



EXPANDING THE EVIDENCE BASE  
FOR PREVENTING AND COUNTERING  
VIOLENT EXTREMISM  
**RESEARCH SOLUTIONS**

SARA ZEIGER | EDITOR



## **EXPANDING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR P/CVE: RESEARCH SOLUTIONS**

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## ABOUT HEDAYAH

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

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Sara Zeiger** is a Program Manager in the Department of Research and Analysis. She joined Hedayah in August 2012 and currently leads Hedayah's portfolio on CVE and education. Sara is also currently a Non-Resident Fellow in International Relations and Counter-Terrorism for TRENDS Research & Advisory.

At Hedayah, Sara supports the Director in providing oversight for the Department's programs, including the Counter-Narrative Library, non-resident Fellowship Program and annual International CVE Research Conference. Sara is currently leading the development of an App for Monitoring, Measurement and Evaluation for CVE projects titled MASAR as well as the development of a collection of counter-narratives for the East and Horn of Africa region. Sara is also the Co-Director of a NATO SPS Advanced Research Workshop grant on the role of women in CVE.

Sara was Hedayah's liaison with the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) to support the development and drafting their framework document, the Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and CVE and follow-up Action Plan. Her recent publications include Violent Radicalisation and Far-Right Violent Extremism in Europe; Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa: The Role of the Mining Sector, and two How-To guides on Undermining Violent Extremist Narratives (South East Asia & Middle East and North Africa).

Prior to joining Hedayah, Sara worked as a Research Assistant at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. She also served as a Head Teaching Fellow for the Harvard Extension School and was a Graduate Assistant at Boston University, conducting research on politics and society in Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. Sara holds an M.A. in International Relations and Religion (concentrations: Security Studies and Islam) from Boston University, and graduated as valedictorian with a B.A. in Psychology and Religion from Ohio Northern University.

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## INTRODUCTION

### DRIVING THE P/CVE RESEARCH AGENDA

Sara Zeiger

#### Background

The threat of violent extremism is a global phenomenon, undermining communities, fundamental human rights and national and international security. Violent extremism spans across religions, national borders, cultures, religions and ideologies—and is constantly evolving and changing. In this context, efforts to counter violent extremism by governments and security actors also need to evolve to address the most pressing threats as well as their root causes. As part of their strategies, governments, practitioners and civil society actors are focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) before an individual commits an act of terrorism or violence by investigating the drivers of radicalization and designing interventions to reduce their risk.

#### Research Conference 2017

In response to the above challenges and as the fourth annual event in this regard, Hedayah, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Center for Middle Eastern and Strategic Studies (ORSAM) hosted the annual “International Countering Violent Extremism Research Conference, 2017” in, Antalya, Turkey, from 30 October to 1 November 2017. The Conference was sponsored in part by the Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Conference could not have taken place without the support of its main partners: the Australian Government, European Union—Global STRIVE

Programme, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), M&C Saatchi, Swansea University, and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

Content partners included Adam Smith International, the Afghanistan Justice Organization, Aktis Strategy, the Asia Foundation, Creative Associates International, Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI), the Global Center on Cooperative Security, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—The Hague (ICCT), Pakistan Peace Collective, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Wasafiri Consulting, and UN Women.

Some of the main objectives for the International Countering Violent Extremism Research Conference 2017 were to:

- Identify and present a comprehensive understanding of driving factors of violent extremism and evidence-based P/CVE interventions during thematic and regional panels.
- Enhance the network of P/CVE researchers and policy-makers to share their research and best practices and to contribute to further connectedness of the P/CVE community.
- Provide a space of exchange for researchers and practitioners to jointly identify trends and needs for on-the-ground implementation, prepare the ground for further research, and collaborate with each other on emerging areas of work.
- Ensure research outcomes for P/CVE are informing programming and policy decisions in the P/CVE domain.
- P/CVE practitioners, policymakers and academics attended the Conference in Antalya, with over 150 participants from 34 different countries, in addition to delegations from the European Union (EU) and several United Nations (UN) agencies.

### Defining Countering Violent Extremism

One of the main aims of the International CVE Research Conference each year is to contribute to the growing body of research in P/CVE and to provide a stronger evidence-base for future P/CVE policies and programs. For the purposes of this edited volume, P/CVE refers to

the “soft” or “preventive” strategies, policies and programs that identify and challenge the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors of radicalization and recruitment... CVE describes both the longer-term prevention strategies that address potential macro socio-economic and political factors, and the specifically-designed targeted interventions that take place at both the community and individual level (to include psycho-social counseling for at-risk individuals as well as detainees) (Zeiger, 2016, p. 2).

P/CVE is part of a broader, comprehensive counter-terrorism framework, not a stand-alone or development-only entity. It should be noted that the terminology and also the programs related to CVE should always be adapted to the local context and culture.

### Essays

The essays included in this volume are reflective of some of the papers that were presented at the International CVE Research Conference 2017. It should be noted that some of the speakers elected not to submit a chapter to this volume due to sensitivities, confidentiality, or the fact that the research was not yet publicly available. The essays that were successfully submitted to this edited volume are summarized below.

The first essay “Study of Vulnerability towards Violent Extremism in Youth of Georgia” by Iago Kachkachishvili and George Lolashvili looks at the case study of Georgia in terms of risk factors related to the vulnerability of youth. In this essay, the authors analyze social risk factors that may lead to radicalization and violent extremism, taking Pankisi Gorge as an example. The study found that several push factors were contributing to the vulnerability of youth in Georgia, including: poor economic status and low employment opportunities; distrust towards local government institutions; limited involvement in public civic activities; ethnic and religious discrimination; and feelings of exclusion from mainstream narratives in schools. Several pull factors were also identified by this research, including: strong social bonds and empathy towards radicalized peers; idea of self-realization when joining a terrorist group; and strong violent extremist propaganda aimed at Georgians (and in Georgian language).

Martine Zeuthen's essay "Violent Extremism in East Africa" provides an overview of research on violent extremism and P/CVE programs in East Africa that has been conducted by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) since 2014 through the STRIVE project. The primary data for this research is focused on Kenya and Somalia, and in the context of a militant organization Al Shabaab. The essay focuses on the recruitment patterns of Al Shabaab in Kenya & Somalia, and some of the government and civil society responses that have emerged in the past 4 years to tackle them. The three main categories of recruitment covered in Zeuthen's essay include forced recruitment, clan-based recruitment, and voluntary recruitment. After providing some insights from the STRIVE, Zeuthen concludes with identifying some research gaps in East Africa. For example, there is a need for more research on assessment of impact of national P/CVE strategies, the needs of Al Shabaab and group dynamics, and the effects of P/CVE interventions.

Irene Ndung'u, Uyo Yenwong-Fal and Romi Sigsworth describe the impact of violent extremism on women in their essay "Violent Extremism in Kenya: Gauging the Impact on Women." The paper, based on a study produced in late 2017, aimed to gain a better understanding of how women play a role in violent extremism as well as its prevention, and how violent extremism impacts women in their communities comparing to men, specifically focusing on the context of Kenya. Some of the key differences found were that violent extremism affects women in terms of sexual violence and rape more often than men, and that women are more affected by the loss of physical safety and psychological trauma than men. The study also noted that social stigmatization of the family members of those who participated in violent extremism was more felt by women than by men—the public "shaming" of formers and family members meant that women were often outcast from society. It is also worth noting that some of the research findings in the report suggested that there was high mistrust between security officials and women in Kenyan communities, but other research findings suggested that the presence of female police officers and investigators helped to build trust and communication between security officials and women in their communities.

The essay "Monitoring and Evaluation for CVE: Strategies from STRIVE II" by Gayatri Saghal outlines a number of challenges faced by M&E for P/CVE, and their possible solutions based on the STRIVE II program of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). The essay suggests that there are both

conceptual and methodological challenges associated with M&E for P/CVE, including definitions of P/CVE and target groups of P/CVE programs, identifying drivers of violent extremism consistently, evaluating preventative measures where the problem does not materialize, attribution to P/CVE interventions, who/what/when to measure, as well as risk and reliability of data measured. As for conceptual challenges, STRIVE II attempted to overcome some of them by defining a detailed Theory of Change and being careful of defining terms in the program design phase. Moreover, STRIVE II overcame some of the methodological challenges by being careful about the type of data collected, and the time period when it was done. At the end of the essay, Saghal outlines a specific component of the M&E plan for STRIVE II, including an example of the criteria to select target participants for a project.

In their essay "Emerging Best Practice and Lessons Learnt on CVE in Fragile Contexts," authors from Aktis Strategy discuss the theory and practice behind their P/CVE programs and projects in a variety of contexts, including Tunisia, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, Australia, the Balkans, Lebanon and Jordan. Saskia Marsh, Kathleen White and Barbara Chalghaf outline some of the design processes and theories behind their P/CVE projects, including hypotheses that P/CVE programs can change social attitudes and behavior. They outline different types of target audiences, and how their P/CVE approaches differ accordingly. They also underline the main challenges to P/CVE program design, and offer solutions to overcome them. Finally, they summarize some of the key lessons learnt from evaluation of their P/CVE programs, offering new ideas for how P/CVE can be implemented in different communities.

İbrahim Efe's chapter on "Critical Discourse Analysis of Turkish News Reporting on Recent Terrorist Attacks" analyzes the effect of media reporting of violent extremism and terrorist attacks on the public opinion and perception of violent extremism, using the case study of Turkey. The research found that polarization of Turkish media along ideological and political lines often was correlated with how terrorist attacks were characterized, and whom the newspaper held accountable for them. It was warned that the news sources should be careful not to reinforce the narratives of violent extremist groups by the way terrorist attacks are portrayed, and that an over-emphasis on the narratives of violent extremism can have a negative effect on public opinion (e.g. raising the fears of the public disproportionately).

## Recommendations

Although a detailed version of recommendations and a summary of the sessions can be found in the “Brief of Recommendations for P/CVE Policy, Programming and Future Research,” (Zeiger, 2018), seven key recommendations from the Conference are summarized below:

### For P/CVE Policymakers

1. **Collaborate with the private sector to leverage all available tools and resources to counter violent extremism.** The private sector can be useful in combating the narratives of violent extremists online, not just in the sphere of social media, but also in leveraging the technology and innovation available. The private sector also has available funds, and can participate in CVE policies and programs through their normal engagement with the community, both in corporate social responsibility programs and regular interactions. The private sector may also have access to market research that could be useful for CVE.
2. **Analyze how shifting mainstream attitudes, values and discourses around identity, nativism, immigration, ethnicity and religion can create an environment that feeds on the pre-violent space of extremism.** In policy decisions, account for elements of “countering extremism” that lead to incitement to violence, while at the same time protecting human rights and freedom of expression.

### For P/CVE Practitioners and Programs

3. **Create, support and reinforce networks of civil society organizations working on P/CVE at the local, national and regional levels.** These networks are useful for information-sharing, support and research related to P/CVE, and CSOs often have access and knowledge of the community that is useful also for policymaking and academic purposes.
4. **Ensure P/CVE programs contain a gender perspective and accounts for gendered differences in how violent extremism affects men and women.** This may include, for example, differen-

tiating the terminology between “foreign terrorist fighters” and “foreign terrorists,” as many women participating in the conflict in Iraq and Syria have not actually been fighting. This may also take into account the presence of sexual assault and domestic violence in interventions in certain communities, and training relevant organizations on dealing with trauma associated with sexual assault and domestic violence.

### For P/CVE Research Community

5. **Research how different violent extremist organizations use different recruitment techniques in local communities.** Much of the existing research focuses on the drivers of radicalization (the recruited individual), but very little research investigates the recruitment patterns of violent extremist groups.
6. **Investigate how violent extremism affects children, both in terms of their involvement in violent extremism and experiences of trauma affiliated with violent extremism.** Often these two elements are not mutually exclusive, and there are multiple pathways by which children are affiliated with violent extremist groups. This research is crucial also for the coming years in reintegrating many families back into their homes that have been impacted by the presence of Daesh in their communities.
7. **Develop techniques that overcome some of the conceptual and methodological challenges related to P/CVE research.** For example, it is critical to develop CVE research methods that overcome the challenge that there are few number of individuals that are radicalized, and therefore it is difficult to conduct research on such a small group. Solutions may include cross-referencing subjects that are susceptible to different violent extremist ideologies. Better program design may also help to facilitate better monitoring and evaluation of P/CVE programs, and the use of proxy indicators may assist in assessing the impact of P/CVE programs.

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## CHAPTER 2

### STUDY OF VULNERABILITY TOWARDS VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN YOUTH OF GEORGIA

Dr. Iago Kachkachishvili

*George Lolashvili*

#### **General Context: Recent History of Extremist Group Activities Related to Georgia**

There have been several infamous individuals from the Georgian Muslim community recruited by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and involved in their terrorist activities. Abu Omar al-Shishani, Ahmad al-Gurji, and Hamzat Borchashvili are a few examples of Georgian-born ISIS members who were covered by Georgian and foreign media on several occasions. In addition, the annual report of State Security Service of Georgia (SSG) counted nine cases of investigation into terrorist activities in 2016. Those cases include charges against several citizens of Georgia for attempts to recruit individuals to ISIS; charges (also against citizens of Georgia) for being a member of terrorist group; charges against both Georgian and foreign citizens for propagating violent extremism; and “ideological support of terrorism” both offline or online. In addition, SSG reported 20 foreign citizens identified in “dubious financial activities” and ultimately supporting the financial interests of terrorist organizations. One citizen of Georgia was also arrested and charged for financing terrorism (The Annual Report of State Security Service of Georgia, 2016). Furthermore, the US Department of State’s Country Report on Terrorism reports about 50 to 100 Georgian nationals fighting in terrorist groups: “The Georgian government estimates 50 to 100 Georgian nationals from the Muslim-majority regions of Adjara and the Pankisi Gorge are fighting in Syria and Iraq for either al-Qa’ida affiliates or ISIL” (Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, Country Report on Terrorism, 2015).

Moreover, because of its geographical location, Georgia is sometimes used as a transit hub for terrorists travelling from the Muslim republics of the Russian Federation to Turkey and/or Syria. SSG reported denied entrance to 750 foreign citizens based on suspicion of terrorist affiliations and 1500 monitored

for the same reason in 2016. The Security Service monitored 1,286 persons according to the 2015 annual report, 1,014 were denied entry into the country and 40 were stopped from leaving it (The Annual Report of State Security Service of Georgia, 2015).

Both the Department of State and the SSG reported the use of online platforms for spreading ISIS propaganda. As an example, in 2015 a Georgian Word Press blog was created, which was actively publishing ISIS propaganda materials. The blog was later taken down by the Georgian intelligence services.<sup>1</sup> Another example was a video message of four Georgian ISIS members to Georgians, in which they were calling for Georgian Muslims to join ‘the Caliphate’ (Islamic State Group’s Georgian-Language Propaganda, 2015).

Even though extremist propaganda activities in Georgia is recognized by both state and society, there has not been research commissioned to study Georgian youth’s vulnerability towards violent extremism (VE), or to measure the significance of well-known risk factors associated with it. The contents of this essay summarize the preliminary results of a study that will help make the first step in developing new intervention strategies in local Muslim communities (for example, the Pankisi valley and mountainous regions of Adjara), members of which have been targeted by recruiters from extremist organizations.

## Methodology

The main research question of this present study can be formulated as following:

**What are the social risk-factors of vulnerability towards violent extremism amongst youth of Georgia and which sub-group is most vulnerable?**

In addition to the above question, issues that were relevant to this study are:

1. What are the conditions concerning social and economic stability of youth in Georgia? How flexible are different youth groups on labor market and how unemployment shapes the lifestyle of the youth?
2. What is young individuals’ assessment of their self-realization in Georgian social and economic system and what are the effects of frustration in youth that have low expectations?
3. Is there lack of common means needed for social interaction in Georgia and how it affects the level of social integration amongst youth?

Because of the lack of research on the topic of VE and its drivers in Georgia, the research design was developed based on the experience of foreign researchers and experts. The most influential text in this regard was ‘*Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*’ developed by USAID in 2009, which outlines key drivers of vulnerability towards violent extremism (VE). Based on the USAID guide and other available research literature, the following drivers were outlined in the conceptual framework of the study:

- Social exclusion, which generally refers to the limitations individuals experience of participating in various activities: production, consumption, civic engagement, political participation, etc.
- Social isolation and alienation which push frustrated youth to risky behavior that provides an escape from routine lives.
- Insufficient governance (both on central and local levels) to address the social problems, especially, poverty and unemployment, and low trust in political institutions and authorities.
- Oppression of human rights to be involved in non-mainstream practices attached to religious minorities; stigmatization/discrimination of those who have different markers of behavior and even physical appearance.
- Lack of viable alternative viewpoints or teachings other than religious, nationalistic meta-narratives, which are delivered to faith based boarding schools or even public schools.

The research project consisted of three methodological approaches that are described in more detail below. Due to limitations to this essay, a detailed description of the methodology is not included:

1. **Qualitative research** – The research studied the topics of social integration and alienation amongst youth groups through 13 focus groups and 5 in-depth interviews. Target groups for focus groups were: faith-based boarding school students (15-18 age group), youth (18-29 age group), and public-school teachers.
2. **Quantitative research (surveys)** – These surveys focused on the value orientation, social mobility, and elements of everyday life of youth groups. In addition, face to face interviews were conducted with three target groups: a) youth in general (18-29 age group); b) students of the public schools (15-17 age group); and c) faith-based boarding school students (15-17 age group). Altogether around 1,100 respondents were interviewed in the framework of national wide sampling.

<sup>1</sup> For more on the Word Press blog and the takedown, see “Georgian intelligence investigating websites supporting ISIS,” 2015).

- 3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** – This aspect of the research investigated the discourses produced by school textbooks and the production of social order by these discourses. Textbooks on History and Literature (VII –XII grades) largely used in Georgian public schools were analyzed. The CDA approach was used to answer the research question – Is the common-sense knowledge, or institutionally developed knowledge about the Georgian history and culture exclusive or inclusive towards specific social groups, that constitute cultural minorities in Georgia.

The first two methodological approaches will be the primary source of data for this essay. Because of the supplementary role in the research project, the results of CDA of the textbooks will not be widely discussed in this essay.

### Main Findings of the Study

Several key findings of the abovementioned research can be described in more detail under the headings below:

#### 1. Bad Economic Conditions of Youth in Georgia and Their Perception of Current Labor Market

The economic situation of the majority of respondents' families in the quantitative survey, according to their self-evaluation, is average ('enough to satisfy basic requirements of the family' - 72.1%). More than a fifth of the respondents' families, according to their subjective perception, live in a worse economic situation, one which is below average. The respondents were asked about the total monthly income of their families and taking into consideration that according to National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT), monthly subsistence minimum for six or more-member households in Georgia is approximately 400 GEL (about 135 EURO), the majority (more than 65%) of interviewed families either live in poverty or slightly above the poverty line (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016).

According to both the Census of 2014 and the survey data, more than a half of the youth between ages 18 and 29 are unemployed. The main problem with the labor market as seen from the point of view of young people is unfair hiring practices - most vacancies have unrealistic demands and connections and 'knowing important people' is given more of a priority in hiring decisions than the qualifications of a candidate. There is also a serious lack of vocational education opportunities to receive some practical skills and increase chances for employment.

#	Statement	Does not agree	Agree	N
1	If you want to be successful, then you need to know important people	31.6%	68.4%	1049
2	It is impossible to have a good job if you do not know important people	46.7%	53.3%	1049
3	It is impossible to have a good job if you have no economic resources	51.5%	48.5%	1035

**Table #1.1 | Statements about labor market**

These problems are universal across various youth groups, but there are additional obstacles for employment which are significant amongst the youth from Muslim communities. First, there are cultural norms that try to suppress women's career interests and employment opportunities and stand in the way of female Muslim youth. Second, in some Muslim communities, there is a strong feeling that they are socially isolated and different forms of alienation make it more difficult to succeed in the labor market. Third, one of the most important qualitative study findings is that perception of employment is somewhat different in urban areas (Batumi and Akhmeta) than in rural settlements (Karajala and Pankisi Gorge). In Akhmeta and Batumi participants of the study had higher expectations with regard to employment – salary, field of work, working conditions, etc. They wanted to have successful careers. However, there was a lack of such vision in Karajala and Pankisi Gorge. They perceived becoming employed a success in itself. This indicates that there are much lower expectations in terms of career opportunities in these communities.

The additional problem with poverty and unemployment is that those youth that do work mostly have jobs that require no qualification or hold low positions in the public sector. Thus, their contribution to household income does not necessarily overcome challenges of poverty or economic deprivation. Furthermore, employed youngsters experience discriminatory work settings and think that their jobs do not give them opportunities to fully realize their potential. Unemployed youngsters talk about nepotism and an unfair job market, which reduces their career opportunities even further. The current state of the labour market in Georgia is one characterized by adverse conditions for self-realization of young individuals.

It is important here to note that we do not suggest the direct link between poverty and vulnerability towards VE. As the USAID guide outlines based on several studies on the issue: “The correlation between income and educational levels on the one hand, and vulnerability to terrorism on the other is weak” (Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming, 2009, p. 52). The guide comes to a conclusion based on empirical evidence that

while individual terrorists tend to be better off than the average citizen in the societies to which they belong, impoverished countries tend to generate more terrorism than wealthier ones. Thus, the empirical relationship between poverty and terrorism is strikingly different at the macro- (country-wide) and at the micro (individual) level. Consequently, a focus on individual poverty – specifically, on the fact that, historically, most terrorists have not been themselves poor, but, instead, have been predominantly well-educated individuals from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds (Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming, 2009, p.19).

However, we suggest that poverty and the lack of employment opportunities should be regarded as important social factors in case of Georgian experience because: 1) economic conditions and employment are not merely indicators of economic well-being, but also important means for social integration and exclusion; and 2) they are important for the study in the latter context, as the individuals who are mainly targeted by VE recruiters are representatives of minority groups and have issues with social integration. Therefore, the discussion of the economic conditions and labour market in Georgia is still relevant for our study as it evaluates them in terms of self-realization opportunities which ultimately lead to higher social integration.

## 2. The Need for Positive Social Interaction in Youth Living in Rural Areas

The analysis of the social environment of youth was oriented on the issues concerning opportunities to socialize for youth in different communities, both urban, or rural. The study results show that the rural areas lack the physical infrastructure that is mostly associated with positive social interactions in youth.

The lack of social spaces in Muslim communities living in rural settlements was in fact, identified as one of the biggest issues by Muslim youth themselves. What was specifically outlined is a lack of spaces that can be used for social interaction, sports activities and cultural or educational events. For example, Keto (aged 28, married, unemployed) said that there are no recreational or entertainment places for her child in Pankisi. “*When I took her/him to Akhmeta he/she was so excited. We have nothing here [in Pankisi].*”

The point that Keto and other participants outlined in the discussions is that the poorly developed (or underdeveloped) physical space and absence of basic infrastructure in their settlements limits their opportunity to engage in different social activities or to organize them. Availability of such spaces is a precondition for the population’s full integration into the community, whereas their nonexistence may create additional obstacles. “Strolling in the street and doing nothing” as one respondent expressed it, can be a factor for increasing vulnerability towards VE as “marginality also translates into restless young people having too much time on their hands, and the resulting boredom can benefit VE organizations. Global Jihadist movements have shown themselves able to exploit the attraction of angry youth to risky behavior that provide an escape from dreary lives” (Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming, 2009, p. 11).

## 3. Trust towards Institutions

In the quantitative study, the respondents assessed the level of trust they have towards various institutions. According to the Mean data, out of the proposed institutions the respondents have the most trust the Georgian Army (Mean=8.37, on 10-point scale; SD=2.01), Georgian Orthodox Church (Mean = 7.99; standard deviation – 2.399), and clergy (Mean=7.86; SD= 2.4). The least trust is expressed by the respondents towards the Parliament of Georgia (Mean=5.35; SD=2.415) and the local government (Mean=5.48; SD= 2.326).



**Diagram #5.1 | Trust towards institutions**

Comparison of the data according to the two biggest religious affiliations (represented in the sample) shows that on average Muslims, when compared to the Orthodox Christians, have more trust towards all institutions except for the Orthodox Church. Independent samples tests show that the difference between groups is significant in case of every item. The higher trust in Muslim youth towards the state institutions is an important finding for the study as the focus groups show that this trust is not rewarded back by the institutions themselves.

#### 4. Passive Engagement of the Local and Central Governments

In the qualitative study, respondents talked about the role of authorities in finding solutions to the regions' and communities' problems. According to the participants of the focus groups, the local government becomes active right before elections to recruit more votes and stay in power. Respondents from the village Karajala, a non-Georgian Muslim populated village, es-

pecially emphasized on the government's passiveness. They say that no one thinks about their village and express their disappointment with the government. Respondents additionally recalled the problems with the targeted social assistance program (poverty-based cash allowance), which also emphasizes the neglect on the part of the government. According to the Karajala focus group members the situation in their village has not changed and all the long-time problems are still in place. Despite being less prominent compared to Karajala, similar perceptions of stagnation are also observed in other non-Muslim communities (e.g. Akhmeta).

Respondents talked about the patrol police and safety in their communities. Although the patrol police work to ensure security, respondents believe that they treat the population in a discriminating manner. For example, respondents say that the patrol police treats community members in a different way, they are especially hostile to those who they do not know (have no connections to) or who have no social and/or economic capital.

Another issue discussed was central and local government's unequal treatment of population. Respondents from Karajala said that the local government used the financial resources allocated for the district/village in a non-targeted way. The same topic was discussed in Akhmeta. However, what the Akhmeta respondents considered unfair was the authorities' preferential treatment of the Pankisi Gorge compared to their own region. Eteri (23-year-old student, single, and unemployed) noted that Pankisi enjoyed free services, like healthcare, education, English, and computer classes "[which] is unusual for us." It was also underlined that the authorities visited Pankisi more often, whereas no such clubs were available in Akhmeta. Another focus group member Koba (aged 25, single, and unemployed) added the following: There are "many families who are deprived of what they [Pankisi Gorge population] have."

Attitude to the authorities shows, to a certain extent, that Muslim population in Karajala believes that the village has been 'abandoned' by the authorities. The most interesting is that the focus group members associate 'abandonment' with their ethnic origin. This can be illustrated by a focus group member's words: "Our village is a poor village. Everyone lives well in other regions except for us. There are Georgians all around us." (Kakha, aged 25, single, and employed). Kakha links 'living well' with the regions populated with ethnic Georgians. This means that the young people interviewed in Karajala perceive ethnic discrimination beyond the economic situation in the village/ community.

The analysis of the data gathered by both quantitative and qualitative surveys comes to an interesting observation that even though Muslim youth generally have a higher trust towards the main state institutions, the qualitative study shows that they are dissatisfied with the involvement of the representatives of the central and local governments in the development of their communities. The qualitative study participants see themselves as ignored by the state and this issue is more problematic because of the fact that they are more active in terms of raising specific issues with the local government and seeing the latter as the relevant institution to solve relevant problems, which is another indication that there is no general distrust towards the government bodies on the institutional level, but on the level of execution. This leads to a suggestion that even though there is willingness from the Muslim youth to engage in social and political life, there may be a certain frustration in terms of expectations from both the local and state government bodies.

The USAID (2009) guide sees poor governance as one of the push factors for VE. “Poor governance” describes a situation where there is a serious issue of establishing the law or providing basic government services. Drawing on the discussions about the lack of employment opportunities and positive social spaces on the local level and unwillingness from the government to engage more actively in addressing the most important issues, the youth from Muslim communities assess their local governments as ineffective. “Ineffective governance” does not mean the same level of risk (as in the case of “poor governance”) of violent extremist groups filling the voids in social and political life left by it, but it still negatively affects the resistance against it.

## 5. Religious Discrimination and Its Ideological Basis

When asked about the issue of religious discrimination in Georgia, third of the quantitative survey respondents disregard it as a serious issue and 46.1% think that there are minor problems regarding religious discrimination. When talking about specific religious groups, it turns out that Jehovah’s witnesses are seen as a religious group with the most negative prejudices against them (42.1%). Second in this list are Muslims with 34%.

The focus group participants from Ajara region, who are Muslim Georgians, spoke about the cases of religious discrimination in everyday life in public spaces and even in state institutions. Respondents from Khulo noted that Muslims never hold high positions in Georgia. The teachers

said that Georgians and Muslims are differentiated: “you can often hear the question: Are you Georgian or Muslim?” (Goderdzi, teacher). Teachers also thought that Muslim students are oppressed and discriminated in schools, often by teachers who do not grade them fairly, ridicule the students and treat them too harshly. Nugzar (teacher, Khulo) said that teachers’ discrimination is not only exclusive to Khulo.

The Muslim students interviewed in Khulo emphasized the same point: that the oppression of Muslims is clearly seen when the girls are not allowed to wear head scarves at school. When Muslim community built a minaret in the village Chela, the community removed it. “There are many Christian churches and many clergy in the region, but they can’t stand even seeing a Jami there and forbid Muslims to pray loudly. It disturbs Christians, they say” (Shalva, student of religious boarding school, Khulo). Mamuka, another respondent, also noted the scarcity of mosques adding that while there are many churches in Batumi, however, there is only one mosque and the space within it is limited. Furthermore, the government forbids construction of additional mosques:

Why are Muslims discriminated from Christians in the country? None of the religions is the state religion in the democratic country. Why should not the Muslim community have a Jami with enough space for praying? And why should not financing be allocated for this purpose? (David, student at the religious boarding school, Khulo).

As for the religious discrimination in the Pankisi Gorge, it is mostly related to external symbols which have religious connotation (i.e. clothes or beard style of Muslims). Non-acceptance of Muslim external symbols leads to social stigmatization. Discussion about clothes in the given context revealed the existence of negative stereotypes in relation to the members of the community.

The topic of religious discrimination is closely related to the CDA of the history and literature textbooks. If the study participants from minority groups outline the discriminative social environment with their life experiences, the CDA shows that these discriminations have their ideological base in ‘common knowledge’ that is taught in public schools. Discourse analysis revealed that school textbooks construct the cultural identity of a Georgian in a close relation to Orthodox Christian faith. The latter is implicitly present in the textbooks and highly influences the narratives in



the texts. The Christian Orthodox paradigms in many cases are a prism through which some issues are refracted. This approach implies that this ‘prism’ is the only right way of interpretation, as it excludes any other religious (or non-religious) point of view and puts the non-Christian Orthodox students (or generally, non-Christian Orthodox groups) in a position where their truth has lesser value. In addition, the exclusive use of *faith* and *ethnicity* to identify who Georgians are, makes the other members of society (who are not Christian Orthodox or ethnically Georgians) ‘lesser Georgians.’ This perception that is supported by the ‘common knowledge’ can be a significant barrier for integration of the individuals coming from minority groups. They produce cultural inequality that positions minorities on a lower level compared to those individuals, whose background fits in the faith- and ethnicity-based identity of a Georgian. This, on the other hand, leads to social exclusion, on which the extremist propaganda can exploit.

### The Case Study of Pankisi Gorge

In order to illustrate how the above factors might interplay with radicalization, this essay highlights the case study of Pankisi Gorge. Pankisi is a gorge located in Eastern Georgia, in the periphery of Kakheti region. It is mostly inhabited by Kists, an ethnic and religious minority group. The valley is mostly known for the infamous individuals connected to violent extremist groups in Syria. Institute of Social Studies and Analysis (ISSA) conducted 3 focus group discussions (FGDs) with the residents in the scope of the research project.

The total number of fighters who have left Pankisi Gorge for Syria in recent years is a subject of speculation. Some media reports suggest up to 100 individuals,<sup>2</sup> another “several hundred.”<sup>3</sup> The most reliable number though is the report of local community radio, “Radio Way”, which reported 26 individuals who have died in the Syrian war. The radio’s website has special reports on each case of death. 26 people is a significant number considering the fact that there are total of 5200 Kists left in Georgia (compared to 12,000 reported in earlier years), according to the latest census. However, media reports suggest that “the count of radicalized Georgian citizens leaving to join foreign terrorist groups continues to decline” (Dumbadze, 2017).

The Pankisi residents also stressed that the frequent “disappearance”<sup>4</sup> of their peers was in the past. It is important to note that Aiyup Bochorishvili, a former Jokholi Imam, was arrested in 2016 “for swearing an oath of bayat (allegiance) to the Caliphate” (Dumbadze, 2017). Bochorishvili, one of the most influential personas in the Gorge (because of his clerical status), was identified as an ISIS facilitator, which is an indication of the scale of the infiltration of the facilitating network in Pankisi. The general understanding of study participants was that the ISIS facilitators were backed by an influential force, or “third actor” as some of them named it. This “third actor” is mostly visible to them only in the cases of the departed Pankisi residents’ border crossings (for example, the schoolboys, who were mentioned most).

### Aftermath of departures and the limited social environment

The study participants from Pankisi said that the radicalization of their peers in the Gorge is not that frequent anymore. Teachers believe that after their community members had left for Syria important things happened. First, the state and NGOs got interested in the young people’s lives in the Pankisi Gorge:

I think that after the Syrian events a breach appeared in the border between us and the State. It was after this that they did those football things. They are integrating our children with Georgian children (Khatuna, aged 29, married, unemployed, Pankisi Gorge).

In addition to potential reasons, the participants talked about the results that followed Georgian citizens’ involvement in terrorist groups. They said that it brought stigma to the population in the Pankisi Gorge. According to Nika (aged 20, single, unmarried), “everyone looks at the Pankisi Gorge with fear [...] It is perceived as a nest of terrorists [...] It is not the only place from where people leave for Syria; the whole world is the place of departure and it is not our fault.”

Two other participants, Irakli and Temo (both 22, students) believed that the Kist youth must take an initiative and act against this stigma. As both pointed out, the whole population of the Gorge is being stigmatized by the media and public as either terrorists, or terrorist sympathizers, which added to the infamous image of Pankisi as a dangerous place, to be isolated and tightly controlled.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, <http://www.ick.ge/articles/22683-i.html>.

<sup>3</sup> An alternate source for the number of those who have left from Pankisi is: [http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id\\_rub=2&id\\_artc=28568](http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=2&id_artc=28568).

<sup>4</sup> Usually, when the youth from Pankisi left for Syria, they went secretly without notifying anyone. Only after several days they would inform their family that they had already arrived in Syria, or were crossing the Turkish-Syrian border.

The major issue in the Gorge together with the high unemployment is migration which is directly connected to the lack of employment opportunities. As study participants pointed out, many of Pankisi residents leave Georgia for either Europe or Russia for employment opportunities. Most of the participants had at least one person in their primary social group, who migrated to one of the named directions. Some of the study participants thought that the collective stigmatization should also be considered as a factor in migration. “When you constantly hear that you are a ‘terrorist, terrorist, terrorist’, you get tired of all that,” says Temo.

Even though the radicalization crisis was considered by the Pankisi settlers to be eased, there were still some major issues that leave the topic of vulnerability towards VE open. The social problems that the youth outlined indicate a limited social environment, aspects of which are:

- The lack of career opportunities and undeveloped local labor market – There are no employment opportunities or vacancies in Pankisi, barring the public services and NGO sector, which employ just a fraction of young individuals in the Gorge.
- Isolation and stigmatization from outside, a collective perception of Pankisi youth as dangerous and inclined to criminal behavior – Almost every male Kist study participant had an experience of police officers stopping them in public spaces because they “looked suspicious”, proceeding to detailed examination. In addition, the Kists feel themselves alienated, noting that many with whom they interact have no information about them except knowing that they are Muslims and come from a place with a history of criminal activities and radicalized individuals. Hence, the view of them as “dangerous” individuals is easily conceived.
- Lack of youth involvement in the social life of the community – The youth see themselves as ignored by the governmental bodies, as these institutions show no effort to establish communication with them. As study participants pointed out, both central and local governments reach out to elders and ask them for feedback on issues, but mostly ignore the youths’ positions. The elders are both a cultural and formal institution in Pankisi (The Gorge has an elder union, which has its own organizational structure), which is a predominant force in Pankisi’s social life.

This limited social environment is connected to the complicated nature of the attitudes Pankisi youth express towards their departed peers. Study participants’ perception of departed citizens is complex. They unambiguously dis-

approve of terrorism and the ideas of ISIS propaganda; however, they more or less understand what mainly drove departed individuals to their decisions – the total lack of opportunities for any realization of their potential. This is the biggest reason why the narrative around the likes of Tarkhan Batirashvili is positive, built around the image of a highly successful military person who could not fulfill his potential in Georgia for various reasons. Because of the limited social environment, the fulfillment of potential in the Syrian war still counts as fulfillment. This is also evident in one of the participant’s (anonymous) answers when asked if he was familiar with the departed peers: “Not only us, but many in Georgia and generally in the World know about the local Kists who had a success in Syria and made a name for themselves.”

Pankisi Gorge has a strongly bonded community. This is not surprising if we consider the fact that they are both an ethnic and a religious minority with a small population. The strong social bonds between Pankisi settlers can help explain the complex and contradictory perception in the Gorge towards the departed in Syria. Even though Pankisi youth denounce the abstract idea of violent extremism, there is no condemnation of the departed community members. The narratives around the departed are still built around positive characteristics – “well educated and/or distinct youngsters”, “successful/brave fighters”, etc. This approach to the issue can be regarded as an individual incentive for radicalization, as it leaves a lot of space for empathy towards the departed peers. Another important individual factor is related to the strong social bonds as well. The focus group discussions showed that there were mainly two different ways of recruiting individuals from the Pankisi Gorge into extremist groups – one was through the VE network (online media propaganda and several individuals related/connected to the Gorge) and another was via the already departed Pankisi residents, who contacted their family members and close relatives and persuaded them to join them. This means that having a member of VE movement in primary social group played a role of another push factor and increased the risks of an individual to be recruited in such groups as well.

### Summary of the Results

In summary, the following *push factors* non-Georgian Muslim youth, living in rural settlements, contribute to vulnerability of youth in Georgia:

- (a) living in HHs with poor economic status;
- (b) facing significantly limited employment opportunities;
- (c) feeling distrust towards local government institutions while recognizing the value of the state authorities;



- (d) limited involvement in public civic activities and an inclination to religious fundamentalism;
- (e) experiencing ethnic and religious discriminatory practices;
- (f) feeling oppressed by mainstream Georgian nationalistic narratives at schools.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, there are additional *pull factors* that can be named in the case of Pankisi Gorge youth:

- (g) Strong social bonds inside the small community, which is both an ethnic and religious minority in Georgia, that leaves space for empathy in youth towards their radicalized peers.
- (h) Complex perception of the decision of the radicalized peers to leave the Gorge for Syria, which is related to: (1) strong social bonds that prevent unambiguously denouncing the radicalized peers; and (2) the lack of self-realization opportunities that lead to a perception that success in bad deeds still counts as success.
- (i) Successful attempts from the widespread VE propaganda in the Gorge to spread their image as liberators of Muslims.

### Glossary of terms and acronyms

- **Akhmeta** - One of the urban district centers of Kakheti region in the east part of Georgia;
- **Batumi** – Regional city center of Ajara Autonomous Republic, located in the west part of Georgia;
- **Faith based boarding schools** – Non-state childcare institutions operating without any statutory gate-keeping and regulation. These are financed and managed by various religious denominations (Georgian Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and etc);
- **Karajala** - Village settled by Muslims in Telavi municipality, which belongs to Kakheti region in the east part of Georgia;
- **Khulo** - One of the urban district centers of Ajara Autonomous Republic in the west part of Georgia;
- **Pankisi Gorge** - Rural valley part of Akhmeta municipality of Kakheti region in the east part of Georgia.
- **VE** – Violent Extremism

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## CHAPTER 3

### VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN EAST AFRICA

Martine Zeuthen

#### Introduction

This essay provides an overview of the current analysis from research on violent extremism in East Africa based on countering violent extremism work that the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) has been undertaking in the region since 2014. Geographically the essay is primarily focussed on Kenya and Somalia. The focus of the research is narrowly on Al Shabaab as an organisation, recruitment and the violence it has caused. The essay does not focus on ideologically motivated violence more broadly.

The perspectives presented in this essay are driven entirely through a lens of RUSI's work, with the aim to provide insights and suggestions to other like-minded organisations. The essay is structured around an initial brief background section on the work RUSI does, then continues with a presentation of a framework for assessing the problem in the region. Following the framing of the problem the essays presents different types of responses from governments that has been observed in the region. In order to further analyse recruitment patterns in the region, Somalia is used in the essay as an example to highlight in particular the distinction between forced, group based, and individual/voluntary recruitment which is often overlooked in CVE work. The essay then looks ahead at emerging regional threats and how these must be considered when CVE work is carried out in the future. In relation to the theme of the International Research Conference on CVE the final sections suggest the need for empirical evidence and highlights some of the preliminary findings from ongoing STRIVE II led research. The essay concludes with an assessment of research gaps emerging in East Africa.

## Background

This essay has been prepared based on data collection and analysis from undertaking CVE work in the region since 2014. The most prominent initiatives led by RUSI are Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) funded by the EU (2014-2016) as well as its follow-on STRIVE II (2016-2019), Street Mentorship (2016-2017) funded by the Government of Canada, Research Support to the IGAD Centre of Excellence in Djibouti (2017), and other smaller research projects. The analysis in this essay is limited to the evidence available to RUSI and does not reflect a comprehensive analysis of violent extremism dynamics in the region.

## Understanding the Problem

The problem of violent extremism in relation to Al Shabaab is significant in the sense of the harm it has caused to many human lives and political insecurity (Ali, 2016; Bryden, 2015; Menkhous, 2016; Romaniuk, 2016; Williams, 2014). However, radicalisation in East Africa is a relatively limited phenomenon that involves active participation of a small number of people as illustrated in the figure below (Figure 1).



**Figure 1 | Illustration of Radicalisation Process**

Some of the structural drivers (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016) affecting large numbers of people are poverty, unemployment, political marginalisation, and general life frustrations due to limited opportunities and perceived influence over one's future. These factors do however not hold enough explanatory power to ascertain why some people end up using violence and not others. There is a smaller number of individuals who are susceptible to the message of violence and they may be willing to act on their frustrations by using violence one day. Some of the 'pull' factors (USAID 2011) are attractive to this group.

In RUSI's work this group are considered as 'at risk' youth who may end up using violence one day. Then, there is an even smaller yet significant and potentially growing group of young people who are actively pursuing political and ideological goals by any means. They are willing to use violence and already engaged in some capacity in violent groups associated to Al Shabaab.

Terrorism prevention work and research on this phenomenon largely focusses on factors that may contribute to a change towards accepting use of violence as well as mitigation means to reduce this risk. More specifically when understanding recruitment and radicalisation RUSI is basing its work on an analytical framework developed by Khalil and Zeuthen in 2016 arguing that the factors can be divided in to three different categories.

- **Structural Motivators:** including repression, corruption, unemployment, inequality, a history of hostility between identity groups and so on.
- **Individual Incentives:** including a sense of purpose (according to ideology), adventure, belonging, acceptance, status, rewards in the afterlife and so on.
- **Enabling factors:** including radical mentors, radical online communities, social networks with VE associations, and so on.

All individual's trajectory to violence are unique and therefore a combination of these factors. In some occasions there is a trigger event but at others that does not occur to be the case. In other words, it is not possible to draw a linear pathway into violence and therefore extremely difficult to project a potential trajectory for an individual (Dalsgaard, 2010; Horgan, 2009; Khalil, 2017).

An attempt to prevent violence must therefore consider the context, the community dynamics as well as what factors may be influencing youth at risk in that particular environment. For East Africa, which is the geographical focus for this essay, there are some contextual trends and political dynamics that influences the patterns but even within the region these varies significantly.

Therefore, responses must also be adjusted in each location.

The IGAD Centre of Excellence for Countering and Preventing Violent extremism has this model in their strategy (IGAD Regional Strategy, 2016).

Epicentre	Spill-over states	At-risk states
Somalia	Kenya Uganda Djibouti Ethiopia	Tanzania South Sudan Sudan

**Figure 2 |** Categorisation of Threat in IGAD Region

### Government-led Responses

Following the logic of this model, different responses are required for each of the categories. At the epicentre of the conflict in Somalia a response to prevention must acknowledge the continued threat from armed conflict and the need for a combined security and prevention response. From a CVE perspective, dis-engagement and de-radicalisation work goes hand in hand with a broader prevention strategy, including community-based prevention as well as preventive communication. Such initiatives are clearly defined in the Somali National Rehabilitation Plan (edited March, 2016) and the national CVE strategy for the country.

In the spill-over states as defined by IGAD the threat also varies massively but with the three countries listed here being troop contributing countries to the AMISOM forces the threat is tangible and significant perhaps most so in Kenya as has already been seen with the number of attacks and attempts the past years.

In Kenya, as an example, the government launched its CVE strategy in 2015 (which is currently under review and revision) and has since had a continued focus on CVE to prevent and counter violent extremism in the country.

Even within Kenya there are different historical, political, and ethnic dynamics that presents different contexts and patterns of recruitment. Counties such as Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi, and Lamu who have experienced high level of threat have since the launch of the national strategy developed County Action Plans for specific county-based responses. In Kenya a combined effort of re-integrating and disengagement of returned fighters, de-radicalisation and risk management in prisons, community-based prevention as well as countering narratives of intolerance and violence is a part of the CVE strategy.

In countries further from the epicentre such as Tanzania, Sudan, and South Sudan are less exposed to attacks, however this risk can rapidly change. In such countries most emphasis is on more general prevention initiatives such as education, job creation, and livelihood programmes. The specific focus of each CVE strategy will carefully take into account the existing and possible future threat in the country. As of April 2018, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda are working on their respective strategies for tackling the threat of violent extremism in their countries.

### Recruitment in Somalia

Focusing more specifically on recruitment patterns is a challenge given the current research environment and available empirical data. Narratives from individuals formerly engaged in violence are rare sources of information in the region. With that said, some general perspectives are relevant to consider again bearing in mind the regional differences and dynamics in Somalia as well as spill-over countries. To illustrate different types of recruitment Somalia has been chosen for this essay as the most striking case in the region, especially when it comes to significantly different types of recruitment patterns.

In Somalia, Al Shabaab has always claimed it is a ‘clan-neutralising’ organisation. While this to an extent may have been the case in the early years of its existence, it is evident that it currently is highly fractured and that clan dynamics play a key role within the power dynamics on the organisation (Hansen, 2013). This must therefore also be considered when understanding recruitment.

In earlier papers and presentations, the STRIVE II team has argued how recruitment in South Central Somalia can be divided into at least three categories:

- **Forced Recruitment** occurs in areas where Al Shabaab is in control and individual choice is extremely limited;

- **Clan Based Recruitment** is a clan-focussed process, where radicalisation is not necessarily essential. The focus is on security clan-based interests and securing access to resources and infrastructure and security for the clan. In this type of recruitment it is rarely an individual choice made by the person joining but rather made by clan elders on behalf of the soldier/gun-holder;
- **Individual/Voluntary Recruitment** is an individual choice to join often partly to challenge the clan system, radicalisation and ideology is of importance and it can be a case of young people making a choice without or against the clan elders.

It is acknowledged that this categorisation is artificial and that there are shades of grey between the categories suggested. In other words, there will rarely be a situation where an individual is entirely free to make a choice and in a forced situation there may be possible alternatives that seems less relevant to the individual at play.

Methodologically there is an added challenge to this analysis, because when individuals who have been engaged in such organisations and have left explain the choice or lack thereof the individual may also in an interview situation emphasise different aspects of their past in order to navigate the future. This is a common human agency phenomenon when trying to navigate complex realities (Vigh, 2006). However, this means the self-reported information collected from an interview may not accurately be reflected in the above categorisation.

When analysing some of the more specific individual incentives for young people to join Al Shabaab within Somalia, factors such as access to material resources in the movement, access to weapons, and having the opportunity to defend oneself and family are of high priority. The organisation provides a sense of belonging with a clear motive of providing equity and fairness, and there is a strong order and governance in the organisation and it provides an opportunity to seek revenge against certain specific violations by security actors. When being a part of Al Shabaab the fighters have the experience of being a 'hero' and that they are defending their idea of Somalia as well as Islam.

Some of the structural motivators in Somalia are high poverty rate, unemployment, clan marginalisation, social and political marginalisation, bad governance, human rights violations by security actors, corruption, impunity of certain groups and broader youth frustrations. Recruiters and enabling actors will take advantage of these motivators and incentives when recruiting indi-

viduals to the movement being either by force, threat or voluntary enrolment. Similarly, in other parts of the region, recruitment will be entirely tailored to the local context and potential recruits' interest in the organisation will vary depending on their own situation and experience.

### Emerging Regional Threats

While acknowledging that Al Shabaab by far poses the greatest threat in the region, other dynamics are evolving that are likely to influence the threat posed by violent extremism groups over the coming years. For Al Shabaab specifically, the political context is changing in both Kenya and Somalia; in Somalia the election of Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmaajo' in February 2017 lead to new approaches such as the amnesty as well as new political alliances which are still playing out. The Kenyan election in 2017 also posed a potential change given that the opposition leader at some stage in his campaign was advocating for a Kenyan redraw from Somalia but with the re-election of president Uhuru Kenyatta it is likely that the current presence will be maintained.

During the election time, Al Shabaab increased its communication focussed on Kenya specifically. The organisation produced a number of films with a clear message to refrain from voting. The films also argued that the electoral system was developed by 'Kafirs' and is against Sharia Law. The message and narrative posed were highly sophisticated and even their dissemination strategy was segmented to appeal to speakers of different Kenyan tribal languages as well as in English and Swahili speakers. The communication campaign re-emphasised that Kenya is the foremost enemy, and they featured a number of known figures from Kenya fighting for Al Shabaab such as Aboud Rogo and Ahmed Iman.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is another increasingly important threat of violent extremism in the region posing a threat of attacks locally such as the one on Mombasa police station but also recruitment to join ISIS operations in Syria or Libya. The patterns of recruitment to ISIS appear to be different than recruitment to Al Shabaab, in particular from Kenya. In the Kenyan case, more women appear to have been recruited, and individuals of higher education and a higher importance of social media are the targets of ISIS recruiters. The fear could be that the recruits to ISIS are less motivated by resources and material gains and more motivated by ideology, which could suggest that should ISIS recruits return to the region, they could pose a potentially greater threat in the future.



### Evidence-based Interventions

The evidence, knowledge and understanding of the threats and dynamics in the region, are constantly evolving and improving. Empirical research helps our understanding to go deeper which allows interventions to become more specific and going deeper in analysing the problem. It does not provide quick solutions but will increase the likelihood of success of interventions and decrease risk of doing harm. With such a sensitive area of intervention risk of harm is of very high importance and must be mitigated as much as possible. Secondly evidence-based interventions help implementers to be more clear and realistic about the change that is possible to make and how one intervention relates to a greater picture of complex dynamics.

Finally, opportunities for engagement are influenced by the state capacity and often also relates to the proximity to the armed conflict for security reasons. Political dynamics and will is changing continuously which provides ever changing opportunities and risk for intervening.

### Summary of Future STRIVE II Research

Under STRIVE II, funded by the EU and in partnership with IFRA, the team will focus on 4 aspects of recruitment research in Kenya. The objective is to get a stronger publicly available empirical evidence base on local recruitment dynamics as well as to enhance understanding of how violent extremist groups may utilise existing conflicts to their advantage. Finally, as a side note the project is also seeking to support Kenyan academics and regional academic institutions to publish in this area.

The four areas of focus are:

- The role of women in both preventing and contributing to extremist activities;
- The relationship between clan conflict and violent extremism in the North East;
- The relationship between land conflict and violent extremism on Kenya's Coast;
- The relationship between violent extremism and urban crime.

All four areas will be studied in partnership with Kenyan researchers and institutions.

Currently the study on the role of women is most advanced and one of the key findings emerging is how women interviewed narrate a story of being forced into violent extremist organisations, how wives of known extremists are facing extensive challenges, and finally how Al Shabaab treats 'female slaves' and how that provides an insight into how the group views women in their interpretation of Islam. The papers will be published and launched during 2018. The study of clan conflicts in north east have been significantly influenced by the political process ongoing in Kenya but the main focus is if local clan conflicts (being over pasture, resources, administrative boundaries, political representation or business etc.) are being manipulated by outsiders with different agendas. The study on coast will be designed based on a thorough literature review utilising the rich literature already existing on the Coastal dynamic and political tensions. The crime and extremism research in the Kenyan prison has been initiated with the aim to assess relationships between crime, gangs, and violent extremism dynamics by interviewing individuals imprisoned for violent extremism offences, interviews with law enforcement officers, lawyers, and potentially family members. The area is complex and vast but the objective is to shed some light on the topic for further research in the future.

### Research Gaps

In conclusion, based on the analysis and framing of the problem, the description of government responses and the analysis of emerging threats to highlight research gaps identified. It is worth mentioning that many other areas than those in focus under the STRIVE II programme (gender, crime, and historical conflicts) are relevant when understanding violent extremism as well as the impact of countering and preventing violent extremism in the region:

- **The impact of P/CVE strategies:** An obvious focus with the development of regional (IGAD), national as well as in Kenya case county base strategies to counter and prevent violent extremism must be to assess the effect of the strategies to continue to improve responses.
- **Continued threat analysis:** is essential as the dynamics change and requires new responses.
- **Organisational needs and group dynamics.** Empirical and specific research to deepen our understanding of the links between local dynamics and groups needs and dynamics are also important for analysing how the organisation evolve and therefore how risks of recruitment and prevention of attacks can be improved.

- **Impact of changing communication strategy.** Al Shabaab is improving and changing its communication strategy. Understanding the impact of this change is essential to focus interventions in the coming years.
- **Recruitment dynamics and risk assessment.** While not being a new area of focus there is a great need to continue to study recruitment dynamics and how that relates to assessment of ‘at risk’ groups is of great importance.
- **Effect and impact of interventions.** With an increase in prevention and countering violent extremism interventions there is a great need to continue to improve our understanding of their impact and effects. Partly to optimise future intervention and partly to reduce potential negative effects of initiatives.
- **Learning from de-radicalisation, disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes.** Research work done with individuals who have left violent extremist organisations and are seeking to reintegrate back into society provides a uniquely important insight into understanding the organisations as well as human dynamics at play. Sharing information and lessons from such interventions is of crucial importance in the region where more and better work is done in this area.

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## CHAPTER 4

### VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN KENYA: GAUGING THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

*\* This paper is reproduced from excerpts from a study by Ndungu, I., Salifu, U., & Sigsworth, R (2017).*

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#### Introduction

Since 2000, there has been an increasing focus on the need to understand the impact of violent extremism on women and the varied roles women play in relation to violent extremism. For example, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2242 (2015) recognises “the differential impact on the human rights of women and girls of terrorism and violent extremism, including in the context of their health, education, and participation in public life” (UNSC Resolution 2242, 2015, p. 2). This was confirmed by the Global Study on the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325, which found that:

Extremism in all its forms has had serious impacts on the rights of women and girls. From forced marriage, to restrictions on education and participation in public life, to systematic sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), this escalation in violence and insecurity demands the attention of the women, peace and security agenda (Coomaraswamy, 2015, p.222).

Former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism also recognises the impact of violent extremism on women and specifically speaks to the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) and in the creation of sustainable peace.

Despite this recognition and the surge of violent extremist activity and attacks across the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa, very little of the recent work on the impact of violent extremism has focussed on women in Africa. Specifically, there has been little empirical research to determine how violent extremism intersects with the lives of women in affected communities in Kenya.

Kenya experienced at least 200 terrorist attacks between 2008 and 2014, perpetrated by the violent extremist group al-Shabaab, resulting in the deaths of over 500 people and injuring over 1,000 (Pate & Miller, 2015). The development context in Kenya – characterised by the combined challenges of youth unemployment, poverty, inequality, and poor governance (among other things) – continues to interact in complex ways with and exacerbate the insecurity that results from violent extremism (World Bank, 2017).

Efforts to prevent violent extremism in Kenya, especially at the grassroots level, are largely undocumented and their impact is unknown. At the policy level, Kenya has developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 (KNAP), which “acknowledges that women can play specific roles [with regard to countering violent extremism]; particularly given their unique access and influence in the household and community” (Ndungu, 2016). This plan is, however, silent on the role of women within and relating to violent extremist organisations (Ndungu, 2016).

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from a larger 2017 study entitled *Violent extremism in Kenya: Why women are a priority* (Ndungu’u, Salifu and Sigsworth, 2017). Through a discussion of the context-specific gendered impacts of violent extremism on women’s lives, and the usefulness for women of current P/CVE programming, this paper aims to enable those working in the P/CVE field in Kenya to better understand how to design evidence-based approaches to prevention and response efforts.

### Research Design, Methodology, and Limitations

The key objectives of the larger study were to gain an understanding, in the Kenyan context, of: 1) the various roles that women play in violent extremism, as well as in its prevention and mitigation; and 2) the impact of violent extremism on women and their communities; and the efficacy of current responses in meeting the needs of women and addressing or hindering the roles that women play in relation to violent extremism.

The study utilised a qualitative research methodology in order to capture the complexities of the respondents’ experiences of violent extremism in Kenya and their impressions of violent extremism from working with those affected by it. Respondents were identified and then carefully selected through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Qualitative data was collected through 12 focus group discussions and 35 individual interviews with a range of stakeholders, including women in the communities, al-Shabaab returnees, govern-

ment officials, international donors and civil society organisations. The fieldwork was conducted in areas disproportionately affected by violent extremism: the Coastal Region (Kwale, Lamu, Mpeketoni and Mombasa), the Eastern Region (Garissa), Nairobi (Eastleigh and Majengo), and the Western Region (Kisumu and Busia).

All the community women participating in the study were considered vulnerable respondents. Procedural safeguards – such as informed consent, locations chosen to ensure safety, protection of identities, provision of referrals for counselling and data protection measures – were therefore put in place for these interactions. The interviews were conducted in confidence and under the condition of anonymity. The authors recognise that violent extremism and responses to it are emotive and contested matters for all involved. All efforts have been made to ensure that the views, opinions, and experiences of the respondents have been faithfully represented.

### Key Terms

Defining key terms – such as “radicalisation,” “violent extremism” and “terrorism” – is a challenge for all stakeholders in this field, as the terms are complex, contested and constantly shifting. For the purposes of this study, the research team made specific choices in selecting definitions. These are as follows:

VIOLENT EXTREMISM	TERRORISM
is understood to mean “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives” (USAID, 2011).	is defined as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological” (US Department of Defense, n.d).
RADICALISATION	COUNTER-TERRORISM
refers to “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups” (UK Government, n.d).	refers to military or police activities and operations that are undertaken “to neutralize terrorists [and extremists], their organizations, and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instil fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals” (Defense Technical Information Center, 2014).

### PREVENTING OR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

is “the use of non-coercive means to dissuade [or prevent] individuals or groups from mobilizing toward violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation, and engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives ... [Countering violent extremism] recognizes a wide range of motives – such as political or economic grievances, feelings of marginalization, money, kinship, coercion, and radicalization” (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2015, 20).

### RETURNEES

are defined as women who once served al-Shabaab in some capacity but have now returned to their communities in Kenya.

## Key Findings of the Study

### The Impact of Violent Extremism on Women

The findings demonstrate that violent extremism has multiple, and often mutually reinforcing, effects on the lives of women in Kenya, and on their families, communities and the continuing dynamics of the affected areas. The interconnectedness of these effects – with each other and with the broader context of historical development challenges, community relations and community-government dynamics – is a core finding of this study, as is the complex relationship between drivers and impacts, which establishes dynamics that enable violent extremism. The direct impacts of violent extremism on women are outlined in more detail through several of the sub-themes below.

#### *Sexual Violence*

Sexual violence seems to play a significant role in the participation of women in violent extremism. All three returnees interviewed for the study reported being sexually abused by fighters during their time with al-Shabaab. Their personal stories describe how women in the camps were forced to use contraception so they did not conceive, but that the men who raped them did not always use condoms, resulting in one of the returnees reporting that she contracted HIV.

Government officials reported on accounts of rape by and forced marriage to extremist fighters. An Anti-Terrorism Police Unit investigator reported that

girls who had travelled to Somalia to join al-Shabaab were often used “to provide sex to fighters, so the fighters do not think about going back home” (personal communication, September 20, 2016). A senior police investigator in Nairobi said that 2% of cases handled countrywide involved girls, recruited between the ages of 14 and 16, who had been forced to marry fighters. These young girls would then have been forced to marry another fighter because “when a woman loses her husband in Somalia, she is passed on to another man” (personal communication, October 3, 2016). It was reported that these young girls, usually new converts to Islam who do not have a good understanding of the religion and want to prove that they believe and belong, are led by other women to believe that forced marriage is a part of life in violent extremist organisations (personal communication, 3 October, 2016).

Sexual violence was also reported as having occurred during police raids and other counter-terrorism (CT) operations, including during Operation Usalama Watch in 2014 (personal communication, October 7, 2016 & September 23, 2016). As a result, some women who were pregnant at the time of the raids suffered miscarriages (personal communication, October 7, 2016). It was unclear whether the alleged perpetrators were security agents or citizens taking advantage of the confusion of the raids and the vulnerability of the women caught up in them.

The likelihood of psychological trauma resulting from rape has been well documented. For instance, “devastating mental health problems” are 5.5 times more likely to occur in rape survivors than among the general population (Kilpatrick, 2000). One of the returnees who reported being sexually abused showed signs of concentration difficulties during the interview and said she had experienced memory loss (personal communication, 2016). While this particular returnee is currently on antiretroviral drugs and is receiving counselling, one of the other returnees reported that she was too afraid to seek counselling, putting her at risk of mental and physical health problems (personal communication, 2016).

#### *Loss of Physical Safety*

Violent extremism also affects women’s physical safety. For example, in Mpeketoni, some of the women who participated in the study had lived through an attack by al-Shabaab on 15 June 2014. The women described the attack, which lasted for over 10 hours, as terrifying, recounting how the attackers used knives, rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles in their rampage around the town. One woman reported counting at least 30 dead bodies, including the

body of a woman who had been mentally ill (personal communication, October 6, 2016). Women in Nairobi and Garissa also described their direct experiences of terrorist attacks, during which some of them had lost friends and family (personal communication, October 7, 2016). Other women reported being caught in the middle of firefights between the Kenyan Defence Forces and al-Shabaab (personal communication, September 29, 2016).

When these attacks occur, women reported being forced to flee or hide in fear of their lives (personal communication, September 29, 2016). Some women fleeing from their homes in Lamu were forced to hide in the Boni Forest; here they were exposed to exploitation by security agents on CT operations, who supplied them with resources in return for sexual favours, and where they were vulnerable to sexual violence by militants hiding in the forest (personal communication, September 29, 2016).

### *Psychological Trauma*

Violent extremism poses a risk for women also in terms of potential psychological trauma. Literature relating to mental health following a terrorist attack has found that of those directly affected by the attack (meaning they had been physically present during the attack or had lost a loved one as a result of it), 30% to 40% were 'likely to develop a clinically diagnosable disorder' within two years of the incident (Whalley & Brewin, 2007). Post-traumatic stress disorder was the most common disorder attributable to the attacks, followed by depression, "although other sequelae include traumatic grief, panic, phobias, generalised anxiety disorder and substance misuse" (Whalley & Brewin, 2007, 95).

Although the psychological impact of violent extremism on women in Kenya cannot be adequately assessed by this study, there is anecdotal evidence from respondents that facing the constant threat of terrorism, suffering through a direct terrorist attack or having family members involved in violent extremist organisations can have serious mental (and subsequently physical) health implications. It is important to note that several women referred to themselves or to others as being "depressed." This is, of course, not a clinical diagnosis but a catchall description of their feelings of unhappiness, stress, sadness, despondency, heavy-heartedness, despair, etc.

The grief of losing a loved one as a result of violent extremism – be it from death, disappearance or being abandoned by someone who joins al-Shabaab – has a profound impact on the women affected. Women whose husbands and sons had been killed as extremists reported experiencing deep sadness,

despair, and grief; women whose husbands and sons had disappeared, either in CT raids or as a result of al-Shabaab recruitment, reported experiencing depression, distress, and grief; and women whose children had left for Somalia reported suffering from extreme anxiety, coupled with the fear of not knowing the whereabouts or well-being of their children (personal communication, October 5 & September 21, 2016).

This trauma was confirmed by multiple sources, including a government official in Garissa who noted that the death of women's husbands and children as a result of terrorism made women "the biggest victims in all this" (personal communication, October 12, 2016). A meeting convened by the United States (US) Embassy in Nairobi and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims found that "women go through psychological trauma because their husbands and children [who have joined al-Shabaab] in general end up being killed. The women are left to fend for themselves without mechanisms for counselling" (Bwire, 2016). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) corroborates this, explaining how "many mothers and wives ... are in a state of perpetual mourning, stricken with a very specific form of grief that can be expressed only in the safe company of those most familiar with it" (USAID, 2016).

Women in the affected communities also live in a constant state of fear (for themselves and for their families), whether they are involved in violent extremism or not. They fear violent terrorist attacks, the actions and attitudes of security agencies conducting CT operations, stigmatisation or reprisals from community members, and the extremists. This fear reverberates through the different aspects of women's lives and influences their day-to-day interactions: some impose curfews on their children; some have relocated from their homes as a result of the violence in the areas in which they lived; and some have to be in a constant state of vigilance, alert to the possibility of retaliatory terrorist attacks perpetrated by both violent extremists and returnees (personal communication, October 6, 2016).

The returnees are also reported that they lived in fear of both security agencies and al-Shabaab members, following the assassination of a prominent returnee in Kwale (personal communication, 2016). Many returnees have gone into hiding as a result.

Fear of security agencies and law enforcement officers was also expressed repeatedly in the study. In Garissa, the heavy presence of security officials caused widespread anxiety (personal communication, October 11, 2016), while Mus-

lim women in Mombasa said that people were afraid to worship in case the police raided their place of worship and harassed them (personal communication, September 21, 2016). A government official in Garissa reported that women whose husbands and sons had been arrested were sometimes subjected to repeated interrogations by the police (personal communication, October 10, 2016). This finding was confirmed by a woman from Majengo, who said she lived in fear of the police who constantly intimidated and harassed her to reveal the whereabouts of her son, who was in hiding after recently returning from Somalia (personal communication, October 5, 2016). Furthermore, the head of a local community organisation reported that the women associated with men who had disappeared to join al-Shabaab were regularly interrogated by the police, judged and vilified by their communities, and sometimes even “forced to relocate to avoid their children being labelled as a bad influence” (USAID, 2016). It was reported that owing to these kinds of tactics, women were afraid to report the disappearance of sons and husbands for fear of victimisation and harassment at the hands of the police (Odit, 2016).

Another finding of this study was the impact of violent extremism on the families of members of the security agencies involved in CT activities. A government official in Garissa spoke about the psychological impact that violent extremism has had on security officials and their families, especially those families who had lost loved ones in the line of duty, protecting citizens from violent extremism or fighting against violent extremists (personal communication, October 10, 2016). Security officials noted that the wives of police officers injured or killed during CT operations or violent extremist attacks suffered from deep trauma. Security officials noted that post-traumatic counselling facilities were not adequately available for officers or their families. This issue needs further exploration if the full impact of violent extremism on women is to be understood and suitable responses developed.

### ***Stigma and Suspicion***

Islamist attacks in Kenya, have also caused some non-Muslims to fear Muslims in general. A growing sense of mistrust towards Muslims and Muslim communities illustrates this fear. This mistrust is reflected in various respondents’ stories.

The social disapproval of or “stigmatisation” of some Muslim women for their association or perceived association with individual(s) linked to al-Shabaab was keenly felt by some women interviewed for this study. Women in Majengo, Lamu, Mpeketoni, and Mombasa reported being profiled, vilified and

harassed by the police on a regular basis (personal communication, October 5, September 21 & September 29, 2016). Women in Mpeketoni described how they were subjected to invasive body searches by the police when dressed in *buibui* (attire worn by Muslim women), arguing that non-Muslim women were not targeted in the same way. Women in Mombasa shared similar stories of being subjected to searches because of the way they were dressed, making them feel like terror suspects (personal communication, September 29, 2016). Muslim women also reported facing suspicion of direct or indirect links with al-Shabaab, resulting in harassment and stigma from members of their own communities and even from their own families. This fear and mistrust has implications for women’s support systems within the community, as one respondent from Mpeketoni pointed out when she described how women in the community no longer felt comfortable or safe leaving their children with their neighbours (personal communication, September 30, 2016).

Stigmatisation by community members was especially evident if women’s children or husbands were suspected of being involved with al-Shabaab (personal communication, October 5 & September 20, 2016). According to a government official in Nairobi, the community often shuns the wives, widows or children of men suspected of involvement in terrorist activities (personal communication, October 4, 2016).

### ***Family Disintegration***

Violent extremism can also result in trauma in families and trigger the break-up of family units. This study found that families have experienced years of physical separation when husbands or children have left home to join al-Shabaab in Somalia. For one of the returnees documented in the study, her family was separated when her husband suddenly left for Somalia. She eventually decided to join him in Somalia to find work, leaving her six children behind with her family. Although she was reunited with her children when she returned to Kenya, she has not seen her husband since he left (Personal communication, September 22, 2016).

Families have also been separated when suspects are arrested and in some cases, never return home. Throughout the study, women made reference to their husbands, sons and other family members never being seen again after being arrested (Ndungu’u, Salifu and Sigsworth, 2017, 40).

Many women have been widowed as a result of violent extremism, with some of them being forced to remarry someone not of their own choice; and families

have suffered when violent extremist acts are committed by someone within or close to the family. A police investigator participating in the study gave the example of a 2008 case in which two 16 year old female recruits were forced to re-marry other men, after losing their husbands who were themselves, Al-Shabaab fighters (personal communication, October 3, 2016).

There are also very real socio-economic implications when families are broken up, especially if the breadwinner has disappeared or been killed. These include poverty, lack of access to adequate housing, healthcare and education, neglect of the children, and the erosion of social support systems. A woman in the study recounted how her brother's widow took their daughter to Somalia to visit the deceased man's grave after he had died in Somalia. According to the respondent, her sister-in-law and niece have never returned to Kenya. The respondent expressed concern that her niece may as a result, never receive an education (personal communication, October 6, 2016).

### ***Economic Deprivation***

The areas most affected by violent extremism in Kenya have also suffered economically as a result. The insecurity caused by terrorist attacks along Kenya's coastline has led to a decline in tourism in these areas, leading to an increase in unemployment and rising levels of poverty in the area. In Lamu, the government-imposed security curfews have restricted fishing operations, leading to a decline in the catch that fishermen rely on to earn a living. In other areas, the availability of basic commodities is limited because of the reduction in vehicles transporting basic goods to the area. Terrorist attacks in Garissa have forced small businesses to close down after losing their clientele.

The study found that women in the affected communities blamed poverty and unemployment for the radicalisation of their husbands and children, and the inducement for the men in their families to join al-Shabaab (personal communication, September 21, 2016). However, husbands and sons who have left Kenya to join al-Shabaab often leave their homes and/or families without breadwinners and stop providing for their families once they are in Somalia. Women are forced to take over as the heads of these households, but the burden of providing for their immediate (and often extended) families is often exacerbated by limited employment or livelihood opportunities for women and the lack of a regular income. Many women find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty as a result.

Women described having to borrow money from each other and from friends, usually sinking them into debt (personal communication, September 23 & Sep-

tember 21, 2016), or trying to support themselves and their children by doing odd jobs, like washing other people's clothes (personal communication, October 5, 2016). Some women incur additional expenses that they can ill afford. For instance, mothers of suspected terrorists held in police custody reportedly had to pay for their sons to be released (personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Understanding how these broad impacts of violent extremism on women may deter or promote the dynamics of radicalisation and violent extremism is crucial for designing and implementing effective interventions and prevention strategies in these affected communities.

### **The Impact of Responses to Violent Extremism on Women**

Women are not only affected by violent extremism itself, they are also impacted by government, civil society and donor responses to violent extremism. The second part of this study attempts to evaluate how the responses of violent extremism particularly influence women in the context of Kenya through a number of themes described below.

#### ***Impact of Government CT Responses***

A major cause for concern among women respondents in the study was the Kenyan government's hard security approach to violent extremism. In all the research sites, women described government CT initiatives in terms of police brutality, disrespect, harassment, profiling, the disappearance of suspects, missing children, and corruption (personal communication, September 29 & October 11, 2016). They observed that instead of the desired effect, the government's CT efforts were leading to increased radicalisation (personal communication, October 5, 2016). Donors, government respondents and women from the communities all highlighted the resulting high levels of mistrust between the government and the communities affected by violent extremism. For one donor, mistrust between the government and its citizens was described as "one of the biggest challenges" in responding to violent extremism.

However, some Muslim women in Mpeketoni reported that they did not mind being searched by female police officers because they wanted to feel safe (personal communication, September 30, 2016). Similarly, in Busia and Kisumu, only female officers are used to search female suspects and female investigators in cases involving female suspects, all of which is helping women feel more at ease in police stations (personal communication, October 17, 2016). These instances of good practice indicate the respect of some law enforcement officials

for the rights, dignity and cultural sensitivities of women in Kenya (Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth, 2017, 74).

### ***Impact of Government P/CVE Responses***

Women in various locations were more supportive of the government's P/CVE efforts and had found them helpful to varying degrees. Some women in Tiwi said the initiatives were working to an extent, but that it was taking too long to implement projects such as the amnesty programme (personal communication, September 23, 2016). In Diani, some women conceded that certain P/CVE efforts, such as government support for returnees to start seedling nurseries, had helped in small ways (personal communication, September 30, 2016).

However, some women in Diani reported that they did not attend the government-initiated public barazas (or public meetings) because they were afraid of being suspected as sympathising with violent extremists or of harbouring extremist sympathisers (personal communication, September 26, 2016). The Uwezo Fund initiative, which is one way that women can access financial assistance from the government, was reportedly difficult to access and women in Majengo did not want to form groups to access the fund for fear of stigmatisation and harassment if they did (personal communication, October 5, 2016).

The findings show that the government and CSOs have engaged in initiatives to provide counselling to those who have been traumatised and to sensitise people to the threat of radicalisation as ways of responding to this challenge. However, women's ability to access such counselling was inconsistent across the study areas, with some women reporting that they are on their own or have learned to support each other (personal communication, September 20 & 30, 2016).

### ***Impact of CSO and Donor P/CVE responses***

Women in the areas most severely affected by violent extremism, such as Lamu, Majengo and Garissa, noted that they had been the subject of multiple research studies undertaken by CSOs and international organisations. Women in these places reported being weary of repeatedly participating in research studies and felt over-researched. They added that the results of the studies were seldom shared with them, and that they had not noticed any changes to the situations within their communities or in their daily lives as a result of the research. CSOs admitted the existence of 'professional interviewees' in some

areas where communities were over-studied (personal communication, October 5, 2016). This is largely due to the saturation of the P/CVE environment with organisations that do not coordinate their efforts or successfully translate the information obtained from their research into action. The result is that communities see no change to their current situation despite the ubiquitous research.

### ***Challenges that Hamper the Efficacy of P/CVE Responses to Women***

Despite some real examples of good practice – such as the gender-sensitive Kwale County Plan for Countering Violent Extremism, the use of female security agents at checkpoints and in investigations involving women, and trauma counselling for some affected women – current government responses in CT and P/CVE are not systematically inclusive of women, nor are they substantively and sufficiently gender-specific or gender-sensitive.

This challenge extends to donor and CSO responses, where respondents admitted that most P/CVE programming tended to overlook the special needs of women, the various roles that women play, and the impact of violent extremism on women and girls (personal communication, December 15, 2016). According to CSOs and donors, most P/CVE responses have been generic and homogenous (personal communication, October 7 & December 19, 2016). CSOs and donors agreed that interventions need to create safe spaces for women to talk about violent extremism given the cultural sensitivities, as well as listen and respond to the specific needs of women involved in violent extremism (personal communication, December 19, 2016).

Although it was noted that there are funds specifically targeting women's involvement in P/CVE and that women are involved in P/CVE initiatives through community dialogues and forums, CSOs observed that there are too few female practitioners and researchers involved in addressing the problem of violent extremism in Kenya. This dearth of female involvement in P/CVE programming may have an impact on programmes' ability to access women who are involved in or affected by violent extremism and who – usually coming from conservative religious or cultural backgrounds – are more likely to trust female practitioners and interviewers (personal communication, October 7 & December 19, 2016). In addition, friction and mistrust between the government and communities, and between the government and CSOs, also hamper efforts to successfully address the familial, social, and communal elements of the impact of violent extremism on women in a fundamental way.



In addition to the challenges specifically related to women's inclusion in the substance and implementation of P/CVE programming, there are also more general challenges for P/CVE design and implementation in Kenya. Disparate understandings of violent extremism among stakeholders and limited coordination has led to a fragmented approach to programming. Combined with inconsistent implementation and insufficient interventions, these challenges severely inhibit the efficacy of responses to violent extremism in Kenya.

## Recommendations

This paper has aimed to explore, in the context of relevant sites in Kenya, the impacts of violent extremism on women and the efficacy of current responses to violent extremism as they relate to women. This section provides recommendations that pertain specifically to women in the context of P/CVE interventions in Kenya.

### To the Government of Kenya

#### *Policy and Programming Recommendations*

- Evaluate current P/CVE and CT strategies and policies for the extent to which women's issues are included, as well as their operational impact on women. The possible implications for promoting radicalisation among women at the community level should be specifically considered.
- Create mechanisms for the accountability of all government role players for their services and functions relating to CT and P/CVE programming, including how the involvement of women and women's issues in P/CVE policy and programming are addressed.
- Specifically review and take action where security actors are abusive and act outside the bounds of the human rights and rule-of-law provisions, and support the safe means through which complaints relating to security actors can be made and investigated.
- Ensure that security agencies are trained to respond effectively to women affected and impacted by violent extremism within the framework of a CT or P/CVE strategy.
- Increase and avail comprehensive post-trauma psychological and material support for women who have been victimised by violent extremism. This must include security officers involved in CT/CVE, and their wives and families.

### *Socio-economic Recommendations*

- Provide economic development programmes to empower women in affected areas to address the circumstances they face.
- Include women's groups in programmes to rebuild relations between communities where they have broken down by working with community leaders, religious leaders and women's groups to iron out prevailing grievances and rebuild trust where it is lacking.

### To Donors and International Actors

- Strengthen the coordination of P/CVE activities in Kenya to ensure that a number of relevant, evidence-based programmes are supported, including specific programmes to address matters relating to women, families, children, young men and women. Assign funding specifically for gender-related P/CVE programmes.
- Implement strong accountability mechanisms to hold authorities and beneficiaries of funding accountable for programmes and strategies.
- Direct financial support to benefit communities affected by violent extremism, including programmes that achieve the following outcomes:
  - Economic development programmes focused on providing job skills, especially directed at women and young men;
  - Psychological and material support for victims of violent extremism;
  - Local programmes aimed at strengthening local governance, accountability of security and other actors, and the adherence to the rule of law.
- Direct training initiatives to the affected regions, and ensure that funded training programmes for government officials (including security officials) and CSOs include a strong gendered dimension, providing guidance on addressing the specific needs of women and men.
- Build an evidence-based culture and approach to all funded P/CVE. This means ensuring that programme designs are informed by context-specific empirical evidence. Programmes should be evaluated, documented, and publicly reported on. Sharing results (through appropriate means) should be prioritised for those involved in P/CVE programme delivery.

### To Civil Society Organisations

- Strengthen evidence-based approaches to programme design, ensuring relevance to context-specific empirical research.

- Undertake evaluations, document programme outcomes, and share evaluation findings.
- Provide feedback to those who have participated in research and ensure that institutions that can offer programme responses are fully informed of the findings.
- Follow up on the implementation of recommendations from research.
- Constructively critique and engage the government through various means, including forums for dialogue and partnerships.

### **To Community-based Organisations and Community Leaders**

- Promote the participation of community members, especially women, in the design and evaluation of P/CVE programmes.
- Promote dialogue, trust building, and conflict-resolution where these issues prevail in communities, and among security and other actors in government.
- Implement information campaigns and discussion forums to increase awareness of violent extremism and its impact and to help community actors contribute to addressing the problem.
- Help address, within the community, the stigmatisation of women whose husbands and sons may be implicated in violent extremism.

### **Conclusion**

Development issues underpin the impact of violent extremism in Kenya. As such, the development-security nexus is a matter of priority for policymakers addressing this security challenge in the Kenyan context. It is imperative that stakeholders in the P/CVE field in Kenya adopt a broader socio-economic approach to responding to violent extremism. Empowering and engaging women is key in this regard.

At the same time, the social and psychological impact of violent extremism on women in Kenya requires urgent attention if the cycle of victimisation and violence is to be stopped. This includes efforts aimed at healing the trauma of women affected by violent extremism, and initiatives geared towards repairing tears in the social fabric of Kenyan society.

Urgent attention is needed to close the gaps in CVE programming relating to women and violent extremism. This can be achieved by widening the lens through which women's connections with violent extremism are perceived and taking into account the myriad ways in which violent extremism impacts women.

Failure to pay attention to the above issues will hamper efforts to comprehensively address the changing nature of violent extremism as well as the multifaceted impact of violent extremism in Kenya.

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## CHAPTER 5

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR CVE: STRATEGIES FROM STRIVE II

Gayatri Saghal

#### Introduction

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)<sup>1</sup>, has emerged as a principal strategy for preventing the spread of radicalisation, recruitment, and mitigating the impact and consequences of violent extremism (VE) (Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017). Within this framework, VE is defined as “actions undertaken by groups or individuals advocating for, engaging in or supporting violence to further ideologically motivated social, economic and political objectives” (Alliance For Peace Building, 2016, p.1). Thus, unlike traditional counter-terrorism measures, which aim to deter and disrupt terror groups, CVE is seen as a softer approach that encompasses a range of strategies directed at addressing the underlying drivers of VE, disrupting the tactics used by VE groups to attract new recruits, disengaging and reintegrating former combatants and developing the resilience of communities and populations to reduce the risk of radicalisation and recruitment to violence (Alliance For Peace Building, 2016; CSO, 2017).

In recent years with the proliferation of CVE programmes, questions have been raised on the effectiveness of such efforts, i.e. whether prevention constitutes a viable strategy on which time and resources need to be spent. Specifically, concerns have emerged on the extent to which CVE programmes have been successful in stemming the tide of radicalisation and recruitment, in the context of rising and more complex terror threats (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013). In 2017 for instance, as per the Global Terror Index<sup>2</sup> (2017),

<sup>1</sup> This paper, while acknowledging the long-standing debates on the appropriateness of ‘prevention’ verses ‘countering’, does not assume any specific positionality. The use of the term ‘countering’ is adopted in keeping with the terminology used during the Conference and is not meant to be indicative of the author’s preference for any one side of the debate.

<sup>2</sup> The GTI defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation”. This definition recognises that terrorism is not only the physical act of an attack, but also the psychological impact it has on a society for many years after. For more details on the definition of terrorism adopted please refer to: <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>

while the total number of terrorism related deaths declined, more countries experienced at least one death from terrorism (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). This was more than at any time in the past 17 years and reflected an increase from 65 countries in 2015 to 77 in 2017 (Ibid).

Against this background, there has been a growing emphasis on identifying more effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices and building an evidence base of lessons learnt on “what works” and “what does not work,” to better inform CVE programming (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013). Such concerns have spawned a litany of tool kits and guidelines—articulating best practice models for monitoring, measurement and evaluation of CVE programmes (Chowdhury, Romaniuk, & Barakat, 2013; Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017; Romaniuk, 2015; USIP, 2017).

The following paper, based on a conference presentation at the International Countering Violent Extremism Conference 2017, attempts to interrogate these best practices by drawing on the experience of EU’s flagship programme in East Africa. The STRIVE – II programme, as it is commonly referred to, is a learning focussed initiative that aims to build a robust evidence base on the impact and feasibility of select CVE interventions. This paper begins by examining the main challenges with implementing M&E for CVE, it then proceeds to examine some of the proposals for improving M&E strategies (Section 2) and offers practical application of such methods in the context of the STRIVE – II programme (Section 3).

### **M&E Challenges for CVE Programming**

The literature highlights two principal challenges with conducting M&E for CVE programmes, these include conceptual and methodological challenges. While conceptual challenges relate to the constraints that prevailing conceptualisations impose on the design of M&E strategies, methodological challenges are concerned with the issue of measuring the effectiveness of CVE programmes in reliable and verifiable ways. The following section discusses both these challenges in detail.

#### **Conceptual Challenges**

The conceptual challenges broadly relate to problems of defining the conceptual boundary of what constitutes CVE programming, identifying the beneficiaries of such programmes and determining the underlying factors or drivers of VE.

### ***Defining CVE Programmes***

Among the most significant of such challenges is the particular framing of CVE as a concept and the definitional boundaries separating the term from related disciplines. As a relatively new area of policy and practice, there exists limited consensus on what is meant by CVE and how it is differentiated from the field of counter-terrorism. Many from the peacebuilding space such as Attree (2017) argue that despite assertions to the contrary, CVE programmes are not significantly different from countering terrorism strategies. Far from representing a shift in tactics, CVE policies as per this perspective, have been implemented alongside hard security approaches; which have thus far proven to be unsuccessful and have only served to further disenchantment by “driving many into the arms of violent groups” (Ibid: 3).

In a related vein, it is argued that there also does not seem to be much distinction between the conceptual boundary separating the term CVE from related disciplines of peace building, conflict resolution and state building (Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017; Fink, 2014). This is related to the question of whether CVE represents a wholly new domain for research and policy which is distinct from existing approaches for addressing the underlying sources of violence and conflict. For some researchers, the distinction itself is problematic because CVE approaches have not succeeded in effectively prioritizing the long-term goals of resolving the root causes of conflict from the short-term security agenda of the “west” and other regional powers (Attree, 2017).

From an M&E perspective, the lack of conceptual clarity has been attributed to challenges with identifying the specific objectives of CVE programmes. M&E managers for instance may face problems in distilling and evaluating the specific objectives of CVE programmes and distinguishing them from those in related fields (Fink, 2014 and Szmania & Mastroe, 2016). Thus, from an evaluation perspective it may-be difficult to attest to whether changes observed can be classified as securing CVE related ends as opposed to other developmental outcomes. Further, according to Ernstorfer & Ris (2017), in treating the CVE as a wholly new discipline there could also be a tendency to eschew the lessons and the learnings for M&E from other similar programmes in related fields.

Along with very little conceptual clarity, there is also some confusion as to what distinguishes CVE core from CVE relevant programming (Fink, 2014). By core programming it is meant programmes designed with a CVE specific agenda. However, there may-be CVE relevant programmes that lack a CVE

specific focus but indirectly contribute to such objectives (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013). For example, employment or vocational training programmes could either be designed with the objective of reducing recruitment and radicalisation by providing at-risk youth with alternative livelihood opportunities, or they could aim to target the youth in general, and in the process could end up including some at-risk youth within their list of beneficiaries.

For researchers such as Fink (2014), even the definition of CVE programming needs to be articulated with some care. Viewing development programmes through a CVE specific lens could tantamount to their securitisation, as programmes may come to be valued from the perspective of fulfilling CVE specific ends (Frazer & Nünlist, 2015). This could result in the co-option of development programmes, undermining their effectiveness and also contributing to instrumentalization of local groups; which could result in undermining their safety and security (Attree, 2017).

In the absence of such distinctions on the specific purpose, M&E strategies it is argued, could be based on incorrect assumptions. This could result in either an overestimation or underestimation of the level of impact. For instance, assessing the CVE effectiveness of youth-employment programmes that do not specifically target at-risk groups, may result in an underestimation of the developmental impact of such programmes. This could prove to be detrimental to programming efforts more generally, as it could engender incorrect assumptions on the effectiveness of such interventions for reducing the risk of radicalisation and could also result in a discounting of the developmental dividends of such programmes.

### ***Defining of the Target Group of CVE Programmes***

Relatedly, there is also very limited understanding of the target group of CVE interventions. This ambiguity in understanding is linked to two interrelated problems, the first is the limited agreement on whether CVE programmes are specifically concerned with individuals or groups who are actual or potential supporters of violence versus those who maybe at-risk of being drawn into violence (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016). This first problem is related to the fact that despite the magnitude of violence, the actual supporters or perpetrators of violent extremism are relatively few (Ibid).

Second, is whether the focus of such efforts is to target both populations that have been radicalised and recruited, or if primacy should be given to one over the other (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013). As counterterrorism experts

Clint Watts and Will McCants note, “[T]here is not a shared view of what CVE is or how it should be done. Definitions range from stopping people from embracing extreme beliefs that might lead to terrorism to reducing active support for terrorist groups” (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013, p. 6).

In the context of these concerns, it may-be problematic to design evaluations for programmes where target populations are not concretely defined and the objectives guiding their identification are not clearly articulated. M&E managers may therefore struggle to identify which groups of respondents should be included within the evaluation and the types of changes that should be observed for these groups, i.e. is the objective reduced radicalisation or recruitment.

### ***Identifying Drivers of VE***

Owing to the nascent development of CVE and the limited agreement on the factors contributing to radicalisation and recruitment, there is often ambiguity on the underlying objectives and aims of CVE programmes. As a consequence, CVE programmes often lack a robust Theory of Change which link specific interventions to overall outcomes (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programming, 2013). This often relates to the limited agreement on the underlying drivers of conflict and violent extremism. As Szamani and Mastroe (2016) note, there is inadequate consensus on the factors that lead individuals to be more or less susceptible to radicalization and recruitment. In fact, most scholars have reached the conclusion that there is no one pathway to radicalization and that usually there is a complex mix of factors that are at play, making any attempt at generalisation particularly difficult (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, Neumann 2013, Khalil, 2017).

Without an understanding of the drivers of VE and how these can be addressed or mitigated, Romaniuk et al. (2013) highlight the problems with selecting appropriate methodologies and designing indicators that are aligned to the internal logic of the programme and are also sensitive to the underlying assumptions guiding the intervention.

### **Methodological Issues**

From a methodological stand point there are also a range of problems with measuring the effect of CVE based interventions. These relate to problems of evaluating prevention of violent extremist acts and behaviors, establishing attribution, measuring the effectiveness of CVE interventions and reducing

the risk to programme beneficiaries and ensuring the credibility of the data collection exercise.

### ***Evaluating Prevention***

Such concerns include the problem with evaluating prevention-oriented programmes. Unlike some development programmes which seek to address known and materialized problems, CVE-based initiatives aim to prevent VE from arising in the first instance. Put simply, while other types of programmes attempt to measure specific events, CVE programmes are directed at assessing the impact of “non-events” (USIP, 2017). The baseline measure for such interventions are consequently mostly hypothetical as they assume the level of incidence of the problem of VE. For instance, to assess if an intervention was successful in reducing the risk to radicalisation, it is important to be able to measure the level of risk, in the first instance. However, since CVE programmes are concerned with prevention, the full magnitude of the risk is not known at the outset (Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017).

In defining appropriate indicators to assess programmatic performance, baseline measures in many instances would need to be based on an educated estimate of the level of risk to recruitment/radicalisation/disengagement. Estimating the level of risk however could however present for a challenge especially in conflict environments where several factors may contribute to influencing overall risk levels.

### ***Attribution***

A second challenge which plagues all types of evaluations but is pronounced in the case of CVE, is establishing attribution or the extent to which specific interventions engender the desired impact (Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017). Demonstrating attribution in the case of CVE programmes is more of a challenge, for three primary reasons. In the first case, in highly complex and conflict environments, where a number of factors can contribute to given programme objectives, it may be difficult to determine whether specific outcomes have been the result of CVE interventions, or if they were attributable to exogenous variables (USIP, 2017). Second, unlike other development programmes that attempt at changing individual/group level conditions or circumstances, most CVE programmes are directed at achieving behavioural, relational or psychological change. Such changes are complicated and are borne of a constellation of factors, which could be difficult to unpack and consequently also change. Attributing changes in observed behaviour or mind-sets exclusively or primar-

ily to CVE specific interventions could therefore result in an overestimation or then underestimation of the impact of such interventions. Third, CVE interventions are also differentiated in that they may lack an effective control group with whom the programme beneficiaries (treatment group) can be compared with. This may limit the options available for adopting more robust methodologies such as experimental designs for establishing causality. This problem is related to the nature of the VE threat, where those who are susceptible or at-risk tend to be quite different from the average population on both observable and unobservable characteristics (White, 2013)<sup>4</sup>. This could make it difficult to find comparison groups whom the treatment group could be compared with in assessing the effectiveness of specific interventions (Dawson, Edwards, & Jeffray, 2014).

### ***Measurement***

A second major methodological issue is the problem of measurement of CVE interventions, which can also be further decomposed into three interrelated issue areas. The first is who to measure - given the multiplicity of actors involved in CVE it is often difficult to distinguish which actors should be included within the evaluation. According to Dawson et al (2014), the involvement of different actors and groups including – NGOs, community organisations, security agencies, corporate actors, makes it problematic to account for and measure outcomes. This could make defining the scope of the evaluation particularly challenging.

The second challenge is that it is often difficult to assess *when to measure*. Often times, CVE programmes are designed to be long term in nature and therefore implementers maybe unwilling to wait until the completion of the project to design evaluations (Fink, 2014). This may present for challenges especially for assessing the impact of the programme at the end of the programme cycle.

The third related problem is *what to measure* especially if outcomes are intangible in nature (Dawson, Edwards, & Jeffray, 2014). While some, such as Romaniuk (2015), argue the need for a unified set of metrics which could be elaborated and applied across programs or at least across program types, others suggest that given the specificities of the context, the need is more for “locally informed lexicons and indicators that can accurately measure change” (USIP, 2017, p. 4). Thus, there exists an underlying concern with striking a compromise between indicators that lend well to cross-programme comparison and those that are embedded in the local context.

<sup>4</sup> For experimental designs the treatment groups can be compared with the comparison group if on average they share similar observable and unobservable characteristics. The process of random assignment is used in experimental designs to avoid selection bias and ensure that there are no systematic differences between the treatment and control groups (White, 2013)

### ***Risk and Reliability of Data***

The sensitive nature of CVE programming makes the collection and storage of CVE data also particularly risky. Data collection may pose risks to enumerators who could face challenges in identifying and contacting programme beneficiaries, located in geographically isolated and/or conflict prone environments (Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017). Moreover, the risk could also be to the programme beneficiaries, especially community members and other groups, who may come under increasing scrutiny by both VE groups and government actors. The risk is also likely to be more pronounced if insufficient attention is paid to securing the personal details of the respondents (Ibid). Furthermore, there may also be challenges of respondent fatigue in places where there has been a proliferation of CVE interventions. Risks of this nature may result in the saturation of some communities beyond their absorption capacity (Fink, 2014).

Risks of this nature if not carefully mitigated, could compromise the reliability and integrity of the data collection exercise and the programme more generally. For instance, given the sensitivity and security relevant nature of many of the questions asked in assessing attitudes and support for violent extremism, could work to reduce the reliability of such information especially if the beneficiaries fear the potential consequences of providing information to external actors (USIP, 2017). Moreover, respondent fatigue may also contribute to a situation where respondents may provide socially appropriate responses and or may 'learn' to align their responses with the expectations of the data collectors.

### **Addressing Challenges with Monitoring and Evaluation Practices**

To address challenges presented by Monitoring and Evaluating CVE programmes, a number of strategies have been proposed by practitioners and academics. These strategies can be similarly categorized into proposals to strengthen the conceptual constraints and those that address methodological challenges, more generally.

### **Conceptual Challenges**

In contending with the conceptual challenges associated with CVE, primarily how CVE is distinguished from other related fields of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, Khalil & Zeuthen (2016) advocate the need to view CVE as a set of strategies aimed at preventing or countering the specific threat of violent extremism. To these authors while there are numerous sources of conflict, and although violent extremist related threats can emerge in the context of larger

conflicts, the problem of VE needs to be viewed as a distinct phenomenon. This distinction is even more pressing since violent extremist organisations have emerged in radically different political and socioeconomic environments, historical contexts, and time-periods (Denoeux & Carter, 2009). For instance, the problem of VE has occurred in contexts where there is an absence of any major conflict situation, such as western countries.

Moreover, in contrast to the argument made by Attree (2017), who highlights the role of structural drivers and notes the absence of this focus in CVE literature, these authors contend that while such drivers can be influential they are not a sufficient condition for VE (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016; Denoeux & Carter, 2009). Efforts to counter the threat of VE, need to be designed bearing in mind the locally specific drivers of recruitment and radicalisation. They assert, that alongside other structural or root factors it is also important to consider the relevance of social networks, radical mentors, individual motivations including "thrill seeking, the pursuit of status," and other motivating factors (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016, p. 3; Denoeux & Carter, 2009). Thus, the focus according to this perspective should be on understanding the local drivers of VE by focusing on the complex interplay of such factors.

Further, the focus on the locally specific drivers of VE, could also be helpful in delineating core CVE programmes from CVE relevant programmes. While it would not always be possible to isolate the specific drivers, understanding the constellation of the factors, would assist with the development of more relevant programming. This is because programmes designed to respond to the main drivers of VE, could be distinguished from those that may contribute to VE in more indirect ways. For instance, if in a given context it is noted that youth, many of whom are unemployed, are being recruited primarily because of their association with certain recruiters, then interventions designed to address unemployment more generally could qualify as CVE relevant programming. Alternatively, programmes designed to provide opportunities to youth most 'at-risk' of recruitment could be categorized as 'core' CVE programmes. Thus, understanding the specific drivers of recruitment and radicalisation, could provide much instruction on distinguishing the conceptual boundaries between CVE relevant and CVE specific programming.

In a related vein, in designing CVE core programming Khalil and Zeuthen (2016), advocate the need to focus on 'at-risk' groups. They assert that since CVE appeals to a relatively small subset of the population, efforts to target whole communities are unlikely to contribute to a reduction in VE (Ibid). Thus, while efforts to influence communities and or potential supporters of



violence are appropriate in many contexts, programmes with specific CVE objectives need to be designed to address the underlying reasons for radicalisation and recruitment of groups who are most ‘at-risk’.

However, in defining the ‘at risk’ group, they caution the need to adopt a strict criterion and to define such groups rather narrowly (Ibid). But in adopting such a criterion, the focus should not be to develop some kind of profile of individual types but rather emphasis should be placed on “narrowing the targeting on a probabilistic basis” (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016, p. 21). The difference being that while the former implies a fairly precise ability to identify individuals according to specific traits, the latter signifies a more cautious approach where individuals are considered to be “somewhat more likely” to be at risk if they have specific characteristics or demonstrate certain behavioral traits.

In assessing, the local drivers of VE and identifying the most vulnerable groups, Ernstorfer & Ris (2017), argue the need for developing detailed Theories of Change (ToC) and setting realistic programme objectives which can be regularly tested and revised. According to these authors, instead of beginning with the programme intervention, ToCs help identify the ultimate aim of the programme (Ibid). In doing so, such strategies encourage practitioners to articulate the programme’s logic - how interventions contribute to the achievement of overall outcomes, and also help clarify whether the programme seeks to achieve CVE specific outcomes or then whether the objective is to accomplish such goals through indirect means (Romaniuk, 2015). ToC development also assists in the identification of questionable assumptions and other potentially problematic aspects of interventions, and thus promotes critical thinking (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016).

Moreover, the apprehension with ToC development particularly identifying the factors contributing to VE, can be overridden if instead of opting for a rigid focus to programme design, there is an effort to adopt a more flexible approach. Owing to the highly context specific nature of the discipline, there are limited best practices in designing and evaluating CVE programmes (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013). Thus, in place of designing programme interventions that are ‘defined in stone’ there is a need to emphasize learning through a process of trial and error.

### Methodological Challenges

In addressing the problems of methodological challenges, Dawson et al. (2014) assert that since attribution is a significant problem with CVE programmes,

M&E strategies should ideally focus on establishing contribution. The complexity of CVE programming implies that in most cases CVE interventions should be considered to be one amongst the many factors that contribute to the achievement of specific outcomes (Ibid). Emphasis should therefore be placed on demonstrating how the intervention has contributed to CVE outcomes, rather than on trying to attribute outcomes to individual interventions. To ensure this, the ToC needs to be explicit about the results that can and cannot be demonstrated.

A further strategy for addressing the problem of attribution could be to include more quasi-experimental and experimental methodological designs (Dawson, Edwards, & Jeffray, 2014). Such methods are useful because they test for causality by selecting treatment and control groups and comparing the performance of the two on certain key outcome variables (White, 2013). While such designs are more rigorous, their application needs to be considered with care especially given the challenges of selecting effective control groups (Ibid). At risk individuals as previously specified, can be quite different from the rest of the population on even observable characteristics. Thus, in applying these methods to CVE programmes, evaluators need to be mindful of the baseline characteristics of the treatment and control groups.

However, if the baseline characteristics are found to be dissimilar or it is difficult to construct an effective control group, a potential alternative strategy could be to identify treatment and control groups, more precisely. Specifically, in place of focussing on more discrete criteria such as location or residence, these methods can be applied to groups of ‘at risk’ individuals (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016). Therefore, ‘at-risk’ individual can be divided into treatment and control groups using similar technique of random assignment or quasi – experimental techniques such as regression discontinuity design, propensity score matching and Coarsened Exact Matching, among others.<sup>5</sup>

Another approach that could also be useful is outcome mapping, a tool for structuring evaluative activities by collaboratively developing programming targets and monitoring progress towards those targets. This approach focuses on identifying through a participatory process, the changes in the behaviour, actions and relationships among the direct beneficiaries or ‘Boundary partners’. This process allows for tracing individual outcomes and provides insights on the pathways for change (Ernstorfer & Ris, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For more details on quasi-experimental techniques see: [https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief\\_8\\_quasi-experimental%20design\\_eng.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_8_quasi-experimental%20design_eng.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For more details on outcome mapping see: [http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome\\_mapping](http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_mapping)

Furthermore, targeted strategies could also be employed to measure the impact of specific interventions. These include more innovative approaches to measure behaviour indirectly. Such measures may consist of Lab and Field experiments, which are used frequently in marketing and social science studies to assess the impact of certain actions, messages, and interventions on individual behaviour (USIP, 2017). Examples of such experiments include, asking treatment groups who have received messages condemning the use of violence to sign a petition against those who encourage sectarianism (Sharma, 2016). Additionally, social network analysis-based tools could also be used to measure the level of individual relationship and networks (Russell, 2017).

With regard to measurement challenges posed by CVE programmes, Romaniuk, Barakat, and Fink (2013) suggest that the ToC should guide questions of who or what to measure. Beneficiaries of the interventions should be identified based on the ToC, and these in the case of CVE specific programming should ideally be targeted ‘at risk’ individuals or communities (Brett, Eriksen, & Sorensen, 2015).

Further on the question of ‘when’ to measure – M&E systems should be designed to allow for continuous feedback to inform future and current programming efforts. The process of M&E therefore should be treated as a means not an end because the findings of such exercise can provide powerful lessons of “what works” and “what does not work” (Romaniuk, Barakat, & Fink, 2013). One potential strategy for building in feedback mechanisms could be through the employment of the Developmental Evaluation approach. According to Ernstorfer and Ris (2017) the Developmental Evaluation approach allows for continuous adaptive learning, by embedding evaluators within the programme design teams, and incorporating a real-time learning approach that is based on capturing systems dynamics and testing new strategies and ideas.<sup>7</sup>

Metrics of what to measure, according to Romaniuk (2015), should be drawn from related fields of practices that share the goals of prevention. Fields such as criminology, public health, psychology, political science, could be very useful in this regard. Further as per a USIP (2017) report, there may also be a need for developing more locally relevant and accurate indicators. While this may not help the problem of cross-comparability, it would assist with the development of more valid indicators that are accepted by communities and groups invested in CVE programmes.

Lastly, to address the problem of risk and reliability of data, Ernstorfer & Ris (2017), propose that such concerns can be mitigated at the project design phase by building greater trust with beneficiary groups. For instance, depending on how issues at hand are perceived in local communities, the focus of initial data collection efforts could be to build rapport with project beneficiaries. Once sufficient trust has been built, a more sensitive line of questioning could be adopted. In addition to address subjectivity bias, more conflict sensitive data collection instruments may also be adopted. Proxy indicators and alternative designs such as List, Random Response or Endorsement Experiments, could be used to guard against subjectivity and protect the confidentiality of respondents. These latter tools have been used in a variety of contexts including Afghanistan (Mercy Corps, 2015) and Somaliland (Mercy Corps, 2016), to assess the attitudes of beneficiaries towards sensitive topics.

Apart from these methods, local data collectors could be involved in the process of data collection to reduce the risk to the respondent. Local research organisations may not attract as much attention as foreign data collectors and they may also be trusted more by beneficiary communities. However, ethical consideration including the duty of care of local researchers, would need to be considered by programmes employing the use of local research organisations. Further, the employment of local researchers verses data collection professionals may entail greater investments of time and resources which may have budgetary implications. Thus programme teams may need to weigh the implications of capacity development with gaining access to hard-to reach population. Lastly, in addressing the risk of respondent fatigue, CVE programmers may need to coordinate their activities better. Given the sensitivities of the issues, there is a need to avoid duplication of efforts and the undue targeting of specific communities.

### Practical Application: Lessons from the STRIVE - II Programme

In keeping with its commitment to learning through practice, many of the proposals for refining M&E for CVE programmes, have been incorporated by the STRIVE – II programme. The STRIVE – II programme, is EU’s flagship programme for CVE in the Horn of Africa which aims to strengthen resilience to violence and extremism by reducing the risk of radicalisation and recruitment of at-risk youth in socially and economically marginalized urban communities. The anticipated results of the project include:

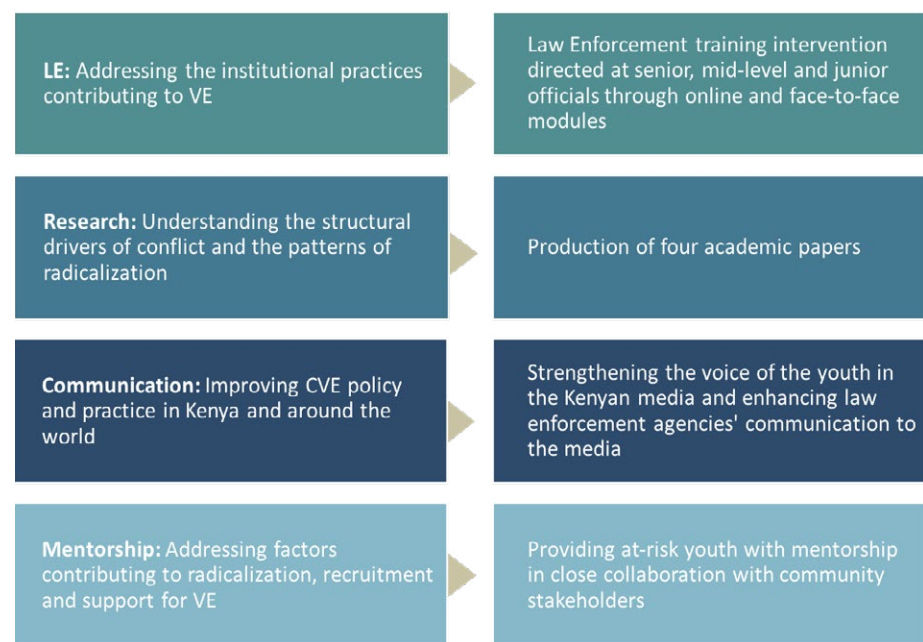
- **Better responses to VE by law enforcement (LE) officers in areas affected by terrorism** and recruitment to VE groups to help

<sup>7</sup> For more details on the Developmental Evaluation approach see: [http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/development\\_evaluation\\_201\\_en.pdf](http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/development_evaluation_201_en.pdf)

address institutional practices that engender radicalisation, recruitment and support for VE;

- **Enhanced understanding of the causes of conflict and the patterns of radicalization** to build an evidence base on the structural preconditions contributing to radicalization and support of VE;
- **Reduction of radicalisation and recruitment of youth in Kenya.**

In order to achieve these objectives, the programme is designed to incorporate four main components (See figure below). Of these four components – Law Enforcement and Mentorship constitute direct intervention areas which aim to address the institutional practices contributing to VE and the drivers of radicalisation, recruitment and support for VE. The Research component while not a direct intervention area, includes a set of activities to widen the evidence base and understanding of the causes of conflict and the patterns of radicalisation. Similarly, Communication related activities, have been designed to support the other three components through the dissemination of emerging findings and the elevation of the level of debate on CVE policy and practice in Kenya and around the world.



**FIGURE 1 | INTERVENTIONS UNDER THE STRIVE - II PROGRAMME**

### Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

The M&E framework for the STRIVE – II programme considers the shortfalls of the problems with designing M&E strategies for CVE and attempts to respond to some of the challenges identified.

### Conceptualisation

From the outset, the STRIVE – II programme was conceptualised as a core CVE programme. More specifically, the objective during the design phase was very clearly articulated as - *reducing the risk of radicalisation and recruitment of at-risk youth*. At-risk youth were thereby identified as the main target group and interventions were designed to mainly address their needs through a range of strategies. Interventions were therefore developed based on an assessment of the principle concerns and risks of such groups and were refined following the development of a robust ToC.

The ToC was developed with the involvement of the intervention leads during a two-day workshop. This approach was adopted in order to develop a shared understanding of how programmatic interventions contribute to the achievement of outputs and outcomes. In articulating the nature of the outcomes to be achieved, the problem of VE was defined by drawing on existing frameworks and conceptualisations. Mainly, the framework proposed by Khalil and Zeuthen (2016) was used in identifying the structural, individual, group-based, and enabling factors that contribute to radicalisation and recruitment.

Attempts were also made to identify specific drivers of VE in the areas of intervention and the similarities or difference across these contexts. For instance, historical injustices were recognised as structural drivers of VE in the coast, while in urban communities of Nairobi, a different set of factors were identified including the use of excessive force by the police and the treatment of the minority community during Operation Usalama Watch (2014). In addition to structural factors the role of enablers, especially group dynamics and peer networks, was also found to be key. Based on previous research conducted in the area, the role of peer networks specifically exposure to or knowledge of those who had travelled to Somalia was considered to be a predictor of radicalisation (Rink & Sharma, 2016). Further with regard to individual level factors, negative catalyst events and troubled social relations were among the types of factors identified as drivers of VE (Ibid). Moreover, in the development phase, assumptions guiding the interventions were also clearly articulated. Thus, through this process, a clear mapping of the links between interventions, out-

comes, and impacts was made along with an assessment of the constraints or resources that were needed to achieve the overall impact of the programme.

Following this ToC design, the two main intervention areas were consequently designed. The Law Enforcement Component was developed in consultation with the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) and the selection of beneficiaries for the training was determined in consultation with the Centre and included primarily mid-level professionals from a variety of security agencies.


In the case of the Mentorship component, at-risk individuals (or Mentee's) were defined on the basis of a series of workshops conducted in urban communities, focusing on issues of violence and crime. Drawing from their prior community knowledge the STRIVE – II team, conducted interviews with individuals identified as being at-risk during a workshop to discuss the validity of the following key criteria:

- Those believed to be perpetrators/supporters of VE or to have peers associated with VE
- Those believed to be involved in crime
- School – dropouts
- Recent converts to Islam

The above criteria was further expanded following an additional round of interviews with the respondents to identify the factors that maybe correlated with future involvement in VE.

STRIVE – II – EU Trust Fund

CVE Kenya through Mentorship & Media



Royal United Services Institute  
for Defence and Security Studies

Project location: NBO /MBSA / \_\_\_\_\_

**MENTEES ENROLLMENT FORM**

#	Name of the mentee	Name of the mentor	Gender	Age	Contact #	Selection criteria (*tick where applicable)						Newly convert	Idle
						Peer recruited into VE /	Associated w/ Violent criminals/ gangs	Radical extremist views & tendencies	Affiliated w/ known extremist views	Socially withdrawn	Former convict		
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
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Prepared by (Lead mentor): \_\_\_\_\_

Verified by (Project manager): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ /2018

**FIGURE 2 | THE CRITERIA USED TO SELECT MENTEE'S**

### *Methodology*

Owing to budgetary restrictions, in place of a quasi-experimental approach a pre-post model was adopted to measure changes over the course of the project cycle. However, mindful of main limitation of this approach – namely that the model assumed that all observed changes were attributable to the programme, specific provisions were incorporated to mitigate this constraint. In particular, drawing on the design of the ToC, a contribution-based approach was adopted in favour of an attribution model. The interventions were viewed as contributing to specific outcomes, rather than seen as causing or directly engendering observed changes. Second, qualitative instruments were also included along with quantitative pre-post instruments, to assess from the beneficiaries' perspective the observed outcomes and the extent to which these were contributable to the programme.

In order to resolve issues of measurement, the M&E design focussed primarily on project beneficiary groups. These groups included at-risk youth who were identified as the target group for the interventions. Thus, no specific comparison group was constructed, owing to budgetary restrictions (as specified previously).

However, to ensure that the approach to monitoring provided feedback and advice to the programme teams, a detailed Performance Management Framework (PMF) was developed. The PMF, which tracks indicators on a routine basis, is routinely shared with programme managers to provide input for strengthening programme design. Primarily, the identification of the expected results verses actual results, has allowed for benchmarking performance.

To ensure that the indicators for measuring performance captured the various aspects of the programme, efforts were made to incorporate a diversity of different measures. The measures drew from varied fields including psychology, political science, and international relations. In addition, different approaches were also employed including – a) contingent valuation questions; to assess how beneficiaries valued certain intangibles such as security, ethical correctness to name a few, b) risk-based questions – to beneficiaries' assessment of risk, and c) psychological measures for understanding behavioural traits (See Figure 3 for a snapshot of the Mentee's questionnaire).

In order to ensure that project beneficiaries and data collectors were not subjected to unnecessary risk, attempts were made to partner with community stakeholders. For instance, for the mentorship programme, mentors served as

the first line of communication with the mentees or at-risk youth. Mentors were recruited from within the community and were assigned the primary responsibility for managing the mentee's. Therefore, even in the case of M&E, data collectors accessed the mentees only through the mentors. Although more long-winded, this process helped in building the mentee's trust and encouraged them to open up about their life and experiences.

Lastly, in order to address the problem of beneficiary fatigue and to guard against the problem of duplicating existing programming efforts, as part of STRIVE – II, RUSI has partnered with two other research organisations - Wasafiri Consulting and Rift Valley Institute to institute a CVE forum to share and coordinate research being undertaken in Kenya and the East Africa region, more generally. The forum which meets on a regular basis provides a platform for researchers to share their work and engage with other actors active in the CVE space. In engaging researchers and academics, the forum seeks to promote the dissemination of emerging evidence and learnings and in doing so also aims to contribute towards the effective coordination of research around CVE issues.



## STRIVE\_II\_RUSI\_Mentees

Field	Question	Answer
Module 0: Background Information		
generated_note_name_16	The following questions are to be answered by the enumerator	
team_id (required)	0.1 Please select your team ID	1 1
enum_name (required)	0.2 Please select your name	1 Vincent Gadamba 2 Ann Maloba Mamboleo 3 Leonard Esendi 4 Pamela Grace Emisiko 5 Ann Musila
type (required)	0.3 Is this fieldwork or training?	1 Fieldwork 2 Training
confirmfieldwork (required)	0.4 Please confirm that this is fieldwork.	1 Yes 0 No -96 Don't know -98 No response
confirmtraining (required)	0.5 Please confirm that this is a training.	1 Yes 0 No -96 Don't know -98 No response
module (required)	0.6 Is this a baseline, midline or endline?	1 Baseline 2 Midline 3 Endline 4 Follow-up Baseline
county (required)	0.7 Please select the county that the respondent belongs to <i>Please note the county of residence</i>	1 Nairobi 2 Mombasa 3 Kwale
area (required)	0.8 Please select the area that the respondent belongs to <i>Please note the area of residence</i>	1 Eastleigh Nairobi 2 Majengo Nairobi 3 Kisauni 4 Likoni 5 Majengo 6 Kwale
Module 1: Demographic Information		
generated_note_name_27	The following questions capture basic information on the respondents demographic background	
generated_note_name_28	Introduction: Good morning, I work with RUSI as an data collector and I would like to ask you a few questions on your experience with the programme. Any information you share with me today will be confidential and your anonymity will be maintained	
consent (required)	1.1 Would you be willing to participate in this survey? <i>Ask the respondent</i>	1 Yes 0 No -96 Don't know -98 No response
rusinfo (required)	1.2 Have you heard of the RUSI mentorship programme? <i>Prompt the respondent and explain the purpose of the programme as they may not identify with the name immediately</i>	1 Yes 0 No -96 Don't know -98 No response
rusirole (required)	1.3 What is your current role within the programme? <i>Prompt</i>	1 Team Leader 2 Mentor 3 Mentee 4 Stakeholder -96 Don't know -98 No response
rusi_engagement (required)	1.4 How long have you been engaged with the mentorship programme?	1 1 year 2 1-2 years 3 Less than a year (6-12 months) 4 Less than a year (0-6months) -96 Don't know -98 No response
mentor	1.5 What is the name of your mentor?	mentor_v   mentor_i

FIGURE 3 | MENTEE'S QUESTIONNAIRE

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while there are several challenges with drafting M&E strategies for CVE programmes, both conceptual and methodological, they are not insurmountable and much of the current literature has been focussed on responding to such constraints. The lessons from the STRIVE – II programme provide a practical example how some of these problems can be overcome and addressed. Even so, the M&E for the programme is far from perfect and several challenges remain; namely, the adoption of the pre-post approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention, is not sufficient in establishing attribution and causality. This model is less robust than other existing techniques and even the adoption of the qualitative component, does not entirely address the fact that the results from this study need to be interpreted with some care. Second, the ‘at-risk’ groups have been defined through a complicated process involving community stakeholders, and while this process is participative, it is not free from selection bias. Further, while efforts have been undertaken to use a range of proxy indicators, there is still a concern that respondents are likely to provide more socially appropriate responses when answering questions on their attitudes and perceptions.

Despite such problems, however, the main lessons from the STRIVE – II programme demonstrate that CVE for M&E can be greatly strengthened if there is an emphasis on:

- Understanding the locally specific constellation of structural, individual, group, and enabling drivers of VE;
- Designing interventions based on a Theory of Change that incorporates this understanding and is shared and jointly owned by the programme team;
- Adopting robust methodologies that aim to assess the contribution of specific interventions as opposed to establishing causation or attribution;
- Employing a process of learning and feedback on the outcomes and outputs achieved to continuously inform programming;
- Building trust and networks with local communities in conducting data collection;
- Avoiding duplication of efforts and not saturating engagements in specific communities.

However, in appreciating such challenges it is important to note that there are no-quick fixes to M&E and refinements in the M&E strategy is a continuous exercise that is strengthened by sharing lessons on ‘what works, what doesn’t, and why’, and contributing to the larger evidence base to inform future and current programming efforts.

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## CHAPTER 6

### EMERGING BEST PRACTICE AND LESSONS LEARNT ON COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

Saskia Marsh

*Kathleen White*

Barbara Chalghaf

This paper discusses lessons learnt concerning the theory and practice of countering violent extremism (CVE) in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region and other fragile and conflict-affected areas. It is based on the authors' experience within Aktis Strategy's Counter Extremism Practice, which applies, tests and evaluates original thinking about extremist violence, based on academic and policy research<sup>1</sup> and evidence from on-the-ground interventions. This paper draws upon CVE projects that Aktis has delivered or evaluated in Tunisia, Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, Australia, the Balkans, Lebanon and Jordan.

#### Emerging Best Practice in CVE Theory

Before getting to detailed characteristics of effective CVE programmes, it is useful to take a step back and look at the theory behind CVE interventions. Aktis' experience points to a few general conclusions about CVE theory, which are important to highlight, because they help to explain why some "CVE" programmes are inadvertently set up to be ineffective.

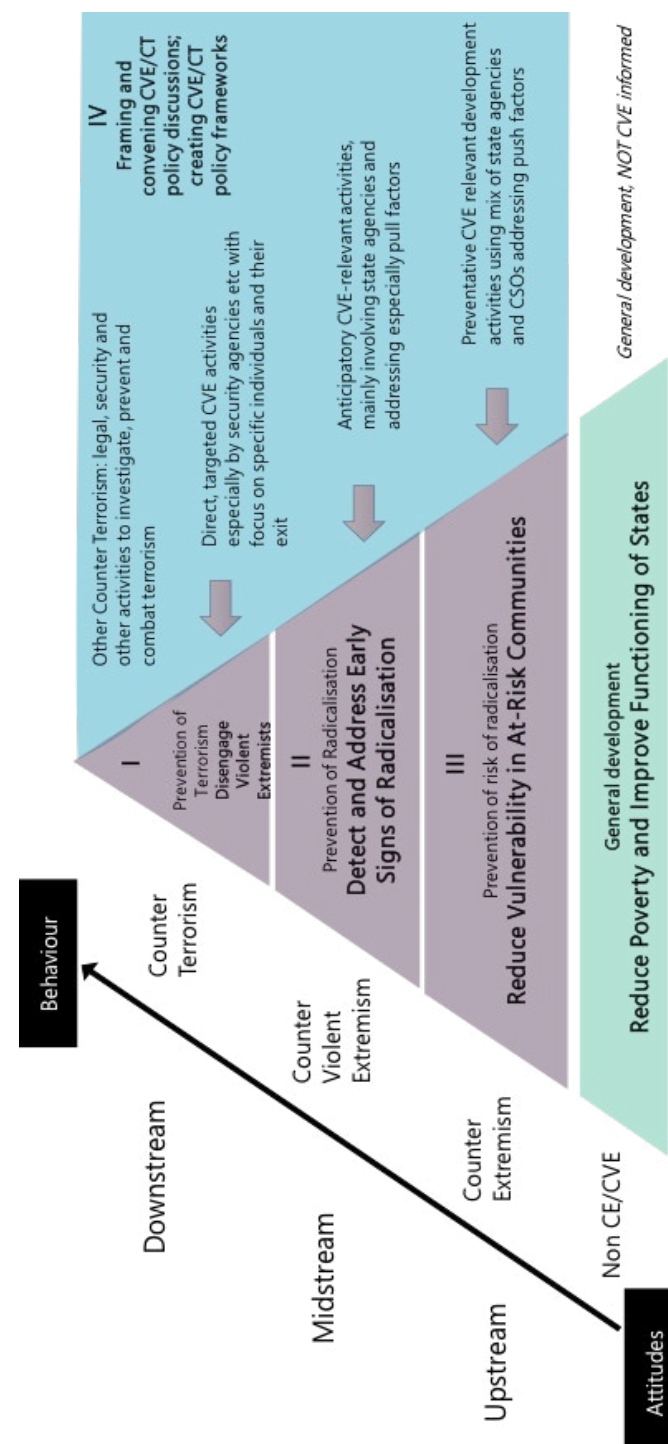
#### **1. Practitioners need a clearer idea of what CVE is, to improve the logic linking activities, target audiences and expected results.**

Even people who design, implement and evaluate CVE programmes sometimes struggle to define what CVE is (or is not).<sup>2</sup> Put simply, CVE work concerns attitudes and behaviours that are considered early warn-

<sup>1</sup> Please see notes for key papers the authors have referred to throughout this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Part of the challenge lies in the fact that unlike *terrorist offences*, "violent extremism" is rarely defined in national legislation.

ing signs for later, criminal (terrorist) actions. However, within the vast range of “CVE” interventions on the ground, many are only loosely connected to this purpose. **Figure 1** in the following page presents the conceptual framework Aktis uses (a pyramid adapted from Danish models) to situate different types of CVE interventions, assess their relevance to CVE objectives and interrogate assumptions about their effectiveness (Brett, Eriksen & Sørensen, 2015).



**FIGURE 1 |** AKTIS FOCUSES ON CATEGORIES III TO I IN THE PYRAMID: WORK TO ADDRESS PROXIMATE RISK FACTORS OR TO BUILD SYSTEMS AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAN HELP DETECT AND REFER HIGH-RISK PEOPLE TO SERVICES

The pyramid is a useful conceptual tool, because it helps verify if a programme's target audience and general purpose align, and at a very high level, helps to sketch out expected results (e.g. whether this is a risk reduction or prevention of radicalisation programme). Note that the pyramid is not showing an inevitable "pathway" or progression from bottom to top (there is little evidence to suggest that extremist attitudes progress linearly to violent extremist behaviour). Rather, it is showing the **diminishing size of the target group** as we move from Category III to I.

**Category III initiatives target broader communities, where there may already be indicators of extremist attitudes or curiosity towards engaging with extremist content.** These include, for example, counter- or alternative messaging campaigns in localities where extremist recruiters are believed to have influence. The initiatives tend to be broad-brush, but can still generate useful insights: in Somalia, Aktis did research to interrogate whether CVE communications helped to shift deeply held attitudes and behaviour over time, transparently sharing limitations and lessons learned from our trials. Aktis' and others' research at broader community-level has also, on occasion, revealed that it is unhelpful (or even counterproductive) to interpret and address local conflict dynamics through a counterterrorism or CVE lens.

**Category II initiatives target individual people who are displaying clear signs of extremist attitudes** (i.e. are deemed to be further up the radicalisation pathway and who may be at risk of 'tipping over' into violent extremist actions). Since January 2017, Aktis has been running a CVE pilot in Jendouba, Tunisia (discussed in Section 3 of this paper), that aims to identify at-risk people who are on the cusp of

engaging in violent extremist acts—what we consider to be a Category II intervention. Together with the central Ministry of Interior, local government and civil society, we have developed a referral mechanism through which to manage cases of concern and try to disrupt concerning behaviour.

**Category I initiatives engage with individuals who have undertaken terrorist acts or display clear intent to do so.** This category overlaps with "hard-end" counterterrorism initiatives. Interventions tend to be led by security institutions and to focus on immediate disruption of terrorist acts and the incapacitation of terrorists (Bjorgo, 2013). Hence, these interventions are far "downstream", when people are showing criminal behaviour. Disengagement, reintegration and rehabilitation (DRR) work also targets people who have already participated in violent extremist activity, so sits in this category. (Note that DRR involves non-security actors as well.)

**Category IV, which lies outside the pyramid, comprises initiatives which, at a "macro"-level, shape and create CVE policy frameworks or processes.** The primary target audience is state actors and potentially civil society organisations invited to take part in policy discussions. This would include work with national counterterrorism commissions to outline "Prevent" strategies, coordinate myriad government and civil society actors around priority objectives, and measure progress.

At the bottom of pyramid, general development work (poverty reduction, good governance, etc.) is frequently "repackaged" as CVE. Some of these interventions may address underlying factors leading to radicalisation in the long-term. However, where a development programme cannot articulate how it intends to address extremist attitudes or behaviours, CVE practitioners should consider it outside the immediate remit of their work.

## 2. Weak theory causes serious, real-world problems.

In Aktis' experience, a lack of clarity about what CVE "is" creates two important problems, which have the potential to cause harm to the communities worst-affected by extremist violence. These communities overwhelmingly live in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS).

<sup>3</sup> Many people do not cross the threshold from extremist belief to violent behaviour. Similarly, violent behaviour can be disrupted without necessarily influencing underlying belief systems (for example, by increasing risks and diminishing rewards of violent acts). Often, violent behaviour precedes a person's embrace of extremist narratives. The prevalence of domestic violence and petty criminal histories among people committing terrorist crimes in Europe and the United States suggests "radicalisation" may involve redirecting violence toward new victims and targets (which are often not the same people<sup>2</sup>). Furthermore, people's reasons for staying in violent extremist or terrorist groups often change over time so that they are no longer the same as the reasons they joined. See Bjorgo, T. (2013). *Strategies for Preventing Terrorism*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>4</sup> This was a step beyond more common tests of audiences' immediate "emotional takeout" from content.

<sup>5</sup> Aktis' recent research in Aarsal, Lebanon, reached this conclusion: inter-communal violence over access to scarce resources was a much more relevant threat to stability. See also *Liptako-Gourma: epicentre of the Sahel crisis?* (2017, June 30). ISS. Retrieved from: <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/situation-analysis/liptako-gourma-epicentre-of-the-sahel-crisis> and *Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force*. (2017, July 7). ISS. Retrieved from: <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/situation-analysis/challenges-and-opportunities-for-the-g5-sahel-force>.

The first problem relates to individual interventions that do not deliver CVE-relevant results. Unclear thinking leads to weaknesses in programme design: it becomes difficult to spot faulty assumptions in our logic if we are not being precise at the outset.<sup>6</sup> Although many organisations now use experimental approaches that let them test and adapt as they implement programmes, it nevertheless can be hard to shake the original flaws.<sup>7</sup> (Section 2 of this paper discusses some **best practice principles** that can help practitioners sharpen their logic and improve CVE programme design.) Furthermore, there is a special challenge around programmes in which “results” stall at the level of producing research or strategic messaging. Available literature (Romaniuk, 2015), CVE programme evaluations, and feedback from intended beneficiaries demonstrate that undertaking research or communications disassociated from any tangible follow up risks breeding distrust within the communities or neighbourhoods of concern. That in turn undermines the potential for future successful interventions (Workshop discussions, Douar Hichar, Tunisia, 2015).

The second problem is at aggregate level and concerns all CVE practitioners—even those who run well-designed programmes with good results. If CVE practitioners cannot define what CVE “is”, then it becomes impossible to accurately assess the impact of work in this field, at scale.<sup>8</sup> (We discuss some **monitoring and evaluation lessons learnt** in Section 4.) It is to everyone’s benefit to narrow our scope to the types of interventions where we add most value; set realistic expectations for results; and then deliver on that basis. Otherwise, it is difficult to deflect criticism that the CVE field lacks professionalism, is inefficient/wasteful, or is driven by the commercial incentives of aid agencies rather than by demonstrated expertise. More worryingly, a lack of focus on delivering CVE-relevant results can enable different actors (e.g. governments) to give the appearance of “doing something” to help communities worst-affected by extremist violence, when in fact there is very little evidence of material benefit to these communities on the ground.

<sup>6</sup> A poorly designed programme can *reinforce* cloudy thinking—for example by perpetuating assumptions about behaviour (“People choose to support extremist groups”; in many contexts, people instead choose to protect themselves, their kin or their livelihoods) or by stigmatising entire communities, or by framing inter-community conflict as having “extremist” motives, rather than more banal ones like access to scarce resources.

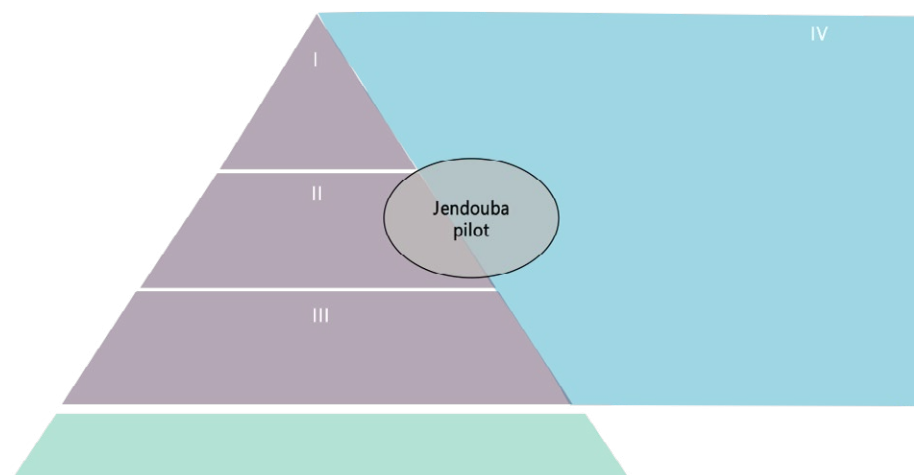
<sup>7</sup> Programmes can gain “momentum of their own”, for reasons other than their effectiveness. The pressure to spend budgets, so they are not reduced in the next financial year (giving less influence to the department concerned), is a common reason for reluctance to suspend unsuccessful programmes. Inertia—the path of least resistance—can then take over despite evidence suggesting the intervention’s underlying logic is unsound.

<sup>8</sup> It is notoriously difficult to measure the effectiveness of preventative work i.e. activities that stop individuals engaging in violent extremism. However, we can find indicators, even in difficult and fragile contexts.

It is important to stress that the lack of clarity in the sector and weak logic the authors are describing are not purely technical problems. As some of the examples in this paper demonstrate, CVE programming is highly political; a sound conceptual framework can only go so far in helping practitioners shift efforts to where they can have greatest impact. While not discussed in detail in this paper, CVE is importantly linked to wider debates about the securitisation and politicisation of development assistance, in the post-9/11 context of the “Global War on Terror” (Van Ginkle, 2017). Hence it is important for practitioners to be aware of how their programming decisions fit into broader political decisions (starting from the choice to designate certain groups’ ideology and violence as “extremist”). This is especially the case in FCAS, where insecurity is often linked to a breakdown in the social contract between certain communities and the state. In these contexts, there is a risk that CVE efforts can reinforce the stigmatisation of certain groups (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016) or imply choosing a side in conflict (Boutellis & Fink, 2016).

### 3. There is a wealth of upstream CVE programming, but downstream engagements are rarer in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Aktis has evaluated CVE programmes supported by various donors in several fragile and conflict-affected regions. While there appears to be a large volume of “upstream” CVE programming (Category III) and strategic, policy-level engagement (Category IV)—or indeed general development work masquerading as CVE (bottom of the pyramid)—there are programming gaps further “downstream” (Categories I and II).



**FIGURE 2 |** AKTIS HAD BEGUN PILOTING A CATEGORY II MODEL TO DETECT EARLY WARNING SIGNS AND REFER THESE PEOPLE TO APPROPRIATE SERVICES

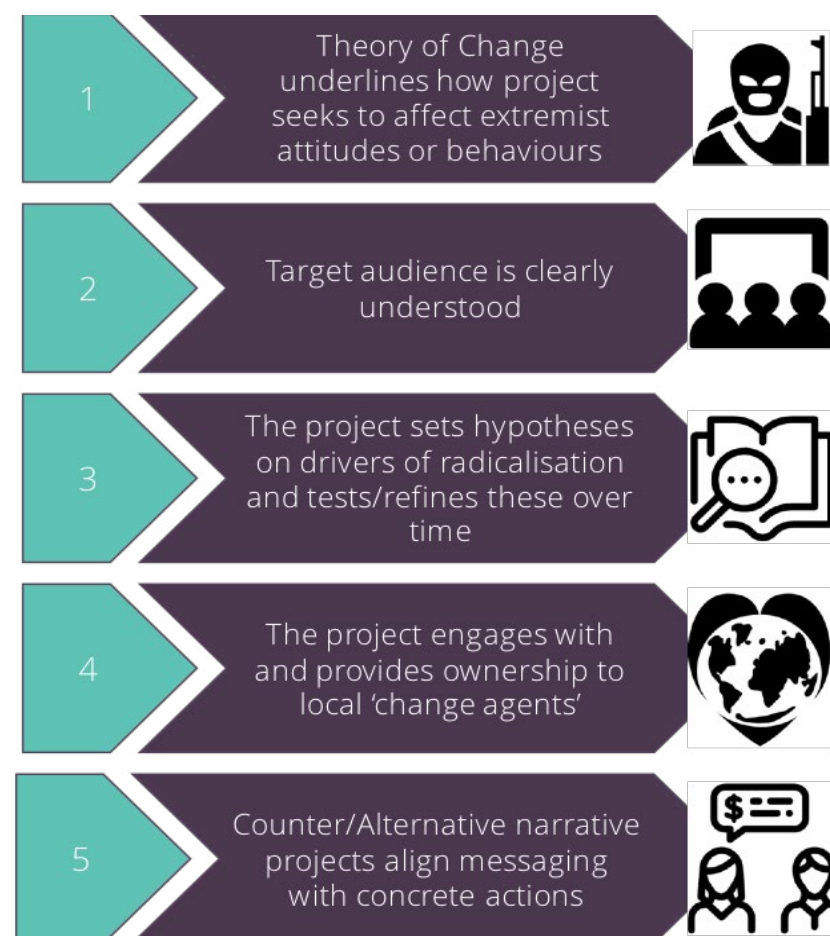
As noted above, our Jendouba project is an unusual and experimental Category II (as well as Category IV) programme, which tries to help government, security services, civil society actors, and members of the public work together, drawing on local knowledge and capacities. There is strong donor interest in introducing more programming in this category, yet relatively few successful interventions to-date. We unpack lessons learnt from the pilot as a case study in Section 4.

### Best Practice Principles to Improve Programme Design

**There is emerging evidence of ‘what works’ in CVE – which Aktis has captured in five best practice principles:**

These principles (Figure 3 in the following page) derive from a literature review of key papers by recognised experts in the CVE field, which are themselves based on an extensive review of evidence (Nathan, 2007; Khalil & Zeuthen, 2016; Ferguson, 2016). We subsequently refined the principles through “real life” evaluations of CVE programmes in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the Balkans and the Sahel.

The principles represent a useful ‘checklist’ for assessing a proposed intervention and determining areas for improvement. For a programme or project to represent best practice on CVE the following must hold true:



**FIGURE 3 |** AKTIS’ BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR CVE PROGRAMMING

**1** *The intervention must seek to counter either extremist attitudes or behaviours.*

This is the first ‘litmus test’; if the theory of change for the programme or project does not explicitly define an objective of seeking to change either extremist attitudes or behaviours, and explain how activities and outcomes are in line with that goal, then it is not a CVE programme. This may be an obvious point, but is often overlooked in programming. Adjusting a project theory of change while operating in fragile and conflict-affected environments is good practice, however in several cases Aktis has encountered, substantial resources were spent to define a theory somewhere around midway through the project. Occasionally, it



is at this point that CVE elements of the programme were tacked onto diffuse thematic objectives and geographic areas of intervention, making it very difficult to understand how already-planned activities were relevant to new types of attitude and behaviour change.

2 *There must be a clear understanding of the target audience.*

This is where the pyramid diagramme is helpful in determining who the target audience is (Category I – individuals who have already engaged in violent extremist acts; Category II – individuals at risk of doing so; Category III – more broadly defined, vulnerable communities; Category IV – CT/CVE policymakers). The point of targeting is not to precisely identify individual types in all cases but to help narrow targeting and thus programme efforts. For example, for one programme in the MENA region, the value of community outreach and engagement activities could have been better assessed by revising the results framework to include indicators on target audience perceptions—not just those who elected to participate, but also those who didn’t.

3 *Research, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be central to the programme design and implementation.* In concrete terms, this means the programme should include:

1. An initial research phase to understand the drivers of extremism in that context. This should be used to a) set initial hypotheses around drivers of extremism<sup>9</sup>; b) build initial programme design around them; c) test during the implementation phase to make sure initial hypotheses still stand.
2. An M&E framework which measures attitudinal or behavioural change. Measuring the success of a CVE programme at the impact level (i.e. a reduction in VE incidents) is usually impractical. However, what can and should be done is consistently assessing the performance of projects at the outcome level. Proxy indicators for attitudinal/behavioural change at this level do exist, and should be used more consistently.

In Aktis’ Jendouba CVE project, we built in a short inception period for baseline research, to test that our initial hypotheses were broadly valid.

<sup>9</sup> Recent research suggests ‘push’ and ‘pull’ categories are too simplistic; Khalil and Zeuthen (2016) suggests analysing drivers across a) structural motivators b) individual incentives and c) enabling factors.

A dedicated research and M&E strand formed a core, integrated part of the project methodology, implemented concurrently with community policing and civil society engagement strands. Moreover, co-creation of research and M&E tools with local stakeholders helped the project team strengthen the overall methodology (e.g. identify additional synergies across the activity areas, and ensure that research methods did not arouse suspicions of intelligence-gathering that could damage fragile relationships between project stakeholders). It also helped us to refine and improve project performance indicators along the way (i.e. by make them “SMART”<sup>10</sup> for the context).

4 *Key to long term impact is engagement of, and over time, ownership by, local “change agents.”*

Evidence to-date suggests the more successful CVE programmes, over the long term, are those that have found ways of stimulating and sustaining, both community and institutional engagement/ responsiveness. For example, Peter Romaniuk’s (2015) research on ‘what works’ on CVE shows that initiatives, particularly those promoted solely by governments, which have focused on a ‘battle of ideas’ have tended to be unsuccessful in preventing/reducing extremist behaviour. What appears to be more effective is community-level partnerships whereby community organisations are involved in diverting individuals from violent extremism through tailored intervention programmes. The more successful community engagement initiatives in the CVE space are those where community relations have been invested in as an end in themselves, rather than simply for CVE purposes, Romaniuk notes – because trust has been built, relationships established, for purposes other than simply identify at risk individuals. Although elements of the UK government’s Prevent strategy have been problematic, the UK’s<sup>11</sup> Channel programme, involving mentoring/counselling for at risk individuals has achieved some good initial results. Similar models have been adopted elsewhere in Europe e.g. Denmark (the Aarhus model) in Germany (Hayat) and Sweden (EXIT) (Romaniuk, 2015; Nathan, 2007). Aktis is applying some of the principles of these models – adapted to the specific local context and dynamics of fragile and conflict affected states– in its work in its Jendouba pilot, as well as elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

<sup>11</sup> For further background on Channel, see <https://www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/95/channel-supporting-individuals-vulnerable-to-recruitment-by-violent-extremists>

5

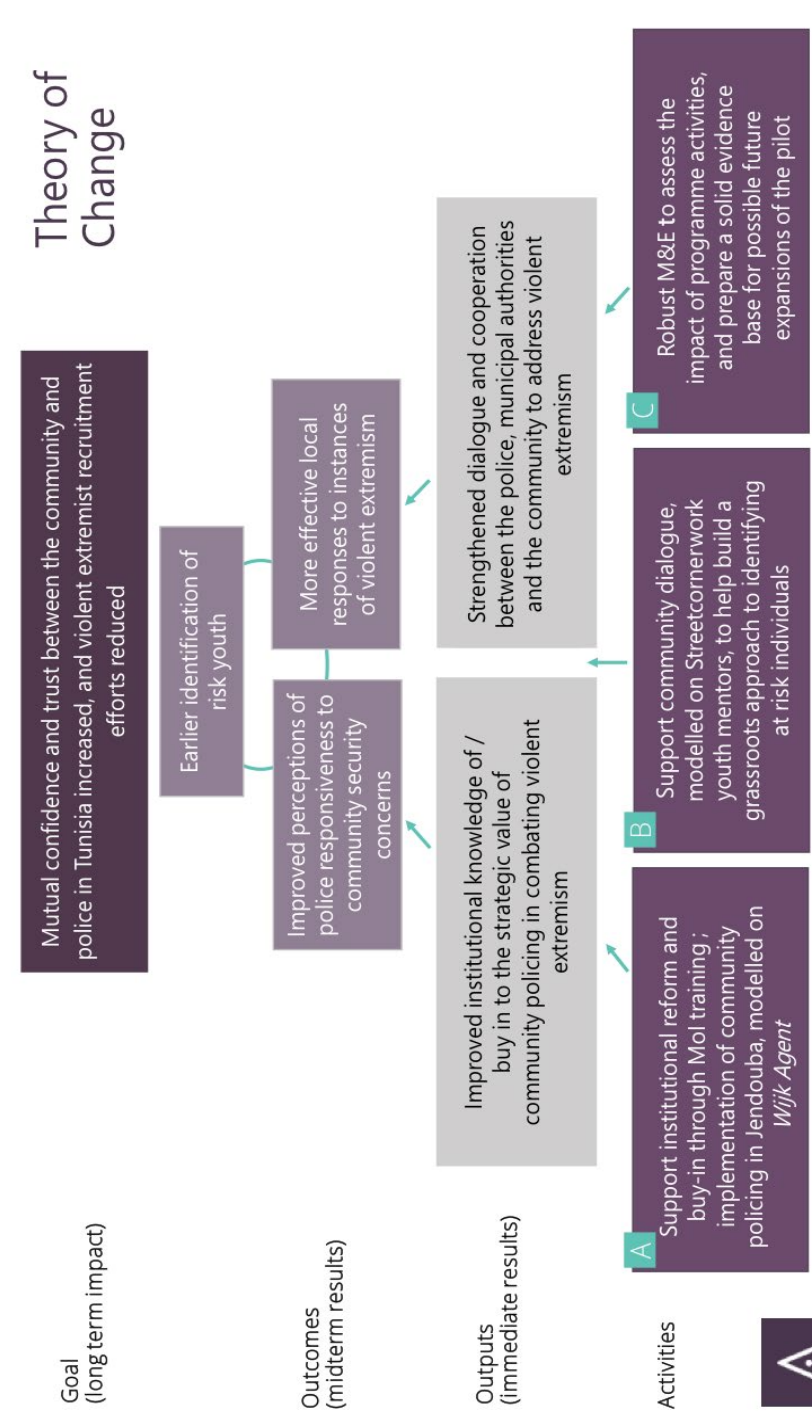
*There is very little evidence of impact of online and/or pure “counter-messaging” campaigns on individuals that are already radicalised.*

Instead, there needs to be a strong on-the-ground element of programming, which begins to address some of the perceived grievances, or taps into the underlying value system exploited by extremist groups (Schmid, 2014). One of the most effective strategic communications programmes Aktis evaluated in Iraq was implemented by a partner with a strong local footprint and clear understanding of the local context. The partner worked through local civil society partners who had a physical presence on the ground and were not just virtual entities. The programme made genuine attempts to empower local actors to create their own campaigns and supported online (and to some extent offline) actions citizens could take, at a local level, to improve their situation. Enabling these ‘alternative narratives’ and helping create a sense in target audience that they have some control over their own lives, is, per the evidence base, more likely to be effective than reactive “counter narratives” (Briggs & Feve, 2013; Ferguson, 2016).

### A Case Study in Category II Programming in Tunisia: Lessons Learnt

Since January 2017, the Netherlands has supported Aktis in **the implementation of a pilot which seeks to develop Tunisia’s capacity to identify and refer high-risk people to interventions that disrupt the journey to violent extremist behaviour.** To our knowledge, it is one of the few Category II initiatives operational in fragile and conflicted areas. Below we discuss some lessons learnt, which may be useful for others seeking to implement similar Category II programming elsewhere.

The project uses CVE models employed in the Netherlands - police community liaison officers and trained networks of community mentors - adapted to the Tunisian context. The project is being implemented in two districts of Tunisia, alongside providing Tunis-level, strategic support to the Ministry of Interior (MoI). The theory of change for the project is captured in Figure 4 below:



**FIGURE 4 | BUILDING COMMUNITY-POLICE TRUST TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN TUNISIA PILOT PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE**



The pilot phase supported the Tunisian Ministry of Interior (MoI) to deploy community liaison officer (CLO) teams on the ground—the first-ever police officers deployed in Tunisia for community policing purposes, with specialised training in CVE. The two teams (one National Guard, one National Security) have been operational since May 2017, but still face some structural challenges to undertaking traditional community policing. Tunisia has also agreed to the staged introduction of a referral mechanism for at-risk individuals in Jendouba, which requires police to collaborate with non-security actors. This is a first in Tunisia, but also the first time (to our knowledge) such an approach is being piloted in the North African context.

Under the youth mentoring strand, the pilot phase established a local youth mentor team under the auspices of the municipality. The project helped these youth mentors to develop the capacity to work with young people on a wide range of social issues and vulnerabilities (including violent extremism). In the pilot phase, the mentors also identified priorities and developed an action plan for building the relationships they need in the two project districts to help them identify and intervene with our target audience. Two of the youth mentors are vetted members of the referral mechanism.

The project pilot phase generated **some important lessons learnt**. We have perhaps succeeded where others have so far failed because we have, quite deliberately, designed an incremental process. It took almost a year of relationship building to start to introduce components of the CVE referral mechanism and individual case management process. Some key points are captured below:

- These types of interventions – focused on establishing relationships and building trust between police and communities – require intensive conflict sensitivity analysis, anticipation of potential risks, and strong mitigation measures. We have had to introduce engagement between police and communities in an **incremental, step-by-step manner**. This agile approach to project management is an intrinsic part of operating in fragile environments, but even more necessary when attempting to strengthen delicate (or non-existent) relationships.
- We spent the first few months **intensively engaging with the key influencers** within Tunisian security structures, to win acceptance of the project's aims, before proceeding onto more technical, CVE-specific activities. As our fourth best practice principle (discussed in section 2 above) underlines, investing time in building local relationships and encouraging local ownership is central to the success of CVE initiatives.

- Research into violent extremism and other public safety/security concerns is a delicate undertaking in Tunisia (as in other contexts). Sensitivities are heightened around this pilot; our partner the Ministry of Interior has extremely high risk-mitigation requirements around potential data and information leaks. **This has required us to iteratively adapt our research and M&E methodology**, to ensure it supports achievement of the primary project objectives: 1) improved relationships and cooperation between project stakeholders and the public, and 2) effective case management.
- Our experience has once again underlined that, while the Netherlands and other European countries have valuable experiences on how CVE can be tackled through a community-oriented approach, **these models cannot be exported and applied abroad as a “cut and paste” approach**. Instead, broad principles and lessons learnt must be adapted to the local context.

The project is now in its second phase. Phase two will support the CLO teams to implement their action plans (which include the establishment of local police and community safety committees) and start “live” case management through the mechanism, drawing in additional partners. The current phase will also now focus on deepening youth mentors’ skills across a range of “safeguarding” issues they may encounter, developing their “institutional home” within the municipality, and helping them develop relationships with other government services and institutions that can help them respond to these safeguarding issues. It will support the mentors to conduct community-based activities to identify “at risk” people or groups and CVE awareness and training for local municipality departments and civil society.

### Lessons Learnt from CVE Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

Finally, in line with our third best practice principle, introduced above, we have developed and field-tested CVE-specific M&E systems and research tools. Evidence suggests that very complex problems, like violent extremism, are best managed through an experimental approach (trial and error, or iteration), supported by robust M&E.

Our research and M&E tools aim to help track CVE outcomes in a sensitive and context-appropriate way. The major challenge has been to match what is *possible* in terms of measuring attitude and behaviour change, to what is *feasible*

ble in fragile contexts. Lessons learnt from the live application of these tools, which may be useful for other practitioners, include:

**Data collection in fragile and conflict-affected contexts can be sensitive and associated with intelligence-gathering.** Security and maintaining a low profile in these settings are often paramount concerns. Some countries in the MENA region have strong, centralised bureaucracies and will not authorise community-level research (based on suspicions, founded or unfounded, about VE recruiters or political opponents posing as non-governmental organisations). There may be ethical and logistical challenges to doing more robust, representative surveys or randomized controlled trials (such as “duty of care” and “do no harm” considerations). We do continuous risk assessments of the situation on the ground and have adapted our key performance indicators and M&E methodologies in stages, transparently with our funders, to reflect the changing context.

**It can be difficult to access the people with direct knowledge of violent extremist groups’ recruitment techniques.** For conflict sensitivity reasons (risks of harm to interviewees, interviewers and the project during this pilot phase), we did not speak to people currently held on terrorism-related offences, returned foreign terrorist fighters, violent extremist recruiters, their direct family members or (to our knowledge) close friends. Therefore, key informant interviews and focus groups were likely, to an extent, capturing prevailing assumptions about drivers and journeys to violent extremism.<sup>12</sup>

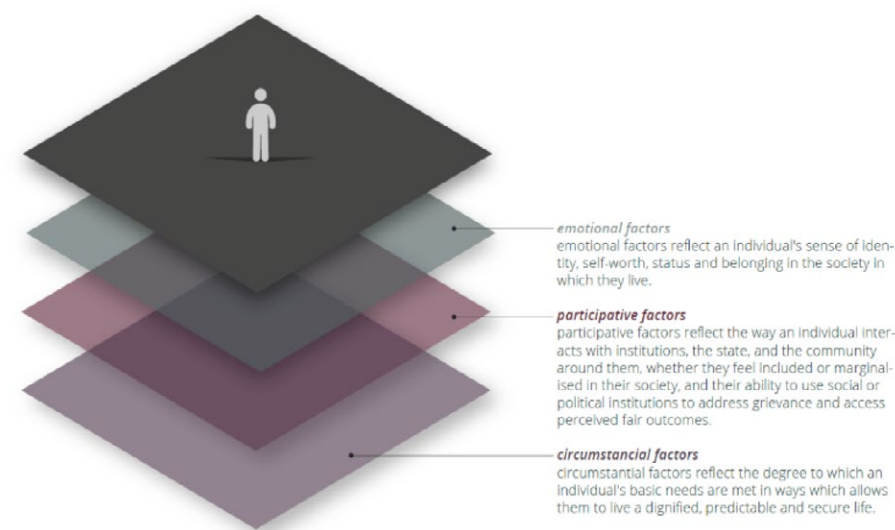
**To build sustainable, local CVE capacity, M&E tools need to be tailored to fit local needs.** In some contexts, we initially planned to use innovative (and more complex) M&E and data collection tools. However, it later became clear that these tools needed revision and simplification, together with local stakeholders.

While we need some consistency in the performance indicators we choose, we can iteratively improve results frameworks, too. Fragile and conflict-affected settings are extremely dynamic, and we may have to use trial and error to work out what data we can find or generate. In several programmes, we have continued to refine our results framework to determine feasible, context-specific performance indicators, which reflect: i) an in-depth knowledge of the culture, values and capacities of the formal and informal institutions with which we are working, and ii) ambitious but achievable milestones and targets for change.

<sup>12</sup> This can still be useful. We can compare perceptions against case management data from the referral mechanism, when available, to see which assumptions are supported by evidence, and what the implications are for better targeting high-risk people.

## 1. Analysing risk factors in a target community: Aktis’ COHERE framework (Classifying the Human Elements of Radicalisation and Extremism)

One of the research tools Aktis has developed for use in CVE programmes is our COHERE<sup>13</sup> framework (Figure 5 below). COHERE helps practitioners analyse, weigh, test, and address factors contributing to violent extremism within target group. We categorise these factors into three levels—emotional, participative and circumstantial—but can add other layers as necessary (e.g. enabling factors, like contact with a close family member who has already been radicalised). The tool was developed to unpack vulnerability factors, but it can be “inverted” to consider resilience factors.



**FIGURE 5 | AKTIS' COHERE FRAMEWORK (CLASSIFYING THE HUMAN ELEMENTS OF RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM) HELPS STAKEHOLDERS IN A PARTICULAR SETTING UNPACK, WEIGH AND TEST FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM. IT CAN BE MODIFIED TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL LAYERS, SUCH AS “ENABLING FACTORS” SPECIFIC TO THAT CONTEXT.**

COHERE focuses on *population-level* drivers (whether the population corresponds to a geographic area or another type of cohort, like prison

<sup>13</sup> The authors wish to acknowledge the contribution of their colleagues John-Paul Gravelines and Alex Martin, who led the original development of COHERE and ICOHERE.

populations). It is therefore only appropriate for projects that aim to reduce the overall risk of radicalisation in a broader target group that may have been exposed to VE material (Category III interventions).

There are a number of lessons learnt from our use of the COHERE framework. First, like any framework, COHERE has certain applications and not others. We have used COHERE to support initial research in Somalia and to help teams think through programme and M&E design. In the longer-term, there may be value in trying to use COHERE as an M&E tool supported by time-series data inputs. We have developed a mobile phone-based survey to support this application, but use ultimately depends on our ability to maintain a feed of quality data.

Second, in practice, to do this aggregate population level of analysis, we have asked **focus groups, key informants, and other project stakeholders** to share their perceptions about radicalisation drivers. As already described above, these participants did not include known violent extremists. Hence, in these types of perception surveys, there is an inherent bias toward the identification of circumstantial factors, because these are the most obvious for someone to pick up on at a distance. These factors are not necessarily what actually caused the ‘tipping point’ into violent extremism for an individual. Finally, the tool can be used in a participative way, prompting respondents to consider drivers across the three COHERE levels, or by asking more open-ended questions and coding responses against those levels afterwards. In Somalia, Tunisia and Lebanon, we have used the open-ended approach, in part due to the need to establish trust with interviewees and avoid direct lines of questioning, given the subject’s sensitivity.

## 2. Analysing risk factors for people: Aktis’ I-COHERE framework (Individual-COHERE)

Aktis subsequently developed I-COHERE to analyse radicalisation on an *individual* level and monitor any changes in i) the salience of contributing factors and ii) ultimately, attitudes and behaviours. This makes it ideal for Category I and II interventions. The point of analysing these factors for an individual is to help understand and address that person’s circumstances, attitudes and behaviours, as part of a crime prevention or rehabilitation programme.

From the I-COHERE program, there were a number of lessons learnt that are applicable for future programming. First, for ethical and conflict sensitivity reasons, we should not be using I-COHERE for pure research purposes, but only when there is a **supportive intervention available to the person**, the effects of which we are looking to measure.

Second, data can be aggregated to inform our understanding of larger radicalisation trends within the pool of targeted at-risk people; however, we should carefully caveat any conclusions we draw at this level, as **they will not be representative** (unless we have deliberately designed a survey of a representative sample of our target group).

- In Tunisia, where we sought to pilot I-COHERE, our original mobile-phone-based data collection concept was not feasible, because research into violent extremism and other public safety/security concerns is a delicate undertaking in this context. Sensitivities are heightened around our Jendouba pilot; the MoI has required thorough vetting of the youth mentoring teams and their phased deployment, and has extremely high risk-mitigation requirements around potential data and information leaks. This has required us to iteratively adapt our RME methodology, to ensure it supports achievement of the primary project objectives: 1) improved relationships and cooperation between project stakeholders and the public and 2) effective case management. This has required a great deal of simplification and reduction of original ambition.
- We also may have been too ambitious in our original results framework in terms of what results could be achieved within a year. It was critical to establish proper support systems—the institutional framework to permit case identification and follow-up—before active case management. We gradually and sensitively strengthened fragile relationships and secured the institutional backing that youth mentors and community police officers would require to operate (and cooperate). In other words, before stimulating “demand” for case referral services by earlier identifying at-risk youth, we had to establish their supply in the Tunisian context. This measure ensured that our intervention would not inadvertently harm at-risk young people, and instead would maximise the potential to connect them with beneficial services. While we initially aimed to measure these young people’s attitudinal and behavioural changes using I-COHERE, as we learned, the successful process we needed to follow to build up lo-

cal capacities (before deploying them to earlier identify at-risk youth) took time.

## Biographies

**Saskia Marsh** leads Aktis' Counter Extremism Practice, where she is responsible for applying evidence-based, best practice approaches to the design, implementation and evaluation of Aktis' portfolio of CE and CVE programmes across Africa and the Middle East. Saskia has over twelve years of experience in working in fragile and conflict-affected states. She is the Technical Director for a CVE Programme in Tunisia which is piloting a model of community policing and 'street mentors' based on Dutch CVE models to detect, and work with, at-risk individuals. Saskia has evaluated British and Danish government CVE programming in the Middle East and the Balkans against national strategic priorities on CE/CVE, as well as the emerging evidence base on best practice/'what works' in countering violent extremism. Saskia holds a BSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and an MBA from IMD.

**Kathleen White** is an experienced M&E practitioner and policy analyst based in Tunisia, who specialises in impact evaluation and programme design for fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). As the M&E lead for Aktis Strategy's Counter Extremism Practice, she designs practical, context-appropriate interventions, with evidence-based change theories and M&E systems that allow for continuous testing and improvement. She has recently designed, delivered and evaluated CVE, institutional reform and security/stabilisation programmes in North Africa and the Sahel for the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands. Kathleen holds a Bachelor of Arts from Princeton University and an MSc in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies from the London School of Economics.

**Barbara Chalghaf** is an experienced international legal practitioner and project manager with a background in behavioural change programming across the Maghreb region. Barbara is the Project Manager for Aktis' CVE Programme in Tunisia which is piloting a model of community policing and 'street mentors' based on Dutch CVE models to detect, and work with, at-risk individuals. Before joining Aktis she managed the World Press Photo and Human Rights Watch Reporting Change project that ran between 2012 and 2014, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The project aimed to report on and support democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa, using complementary approaches. Barbara holds a L.L.M. in Public International Law from Leiden University.

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## CHAPTER 7

### CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TURKISH NEWS REPORTING ON RECENT TERRORIST ATTACKS

Ibrahim Efe<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

This article analyses newspaper representation of recent terrorist attacks in Turkey. To this aim, using a corpus of 2,330 news items, the research investigates how violent extremism and violent extremists are represented in six Turkish daily newspapers aligned with the main ideological groups in Turkey. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis, this paper will try to answer a number of questions including: how violent extremist attacks are reported; what discourses revolve around the topic; what qualities are attributed to attackers. The overall aim of the paper is to de-construct the ways in which Turkish press reports on violent extremism and to make recommendations on how this influences public perception around radicalization and violent extremism.

#### Background

The relationship between the media and terrorism is often described as symbiotic (Cvrtilla & Peresin, 2009, Frey & Luechinbger, 2008). Violent extremists use media for representing a version of the truth; that is, they use media in spreading their propaganda and recruitment. One approach to counter the communicative aspects of violent extremism is the use of strategies to stop or restrict the use of media by extremists, a task becoming extremely difficult vis-a-vis the constantly changing nature of online media and laws related to user rights. Henceforth, rather than censorship and disruption approaches, the literature on the topic becomes increasingly focused on the use of counter-narratives (Chowdhury & Krebs, 2010; De Graaff, 2010; Harchaoui, 2010; Jacobson, 2010; Kessels, 2010; Kokoda Foundation, 2008; Qureshi & Marsden, 2010). Given the increasing

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emphasis on counter-narrative approaches within strategies for countering violent extremism (CVE), a number of suggestions have been made for the field of media and journalism: 1) representing states as “supporters of life” whereas violent extremists are the “champions death and destruction” (De Graaff, 2010); 2) emphasising Muslim and civilian suffering caused by terrorists and violent extremists (Jacobson, 2010; Kessels, 2010); 3) delegitimising terrorists by portraying them as immoral criminals who transgress Muslim principles (Jacobson, 2010; Kessels, 2010; Kokoda Foundation, 2008) or as destructive interlopers or the ‘puppets’ of foreign powers who lack the right to levy claims on the polity (Chowdhury & Krebs, 2010); 4) emphasising the non-violent nature of Islam and the rejection of violence as a strategy for addressing grievances (Qureshi & Marsden, 2010); and, 5) depicting life within a terrorist group as difficult, financially unstable, and filled with fear (Jacobson, 2010; Kessels, 2010).

At the same time, concerns regarding the efficiency of these methods have also been raised. Kessels, for instance, argued for the importance of silence as a significant counter-narrative (2010: 8). Looking from a different angle, Taylor and Ramsay (2010) criticise the efficiency of the approach by suggesting behavioural outcomes are difficult to measure and evaluate until there is a better understanding of what the counter narratives should be addressing and how to identify the content and actors they should target (2010, p. 109). Concerns around counter-narratives also relate to the source (messenger) and the compatibility between what is said and what is done.

Common to all suggestions and concerns, however, is an emphasis on how language shapes pertinent experiences and attitudes of potential target audiences. In Chowdhury and Krebs (2010) words, language is a “matter of both semantics and some consequence” (p. 126). In this regard, the language used in reporting violent extremism at times exacerbates the issue. A report published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) warns about the language of reporting:

...there are many examples in which reporting has been less than helpful, either by broadcasting the latest ISIL video or by using headlines that generate community anger rather than inform people (Bergin et al., 2015, p.54).

This analyses newspaper coverage of the recent six terrorist attacks in Turkey. The aim of this research is to understand how violent extremism and violent extremists are represented: how violent extremist attacks are reported, what discourses revolve around the topic, and what qualities are attributed to at-

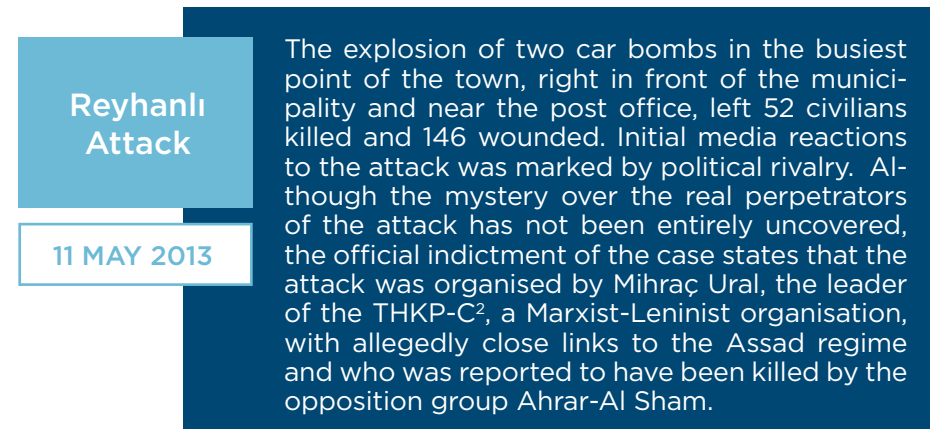
tackers. Therefore the overall objective of the study is to de-construct the ways in which violent extremism is discussed in Turkish press.

### Context: The ISIL and the PKK Attacks in Turkey

Turkey has always been a major target of terrorist attacks, mainly by the Kurdish insurgent group, the PKK, since the 1980s. The group’s violent activities almost came to a halt during the opening process between 2009 and 2015. However, with the ending of the opening process and Turkey’s clear stance against a nascent Kurdish state in northern Syria, the PKK, together with other affiliated terrorist groups, has resumed its attacks on Turkish police and armed forces, and leading to the death of several civilians (Ensaroğlu, 2013).

In addition, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gained global attention after driving Iraqi forces out of key cities in Iraq and eventually capturing Mosul. As a result of their emergence, Turkey has suffered from some of the deadliest ISIL attacks since 2013 (Reyhanlı Attack), which only exacerbated following Turkey’s decision to join the anti-ISIL coalition and open the İncirlik base to the coalition forces in September of 2014 (Yetkin, 2014). By declaring the Turkish state and its leaders “apostate”, the group has tried to legitimise its attacks on Turkish cities, airports, and a nightclub on New Year’s Eve in 2017.

Within this brief historical account, the nodal points selected for data collection in this research can be better contextualised. Although it is not the focus of this study, each violent attack under investigation has significant repercussions on Turkish as well as regional politics. The six attacks analysed in this study are outlined in more detail in the below chart:



<sup>2</sup> Also known as Acilciler, the THKP-C is a revolutionary leftist organisation founded in 1970s and was very influential around Hatay.





## Method

This study utilizes discourse analysis to analyse the news coverage of the attacks listed above. For the purposes of this study, in comparison to content analysis, which focuses on the subject of the text, discourse analysis reveals what is implied in a text. Since a discursive approach focuses on the way knowledge regulates and constructs identities, discourse analysis defines how the ways social actors and actions are represented (Hall, 1997, p.6). Critical Discourse



Analysis (CDA) is one of the main methodologies used by researchers to analyse text in this way (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2003). While a review of the literature on CDA is outside the scope of this essay, this particular study utilizes the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which is an accepted type of Critical Discourse Analysis (Khosravinik, 2015). The DHA analyst takes discourse (as in language in use) as a form of social practice and reveals representations of social actors/events in a discourse, and accounts for the broader societal and political conditions of the processes of production and interpretation of this discourse. Since the language used in newspapers is not mere reflections of what ‘really’ happens in the world, such a critical perspective as in the DHA, will be conducive to understanding the language used in the media.

Discursive strategies can be defined as systematic ways of using language, which can be located at different levels of linguistic organization and complexity. Traditionally, the DHA proposes to look for five discursive strategies, all which are involved in the positive self- and negative other-presentation. These are (i) referential strategies or nomination strategies, (ii) predication strategies, (iii) argumentation strategies, (iv) perspectivation and framing strategies, and (v) intensifying and mitigation strategies. For the purposes of the current study and mostly inspired by Khosravinik’s book (2015) the DHA approach with a slight adjustment was used. Thus, we have analysed the selected columns and news articles by revealing three discursive strategies (referential, predication and argumentative) and examining their linguistic realisations in text.

**Referential strategies** or nomination strategies utilize membership categorization (in group versus out group), naturalizing and depersonalizing metaphors, as well as through synecdoche in the form of 1) a part standing for the whole (*pars pro toto*) or 2) a whole standing for the part (*totum pro parte*).

**Predicational strategies** utilize evaluative (negative or positive) characteristics attributed to social actors and events. These strategies aim to label or characterize social actors more or less positively or negatively, depending on the intention of the author.

**Argumentation strategies** justify the positive or negative attributes utilized by predication strategies. The analysis of argumentation tools reveals how the social and political inclusion or exclusion, the discrimination or preferential treatment of the respective persons or groups of persons are justified.

### Turkish News Corpus

For the analysis of radicalisation and violent extremism in Turkish newspapers we have collected a total of 2,330 news items, consisting of 640 columns and 1,690 hard news. The details of the news corpus (henceforth Turkish News Corpus-TNC) are shown in the below table.

NEWS SOURCE	Reyhanlı	Diyarbakır	Suruç	Ankara (2015)	Sultan Ahmet	Ankara (2016)
Cumhuriyet	88	20	55	183	26	56
Hürriyet	53	8	67	104	28	69
Ortadoğu	75	0	35	76	23	57
Özgür Gündem	68	66	146	198	21	33
Star	88	21	89	151	31	82
Yeni Akit	70	6	71	86	28	52
TOTAL NUMBER OF NEWS ITEMS	442	121	463	798	157	349
GRAND TOTAL	2330 news items (640 columns)					

Table 1 | Turkish News Corpus

The highest number of news items belongs to the Ankara attack of 2015, likely because it remains the deadliest attack in the history of modern Turkey. For data selection, this study also looked at daily frequencies of news numbers. The second day turns out to be the peak day in terms of the number of news published on each event, excluding the Sultan Ahmet attack when the first day following the attack had the highest number of articles. In all other events, second day has the highest number of news and the number of news fall sharply in the following few days. The gradual decrease in the frequency of news reveal how an event falls steadily in significance across all newspapers. Having said this, it is also to be noted that with the emergence of new

developments regarding an event there are also sporadic spikes. For example, for the Reyhanlı attack, a spike on 19 May 2013 pertains to the ousting of the Reyhanlı police commissioner and capturing of new suspects in relation to the attack.

## Analysis

Discourse analysis of the news reporting on the six attacks reveal the changing positions of newspapers depending on the perpetrators of the attacks and the ideological allegiances of the newspapers.<sup>3</sup> While attacks perpetrated by the ISIL are represented as equally bad by all newspapers, the attacks perpetrated by the PKK and affiliated terrorist organisations are foregrounded by the *Özgür Gündem*, and not talked about at all by the *Ortadoğu*. Such ideological bifurcation similarly occurs in pinpointing the real perpetrators of the ISIL attacks. As expected, newspapers that are typically critical of the government accuse the government for complicity and lack of intelligence and security measures. These accusations construe the government as the ‘real’ responsible actor, leading to a somewhat dual treatment of the perpetrators of the attacks as ‘real’ and ‘surface’. Newspapers which support the government accuse the critics of the government for treason and collaborating with foreign powers. What is common to all newspapers, however, is the use of episodic framing; that is newspapers focus on the single event at the expense of neglecting the overall trends. Both the ISIL and the PKK attacks are reported with vivid images of the blast scene, accompanied usually with emotional language use. Discourse on solidarity and fraternity which appears commonly, particularly after ISIL attacks, can be regarded as a positive finding. Nevertheless, ideological allegiances stop all newspapers from forming a unity and criticizing violent extremism on normative bases, rather their criticisms are directed either against the government or the oppositional political groups.

Before presenting the findings from the analysis of newspapers, it is useful to make a few notes on the data selection. As proposed by the DHA, we have first looked at the discourse topics. For this all news articles were scanned and examined, especially the front pages and headlines since they express the most ‘important’ topic of the news (van Dijk, 1985). Then using the frequency tables, representative columns from each newspaper on the event in question were selected. The selection of the columns rely on two criteria; significance and satisfactory content, i.e., those columns that deal with the event in question directly and discuss it in detail. One column from each newspaper pub-

lished within a week following an attack is selected for textual analysis. The analysis will be presented in order of an analytical category.

## Discourse Topics

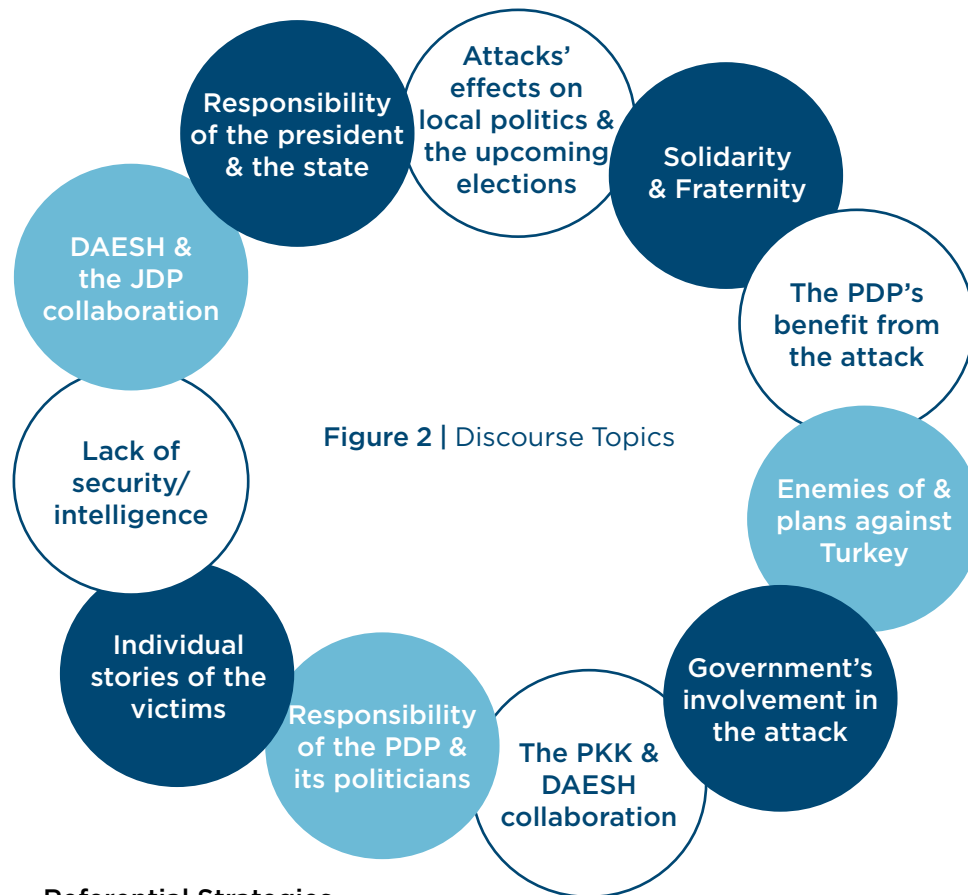
The analysis of discourse topics reveals that all newspapers reflect both visually and textually the public indignation caused by the attacks. For instance the below image of an elderly woman standing in the midst of the debris left from explosion with her hands raised up to the sky in a manner of bursting out is used by all newspapers besides other images to personify the chaos, pain, and helplessness experienced in the aftermath of the Reyhanlı attack.



Figure 1 | First Page of the *Cumhuriyet* after the Reyhanlı Attack

The newspapers’ discourse topics on the six attacks are placed next to a sundry of discourses, for example: discourse on lack of security or intelligence leading up to the attack; discourse on Turkish government’s inadequacy in dealing with terrorism; discourse on government’s failure in Syria related foreign policy; discourse on the victims of the attack and pain of their relatives; discourse on vastness of terrorism; discourse on the enemies of Turkey; discourse on lack of empathy among oppositional groups; and so on. The below figure presents a summary of the discourse topics visited by all newspapers after the attacks:

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the analysis presented below is a selection of the full dataset for the purposes of this essay, but the full analysis can be found in a forthcoming paper.



### Referential Strategies

Referential strategies are conducive to the discursive construction of in-groups (Us) and out-groups (Them) in a discourse. For instance in a column in *Cumhuriyet*, the perpetrators of the Reyhanlı attack are conceived as a group of unpredictable people with ill intentions and their victims, and the victims are the whole nation, expressed through the inclusive use of pronoun as in “our hearts are burned, roasted” (Çetinkaya, 2013, p.5).<sup>4</sup> In contrast to this inclusive use of the pronoun ‘our’, the *Özgür Gündem* inconspicuously construe the government and its leader as the out-group. For instance reporting on the Diyarbakır attack, a columnist from *Özgür Gündem* reports that “those who gathered in the site knew this and suddenly they chanted slogans against Tayyip Erdoğan and the JDP” (Bayram, 2015, p.11).

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the grammar of Turkish allows person markers to be attached to nominals to express possession. In this example ‘yüreğimiz’ can be translated as ‘our hearts’.

For pro-governmental papers the frequent out-groups are the enemies of Turkey, inside and outside. The author of a column in the *Star*, a professor of psychiatry, calls the Diyarbakır attack a “dramatically political event aiming to increase the PDP votes” and the perpetrators are equivocally referred to as “political engineers” (Yanık, 2015, p. 15).

The common thread running through all oppositional papers, i.e., criticism of the government and the president, at times turns to overt accusation over responsibility for the attack.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the editorial of the *Cumhuriyet* entitled “400 Vekil İçin”<sup>6</sup>(For 400 MPs) holds the president as the main responsible actor for the recent attacks in Turkey by stating “against Nimrods who set the square afire for their personal power; we should at least line up near the peace at least to show our side.”

In pro-governmental papers, *Star* and *Yeni Akit*, the attackers are frequently those who collaborate with terrorist groups and foreign intelligence services. In a column of the *Star*, the attackers are described as those “who collaborate with terrorist groups and foreign intelligence services” (Bulut, 2015, p.5). In a similar vein, a column in *Yeni Akit* defines the Ankara attack (2015) as “a stinking CIA operation” (Dede, 2015, p.6). Therefore, the attackers, according to the author, are expanding the proxy war among imperial powers, i.e., Russia and the US.

### Predicational Strategies

Drawing on discourses on the enemies of Turkey and lack of empathy with the government of the country, both *Star* and *Yeni Akit* columnists criticise the oppositional groups’ take on the issue and their attack against the government. The criticism in the column of *Yeni Akit* on Reyhanlı Attack turns into an overt negative evaluation: “Unfortunately, there are those sold creatures within the army who can carry fuel to this hell. They are entities who have become as monstrous as to let their people burned furiously, due to their enmity toward the JDP!” (Yılmaz, 2013, p.3).

As for the oppositional papers, criticisms directed against the government provide the content for discourses on lack of security and intelligence as well as discourses on government’s failure and unnecessary involvement in Syria related policies. After the Sultan Ahmet Attack, the criticism against the gov-

<sup>5</sup> For example see the news articles “Katliamın sorumlusu iktidardır” [The responsible for the attack is the government], which appeared on 21.10.2015 in *Cumhuriyet*, and “Cumhurbaşkanı sorumlu sensin” [The responsible is you, the president], which appeared on 15.10.2015 in *Hürriyet*.

<sup>6</sup> The editorial was published in *Cumhuriyet* on 11 October 2015 after the Ankara attack.

ernment's failure in foreign policy, particularly in Syria, is connected with the insecurity posed by Syrian refugees, as can be seen in the column from *Hürriyet*: "How many "sleeping activists" in the disguise of Syrian migrants are scattered around the cities of our country?" (Yılmaz, 2016, p.15). The same line of criticism continues in *Özgür Gündem* with an insinuation that the JDP paved the way for the attack: "Nothing is coincidental. Some prepare the ground; some others detonate the bomb" (Sarısozen, 2016, p.7).

A column in *Ortadoğu* published after the Ankara Attack 2016 accuses the government for its "adventurous" politics in the Middle East, for submitting to the PKK, for lack of security measures and not being able to govern the country as it is supposed to, in other words for everything (Çiçek, 2016, p.5). The criticism becomes so encompassing that it loses its focus and turns into a slogan: "...as usual the JDP is holding a coffin to the dead and take statements of the rest" (Ibid).

The implicit criticism of government for its lack of security measures and even involvement in the attacks is a common theme in oppositional papers through the use of predication strategies. In line with this criticism, the victims of an attack are therefore represented as the victims of the government's failure in taking necessary precautions. For instance, the victims of the Suruç attack, i.e., the youngsters who set off to help rebuild Kobane, are described with anti-capitalist and anti-system, in other words heroic qualities in the column of *Özgür Gündem*:

While the concepts of competition, getting on the gravy train, becoming rich by approaching to some [the powerful], being a cog in the wheel, as well as being 'religious and furious' are being pumped into that generation; while fascism, nationalism are rising and becoming legitimate values; they have decided voluntarily and full heartedly where to go without having the popular anxiety of 'everywhere is so crowded, where should we go for the holiday?' (Koçali, 2015, p.10).

Such descriptions are central to a related discourse on solidarity against the government, usually accompanied with emotional language use regarding the oppressed and rebellion<sup>7</sup> as well as personification of peace<sup>8</sup> and exaltation of people's victory<sup>9</sup> as can be seen particularly in *Cumhuriyet* and *Özgür Gündem* articles after the Diyarbakır and Suruç Attacks.

<sup>7</sup> Among many see a column by Celalettin Can, titled "If tyranny has cannons, cannon balls, castles, the truth has an invincible arm, an uncompromising face" (*Özgür Gündem*, 07.06.2015).

<sup>8</sup> For example see the article Diren Barış" [Resist Peace] in *Cumhuriyet*, 06.06.2015, p.1.

## Argumentative Strategies

One of the central and reiterating themes in the argumentation structure of oppositional papers is 'responsibility'. It is used as a short-cut argumentative strategy in which government is depicted as an omnipotent actor and thus the main responsible for the attack. This argument is explicitly stated in the following extract from a *Hürriyet* column after the Reyhanlı Attack: "They will not even recall the fact that for anything going wrong in a country the government is responsible" (Yılmaz, 2013, p.17).

This argumentative strategy is persistent across *Cumhuriyet*, *Ortadoğu* and *Özgür Gündem*. Closely related to this strategy are other argumentative themes like lack of pre-emption, the negligence and causality. Through such themes the government and the security forces are held responsible for being not pre-emptive or deterrent despite the intelligence of an imminent attack. Therefore a causal relationship between the 'wrong' policies of the government and the attacks is suggested. The argumentation related to pre-emption, in which the government and the security forces are accused of being not pre-emptive or deterrent despite the intelligence of an imminent attack is observed in the following question posed by a *Cumhuriyet* columnist: "Then why the security forces of the state cannot arrest bloody handed terrorists before the attack although our intelligence units have warned the security forces?" (Çetinkaya, 2013, p.5).

Notice that this argument functions on a fallacious premise or in legal terms on a disputable presumption since one cannot be arrested of a crime until there is the external element or the objective element of the crime (*actus reus*). In fact, the rhetorical question in the extract begs the question (*petitio principii*) of whether the government knew what would happen, and thereby resorts to the fallacy of making unfair use of a presupposition in asking this question (fallacy of many questions). Similarly, a column in *Hürriyet* after the Suruç attack draws a causal relationship (*topos* of causality) between the 'wrong' policies of the government and the attacks of Reyhanlı and Suruç:

But the couple of Erdoğan-Davutoğlu did all their calculations wrong, fuelled the civil war in the neighbour, overlooked the fact that the borders were turned into sieve. And the cost of their mistake has been paid by innocent people in Reyhanlı and Suruç with bomb explosions (Yılmaz, 2015, p. 19).

<sup>9</sup> For example see the article "Halkların Zaferi" [Peoples' victory] in *Özgür Gündem*, 06.06.2015, p.5.



This line of argument simply violates the relevance rule in argumentation (van Eemeren et al., 2002, p. 119), that is the argumentation is not directly (and/or is very loosely) connected to the standpoint advanced in the confrontation stage. Drawing a direct causal relationship between the government's 'failed policies' with the attacks, it appeals, in classical rhetorical terms, to the emotions of the readers, thereby rendering what is called a *pathetic fallacy*. The macro-legitimate argument in oppositional papers hinges on the *topos* of cause and effect, which draws a causal relationship between the government's Middle East policies, in general, and Syria related policies, in particular, and the terrorist attacks in Turkey.

The argumentative strategies of the oppositional papers are confronted by a set of themes used in *Star* and *Yeni Akit*, the pro government papers. Of these, treason is a significant theme. This line of argument relates to the discourse on enemies of Turkey and the oppositional groups are construed as collaborating with the enemies of Turkey. The arguments in the column of *Yeni Akit* function through a similar set of themes which are consulted in discourses on enemies of Turkey and on lack of empathy. The theme of benefit is central to these discourses: "Why would the state<sup>10</sup> set bomb in the PDP meeting? Why would it shoot its own foot while it knew this would be against itself?" (Yılmaz, 2015, p.7). This argument can be reformulated as: if an attack benefits a certain group it must have been planned or desired by them or if it does not benefit a group it must not have been desired or planned by them, vice versa.<sup>11</sup>

Pro-governmental newspapers develop a counter-discourse by interacting with the main macro-legitimate argumentation of oppositional newspapers. Therefore, another frequent theme, next to the theme of benefit, is the theme of rationality. For instance, in reference to ISIL members a columnist from *Yeni Akit* says: "They must be crazy to perpetrate this massacre!" (Şimşek, 2015, p.4). Rationality is used in this example as an argumentative strategy in which DAESH<sup>12</sup> members are represented as rational actors who would not take the risk of carrying out such an irrational act, i.e., the attack.

It is to be noted that the *topos* of rationality is closely linked with the *topos* of benefit. Thus, the author of *Yeni Akit* column responds to the question whether ISIL would want this attack with a clear "no", as ISIL would not want to con-

front Turkey and empower its enemy, the PYD. According to the author, the only actors who would like this attack for various reasons are the USA, Britain, Israel, and the oppositional groups in Turkey. All in all, the main argumentation strategy in oppositional paper rests on the claim that the attacks are the result of wrong policies of the Turkish government. Internally, this claim is linked with negligence of security measures (*topos* of insecurity) and failure to predict such attacks. In this environment, from the oppositional groups' perspective, it becomes impossible to think positively about the president and the government. The oppositional criticism as to them turn into demonization. The counter-argumentation strategy that runs through pro-governmental papers rests on the *topos* of treason, the *topos* of benefit and the *topos* of rationality, all of which deviate the focus of the discussion from the attack and turn it to "bigger threats", thereby amounting to further politicization of the issue.

## Discussion

The first and most significant conclusion of discourse analysis of the attacks is that most of the news stories are told from episodic frame. That is, they focus on the single event at the expense of neglecting the overall trends. The newspapers analysed in this paper focus on single events rather than providing a general understanding of violent extremism, motivations behind and reasons that lead to violent extremist events. This in turn leads to a partial or incomplete understanding of the attacks. Rather, the representation of the events in question is marked by the ideological allegiances of the analysed newspapers. Newspapers who are critical of the government represent the government as the sole responsible of the attack (as in most of *Özgür Gündem* articles) or accuse the government for its involvement in the attack in particular and in the surrounding conflicts in the Middle East, in general.

The second important conclusion of the discourse analysis pertains to the use of shocking images of violence to intensify the emotion related to the attack, or "visual sensationalism." For example, *Özgür Gündem* and *Cumhuriyet* use shocking images of the blast scenes to intensify their accusation of the government. Furthermore, close shot and individual images of the victims are used to support discourses on the pain of the victims and solidarity with them and against terrorism. Discourses on solidarity against terrorism, which is found widely across all papers, is a positive finding. However, calls for solidarity are embedded in sensationalism and appeal to the emotions of readers and they only provide readers with a limited understanding of what is happening around them.

<sup>10</sup> The "state" here is used interchangeably for government.

<sup>11</sup> For another example of the argument resting on the *topos* of benefit see a column from *Star* by Kartoğlu (2015).

<sup>12</sup> The term DAESH (an Arabic acronym formed from the initial letters of the group's previous name in Arabic - "al-Dawla al-Islamiya fil Iraq wa al-Sham) has also gained currency thanks to the irritation it caused among the group member for it is pronounced similar to an Arabic verb with a pejorative meaning, i.e., to crush something, to tread underfoot.

Thirdly, the common theme that runs through all oppositional papers (*Cumhuriyet*, *Özgür Gündem*, *Ortadoğu* and partly *Hürriyet*) pertains to the government's failure in preventing the violent attacks due to security and intelligence failures. Within this argumentation structure the government is represented as a hostile actor that conspires against its own people. The themes of lack of security and negligence of security forces are also conducive to this argumentation scheme. Another common theme that feeds main arguments of the oppositional papers is government's involvement in Syria and other Middle East related politics. Contrariwise, the common denominator that marks pro-governmental papers in terms of their argumentation strategies is their frequent resort to enemies of Turkey, through which they construct a sharp 'US and THEM' representation. In this line of pro-government arguments, perpetrators of the attacks are usually referred to metaphorically, through darkness metaphors. Marked also with emotional language such representations also lead to ambivalence, and what is more important these can lead to an understanding of terrorism and violent extremism as unstoppable (as in discourses on the vastness of terrorism). In parallel with discourses on enemies of Turkey, another common theme that provides content for pro-governmental papers pertains to the accusations of treason (*argumentum ad hominem*) in relation to oppositional groups. Last but not least, semiotic and linguistic choices of the newspapers used in the representation of violent extremist events are marked by their ideological stance. This leads to diversion from the main issue and hinders a thorough understanding of violent extremism and violent extremist events.

Polarisation of Turkish media along ideological and political lines is so deep that violent extremism cannot escape its effects. Turkish newspapers often portray so irreconcilable versions of the same event that reporting becomes highly marked by each newspaper's political stance. As such, there needs to be more attention paid to the style of reporting and the strategies utilized by reporters to ensure that the news is not reinforcing certain narratives of terrorist groups. A number of recommendations for media outlets can be made in this regard:

1. **Examine how the use of shocking images may reinforce narratives of terrorist groups.** For instance, vivid descriptions of the blast scene are used by newspapers to further their political criticism at the expense of contributing to extremist groups' wish to spread fear and shock. This issue needs to be addressed by media producers, perhaps by utilizing images that are less fear-inspiring and instead focus on the victims of the attack.

2. **Avoid characterizing perpetrators of the attacks in a mystical or 'heroic' manner.** The mystification of the perpetrators of the attacks rendered through metaphoric and emotional language use is another negative finding with regard to Turkish newspapers' portrayal of the attacks. This is important for two reasons: 1) because it can lead to underestimation of violent extremists by news readers; and 2) representing violent extremists as unstoppable (as in the discourses of vastness of terrorism) can lead to at a minimum, passive support of the 'success' of terrorist groups, and at a maximum, admiration, which in turn can contribute to recruitment strategies of terrorist groups.
3. **Avoid establishing a causal link between terrorist groups and political groups in Turkey where clear and factual connections are not established.** This has the potential to lead to resentment of ordinary people who support these political groups, which could lead to polarization, isolation and potentially further radicalisation of particularly younger generations for being excluded from society.

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The aim of this edited volume is to encourage written contributions to add to the small but growing body of literature on P/CVE. This volume contains research pieces by academics and practitioners, and incorporates perspectives from both theory and practice.



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