and contribute to their stigmatization in the Netherlands. But while the former still maintain expectations and hopes of carrying out actions that try to correct the situation of inequality of the Muslim populations, the young people who militate in Salafi groups choose to speak definitively of a structural exclusion that can hardly be overcome. Thanks to the comparison made by this study, it is possible to observe that radicalization does not seem to be so much the result of a loss of identity or an accumulation of political grievances in the face of the treatment that Muslim populations receive at the hands of Western governments but the loss of confidence in democratic institutions as the instrument to reverse this process.

For the Western Balkans, Morina et al. (2019) showed that a deep polarization along identity, religious and ethno-political lines, and the absence – or capacity gap – of state institutions are important to take into consideration. They added that poor socio-economic conditions and political deadlocks lead to a feeling in

some communities (or parts of some communities) that the future is uncertain, or that the future holds few or no opportunities and prospects and that institutions are dysfunctional and considered ineffective (Morina et al., 2019).

Repression is another facet of the (lack of) political opportunity structure. However, again, the literature is divided on its precise effect. Indeed, in its most severe different forms (physical elimination, torture, incarceration, etc.) it can provoke opposed consequences, namely inhibition in certain cases because the costs are too elevated vis-à-vis the potential benefit of the mobilization or the acceleration of radical movements, depending on its nature, degree and the moment it intervenes in the protest cycle (Sommier, 2012). In repressive states, violence can be seen as the price to pay in order to create the conditions of a social action that is forbidden or to reveal a political movement hindered by the absence of democratic mechanisms (Wieviorka, 1981). In other words, repression can both discourage militants to engage or contribute to the “moral shock” (see below) produced by radical ideologies. Repression can foster hatred of the system, bring a moral justification— and sometimes a form of moral duty – to armed mobilization and reinforce clandestinely and, consequently, the attraction provided by radical movements (Sommier, 2012). This was revealed by Sommier (2012) for Italy, Larzillière (2003) for Tchetchenia and Gayer (2009) for the Sikh radical movement. Bosi and Della Porta (2012) have also highlighted that the violent and massive repression of IRA militants by the Northern Ireland police fostered the reaction of its militants. Finally, Botha (2014) underlined that, as a result of the counter-terrorism efforts, many Muslim youths (especially Kenyan-Somalis) ended up being arbitrarily arrested and incarcerated on suspicion that they were engaged in terrorist activities, fuelling their will to do so.

Ideologies, Cognitive Drivers and Education

Ideologies are also to be considered when analyzing radicalization processes. Ideologies produce interpretative frames of the world. The term “frame” (and framework) is borrowed from Goffman (1974) to denote “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Snow et al., 1986). By doing so, ideologies frame injustice and humiliation feelings in these interpretative models. Snow et al. (1986) used the notion of injustice frame to describe this process. Drawing from social movement perspectives, cognitive frame alignment refers to the learning processes an individual undergoes in forming radical beliefs (Jensen et al., 2018). This notion is rooted in both theory and evidence in social psychology that cognitions (e.g., attitudes and beliefs) are predictive of human behaviour. Gamson (1992) insisted on the capacity of cognitive frames to canalize the “just anger”, the one associated with injustice feelings (1992, cited in Crettiez, 2016). These injustice frames are produced by leaders and/or charismatic personalities of radical movements, called moral entrepreneurs (Crettiez, 2016), and are materialized in communication and propaganda material used in the movement.

Hirsch (1990) goes in the same direction when he considers that the increase in political awareness relies on a militant *savoir-faire* able to provide cognitive tools and injustice interpretation models. In other words, cognitive frame alignments are often closely related to the communication of group norms by influential group members (Jensen et al., 2018). These frames, which are often rooted in religion or shared history, influence how individuals interpret grievances, including the assignment of blame and the prescription of corrective actions (Jensen et al., 2018). For example, Borum (2011) proposed a four-stage conceptual model for the emergence of a “terrorist mindset”, derived from analyzes (though anecdotal and unsystematic) of multiple

violent extremist groups with a span of diverse ideologies in an attempt to discern whether some common factors might exist among them in the processes of radicalization. The conceptual model attempts to explain how grievances and vulnerabilities are transformed into hatred of a target group, and how hatred is transformed – for some – into a justification or impetus for violence (Borum, 2011). Oberschall (2000) calls this a crisis cognitive frame, meaning a vision of social reality based on fear of the other, the inflection on group threat and the imperious necessity to react before disappearing.

Here, many authors note the importance of the international context for producing situations that are perceived as unfair and unjust. Pape (2003) has illustrated this in a study of suicide terrorism insisting on the effects produced by an international situation apprehended as totally derogatory to the dominant morality of a country. In this case, moral shock can brutally accelerate the engagement in a radical group when an individual is upset by a situation of injustice or is subjected to a visual, emotional or psychical shock produced by the political repression or by the propaganda of the radical group (images are, in this frame, crucial). The impact of these moral shocks will be higher if they resonate with a previous personal injustice feeling (see above). The perceived threat to a group is mentioned as a push factor of radicalization in the context of right-wing extremism where the threat is couched in primarily racial terms, but some articles also mentioned threat perception as a push factor in the context of Jihadist radicalization and Jewish extremism (Vergani et al., 2018). This group threat perception puts individuals in a situation of moral discomfort and produce a necessity to react, a kind of moral obligation to engage.

Finally, several authors underlined that the realignment of cognitive frames that occurs as a part of the radicalization process fundamentally alters the way people view the world, making them less receptive to disconfirming evidence and more convinced that violent actions are useful, and perhaps necessary, for achieving political goals. This group thinking cognitive behaviour allows us to make the link with a driver in the micro level, which is education. Indeed, level and type of education is another variable connected with push factors often cited as being a predictor of radicalization (Vergani et al., 2018). Education can be an enabler of less sophisticated and more black-and-white worldviews, which are a predictor of cognitive radicalization. It remains to be seen whether it is an issue of lack of education solely or a matter of quality or type of education received generating dissonances or not providing skills such as critical thinking.

Berrebi (2007) showed for example that lack of formal education makes youths more vulnerable to obnoxious individual and group ideologies and sentiments. In their paper based on Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia, Morina et al. (2019) indicate that even if there is conflicting data on this issue, the lack of quality of religious education was seen as detrimental to PVE in the sense that a lack of proper religious education creates an enabling space for extremist narratives to emerge and flourish. The same was posited for several Arab countries by Baffa and al. (2019) pointing out the poor quality of religious education as a driving factor to radicalization. Consequently, if ideologies also matter in terms of the cognitive frames and interpretation models they provide to local, personal and international injustice feelings, it is important to insist again that their influence must be taken into consideration along with the other micro and meso drivers.

Prevention and Social Resilience

Parallel to the bibliography that analyzes the causes and factors that lead to radicalization and VE, two other main lines of reflection are elaborated around the mechanisms of PVE and regarding the initiatives of de-radicalization or disengagement. Within the framework of the CONNEKT Project, we are interested in developing the field of prevention and, especially, its connection with the idea of social resilience.

When trying to think of a prevention model that goes beyond extending the security-agenda to other social areas beyond the police (care, social work, health, education), there is a certain consensus on the literature for the use of the notion of " (compared to "countering violent extremism (CVE)", originally related to counter-terrorism initiatives). Along with CVE, it is considered to refer to "the 'soft' side of counterterrorism strategies that tackle the drivers which lead people to engage in politically- or ideologically-motivated violence" (Nünlist and Frazer, 2015:2). In reality, the focus of such strategies has been disproportionately put on violent Islamist movements, but the notion encompasses violent groups "ranging from right-wing or left-wing extremists and environmental activists to Buddhist or Hindu nationalists" (2015:2). Despite its understood general nature, "there is no universally accepted definition of violent extremism" (2015:2), and some "critics regards 'violent extremism' as a cosmetic replacement for the highly politicized term 'terrorism'" (2015:2).

28

As for the counter-terrorism frame, special importance has been given to the micro level, focusing on personal rationale and negative experiences, neglecting the structural factors that can lead to VE (Nünlist and Frazer, 2015). At the meso level, which remains under-studied, attention is put on how the society can respond with positive existing tools and narratives to VE (2015). And at the macro-level, government actions play an important role as drivers of VE including "collateral damage" by counter-terrorism measures, such as human rights violations, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization, lack of good governance or failure to integrate diaspora communities (2015). Therefore, the approach of PVE seeks to enlarge the scope of counter-terrorism measures by rejecting the idea that violent extremists should be fought exclusively with intelligence, police and military means (2015). Despite this, and as mentioned above, the reference to VE continues to generate debate, as if it were a logical continuity of all radical commitment, and that responds more to a behavioural than analytical dimension.

If we understand prevention as the efforts to influence individual and/or environmental factors that are suggested to create the conditions in which VE can and cannot flourish, using social or educational rather than explicitly security-driven measures (Stephens et al., 2019: 2), it must be recognized that prevention involves the sum of actions carried out in different areas and levels. This places us within an interdisciplinary field of intervention, with different ways of understanding what prevention implies, showing other variables to those of safety, and whose use is not without controversy (Schinkel, 2011).

According to Stephens et al. (2019), the academic literature on preventing extremism is centred around four axes: the "individual resilient" identity, dialogue and action, and connected or resilient communities. The first two axes are oriented around actions aiming to create strong, critical or flexible individuals, capable of

responding to violent extremist ideologies or groups. CONNEKT focuses more on the other structural dimensions. However, suggesting the idea of dialogue is not without controversy either. This indeed implies a certain recognition that such extremist positions can be discussed through the confrontation of ideas, and thus be able to redirect them towards other forms of civic political engagement. Starting from the idea that extremist positions arise in response to situations of social disaffection, Weeks (2018) suggests that the idea of engagement in action as a prevention approach is based on the empowerment of the social and political agency of young people.

The incorporation of an idea of resilience applied to the prevention of extremism, not related only to an individual attitude but as a community dimension, is suggested by various authors (Dalgaard et al., 2016; Wimelius et al., 2018; Jore, 2020; Stephens and Sieckelink, 2020). Talking about community engagement or resilient communities implies formulating the idea that groups or communities have mechanisms that prevent members of that community (or the community as a whole) from engaging in VE. However, despite the fact that the concept of social or community resilience suggests an alternative to explicitly security-driven approaches, its application is widely discussed in other social areas.

In the MENA region, we can concretely observe that while state-centred security (SSP) policies, including the excessive use of force and restrictions on freedoms, reinforce the drivers of VE by contributing to marginalization and frustration, successful human security (HS) can prevent VE and address the drivers of instability, including social and economic conflicts and democratic deficits (Osborne et al. 2017 Wana Institute). According to a report by the Wana Institute (2019) exploring how HS can contribute to successful prevention by improving resilience to conflict in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, the term HS can be defined as “a state of individual and communal peace achieved through an environment that meets the basic needs of individuals and through legislations that guarantee the rights and duties of all citizens. A state that promotes confidence in state institutions and cements citizenship and belonging” (Bondokji and Mhadeen, 2019: 9). Local communities understand HS in two forms: a material one, basic services covering human needs; and an abstract one, related to rights, freedom and duties. Physical and psychological protection as a key aspect of HS. Thus, “the more human security programmes meet people’s tangible and abstract needs, the more it enhances resilience to conflict” (Bondokji and Mhadeen, 2019: 7).

The absence of a consensual definition of resilience, its ambiguity and lack of empirical concretion, has led some authors to consider it as a cultural metaphor (Ungar, 2008; Kirmayer et al., 2009). Jore (2020) even argues for its inadequacy in the field of terrorism and extremism prevention: “The resilience concept in its current state serves more the role of cultural metaphor or utopian dream than of a scientific concept that can lead to a safer society” (2020: 15). Instead, he proposes that its ambiguity be explicitly recognized, as well as its dimension as a boundary concept (as an idea or term that enables communication across disciplines and that can smooth the way for collaboration, and also enable communication between the scientific and policy domains (Tierney, 2015: 5). Furthermore, other authors prevent the rhetorical and instrumental character that has been made of the idea of resilience in certain neoliberal contexts (Brunner and Amrani, 2019; Stephens et al., 2019), where the focus is directed towards individuals and communities, ignoring structural situations of injustice or discrimination. The critique of this profoundly depoliticizing effect, which is found by proposing a basic idea of resilience as the ability to “bounce back” after trauma or hardship, appealing to a supposed social elasticity and based on a triple principle of absorbing, recovering and adapting, is the starting point of

those authors who want to recover another sense of this concept as a strategy to reconcile liberty and security (Bourbeau, 2013). The search and empowering the strengths and resources available to society and the groups that make it up to face critical situations involves going beyond that rhetoric that makes resilience synonymous with resignation or uncritical acceptance by citizens. As Rogers (2015) suggests, the positive potential of resilience offers progressive opportunities for activism, and “could become a platform for evidence-based policy and collaborative practice in which shared responsibility is not a cynical reflection of the desire to cut costs and ‘pass the buck’ onto citizens” (2015: 67). Talking about resilience also implies recognizing the potential and agency of individuals and communities and, according to Jore (2020), involves “connecting with the concept of social capital and empowerment” (2020: 13), (see Aldrich and Meyer, 2015; Aldrich, 2017; Uekusa, 2018), and the emphasis shifts from the surveillance of suspects to a focus on building strengths rather than deficits.

According to Stephens and Sieckelinck (2020), resilience “appears often as an aim, but less often with any details on how this resilience should emerge” (2020: 147) and frequently relates to groups that are considered vulnerable or that may tend more towards radicalization processes; “the nature of the resilience is then some form of shield or barrier that prevents young/vulnerable individuals from being influenced by these extreme ideas” (2020: 148). One of the goals of the project is precisely to rethink the assumption that both youths as an age group and Muslims as a religious community are, by default, conceptualized as more vulnerable to the influence of extremist ideologies than others. These same authors make two more suggestions regarding the application of the principle of resilience to the prevention of extremism: on the one hand, the construction of resilience leads to criticism of extremist narratives, which favour the polarization that continues to maintain the lines of “us and them”. On the other, that the definition of policies to prevent violence should be associated with initiatives that are carried out from a broader social perspective, and that contribute to creating an active and critical citizenship.

In Europe, the work of Demant et al. (2008) insists on the empirical emptiness that exists regarding the de-radicalization initiatives that have been developed in some European countries and directed at young extremist militants. These authors analyze the actions of the Dutch government, from the 1970s onwards, with members of the radical Moluccan movement, the squatter movement and with extreme right-wing groups, applying a framework of analysis with which to establish a balance of how these groups lost their radicalism. They establish four groups of variables to be applied to the case of Islamist radicalism and which would explain the progressive dissociation of its members: factors linked to the movement itself, the needs of its members, external factors or the breakdown of individual dependence on the group. It is evident that we could understand these processes of de-radicalization as situations in which what is being proposed is to promote a process of re-socialization of a series of individuals who come from another process of re-socialization that made them distance themselves from the majority social references, in order to intensively assume others that were formulated in terms of truth.

Social control theory states that “strong bonds to family, community and society are fundamental to violence prevention in that they both provide a conduit for conveying social norms and expectations in addition to the motivation to abide by those norms” (Hirschi, 1969 cited in Ellis and Abdi, 2017: 290). Ellis and Abdi (2017) also theorize that “social connection is at the heart of resilient communities” and suggest that any strategy to increase community resilience must both “harness and enhance existing social connections while

endeavouring to not damage or diminish them" (2017: 290). While the application of community resilience to the field of VE is more recent, it is already present not only in the prevention field, but also in many countering terrorism, and countering VE strategies and discussed by different authors. Weine (2013), for instance, recognizes how strategies targeting VE have shifted from looking at individual pull and push factors to "an ecological view that looks at how characteristics of the social environment can either lead to or diminish involvement in violent extremism for the persons living there" (2013: 81), and how at the core of this paradigm is the will of "countering violent extremism through building resilience" (2013: 81), an approach that has already been used in policies in the fields of public health, child development and disaster relief (2013). According to Weine's (2013) empirical research, "building community resilience to violent extremism depends on sustaining and strengthening protective resources through collaborations between family and youth, community and government" (2013: 84). Weine (2013) proposes to develop multi-level strategies adapted for communities "under threat" including refugees and immigrant communities, and Hedieh (2016) adds that parents, teachers, religious leaders, counsellors and social service providers might be well positioned to "identify individuals vulnerable to radicalization, and to mobilize resources to intervene should these individuals become radicalized" (2016: 130). She suggests a model for establishing relationships with partners from various disciplines and at different levels, focused on establishing a community network that would serve as an early warning system to intervene in the "pre-criminal space", giving the "ownership of the agenda" to the community (2016: 138).

However, authors like Aly, Taylor and Karnovsky (2014) problematize and criticize that view by arguing that programmes seeking to build resilience at the community level tend to "assume that communities and individuals are particularly vulnerable to violent extremism by virtue of their religious or ideological beliefs" (2014: 383). As mentioned before in the paper, this is conceptualized in the literature as "suspect community" by Vermeulen (2014), whose research showed that focusing on entire local Muslim communities instead of on specific individuals contributed to the creation of a "suspect community". The risks of intervening at the community level and falling into stigmatisation or utilitarian purposes are present in all the range of strategies. Counter-terrorism particularly is found to generate feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and anger among the communities that are primarily target" (Ragazzi, 2016: 726).

Ragazzi (2016) goes further in the critique by adding that the literature has focused too narrowly on the discriminatory effects of counter-terrorist policies, being unable to grasp "the complex, multifaceted and more insidious political effects of counter-terrorism policies based on the active participation and involvement of Muslims in their own policing" (2016: 725). He nuances the idea of "suspect community" by proposing that, indeed, these policies "reproduce and reinforce the differential government of society" (2016: 725). His work accounts for the "support that counter-terrorism has garnered among a certain fringe of the Muslim population" (2016:729), the "good Muslims", "who share the values and norms of liberal society" (Mamdani, 2003, cited in Ragazzi, 2016: 732). We will see below that this idea is also developed by authors from the MENA and Balkan regions. Besides, Ragazzi (2016) notes that the "bad Muslims" category is thus "not dependent on the ideological or religious orientation of these individuals and groups, but upon their failed alignment with the bureaucratic or political requirements of the moment" (2016: 732). The "trusted" ones are necessary for infiltration in the community, "encouraged to put their capital of 'authenticity' to good use" to reach the "risky individuals" (2016: 734), which means surveilling their own communities and making the community "feel comfortable maintaining constant two-way communication with law enforcement, reporting suspicious activity

and potential radicalization" (Gonzalez, 2017). This also means that when they fail to perform according to CT/CVE agendas, they can "rapidly fall in the 'victim' or 'risky' categories" (Ragazzi, 2016: 734). Another downfall is the fact that this dividing mechanism of communities can lead to competition for funding and political influence, "producing misleading, tokenist and reifying view of communities as never-changing socially bounded entities" (Vertovec, 2010: 85), undermining the credibility of non-violent but more radical voices that "can constitute the legitimate interlocutors of a truly equal politics of recognition" (Ragazzi, 2016: 738).

Ellis and Abdi (2017) also propose a paradigm shift through a "bottom-up approach since communities often play the most critical role in both immediate and longer-term response to disasters" (Chandra et al., 2013, cited in Ellis and Abdi, 2017: 297). From focusing on the "risky" aspects, to enhancing the positive protective resources inherent to communities. Instead of focusing on isolation and marginalization from society, they propose to invest in social bonding and social bridging. While social bonding increases the sense of belonging to a group and serves as a protection mechanism within oppressed groups, social bridging allows youths to "experience themselves as integral members of the larger community and nation," contributing to resilience (2017: 294). The authors then propose a model of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), which seeks to "bring together community members and institutions to work as equal partners" and eliminate the researcher-subject power imbalance (2017: 296). The model involves a "belief that community members hold critical knowledge and are equal partners" and "concrete structures to operationalize these values" (2017: 296). With this model, the community is treated as a "unity of identity", making sure the project benefits all participants and includes them at all project stages, and addressing social inequalities and creating a "reciprocal transfer of knowledge skills, capacity, and power" (Israel et al., 1998: 179). The model also includes youths as key partners to challenge stigma and focus on positive development.

Importantly, Mahiri (2016) highlights in the Rift Valley Forum Report how "the role of women, families and communities [...] is often overlooked" and how the chosen stakeholders are "either disconnected from the communities involved or lack in-depth relationships with the community" (2016: 2). Mahiri (2016) states how women and families "are essential in providing the support systems needed to deal with challenge, adversity and uncertain and competing influences" (Grossman, cited in Mahiri, 2016: 2). The role of women was further acknowledged by Mohamed Shale Billow by sharing that in Nairobi research found that "men are afraid of the state apparatus", and not ready to talk about extremism of CVE compared to women who felt more open to talk "perhaps because they are not directly threatened by the state or were not seen as threats by the state" (2016: 3).

And, finally, the most developed conceptualization of the idea of resilience applied to policies to prevention of extremisms at the local level is developed by Wimelius et al. (2018). According to their approach, the concept of resilience is used and understood as if it was a process, as a capacity to develop, as an approach to strengths rather than problems and risks, and as a framework for guiding interventions. The elements that can be promoted from a local perspective are broad: strengthening social support networks; collaboration with community organization; enhancing community resources; increasing community safety; building collective identity based on hope, agency, altruism, cohesion, trust and security; training and education in how to handle uncertainty and risks. And from the perspective of its application to the prevention of extremisms, they point out that:

- Protective factors that may promote local resilience need to be mapped out in each target community. There are no universal protective factors that are valid and available in all places.

- Available protective factors and resources need to be integrated within local community networks in order to be used by them.
- Building local community partnerships and networks is crucial but cultural competence is needed in order to succeed in this.
- Social networks may promote local resilience through collective actions and building a collective identity.
- Social networks may also promote local resilience by facilitating training activities for crisis preparedness.

Taking CVE Programmes to the MENA and Balkans Regions

According to the scientific literature, fighting against violent extremisms has similar geopolitical impacts in various parts of the world. One of the strongest critical opinions regarding CVE public policies described as new types of insurrectionary practices can be found in Sadriu (2019). Here, these policies are considered to belong to the radical hegemony of internationally powerful countries over others. Also, the war against terrorism seems to be grounded on the notion of the world as divided into two parts: a liberal “peace zone” and the rest of the world that resists it (Sadriu, 2019).

Some authors (Rampton and Nadarajah, 2017) even state that the conflict stems from the quest for liberal expansion, and “programmes to combat violent extremism (CVE) reinforce the very illiberal forces that good governance programmes push into combat” (Sadriu, 2019: 433-4). In the Balkans as well as the MENA region, the issue is becoming especially acute. The regions lack local independent organizations able to regulate abuses these programmes may allow, such as politicians misusing them for their own profit (Sadriu, 2019). As we will develop further, such situations occur in the Balkans due to institutional weakness, and in the MENA region rather due to persisting authoritarianism.

CVE IN THE BALKANS

Research about radicalization in the Western Balkans almost always regards the Salafist discourse as a central concern (Becirevic et al., 2017). This focus on Salafism is linked to current VE, as in recent years the Western Balkan countries have experienced an increasing number of low-level terrorist incidents and prevented terrorist plots. The number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq from the Western Balkans region, particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia, is relatively high (Becirevic et al., 2017). Post-communist nationalism, the conflicts of the early 1990s and revived religious passions have produced social divisions within and between Western Balkan countries (Becirevic et al., 2017).

According to the research conducted by Perry (2016), the professional community in South Eastern Europe views VE primarily through the lens of the ISIS threat. This marks a departure from the discussions on “radicalism” or “extremism” in the region that took place just over a decade ago, back when these concepts were strongly linked to nationalism and sports hooliganism. The socio-political climate, where the glorification of war criminals, the weakening of state structures and inflammatory nationalist discourse are a norm throughout the region, offered Salafism a fertile ground (Becirevic et al., 2017). Besides, the Balkans have become a key site of PVE engagement for the US and, later, for other Western agencies: “This is justified by security analysts who argue that states here have only recently emerged from wars or decades of communism and therefore suffer from capacity deficits” (Sadriu, 2019: 441). As others have pointed out, this assessment of the factors that lead to violence is not adequate. It largely obscures the role of foreign policy in fuelling violent reactions (see Sabir, 2017).

From an international perspective, the Muslim “threat” of the Balkans to world peace contributes to the fact that the Balkans are not treated as part of Europe, but as an extension “of the populations at risk” outside the liberal regime (Sadriu, 2019). From a local perspective, peace-building and inter-community reconciliation programmes have allowed ethno-political elites to keep fostering division at the expense of national unity (Turalo and Veljan, 2018). The Berghof Foundation study (2019) points to serious shortcomings in the healing of post-war trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina and an additional burden of “institutional anomie” that undermines people’s life ambitions and leaves them cynically wary of the country’s institutional capacity to provide for its citizens. These two “shortcomings” offer fertile ground for radicalization (Turalo and Veljan, 2018). However, Stojkovski and Kalajdziovski (2018) noted that in Macedonia the promotion of activities and programmes that foster inter-ethnic integration and collaboration strengthen the resilience of municipalities vis-à-vis factors that contribute to a favourable environment for extremism.

Sead Turcalo and Nejra Veljan (2018) also believe that a genuine peace-building approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina (which is local and community-based) could provide a valuable counter-balance to current security trends in PVE programmes. But the “essence” of peace-building is an important factor if it is to contribute to resilience. In Kosovo, researchers point to strong local rejection of such initiatives, resulting from the significant external influence exerted on peace-building programming. Overall, “because these initiatives are not grassroots and are widely seen as an external intervention, they have not attracted local attention and have not taken off as a sustainable initiative” (Jakupi and Kraja, 2018: 26). Also from a local perspective, “the misuse of the CVE agenda by local politicians can also be seen in the narrowing of the political space for activism against ruling parties, as the terrorist threat came to encompass activities carried out by other, non Islamically-inspired actors too” (Sadriu, 2019: 447).

Sadriu (2019) examined the impact of the “war on terror” at the local level in Albania and Kosovo, mainly in terms of “(mis)use of the war on terror rhetoric by politicians and the impact this has on Islamically-associated activism” (2019: 433). He points out that the problem lies in the realm of ideological activity, which comes with consequences. Indeed, PVE programmes have focused on “policing in ‘pre-crime’ context of potential activists” (Heath-Kelly, 2017, cited in Sadriu, 2019), leading to an erosion of civil liberties. In addition, an exaggeration of threats has been developed to justify funding of PVE programmes. The war on terrorism has thus fostered the entrenchment of institutional interests in order to maintain some privileges for local politicians who claim to be the best suited to address these threats. In the Balkans, “local leaders were encouraged to take on the role of disciplining constituents increasingly stigmatized as out of control and contributing to global insecurity” (Sadriu, 2019: 442). Finally, PVE programmes attempt to shape Muslim identities: they make normative Islamic practice suspect and reduce Islamic activism. Suspected extremists are identified and contained, while targeting “those deemed vulnerable to extremist ideologies and [subject] them to a process of ‘de-radicalization’” (Sian, 2017: 3; Qureshi, 2016, cited in Sadriu, 2019).

Although the Balkans produce fewer fighters than other regions, “Muslims in the Balkans are still subject to the same framing reminiscent of the types of framings used by Serb nationalists in the 1990s that sought to portray the Balkans as a hotbed of religiously inspired extremism” (Sadriu, 2019: 444). CVE programmes, whether intentional or not, are part of the same pattern that portrays Muslims as prone to violence (Sadriu, 2019).

CVE IN THE MENA REGION

In the MENA region, the radicalization-repression dynamic fuels political opposition and has led to the radicalization of numerous North Africans (Storm, 2009). Indeed, the result of the repression of opposition forces through human rights violations and political exclusion is that “legal opposition forces that exist are extremely weak, with very little popular support” (Storm, 2009: 1012). Actual opposition forces are located outside the official system and are the main target of political repression – the strongest of them are mainly Islamist (Storm, 2009).

In a context of persisting authoritarianism, the opportunities for achieving democratic power are minor and are no threat to the regime. As a result, North-Africans – especially young people – are left with two alternate options: “exiting the political system in favour of the stronger and genuine, but radical, opposition forces outside the formal political system; or exiting North Africa in favour of a future in Europe” (Storm, 2009: 1000). Presently, 56% of Arab youths view the Arab Spring uprisings negatively, resulting in disastrous civil wars and political and economic inertia (Baffa et al., 2019). The youths of the region, faced with poverty and unemployment, have very few possibilities of expressing discontent through democratic alternatives. Unachievable social, economic and political mobility, warn Richard Baffa, Nathan West, Wing Yi Chang and Abby Fanlo (2019) will definitely, for some, result in terrorism as the only way to assert a role in the society and bring about change in a stagnant Arab world (2019). The war on terror has provided authoritarian regimes with a “*legitimate*” tool to repress genuine opposition on the grounds that they are Islamists” and provided them with improved security and intelligence capacities,” especially for Morocco and Libya (Storm, 2009: 1007).

36

Comparing anti-terrorism laws in the Maghreb states (Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia), Tamburini (2018) reports that the use of these laws has for the most part diverted them from their purpose, making them tools for maintaining public order or controlling opposition and dissent, without any legal control against human rights violations. Moreover, security measures and military tactics alone do not address the roots of politically motivated violence, namely, the unsustainable political and socio-economic conditions. On the contrary, by maintaining military, political and financial support to the ruthless regimes in the region, the international forces contribute to exacerbating the socio-economic and political conditions that foster terrorism in the first place (Housam, 2017). “As long as the international powers persist in their current approaches, they will be perceived as threats and obstacles to the realization of popular socio-economic and political aspirations” (Housam, 2017: 1).

The security approach of PVE policies views VE as “emanating from a misunderstanding of Islam” (Bourekba, 2016: 4). This reading is also endorsed by political leaders in the MENA region, including Islamists, who see radicalism as a perversion of Islamic values (2016). This, in a way, underlines the limits of a security-centred approach that comes with counter-productive issues such as criminalizing conservative religious groups (Moussa, 2016).

In this regard, Manal Omar (2016) wonders how to work with religious leaders to counter VE. He notes and deplores that PVE programmes focus primarily on religious groups. Counter-terrorism programmes, says Omar (2016), must take into account factors other than religion that fuel extremism. They must identify how religion can help, and not solely focus on how faith can be abused. PVE projects need to ally with women and youths

in order to ensure long-term commitment and to build closer ties with the community. The author also notes that, despite the violence of Christian militias in the Central African Republic and marauding Buddhist monks attacking Muslims in Myanmar, “when CVE experts talk about religious extremism, they inevitably mean radical Islam” (Omar, 2016: 74). Only targeting Muslims fuels a conspiracy theory of a “global war against Islam” (2016: 74). The inclusion of other extremist religious movements in PVE strategies not only would alleviate this concern but would also offer the opportunity to apply lessons learned from a given situation to the others (Omar, 2016).

Another interesting approach is that of the Human Security Collective (HSC), which supports intervening at the community level from a human security perspective, seeing “the individual as being the one primarily at risk” (HSC, 2018) and thus trying to secure his/her welfare in the long term. This entails a paradigm shift from seeing a community as being “risky”, to a community at risk, and it tries to focus on the “vast majority who are resilient to the lure of extremist or criminal messaging” (2018: 209) as the keys to building community resilience, as opposed to focusing on the few that get radicalized towards violent ideologies and behaviours. HSC draws its findings from a project implemented in communities in Tunisia and the Netherlands, aiming to prevent radicalization leading to VE among teenagers. The research proves really useful since it offers empirical proof of the shared characteristics that exist between youths from different regions amid a gap in the literature in non-western regions, including socio-economic deprivation, insufficient inclusion in decision-making, and the feelings of marginalization and alienation from society. Another common feature is the way youths perceive local security officers and the community role in relation to violence prevention as well as the role of close persons within family and neighbourhood and who endorse violent radical ideologies. Moreover, men and women in Tunisia thought that communities could have a strong influence against VE ideologies (2018: 204).

And this is, indeed, the point of departure of CONNEKT's approach to community involvement in the prevention of violent extremism.

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What drives youth to violent extremism? How can they turn from being “the problem” into “the key” for a solution? By engaging youth in the research, CONNEKT will raise young voices to become stakeholders in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism.

CONNEKT is a research and action project which analyses seven potential radicalisation factors among youth aged between 12 and 30: religion, digitalisation, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, transnational dynamics, socio-political demands, and educational, cultural and leisure opportunities and evaluates them on three levels: transnational/state, community and individual.

Its aim is to establish a multi-dimensional map of drivers of extremism among youth in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bulgaria, and to identify the interplay between them. Based on the empirical research findings, the project will end up recommending tools and measures for the prevention of violent extremism from a social and community perspective both for the regions of study and the European Union.

Under the coordination of the European Institute of the Mediterranean, (IEMed), the project gathers a multidisciplinary Consortium involving 14 partners from MENA, the EU and the Balkans.



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