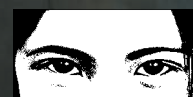


Reconceptualizing the drivers of violent extremism: an agenda for child & youth resilience



Terre des hommes
Helping children worldwide.



Author: Erica Harper

Layout: Fabien Scotti

© 2018

Terre des hommes – helping children worldwide
& WANA Institute

Executive summary

Radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism, sit at the forefront of today's policy discussions, in both Arab and non-Arab states. The fear these phenomena have instilled, their connection to wider tensions between and within religions, and how they have exposed a lack of social cohesion in seemingly resilient societies, have impacted communities in fundamental ways.

Characteristic of today's violent extremist networks is the disproportionate participation of youth. While this is not uncommon in violent extremist groups, it is unusual that the demographic is so heavily skewed towards young people, and at the same time so geographically dispersed. An even more atypical trend is the roles being played by children, off the battlefield, and as soldiers, executors and suicide bombers. These trends present myriad risks for, and impacts on, children and youth in conflict-affected, fragile and developing countries alike. The different hats they wear — actors within the conflict, bystanders in theatre, sympathisers, activists or observers — means that individuals might be simultaneously vulnerable to recruitment, mistreated within a legal system and pose a danger to national security.

In response, this report examines the phenomenon of violent extremism, and the unique vulnerabilities of, impacts on and consequences for children and youth. It starts by presenting a new way of conceptualizing violent extremism; that individuals join a violent extremist group either in rejection of/rebellion against a given state of affairs, or driven by highly personal returns, and then enabled by contextual conditions. Structural motivators include, inter alia, repression, corruption, unemployment, inequality, discrimination and hostility between identity groups. Individual incentives include a sense of purpose, adventure, belonging, acceptance, status and/or material reward. Enabling factors include the presence of extremist mentors, access to social networks with violent extremist associations, and religious ideology.

Against this understanding, we critique both legal and security measures that have evolved to protect against the threats of violent extremism, as well as 'softer' preventative measures aimed at dissuading the vulnerable from pursuing or joining violent groups. It explains

that, for the most part, such approaches have had little impact on the integrity or strength of extremist group structures. A key difficulty is that the drivers, motivations and enabling factors identified are largely rooted in chronic, political-development challenges that have no easy or quick solutions. Indeed, the pervasiveness of lack of opportunity, fragmented social identity, and exposure to social injustice, typecast the majority of youth in many countries, as vulnerable to extremism. Moreover, even if these challenges could be overcome, it does not necessarily follow that the problem of violent extremism would be extinguished.

Responses to date have also, at least in some cases, had disproportionate and negative consequences for the protection of children and young people. A key example is when security measures encroach on rights to privacy, impact freedom of speech or belief, deny fair trial protections, or are perceived as targeting a religious or ethnic group, perceptions of marginalization can be exacerbated or new grievances created.

Against these challenges, we offer a different framework for preventing violent extremism by promoting a more integrated and resilience youth society. We argue that strategists and policy-makers will need to find new ways to interrupt the pathways that lead an individual to engage in violence for political or ideological ends. More simply, if the causal drivers cannot be eliminated, and agency can/should not be revoked, then the only way to compete with extremist groups is to offer more attractive alternatives. This discussion centers around the kind of environment youth need in order to reject violent extremist groups. A key takeaway is from the literature on youth development, which highlights that young people need to be equipped with a range of experiences, skills, and assets in order to transition to adulthood and have the resilience to overcome adversity.

Building upon this, we set out areas of youth engagement with high potential for bolstering youth life satisfaction, and thus an enabling framework for preventing violent extremism at the individual level: sports and extracurricular activities; alternative pathways for 'would-be' fighters and ideological radicals to constructively, but non-violently, address their

concerns; and creative messaging that bolsters youth critical thinking skills and respects their agency. We also discuss the importance of mechanisms and facilities to provide information, guidance and support to those at risk of or wishing to disengage from a violent group, and the need to align legal frameworks with minimum rights standards and elaborate diversionary and rehabilitative structures for children and youth in the specific context of violent extremism.

For the purposes of this report, we use the terms 'violent radicalization' and 'violent extremism'. This departure away from the more common vernacular of radicalism and extremism is deliberate. It reflects the importance of distinguishing radicalization — the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs — from action pathways — the process of engaging in violent extremist behaviors. Moreover, it supports the idea that radicalism and extremism are not phenomena that necessarily can — or even should — be extinguished. Indeed, radical and extreme thinking can manifest as positive forces; they can also be understood as processes that naturally — but not universally — accompany adolescent development. Finally, it is important to highlight that while current discourse is focused on Islamist extremist groups, our definitions apply to the violent extremist phenomenon more generally. We acknowledge that the pages of history are littered with extremist groups with a range of goals — including political, religious and social ones. In all cases, extremists represent only a minute proportion of the population group whose name they claim to act in. Only when this becomes a universally-accepted truth can the fight against violent ideology commence.

Table of contents

Executive summary.....	4
Table of contents.....	6
Introduction.....	8
1. Explaining the journey from radicalism into violent extremism.....	10
1.1 From a terrorist typology to models of radicalisation.....	11
1.2 A new working theory on violent extremism.....	12
1.2.1 Identity politics: Something to fight for, someone to fight against.....	12
1.2.2 Individual motivators	14
1.2.3 Enablers	15
Networks.....	15
Religious ideology.....	16
1.3 Conclusion	17
2. Assessing the efficacy of responses against the evidence.....	18
2.1 Securitization and legal measures for countering violent extremism	19
2.2 ‘Soft’ measures for preventing violent extremism	21
2.3 The challenge of evidence-based approaches.....	23
3. A better framework for prevention: Towards a more integrated and resilience youth society.....	26
3.1 Beyond employment : Sports and extra-curricular activities	27
3.2 A safe space for dissent and radical ideology.....	29
3.3 Promoting effective use of agency.....	30
3.4 De-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration	31
3.5 Protecting children in conflict with the law	35
Conclusion.....	38

Introduction

Radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism, sit at the forefront of today's policy discussions, in both Arab and non-Arab states. The fear these phenomena have instilled, their connection to wider tensions between and within religions, and how they have exposed a lack of social cohesion in seemingly resilient societies, have impacted communities in fundamental ways. This report examines how these impacts specifically and disproportionately affect children and youth. It sets out how both security frameworks and prevention interventions have — albeit not deliberately — operated to expose these groups to rights violations and forces that render them more vulnerable to violent extremist recruitment. In searching for more effective intervention frameworks, the policy and programmatic communities have been constrained by limited understanding of how the violent radicalization and extremism process evolves, including drivers, pathways and tipping points.

One challenge is that there are no clear or universally accepted definitions that can be applied to the central concepts of radicalism, extremism and violent extremism. Radicalism, for example, can be understood benignly, as the active pursuit of far-reaching societal change, that may or may not involve violence. It is not a new phenomenon, nor is it necessarily a negative one. Indeed, most progressive social change was initiated and driven by so-called radicals; pertinent examples include the civil rights movement, feminism, and LGBT mainstreaming. Groups as diverse as Occupy Wallstreet, the Vietnam-era 'draft-dodgers' and Greenpeace

have each been referred to as radical organizations during their heyday. However, an analysis of current strategies reveals use of term as irrevocably implying violence.¹ The UK's Contest strategy, for example, explained radicalisation as a "process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, then to join terrorist groups".² The same binary understanding can be applied to the notion of extremism.³ The reasons for this are multifaceted. It can be said, however, that as the policy discourse has trended towards risk minimization, in some contexts it has been shaped by stereotypes and ethno-religious prejudice. The risks associated with this emphasize the importance of using terminology that is approached prudently and evidentially.

In response, and for the purposes of this report, we use the terms 'violent radicalization' and 'violent extremism'. radicalism and even extremism are not understood as phenomena that can — or even should — be resisted or interrupted. Indeed, radical and extreme thinking can often manifest as positive forces; alternatively they can be understood as processes that naturally — but not universally — accompany adolescent development.⁴

When articulating definitions, and while acknowledging that the current discourse is focused on Islamist extremist groups,⁵ it is important to highlight the range of goals that extremist groups ascribe to. An historical interrogation reveals religiously-motivated, non-Muslim violent extremist groups such as the KKK, groups

formed to advance liberation such as the IRA and Tamil Tigers, as well as groups that have sought to establish a new state order, such as the Red Brigades. In each of these movements, violent extremists represent only a minute proportion of the population group whose name they claim to act in.

Another characteristic of today's violent extremist networks is the disproportionate participation of youth.⁶ While the reasons for this are only scantily explored in the literature, it is likely because youth apply a different cost-benefit analysis when compared to older individuals. From a temporal perspective, youth have the most to gain from positive social change, but as they have not yet accumulated social assets, such as career trajectory and family, they have less to lose.

While this is, again, a long-standing and historical trend, an important distinction is that the demographic is so heavily skewed towards young people, and at the same time so geographically dispersed. According to the World Youth Report, the 'jihadism' promoted by al-Qaeda and Daesh is "almost exclusively associated with young men under the age of 25...";⁷ and there is little differentiation between Arab and Western recruits.⁸ The German government, for example, estimates that the average age of nationals who have left for Syria or Iraq is 26.5 years, with two-thirds being younger than 26.⁹ Even the names of some movements reflect this demographic: Al-Shabaab means Youth, and Boko Haram loosely translated means that Islam forbids foreign or 'Western' education.¹⁰ This perhaps should not be all that surprising. Groups such as ISIS promise an historically unprecedented opportunity to 'fight the good fight', find employment, marriage and social advancement, and (at least for the pious) to live a traditional Islamic life — the precise deficits youth are experiencing across the globe.

A more atypical trend is the roles being played by children.¹¹ While children have traditionally been utilized by militant groups for pragmatic reasons (they are cheaper to maintain and easier to manipulate),¹² groups such as Daesh have a more complex strategy in play. As elaborated in the Quilliam report 'The Children of the Islamic State', children are being used in battlefield, as soldiers, executors and suicide bombers.¹³ Likewise Boko Haram has recruited perhaps thousands of children, and used dozens as suicide bombers and in civilian attacks.¹⁴ This is not only efficient (the lightweight and simplified nature of modern weaponry make children as effective as adult fighters), but breaching international norms on how children are used in theatre has yielded significant propaganda returns.

The nature of these trends present myriad risks for, and impacts on, children and youth in conflict-affected, fragile and developing countries alike. The different hats they wear — actors within the conflict, bystanders in theatre, sympathisers, activists or observers — means that individuals might be simultaneously vulnerable to recruitment, mistreated within a legal system and pose a danger to national security. As such they may require protection, empowerment, resilience or a combination of these. Response strategies thus need to be both flexible and multidimensional, with a careful balancing of protection, harm minimization and reintegration. Whichever of these are prioritized, the case for intervention is compelling.

1 T Veldhuis and J Staun (and see further Crossett and Spitaletta), taken from R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', Journal of Strategic Security, No.4 Vol. 4 (2011) 2-3.
2 United Kingdom. Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales. July 16, 2015. Accessed October 18, 2017. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445977/3799_Revised_Prevent_Duty_Guidance__England_Wales_V2-Interactive.pdf.
3 Likewise, the concept of extremism, while it differs technically from radicalism only in nuanced ways, has evolved to exhibit more negative connotations, such as rigidity in thinking, intolerance to alternatives and violence. Again, the definitions posed by different scholars, practitioners and policy makers sit along a continuum. Australia's 2015 'Living Safe Together' policy, defines extremism as a willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature, whereas the UK's Prevent strategy understands extremism as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs." 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 61-67.
4 Such a transition can be observed in the policy discourse. Recently, policy-makers have moved towards differentiating extremists from *violent* extremists — the latter being persons or groups that undertake violent acts, including terrorism, to get their extremist messages heard. Violent extremist groups do not seek peaceful bargains that accommodate their demands; their claims are fundamentally non-negotiable and they apply zero sum logic. See further Global Open Days, UNAMA 'Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women's role in preventing violent extremism' (2016); 'Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' UNDP, (2016) 9 and USAID, 'Fact Sheet: The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency', p. 2.
5 The notion of an *Islamic* extremist organization warrants more detailed explanation. It is not contested that groups such as Daesh have built their organizations around a religious precept. But as Borum points out, scholars are divided between those arguing that the militant ideology put forward by ISIS has no basis in Islamic doctrine, and those who believe that the two are irreparably entwined. His point is that it is foolhardy to shy away from these debates for political correctness. Indeed, while the vast majority of Muslims do not ascribe to violent extremist ideology, it is also the case that the vast majority of attacks have been perpetrated in the name of Islam and these are tensions that need to be discussed and addressed. R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', Journal of Strategic Security, No.4 Vol. 4 (2011) 9-11.

6 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 21-3; R Barrett 'Foreign Fighters in Syria; The Soufan Group (2014) 16-17; see further 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014); *Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context Global Counterterrorism Forum* 4-5; 2016 Global Open Days, UNAMA 'Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women's role in preventing violent extremism' (2016); 'Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' UNDP, (2016) 16.
7 UN World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement (2016).
8 R Barrett 'Foreign Fighters in Syria; The Soufan Group (2014) 16-17.
9 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 50.
10 The name of the Taliban in Afghanistan stems from the Pashto word for "students"; UN World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement (2016) 88; 'Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' UNDP, (2016) 16.
11 R Barrett 'Foreign Fighters in Syria; The Soufan Group (2014) 16-17.
12 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 14, 27-8, 41-44.
13 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 14-15, 41-44.
14 'Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats', Human Rights Watch (2016).

Part 1.

Explaining the journey from radicalism into violent extremism



While estimates vary significantly, upwards of 30,000 foreign fighters, from 81 countries,¹⁵ joined violent extremist groups in Iraq and Syria between 2011 and 2017. These figures include a disproportionate youth participation, and unprecedented numbers of women and children.¹⁶ While the Middle East was the largest contributing region, around 20 percent hailed from Western states, fueling wide interest in the causal factors and enabling conditions in play.¹⁷ Indeed, how extremist groups, and Daesh in particular, managed to attract participants in such high numbers, and from such diverse demographic groups, has confounded scholars and practitioners alike. The discussion below sets out how scholars have sought to rationalize or explain these behaviors over time, and how the locus of interest has shifted from individual acts of terrorism, to processes of radicalization, and finally to compounding forces of influence.

1.1 From a terrorist typology to models of radicalisation

Early research experimented with the idea of a terrorist persona — the idea that those who engaged in terrorist activities shared some form of mental fragility, or other social dysfunction. By the early 2000s, such theories had been largely discredited;¹⁸ certainly evidence from the most recent wave of violent extremists suggests that, apart from being disproportionately young and male, there is a strong heterogeneity in fighter profiles.

Having rejected the idea that neither ethnicity, social class, religious ideology, family background, nor socio-economic status can explain participation in a violent extremist group,¹⁹ scholars moved towards the idea of violent extremist action being the end-stage of a process that started with an individual's radicalization.²⁰ Various explanatory models have been put forward, however none proved to be scientifically robust or able to explain extremist behavior in a reliable way when applied to the rise of Daesh and other Sunni extremist groups.²¹

In the mid-2010's yet another way of thinking about the relationship between radicalization and extremist behavior surfaced. Radicalization was still understood as a process that culminated in the decision to join a violent extremist group, but one that was driven by certain 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors were largely understood as the negative social, political, economic and cultural drivers of individual decision-making, while pull factors were the positive characteristics or benefits offered by a group in exchange for participation.²²

But as the Daesh phenomenon entered a fifth year, theories linking radicalization to violent extremist behavior or group membership came under increased scrutiny.²³ A first argument was that the commonly referenced drivers/push-pull factors were too generic to adequately or consistently explain radicalization within individuals. Indeed, while unemployment, political marginalization or religious ideology may have driven individual cases, these phenomena are broad-reaching, leaving models

15 Speaking at the 52nd Munich Security Conference (2017) US National Intelligence Director James Clapper stated that as at February 2016, more than 38,000 foreign fighters had traveled to Syria. Peter Neumann from the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) gives an estimate of more than 20,000; N Chowdhury Fink 'A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism' Hedayah and The Global Center on Cooperative Security, (2016), 10-12.

16 See generally, E Harper 'The Psychological Drivers of Radicalisation in Jordan' WANA Institute (2016).

17 R Barrett 'Foreign Fighters in Syria; The Soufan Group (2014) 9.

18 The work of Martha Crenshaw (1986, 1992, 2000) and more recently the research undertaken by Andrew Silke (2001, 2008) challenged the narrow psychopathological perspective, finding no evidence of a 'terrorist personality' or of 'terrorist genetics'.

19 C Angus 'Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses' NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 7-8. J Khalil and M Zeuthen, 'Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation' Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (2016), 8; Wafa' al-Bura'i, 'The role of Universities in Countering Ideological Extremism' (Alexandria, Egypt: Dar al-Ma'rifah Publishers, 2002). Claude Berrebi, 'Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians,' Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy 13 (2007), 1-36; Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova "Seeking the Roots of Terrorism," The Chronicle Review, 6 (2003). Note that this applies both to participants from Middle Eastern countries, and foreign fighters. See e.g. Mercy Corps, 'From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups,' 3-4; R Coolsaet, 'Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case (Brussels: Royal Institute for International Relations, 2016), http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/egmont.papers.81_online-versie.pdf

This is also consistent with WANA's research produced in N Bondokji and E Harper 'Journey Mapping on Selected Foreign Fighters in Jordan' WANA Institute (2017). See further, Mercy Corps, 'Thought Leadership on Youth and Conflict' (2017) and 'Examining the Links between Youth Economic Opportunity, Civic Engagement, and Conflict' (2012).

20 V Coppock and M McGovern 'Dangerous Minds? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalization and the 'Psychological Vulnerability' of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 8-10.

21 See e.g. R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', Journal of Strategic Security, No.4 Vol. 4 (2011)

22 See e.g. N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson 'Trapped Between Destructive Choices: Radicalisation Drivers Affecting Youth in Jordan', WANA Institute 2016.

23 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalization in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 31.

unable to explain why the majority of affected individuals neither radicalize nor behave violently.

A second point was that even if a set of drivers could explain radicalization, radicalization did not seem to explain violent extremism. As research has expanded, it appears that many individuals ascribe to radical ideology and/or justify the use of violence to achieve set goals, but never go on to join extremist groups or engage in extremist behavior.²⁴ Treating radicalization as a form of pre-terrorism thus risks alienating groups that may never have become violent, and may exacerbate some of the feelings that do feed extremism, such as identity polarization and marginalisation.²⁵ Moreover, crafting policy and interventions around a linkage that cannot explain practice diverts attention and resources away from more tangible or evidential explanations.²⁶

*Ideology and action are sometimes connected, but not always. Most people who harbor radical ideas and violent justifications do not engage in terrorism, just as many known terrorists — even many of those who carry a militant jihadi banner — are not especially pious and have only a cursory understanding of the radical religious ideology they claim to represent.*²⁷

Against these conceptual challenges,²⁸ the theory put forward by James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen, perhaps holds the greatest potential. Their basic proposition is

that individuals join a violent extremist group either in rejection of/rebellion against a given state of affairs, or driven by highly personal returns, and then enabled by contextual conditions.²⁹ These forces are discussed below, drawing on Khalil and Zeuthen's work, but also informed by the wider scholarship and other sources of primary research.

1.2 A new working theory on violent extremism

1.2.1 Identity politics: Something to fight for, someone to fight against

A first group of individuals are motivated to join a violent extremist organization by their desire to right or avenge injustices committed against the group with whom they identify. These identity politics centre around the notion of Sunni marginalization, occupation and oppression.³⁰ The group that constitutes the 'other', however, takes several forms. A first other against whom Sunnis identify is the US, or the West more broadly. This schism is rooted in post-World War I interventions in Arab affairs, but has been exacerbated by Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and other egregious acts overlooked by the West, as well as the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.³¹ A second other is the Shia, who Sunnis regard as the antagonist in their weakened political influence

and shrinking territorial integrity.³² A final other evolved alongside Assad's brutality against his Syrian — predominately Sunni — population. Indeed, primary data collected by the WANA Institute and MercyCorps suggest that many of the Jordanians and Syrians who joined either Al Nusra or Daesh saw themselves as agents of justice defending Syrian women and children against regime attacks.³³

How these identity politics serve as motivation to join an extremist group is a binary process. The narrowing of self-identity in reference to an 'other' creates social divisions with a high propensity for violence. This may be particularly the case in Arab cultures where Islamic political philosophy emphasizes justice over peace. As Victoroff highlights, "revenge for humiliation by an oppressor is, in fact, an ancient cultural tradition with direct link to the current violence in the Middle East."³⁴

These rifts are then exploited by extremist groups through propaganda that both validates the Sunni marginalization perception — for example, footage of civilians killed by US drone attacks, rights violations against detainees under the US practice of extraordinary rendition, Shia militias in Iraq, and the corpses of tortured Syrian children — and provides an opportunity to invoke redress. Daesh, in particular, portrays itself as a group fighting to avenge decades-long injustices,³⁵ as well as the only political group capable of countering Shia influence and protecting Sunnis in the region.³⁶

In Neumann's study of European foreign fighters, most saw themselves as "fighting against an existential threat" and had engaged with online media that depicted Sunnis being tortured, raped and killed. He concluded that their decision to fight was "less about a particular

interpretation of one's religious obligations, and more an emotional response to injustices perpetrated by an outside group."

Another form of identity politics can be seen as playing out between individuals and the state. Much has been written about the collapse of the Arab social contract and the deep sense of social injustice this has evoked.³⁷ Certainly, youth unemployment, coupled with rising prices and weak social safety nets, has profoundly impacted social mobility. But it is not poverty, socio-economics or lack of opportunity that has fueled a division between state and citizen as much as how unevenly these consequences are distributed. High levels of inequality have manifested in gross national imbalances in terms of development, opportunity and the provision of services,³⁸ feeding a narrative of purposeful marginalization and the idea that elite interests have been served at the expense of 'the rest'. Equally relevant is the role of corruption and nepotism in driving inequality, and the resultant feelings of grievance, disenfranchisement and elite domination this connotes.³⁹ These arguments find scholarly support in theories on relative deprivation — the idea that when young peoples' aspirations and frustrations collide, bringing their disadvantaged position to bear, they seek out alternatives to assert their relevance and obtain status.⁴⁰ Violent extremist groups tap into these feelings in two ways: offering to fill the extant deficit with immediate employment and future opportunity, and by offering a political model that embodies equality and meritocracy. Examples of how these forces work in practice are plentiful. Research on Boko Haram in Nigeria sets out how deeply entrenched dissatisfaction with corruption and inequality left individuals who went on to be recruited feeling 'not Nigerian', associating with their religious group or tribe, but not

24 Moreover, some members of violent extremist groups, although fewer in number, are neither deeply ideological nor do they 'radicalize' in any traditional sense. J Khalil and M Zeuthen, 'Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation' Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (2016), 8, 11-13; 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 11; R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', Journal of Strategic Security, No.4 Vol. 4 (2011) 8.

25 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 31; 6 J Khalil and M Zeuthen, 'Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation' Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (2016), 6.

26 J Khalil and M Zeuthen, 'Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation' Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (2016), 7; 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 11.

27 R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', Journal of Strategic Security, No.4 Vol. 4 (2011) 30.

28 Identifying the circumstances and enabling conditions that accompany this step is complicated by simple pragmatics. Recruitment into such groups often takes place rapidly, and in hard-to-access domains such as the Internet and guarded social networks. Once in theatre, individuals are almost impossible to access, and if they return, their testimony is generally deemed unreliable. Evidence gleaned from friends or family, or available in the form of social media posts or letters, usually relates to end-stage behavior and thus reveals little about tipping points. Moreover, relatives' post-factum explanations often tend to be skewed or compromised, either due to self-harbouring guilt or because they wish to see their loved-one return safely. See 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalization in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 12.

29 Structural motivators include, inter alia, repression, corruption, unemployment, inequality, discrimination, a history of hostility between identity groups, and/or external state interventions in the affairs of other nations. Individual incentives include a sense of purpose, adventure, belonging, acceptance, status and/or material reward (including in the afterlife). Enabling factors include the presence of extremist mentors, access to social networks with violent extremist associations, access to weaponry and/or a lack of state presence. See generally, J Khalil and M Zeuthen, 'Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation' Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (2016), vi, 9-11.

30 Some argue that Arab educational curricula, has played a role in consolidating these identity schisms, through content that glorifies violent conflict, gives religious support to violence, or promotes Muslim (Sunni) superiority. Neumann's research discusses how Western foreign fighters identified with the in-group (Sunni Muslims) facing injustice, and that in this way the conflict in Syria was seen as "fighting against an existential threat." See N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson 'Trapped Between Destructive Choices: Radicalisation Drivers Affecting Youth in Jordan', WANA Institute 2016.

31 See further Robert A. Pape, "It's the Occupation Stupid," Foreign Policy, October 18, 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/10/18/its-the-occupation-stupid/>; Will McCants "The Believer; How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer became Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Leader of the Islamic State," Brookings, September 1, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2015/thebeliever>; Martin Chulov, "ISIS: the Inside Story," The Guardian, December 11, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/sp-isis-the-inside-story> See also, Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman's research cited in R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research', Journal of Strategic Security, No.4 Vol. 4(2011) 53.

32 Hassan Abu Hanieh and Mohammad Abu Rumman, *The Islamic State Organisation* (Amman: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2015) 165.

33 N Bondokji and E Harper 'Journey Mapping on Selected Foreign Fighters in Jordan' WANA Institute (2017); Mercy Corps, 'Thought Leadership on Youth and Conflict' (2017).

34 Jeff Victoroff, "The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (2005): 28.

35 For example, see Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qa'ida* (London: al-Saqi, 2006), 44-50; Christoph Reuter, "The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State." Der Spiegel, April 18, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html>

36 Murat Özçelik, "The Two Radical Sources of Instability in the Middle East," *Council on Foreign Relations' Global Memos*, August 15, 2014. http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global_memos/p33347

37 A Malik and B Awadallah, *The Economics of the Arab Spring*, Centre for the Study of African Economies (2011) 7.

38 The income share held by the poorest 20 percent of the region is a negligible 6.8 percent of the total. Average income inequality is 38.2 percent, which is only slightly better than East Asia and the Pacific at 39.2 percent, A Jcube, J Anywawu, and K Hauske, *Inequality, Economic Growth, and Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa*, African Development Bank Group (2013) 10. See further, W Zartman, 'Need, Creed and Greed in Intrastate Conflict' in C Arnson and W Zartman (eds), *Rethinking the economics of war: the intersection of need, creed and greed* (2005) 257 and 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977 (2014) 12.

39 A Malik and B Awadallah, *The Economics of the Arab Spring*, Centre for the Study of African Economies (2011) 7.

40 Gambetta, D., & Hertog, S. (2009). Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals? *European Journal of Sociology*, 50(2), 201-230.

the state.⁴¹ Other examples come from outside the West Asia-North Africa region. Scholars from Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus have linked the appeal of Jihadism to frustration over corruption, poor governance and rights violations.⁴²

A final set of dynamics that can cause an individual to identify him/herself as in opposition with the state itself is limited civic freedoms,⁴³ generalized repression and/or state-perpetrated (or sanctioned) rights abuses, especially when this is coupled with little opportunity for rule-based recourse.⁴⁴ While this has principally been regarded as a region-specific problem, minorities living in Western states increasingly regard new security measures, such as 'stop and search' protocols and migration vetting, and as a form of targeted marginalization. Borum cites research on Muslim youth in the UK where subjects stated feeling that they were in a 'state of war', including with the media, government and broader security system.⁴⁵ Recruiting groups capitalize on such perceptions in both contexts. Al Shabaab has used footage of police harassing Kenyan Muslims, and (non-verified) images of arbitrary arrests, detentions and extra-judicial killings in their recruitment videos, while Daesh has attempted to recruit American Muslims by highlighting widely publicized police brutality and racial discrimination.

1.2.2 Individual motivators

Another group of individuals joins an extremist group, not in response to a broader injustice, but for highly personal, individualistic reasons. Some, for example, are motivated by economic gain. A study by Search for Common Ground in Nigeria found that material reward was a far more stringent motivator than religion in their decision for joining Boko Haram, and likewise that those most vulnerable to recruitment were from poorly-resourced boarding schools.⁴⁶ Similarly, but in the central Asian context, research suggests that the promise of good jobs and financial repatriation⁴⁷ "may be the single most important factor" explaining recruitment into the Syrian conflict.⁴⁸ Even in Jordan — the country that largely debunked early theories that extremist group membership was needs-driven — there is evidence that financial incentives play some role. In the WANA Institute's work with former combatants, each subject drew attention to difficult living conditions, financial constraints, unemployment and/or low salaries and irregular employment as driving their despondency.⁴⁹

Another set of recruits — predominately male youths — are attracted by the prospect of adventure; the idea that fighting alongside an insurgent group will bring with it excitement, novelty or thrill.⁵⁰ Yet another set of individuals seek self-cleansing. This particularly relates to victims of sexual assault or rape, those who have engaged in pre-marital sex, or those who identify as LGBTI. A lack of social acceptance of these groups, the absence of support networks or rehabilitation services

(in the case of sexual violence victims), coupled with religious chastisement, can drive such persons to engage in forms of religious conservatism with a view to self-correction or forgiveness-seeking.⁵¹

A final group of individuals seek reward, which might take the form of social significance, wealth or marriage. This is especially meaningful in Arab cultures where 'provision' is an expectation associated with adulthood and masculinity, and material wealth begets respect, dignity and honor. Reward as a driver has been particularly associated with those who have little scope for upwards social mobility and who are subsequently marginalized by their families.⁵² Propaganda plays an important role in such contexts. Not only do extremist groups promise to deliver the goods that the disenfranchised long to possess (employment, marriage and material possessions), they also construct a narrative of heroism by focusing on their military victories. By appealing to youth to join the 'winning team', they draw attention to the paucity of strength exercised by their own governments, as well as juxtaposing potential recruits actual and potential state of being.

1.2.3 Enablers

Networks

The above discussion outlines two groups of motivators that can lead an individual to embrace violent extremist ideology. But these cannot, alone, explain violent extremist behavior. The act of joining a violent extremist group and/or using violence to realise such ends requires opportunity, or enablers. Most obviously, opportunity implies an organisation to join. As Silke notes "people cannot become active terrorists unless they can find a terrorist group that is willing to let them join."⁵³ In this way the Syrian crisis distinguished itself from other

theatre. The openness of groups to external participation, coupled with porous borders and increased ease of travel, played a clear role in the volume and diversity of foreign recruits.

But individuals still require a vehicle to connect them with a group. A first enabler facilitating an individuals' decision to join a violent extremist group is thus peer networks and influence. Atran suggests that up to 75 percent of Daesh fighters were recruited through friendship groups; such trends have also been observed by Hegghammer, who examined Afghan jihadists⁵⁴ and Roy, who studied of European Al-Qaeda recruits.⁵⁵ Theorists explain this in terms of the psychological need for group belonging. Within groups, individuals share social bonds, reap pride based on membership and are provided with security and protection. Newly formed group identity facilitates in-group bias and a demonizing of the out-group; this tapers individuals' moral inhibitions against participating in acts of violence.⁵⁶ Peer structures are also highly influential in youth development. The scholarship establishes clear linkages between youth peer relationships and behavior, moral reasoning and analytical judgement. Peer group influence seems to be particularly significant in terms of impacting context-based morality, or the moral choices made in context-rich situations.⁵⁷

The belonging power of groups is robust; individuals will rarely leave a group unless provided with another, equally secure, membership option. It follows that some members of violent extremist groups became such simply by following the group they already belonged to. Coolset's study of Belgian Daesh fighters found that for some, their recruitment was more a matter of their kinship group shifting its alliance; as the group transferred their deviant behavior to a different context,

41 Global Open Days, UNAMA 'Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women's role in preventing violent extremism' (2016); 'Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' UNDP, (2016) 8. See also MercyCorps' research on Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria which suggested that the forces motivating youth to join the group include discontent with government and deep inequality; Mercy Corps, 'Thought Leadership on Youth and Conflict' (2017).

42 N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson 'Understanding Radicalisation: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers' WANA Institute (2016) 15.

43 Alaa' al-Rawashdeh, "Ideological Extremism from the Perspective of Jordanian Youth (in Arabic)," *Arab Journal for Security Studies and Training* 31 (2015); Ali al-Harby, "Perceptions of Saudi Youth Towards Ideological Extremism: A Sociological Study on a Sample of Students at Al-Qaseem University (in Arabic)" (Master's thesis, University of Jordan, 2011). Another is a study by Hegghammer which found that ideological and political drivers were more significant than socio-economic factors in the al-Qaeda recruits he studied. Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy* Winter 13, no. 4 (2006): 39-60.

44 See generally C Call (ed) *Constructing Justice and Security After War* (US Institute of Peace 2007).

45 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalization in the EU' IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 12; Mercy Corps, 'Thought Leadership on Youth and Conflict' (2017).

46 "Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder's Guide" Search for Common Ground (2017) 21; see also Mercy Corps, "Motivation and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth," 13.

47 Cholpon Orozobekova, "Central Asia and the ISIS Phantom," *The Diplomat*, October 2, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/central-asia-and-the-isis-phantom/>

48 Noah Tucker, *Central Asian Involvement in the Conflicts in Syria & Iraq: Drivers & Responses* (VA, USA: Management Systems International and USAID, 2015), iii. (in N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson 'Understanding Radicalization: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers' WANA Institute (2016) 15). See also MercyCorps 'Gifts and Graft' (2016) and 'Thought Leadership on Youth and Conflict' (2017).

49 N Bondokji and E Harper 'Journey Mapping on Selected Foreign Fighters in Jordan' WANA Institute (2017).

50 This theory has parallels with 'novelty-seeking theory' in psychological literature. Joining a terrorist group offers the possibility of participating in something thrilling and outside of normal experience. Sensation and novelty seeking is a normal feature of adolescence, "adolescents like intensity, excitement, and arousal... It is a developmental period when an appetite for adventure, a predilection for risks, and a desire for novelty and thrills seem to reach naturally high levels." Ronald E. Dahl, "Adolescent Brain Development: A Period of Vulnerabilities and Opportunities. Keynote Address," *Annals New York Academy of Sciences* 1021 (2004): 1-22. (in N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson 'Understanding Radicalisation: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers' WANA Institute (2016) 17).

51 E Harper 'The Psychological Drivers of Radicalisation in Jordan' WANA Institute (2016).

52 "Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder's Guide" Search for Common Ground (2017) 37.

53 A Silke and T Veldhuis 'Countering Violent Extremism in Prisons: A Review of Key Recent Research and Critical Research Gaps' Perspectives on Terrorism (2017).

54 Hegghammer "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalisation in Saudi Arabia," 49.

55 Oliver Roy, "Al Qaeda: A True Global Movement," In *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 2nd edition, edited by Rik Coolseat, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 19-25, <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/2093059/file/6769814.pdf>

56 N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson 'Understanding Radicalisation: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers' WANA Institute (2016) 18.

57 This is sometimes referred to as 'bracketed morality' in the scientific literature; Newcomb & Bagwell, 'Children's Friendships: A meta-analytic review Psychological Bulletin (1995) 117 306-347; Newcomb, A. F., Bukowski, W. M., & Pattee, L. (1993). Children's peer relations: A meta-analytic review of popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average sociometric status. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113, 99-128.

members followed with little intellectual interrogation of the circumstances they were entering into.⁵⁸ Others lack a group to belong to and find one in the world of violent extremism. Indeed, as adolescents separate from their intra-familial group in search of a broader, independent identity, they are vulnerable to the role models, cues and patterns around them. Usually, several groups — and thus identities — will be on offer — the university student, the worker, the spouse etc. However, if such opportunities are not available, groups peddling open and more inclusive identities, such as Daesh, may prove attractive alternatives. One can imagine several vulnerable typologies: the child of Muslim immigrants living in a cosmopolitan city, the socially awkward non-conformist, or the Jordanian who is unable to marry because they lack the social influence to secure one of the few job opportunities available. Against such complex structural obstacles, Daesh can be seen as offering a simple solution: a clear identity as a pure Muslim in the Caliphate, and membership to a group whose purpose is both meaningful and transformative.

*Youth easily “self-mobilize to the tune of a simple, superficial, but broadly appealing ‘takfiri’ message of withdrawal from impure mainstream society and of a need for violent action to cleanse it.”*⁵⁹

Religious ideology

Certainly, some violent extremists are motivated solely by the sense of religious obligation Daesh instills. The WANA Institute’s mapping of returnee fighters identified some individuals as acting upon their religious duty to take part in jihad. Likewise, Hegghammer, al-Harby and Abu Rumman’s work on European, Saudi and Salafi jihadists respectively, found that religious ideology played a major role in shaping behaviors and commitment.⁶⁰

For most, however, religious ideology serves the role of an enabler. Whether they are reacting to a grievance,

seeking social significance, or pursuing reward, individuals need a platform or framework within which to act on their frustrations. Daesh’s religious ideology provides just this; jihad is a modality to right wrongs committed against Sunnis, or reject the marginalization created by one’s own state. It likewise presents an appealing and righteous narrative for those seeking reward, salvation or adventure. Thus, even when individual motivations are context-specific, collective and institutionally legitimate concepts such as ‘martyrdom’ and ‘jihad’ can present themselves as a solution.

This complements Jonathan Russell and Haras Rafiq’s observation that the Daesh narrative has been so effective because it is “sufficiently malleable to apply to recruits from the West, local populations, and members of existing terrorist groups”.⁶¹ It also explains the increasing evidence that violent radicals are not usually very pious and know little about Islam,⁶² as well as emerging studies on former fighters who return when better opportunities are presented and/or renounce violent extremism (something that is unlikely to happen in the religiously indoctrinated).⁶³ In short, while religion and religious actors play a role in some cases of radicalisation, it is not a given that their influence is causative. More likely, they facilitate a transition by introducing individuals to radical ideology and providing a justification for ends-oriented violence.

Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman’s research found that religion and theological understanding may factor prominently into only a subset of cases. In the process of becoming radicalized, one in five were known to have a spiritual mentor. One in four claimed to have a spiritual sanctioner for their planned attack, but less than 40 percent claimed explicitly that their illegal actions were religiously motivated. Bakker’s examination of more than 200 militant jihadists found that less than a quarter were raised in religious families, and another quarter were

*converts to Islam. Research by Klausen on 350 jihadists in western states found that fewer than 10 percent were Muslim converts, but around 80 percent of the militants were connected to social networks that traced back to just four prominent Islamist leaders in London.*⁶⁴

1.3 Conclusion

As complicated as it might be, it is most likely that structural deficits within specific cultural and political contexts, coupled with exposure to an extremist group, its ideology, and social group support, is behind the making of a violent extremist.

A further realization is that radicalization — the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs — needs to be distinguished from action pathways — the process of engaging in violent extremist behaviors. Radical ideology may not be something that can nor should be prevented. Instead, it is when someone with radical ideology decides to join a violent extremist group, that needs to be understood and interrupted.

The absence of a set of characteristics that can identify those vulnerable to violent extremism, nor a linear pathway, is problematic from a security and programming perspective. The structural factors and individual motivators referred to above have no quick or easy solutions. Moreover, the pervasiveness of lack of opportunity, fragmented social identity, and exposure to social injustice, typecast the vast majority of youth in the region as vulnerable to extremism.

It is against these insights that responses to countering and preventing violent extremism must be judged for efficacy. The next section examines these approaches respectively.

58 Coolsaet, *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*, 3. V Coppock and M McGovern ‘Dangerous Minds? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ‘Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain’, 8-10. Bakker examined more than 200 terrorists with a view to understanding how they became involved in militant jihadism. About 20% were related through kinship, and another 18% by friendship and social bonds, emphasizing the importance of social networks in facilitating entry into the militant Islamist movement. In R Borum ‘Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research’, *Journal of Strategic Security*, No.4 Vol. 4(2011) 48. At p.53 he also cites Klausen’s research on 350 arrested European-American jihadists, where around a third were in a network (friends or family what supported jihadism), and 80 percent of the militants were connected to social networks that traced back to just four prominent Islamist leaders in London.

59 ‘Theoretical Frames on Pathways to Violent Radicalization: Understanding the Evolution of Ideas and Behaviors, How They Interact and How They Describe Pathways to Violence in Marginalized Diaspora’, *Artis* (2009) 6.

60 N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson ‘Understanding Radicalisation: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers’ WANA Institute (2016) 20.

61 N Bondokji, L Agrabi and K Wilkinson ‘Understanding Radicalisation: A Literature Review of Models and Drivers’ WANA Institute (2016) 20.

62 “It ain’t half hot here, mum,” *The Economist*, August 30, 2014 <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21614226-why-and-how-westerners-go-fight-syria-and-iraq-it-aint-half-hot-here-mum>

63 M Hassan, “Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth.”, No. 8 Vol. 5 (2012).

64 R Borum ‘Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research’, *Journal of Strategic Security*, No.4 Vol. 4 (2011) 48, 53.

Part 2.

Assessing the efficacy of responses against the evidence

2.1 Securitization and legal measures for countering violent extremism

The emergent threat of violent extremism, and in particular the global reach of terrorist recruiters, has impelled comprehensive changes in security arrangements both within and between states. This trend has strongly favoured governments expanding the powers and reach of the security sector with a view to enhanced intelligence gathering, disrupting networks and thwarting acts of extremist violence.⁶⁵ These evolutions have disproportionate and negative consequences for the protection of children and young people, along with their exposure and vulnerability to violent ideology.

They include: legislation that widens the definition of terrorism to include periphery acts such as encouragement, dissemination or training, for terrorist purposes;⁶⁶ elaborated powers of arrest and pre-trial

detention for matters involving national security, including inchoate acts;⁶⁷ widened scope for intelligence gathering, including through surveillance, compulsory disclosure and searches, as well as controlling communications and online content;⁶⁸ and the deportation or revocation of citizenship of persons – including minors – who have engaged in terrorist activity.⁶⁹

Such ‘zero-tolerance’ responses have been heavily criticized by practitioners, scholars and civil society groups. A first argument is that vague and overly broad definitions of terrorism and terrorist offences can compromise the rights to life, to freedom of opinion, freedom of movement, freedom of expression and a fair trial.⁷⁰

A further observation is that pre-emptive judicial powers, such as pre-charge detention, challenge fundamental due process rights. This has compounded implications for children, who are entitled to specific protections that take into account their age-specific

65 E Rosand ‘Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism’ The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism (2016) 8. and detailed comprehensively in Annex 4. ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 51; note that UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) which encouraged all states to ensure that their legal systems provided for the prosecution, as serious criminal offences, of travel for terrorism or related training, as well as the financing or facilitation of such activities.

66 In Belgium, for example, a 2013 Royal Decree criminalized public incitement to commit a terrorist crime, recruitment to commit a terrorist crime, providing training to commit a terrorist crime, and following a training to commit a terrorist crime. ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 20-21. In the UK, the dissemination of material deemed to ‘glorify terrorism’ is criminalized. In Germany, it is an offence to leave (or plan to leave) the country, to go to an area where a terrorist training camp is located, if the trip is aimed at committing serious seditious acts of violence. Likewise in France, planning to join a terrorist organization is an offence under law. ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 51-52. ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 20-21. V Coppock and M McGovern ‘Dangerous Minds? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ‘Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 3.

67 In the UK, suspects in terror-related offences can be detained for up to 14 days without charge, while in France, persons can be held for up to 6 days under exceptional legal provisions. See *Counter-Terrorism Act 2008* and art. 421-2-1 of the Criminal Procedure Code. V Coppock and M McGovern ‘Dangerous Minds? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ‘Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 3. Under Egypt’s 2015 counterterrorism law, prosecutors have been granted broad powers to can detain suspects without judicial review. ‘Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats’, Human Rights Watch (2016), ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 36-37.

68 V Coppock and M McGovern ‘Dangerous Minds? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ‘Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 3 ‘Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats’, Human Rights Watch (2016); ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 21; C Angus ‘Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses’ NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 14-15. In the UK, the Terrorism Act classifies non-disclosure (as it relates to terrorism) as an offence. In France, where intelligence agencies indicate that a civic entity is engaged in activities tied to radical Islamist activities (financing, proselytizing, propaganda etc.), state administrative agencies are empowered to leverage standard checks (controlling for hygiene and safety, the immigration status of staff, or financial irregularities) to facilitate more in-depth investigation. As at May 2007, more than 500 locations had been inspected and more than 2,000 persons controlled. ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 21, 26. Stop and search protocols have been the most controversial form of intelligence gathering. In the Netherlands, under the Crimes of Terrorism Act (2004) prosecutors can designate a geographic area for stop and search operations for a 12-hour renewable period. In Germany, police have the power to stop, search and question individuals provided that there is a general and assignable reason; in some states the police can declare ‘danger zones’ where individuals can be stopped and searched without specific justification. In the UK, the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) is mandated to identify suspect websites and remove them if necessary. In France, measures can be taken under the Anti-terror law to remove threatening online content.

69 The most sweeping provisions were introduced under the Australian Citizenship Amendment Act (2015), which allows authorities to revoke the citizenship of dual nationals as young as 14 for terrorist acts committed abroad, even if they have not been convicted of a crime. Revocation can also be applied to dual nationals convicted of terrorism-related offenses in the previous decade that carry prison terms of 10 or more years, without any new court process. Conduct that can trigger revocation includes voluntarily fighting with a declared foreign terrorist organization; engaging in terrorism; receiving terrorist training; or financing, training or recruiting related to terrorism. In the UK, authorities can invoke immigration powers to withdraw the citizenship of dual nationals where such citizenship is deemed to be against the public good. ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 64. In France, foreign nationals suspected of being serious threats to the public order can be deported, and if convicted can be banned from French territory. ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 25-26. Similar legislation exists in the UK; in 2014, 15 foreign nationals were excluded from the country on the grounds of national security and 15 more on the grounds of unacceptable behavior, including hate speech. ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 64. A contrary approach is applied in the Netherlands, where individuals suspected of planning to join a terrorist group can have their passports confiscated. ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 23-24. Likewise in Germany, authorities have the power to confiscate the identity documents and passports of suspected terrorists in order to stop them from travelling to locations in which there are known terrorist camps. ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 57-58.

70 Under Iraq’s 2005 Anti-Terrorism Law, the death penalty can be invoked, not only for those who commit “terrorist acts,” but also “those who enable terrorists to commit these crimes.” Egyptian legislation is similarly broad-reaching. Another example is Tunisia’s Anti-Terrorism Act (2003), which was used to try thousands of people during the rule of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in violation of basic due process rights. See ‘Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats’, Human Rights Watch (2016)

vulnerabilities. Similar objections are levelled against the reliance in new laws on ‘intelligence’ (which cannot be scrutinized and may be collected in abrogation of other basic rights) as opposed to evidence (which can and may not), to surveil, arrest and lay charges.⁷¹ In the UK, for example, an organisation can be banned,⁷² and in France foreigners can be deported, on the basis of classified intelligence reports.⁷³ Reforms that make it an offence to post certain content on the Internet or be a ‘sympathizer’ of a terrorist group,⁷⁴ have been similarly criticized as comprising freedom of speech and belief.⁷⁵ The 2014 criminal prosecution and imprisonment of a French website moderator after partially translating and publishing two issue copies of the Al Qaeda magazine ‘Inspire’, on the grounds of condoning acts of terrorism and incitement of terrorism, drew worldwide attention.⁷⁶ As the principal consumers and generators of online content, these trends disproportionately impact and expose young people.

Finally, laws enabling the revocation of citizenship have created backlash, with some arguing that they place countries in breach of their obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prevents ex-post facto legislation and guarantees fair trial standards, and the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which prohibits governments from revoking a person’s nationality if it leaves them stateless. In such cases, children can be impacted both directly and also when a parent is affected.

But it is less legalism that has most concerned scholars as much as the tensions and hostilities that such measures can and have provoked.⁷⁷ It is now broadly accepted that extremism, at least in part or for some, is a reaction to phenomena taking place within the state, such as marginalization, inequality and/or elite capture.

Where security measures encroach on rights to privacy, impact freedom of speech or belief, deny fair trial protections, or are perceived as targeting a religious or ethnic group, such perceptions can be exacerbated, narratives confirmed and/or new grievances created. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s 2015 publication ‘Gen Y jihadists’, explains how government security measures, coupled with media reporting on home grown terrorists simultaneously reinforced perceptions of Muslims as the ‘other’, as well feelings among Muslims that there is deeply-entrenched hostility against them.⁷⁸

A prime example is ‘stop and search’ powers, which disproportionately impact young people, and young Muslims in particular, thus eroding trust and confidence in police-community relations.⁷⁹ Even in Germany where racial profiling is strictly prohibited, exceptions can be granted.⁸⁰ Against such concerns, the European Parliament concluded that such policies “have in several instances been found to generate a feeling of suspicion that is unhelpful to the relations between the state and Muslim communities across Europe.”⁸¹ Similar conclusions were drawn in the UK;⁸² an investigation found that ‘stop and search’ powers were “much used and much resented, but of very limited practical assistance in the fight against terrorism”. They were subsequently repealed and replaced.⁸³

Other measures — such as French authorities’ invocation of standard controls to surveil and then sanction, predominately Muslim-run, businesses — have attracted similar scrutiny. Indeed, the closure of halal butcher shops for breaches of public health laws, places of worship for violating security regulations, and streetwear businesses for tax evasion, have been widely publicized as the outcome of discriminatory targeting.⁸⁴ Certainly, those whose livelihoods are

compromised, citizenship is revoked or persons who are deported or denied entry into a country, have the potential to become potent icons for propaganda purposes.⁸⁵

Finally, compulsory disclosure laws have operated to de-legitimize key actors within their communities, by creating fears that they could be pressured into reporting information on individuals, or suspicions that they have become covert gatherers of intelligence for the state.⁸⁶ Not only has this eroded the potential impact of these figures in the fight against violent extremism, it has also perpetuated polarization in the form of ‘us and them’ identity politics. Likewise, limiting public access to mosques and engagement with imams has had a similar impact by cutting off a main source of guidance and clarification.⁸⁷ In some locations, religious securitization means that imams no longer feel comfortable discussing radicalisation issues with youth, nor seeking guidance from their superiors, as such interactions leave them vulnerable to questioning from intelligence authorities.⁸⁸

2.2 ‘Soft’ measures for preventing violent extremism

The limits, and in some cases the unintended consequences, of the security-centric approaches described above have given rise to complementary ‘soft’ approaches, often labelled ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ (PVE), or ‘Transforming Violent Extremism’.⁸⁹ Such approaches sit more comfortably with the emerging scholarship on human security which identifies communities as vital sources of information and resistance, and thus as playing a pivotal role in countering the rise and actions of extremist groups.⁹⁰ Indeed, PVE can be broadly termed a human security-type approach; it focuses

on eliminating or ameliorating the causal drivers of radicalization and violent extremism including through measures such as awareness raising, strengthening the state-civic contract and addressing areas of basic need.

Like security-centric approaches, PVE responses have had mixed results and been the subject of wide criticism.

A first area of criticism relates to messaging. Media, propaganda and online solicitation have been widely touted as playing an important role in recruiting individuals into violent extremism. Indeed, a defining characteristic of Daesh is their use of sophisticated and professionally-produced propaganda to attract followers. Case studies of fighters have found that sensationalist media coverage, particularly that which aroused empathy for the victims of the Syrian conflict and injustices being perpetrated, was influential, at least at the initial stages of their journey into violent extremism. In other cases, recruiters actively seek out those displaying vulnerabilities on virtual fora; this might include those who express frustration at inequality, discrimination or the Syria crisis, or who endorse extremist propaganda. This can be highly effective. Youth are disposed to believe, without high amounts of scrutiny, information they find on the Internet. At the same time, Arab youth lack a sophisticated understanding of religious scripture, particularly as it relates to jihad and martyrdom, and there are few alternate, safe fora for youth to discuss or seek clarification on religious precepts or authenticate messages.⁹¹

Such concerns have led to a strong interest in ‘counter narratives’, largely drawn from within Islamic scholarship, that discredit or subjugate extremist messaging. Examples include the Qur’anic value of being patient

71 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 7.

72 Schedule 2 of the *Terrorism Act 2000*, ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 25; France Spain and Belgium have similar legislation but it is infrequently used.

73 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 25-26.

74 ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 51.

75 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 7.

76 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 21-22.

77 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 7.

78 C Angus ‘Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses’ NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016).

79 T Choudhury and H Fenwick. ‘The Impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim communities,’ *Equality and Human Rights Commission*, (2011).

80 In Germany, even though courts have strictly prohibited racial profiling in stop and search, in a number of states the police have powers to declare ‘danger zones’ (“Gefahrengebiet” or “Gefahrenort”) in which any individual can be stopped and searched without specific justifications.

81 C Angus ‘Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses’ NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 14-5.

82 s44-45 of the terrorism act Section 7, HM Government (2000) *Terrorism Act 2000*.

83 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 22-23; see specifically Section 7, HM Government (2000) *Terrorism Act 2000*.

84 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977 (2014) 26.

85 R Borum ‘Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research’, *Journal of Strategic Security*, No.4 Vol. 4(2011) 50-1. E Rosand ‘Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism’ *The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism* (2016) 7-8; Broadening definitions of terrorism and terrorism offences have impacted the space for and strength of civil society organisations in some countries This has particularity related to laws restricting or banning foreign funding, or imposing onerous restrictions on civil society engaging in PVE work. In some contexts, such laws have been used as a space to monitor or further restrict the civil society space for reasons connected to autocratic governance, arrest problem people to the government or interrupt civic action such as protests.

86 In the UK, classifying non-disclosure (as it relates to terrorism) as an offence has driven concern that members of the community likely to hold information could be pressured into disclosing information; C Angus ‘Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses’ NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 14-5; ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977 (2014) 21.

87 In Jordan, the Ministry of *Awqaf* (religious endowment) and Religious Affairs has closed mosques to the public except during prayer times.

88 Implied in such approaches is an assumption that Imams are key to recruitment, whereas most evidence suggests that they are not.

89 The importance of this transition was articulated in the UN’s call for a “more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism that have given rise to the emergence of these new and more virulent groups.” See generally L Ris and A Ernstorfer ‘Borrowing a Wheel: Applying Existing Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Strategies to Emerging Programming Approaches to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism’ *Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium* (2017).

90 Mercy Corps, ‘Policy Brief From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria’s Violent Extremist Groups’ (2015), (2015)

91 Others believe that the Internet influence is overstated, and that violent action is unlikely to originate from purely virtual ties. ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977 (2014) 7, 11, 16, 50.

see also In and Out of Extremism, Quilliam 2(2015) 5.

against oppression and poverty, the denouncement of violence and killing, and tolerance towards other groups. A danger in such approaches is that they can be perceived as attacking Islam, further driving polarization and narratives of Islam being under attack from outside forces. It could be argued that such messaging assumes that ideology is always the principal driver of extremist involvement. While this may be correct in some cases, as this paper has set out, many are motivated by marginalization and social injustice, with ideology acting only as an enabler in an already active pathway. The focus on religious narratives thus strikes some as disingenuous i.e. that policymakers are invoking religious doctrine to deal with a problem that is rooted in poor governance and elite capture.⁹²

Others argue that counter-messages simply cannot compete with the narratives produced by extremist groups such as Daesh,⁹³ which are complex, rooted in culture and history, and create a compelling context for believability and inspiration. This is consistent with scholars who argue that while the West has been very good at articulating what it is against, it has been unable to develop a compelling and attractive narrative around what it stands for. Underlying this is an assumption that the non-extremist position is superior, and that counter messages have an implicit logic that does not require explanation — an assumption that actually feeds the Daesh narrative of elitism, marginalization and exclusion.⁹⁴

Other interventions, such as awareness raising and skills building, have been perceived as inappropriately targeting youth and/or Muslims. Indeed, normal adolescent behavior closely mimics what policy-makers (and to an extent scholars) have identified as the signs or characteristics of a budding extremist. Examples include searching for role models, introspective behavior and detachment, feelings of grievance, emergent political engagement, or the exercising of self-expression

or dissent.⁹⁵ Additional characteristics listed in government ‘vulnerability assessment frameworks’ include feeling under threat, feeling discriminated against, regularly visiting mosques, and engaging in regular prayer and other religious rites. The result is that Muslim youth are often doubly typecast.⁹⁶

*Contemporary theorisations of the psychology of the ‘would-be-terrorist’ collide powerfully with institutionalised discourses of childhood vulnerability.*⁹⁷

The consequences, and implications for children and youth, scarcely need spelling out. Basing preventative interventions, not on actual actions, but on markers of future behaviors as well as laden stereotypes, can drive existing perceptions of marginalization and exclusion, as well as exacerbate suspicion and polarization within certain ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups. This was the conclusion drawn following an evaluation of the UK’s PREVENT I and II community cohesion-early detection programs; specifically, the program was found to have contributed to an atmosphere of suspicion, alienation and stigmatization, and a worsening relationship between the state and Muslim communities. Moreover, to the extent that programs targeting those classified as vulnerable have been executed by religious leaders, community-based organizations and civic action groups, their legitimacy has been compromised, potentially cutting off a vital source of information and support to those at risk of engaging in violent extremism and their families.⁹⁸

There is also evidence that when an individual feels targeted or marginalized by the state or security forces, their vulnerability to recruitment into the group that is the broader subject of the intervention can increase (usually as a means of securing protection).⁹⁹ This is consistent with the scholarship on youth delinquency which sets out a positive correlation between ‘preventative’ youth programming and subsequent misbehavior; the logic is

that when youth feel stereotyped and stripped of agency, they follow what is being presented to them as an assumed action pathway, creating a self-fulfilling path of events.

*If the implicit message of a jobs programme shifts from ‘we are supporting your livelihood because your well-being matters’ to ‘we are supporting your livelihood to stop you becoming a terrorist’ this carries risks.*¹⁰⁰

But approaching vulnerability from a broader perspective has been equally criticized. As discussed above, the commonly presented drivers — lack of opportunity, inequality and political grievance — are broad and capture, in some cases, the majority of a population group. PVE interventions geared towards enhancing political agency or expanding employment are often scarcely distinguishable from the development programs that came before them, and hence have limited potential to prevent extremism.

Responding to other categories of drivers pose programming dilemmas. The ruling bargains that have kept Arab states stable rely upon limited political freedoms and space for dissent. Thus, even if there is a causal link between such freedoms and extremism, power holders have strong vested interests in maintaining the status quo. There is also a valid argument that any interventions likely to weaken existing power distributions, risks a diminution in stability, which might prove more costly in the overall fight against extremist violence. Other dilemmas are more structural; there is no clear guidance or experience on how to program effectively to ‘build identity’ or address despondency, for example.¹⁰¹

2.3 The challenge of evidence-based approaches

The above examination provides insight into how we reached the status quo, and highlights that clear and evidence-based direction on how to design and execute PVE programs is in short supply. Quite the contrary, lack of understanding around what makes a violent extremist

has made way for programming that has either been overly broad or inappropriately targeted, resulting in ineffectiveness, or an exacerbation of existing tensions. Fear, both of large scale terror attacks as well as the ‘boy next door’ nature of the Daesh threat, and concerns around diminutions in stability, have driven hyper-vigilant security responses. There is no doubt that these have yielded a level of effectiveness, although in the absence of a counter-factual, it is impossible to speculate on the scope. Over time, however, we have learned that while people may be safer, this is at the cost of other freedoms. Moreover, as causal drivers are not being ameliorated, a larger threat is arguably evolving.

The challenge is that such drivers are structural development, governance and geopolitical issues that — if solvable — will involve decades-long, resource-heavy interventions. Livelihoods and employment opportunity provides a clear example of the difficulties, risks and vested interests that belie solutions. While it is clear that boosting employment is not a direct or complete solution to preventing violent extremism (those departing for Syria are most often employed, even if not satisfactorily), livelihoods do seem to play a role in the decision to join a violent extremist group. Some are driven by direct financial need; for others lack of opportunity feeds into an overall sense of despondency, desperation, humiliation and lack of hope for the future. It follows that opportunity — whether this be in the form of paid employment or other forms of entrepreneurialism — may offer some protection against extremist group involvement. Most simply, employment leaves less time for youth to engage in dangerous online activity, meet with recruiters or lament their situation to sympathetic listeners. There is also evidence that the employed generally have fewer incentives to engage in unsocial behavior and violent actions, including participation in violent groups. This is because employment raises the costs of violence, especially if the latter is meant to achieve economic or financial benefits; more generally because access to a steady income incentivizes individuals to maintain the status quo.¹⁰² More broadly, employment can help to mitigate inequality, lack of access to essential services and social exclusion. It is

92 A Glazzard ‘Losing the Plot: Narrative, Counter-Narrative and Violent Extremism’ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (2017), 6; In and Out of Extremism, Quilliam 2(2015) 26.

93 A Glazzard ‘Losing the Plot: Narrative, Counter-Narrative and Violent Extremism’ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (2017), 3, 55.

94 A Glazzard ‘Losing the Plot: Narrative, Counter-Narrative and Violent Extremism’ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (2017), 2, 6, 11-15; “Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder’s Guide” Search for Common Ground (2017) 29-30.

95 V Coppock and M McGovern ‘Dangerous Minds?’ Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ‘Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 11-14.

96 C Angus ‘Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses’ NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 14-5.

97 V Coppock and M McGovern ‘Dangerous Minds?’ Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the ‘Psychological Vulnerability’ of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 11.

98 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 29.

99 ‘Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats’, Human Rights Watch (2016).

100 L Ris and A Ernstorfer ‘Borrowing a Wheel: Applying Existing Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Strategies to Emerging Programming Approaches to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism’ Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium (2017) 11

101 See generally J Khalil and M Zeuthen, ‘Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation’ Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (2016).

102 World Bank, World Development Report, 2011; P Collier and A Hoeffler, “On Economic Causes of Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 50, no. 4 (1998) 563–573.

also considered essential for growth and poverty reduction,¹⁰³ and can foster state effectiveness by extending the tax base and allowing for greater social service provision.¹⁰⁴

But raising opportunity — particularly in Middle East contributing states — is easier said than done. Across the region, rentierism, proximity to conflict, bureaucracy, corruption and topography, have worked together to dissuade investment, prevent new market emergence and complicate steady economic growth. This has left economies unable to generate sufficient internal productive capacity to keep those able and willing to work — particularly youth — employed. To reverse these trends and create a leaner economic framework, governments need to nationalize employment, roll back subsidies, and reduce the size of the informal economy and public sector. But relief will not come quickly nor painlessly. Market competitiveness and productivity will take time to build and during this period living standards are unlikely to improve markedly. In the interim period, the factors driving youth involvement in violent extremism, thus remain virulent.

Another example of ‘restructuring pains’ is the spillover effects that have followed Jordan’s efforts in education reform.¹⁰⁵ To improve the competitiveness of the workforce, and reduce reliance on migrant workers, the Tawjihi (leaving certificate) standards and requirements were tightened. The short-term result however, was that hundreds of students failed the Tawjihi, leaving them unable to move on to university studies. Humiliated and without gainful employment options, scores committed suicide in both 2016 and 2017; there is also evidence that others joined violent extremist groups.¹⁰⁶

The states producing the highest numbers of violent extremists thus sit at a crossroads. While reforms pose a risk, the non-sustainability of the governance model means that, as long as the status quo remains in play, new risks evolve. Against the urgent need for better frameworks for identifying and responding to persons — especially children and youth — vulnerable to violent extremism, the following sections set out emergent good practices and new ideas in the areas of prevention, legal prosecution and de-radicalisation-reintegration.¹⁰⁷

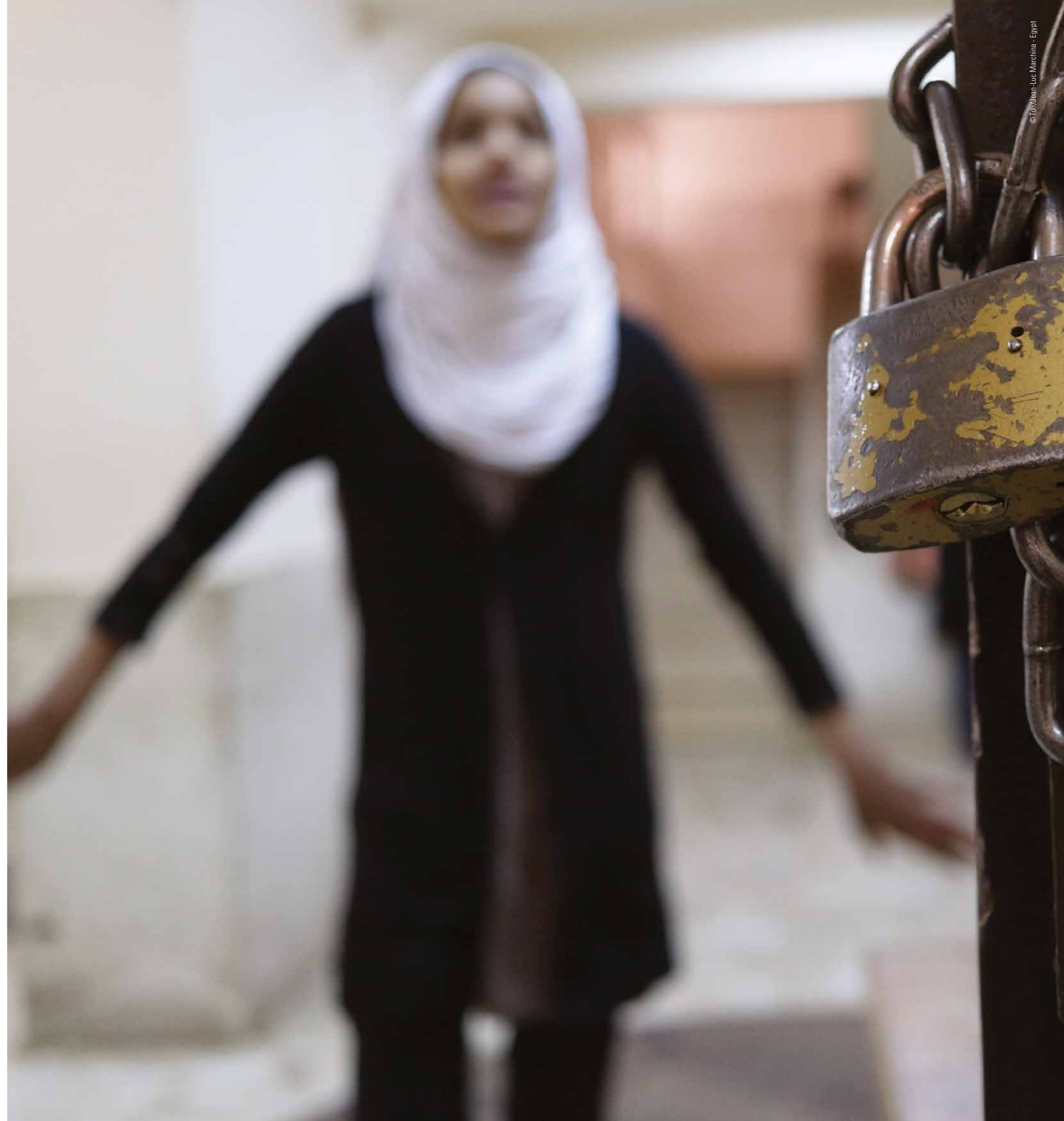
103 “The Nexus of Economic Growth, Employment and Poverty Reduction : An Empirical Analysis,” Working paper, (2004), International Labour Organisation; Recovery and Reconstruction Department, http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_120690/lang-en/index.htm.

104 J Fearon and D Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90.

105 The logic behind such reforms is not in question. Despite Jordan’s high levels of educational attainment, the competencies available in graduates do not link closely enough to the needs of the labour market. In some cases, companies still need to reach to the international market to find staff with the required skill sets and experience.

106 Neven Bondokji and Erica Harper *Journey mapping of selected fighters from the districts of Ma’an and Zarqa in Jordan* (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017), <http://wanainstitute.org/en/publication/journey-mapping-select-jordanian-foreign-fighters>

107 C Angus ‘Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Resposes’ NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 17-18.



Part 3.

A better framework for prevention: Towards a more integrated and resilience youth society



This paper has described the transformations that the PVE sector has undergone in recent years, both in terms of how the problem of violent extremism is conceptualized, and how it might be responded to. It has also offered a new way of understanding violent extremism — as a phenomenon resulting from structural drivers, individual motivations and enabling factors, that work together in a non-linear and reactive process. It has also set out the deficits within current response strategies and highlighted the unintended consequences that can result.

A key difficulty is that the drivers, motivations and enabling factors identified are largely rooted in chronic, political-development challenges that have no easy or quick solutions. Even if these challenges could be overcome, it does not necessarily follow that the problem of violent extremism would be extinguished.

It is likely that strategists and policy-makers will need to look beyond such deficits, to find new ways to interrupt the pathways that lead an individual to engage in violence for political or ideological ends. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that many, if not most, violent extremists are not brainwashed or coerced, but are exercising agency in rejection of injustice, religious marginalization, despondency, exclusion and other grievances.¹⁰⁸ Preventing people from exercising such agency is fraught with difficulty; the lesson learned from the past five years is that modern recruitment networks are very difficult to quash and to the extent that people want to join the fight, groups will find ways to engage them. In cases where individuals are unable to or prevented from travelling to a conflict theatre, they may perpetrate acts of violence in their domestic locales.

If the decision to join a violent extremist group is the result of a cost-benefit analysis, a more effective approach may be to adjust the risk-return assessment in favour of non-extremist options. More simply, if the causal drivers cannot be eliminated, and agency can/should not be revoked, then the only way to compete with extremist groups is to offer more attractive alternatives.

The question then becomes what kind of environment do youth need in order to reject violent extremist groups?

In answering this, the literature on youth development may prove instructive. It highlights that youth life satisfaction strongly correlates with adaptation, can mitigate the negative effects of stressful life events, and counters the development of psychological and behavioral problems. What translates into life satisfaction is the more challenging question. The literature identifies supportive parenting, challenging activities, positive life milestones, and high-quality interactions with significant others, as all contributing to life satisfaction and other subjective notions of wellbeing.¹⁰⁹ Young people also need to be equipped with a range of experiences, skills, and assets in order to transition to adulthood positively.

Building upon this, the following sets out areas of youth engagement with high potential for bolstering youth life satisfaction, and thus an enabling framework for preventing violent extremism at the individual level: sports and extracurricular activities; alternative pathways for ‘would-be’ fighters and ideological radicals to constructively, but non-violently, address their concerns; and creative messaging that bolsters youth critical thinking skills and respects their agency. We also discuss the importance of mechanisms and facilities to provide information, guidance and support to those at risk of or wishing to disengage from a violent group, and the need to align legal frameworks with minimum rights standards and elaborate diversionary and rehabilitative structures for children and youth in the specific context of violent extremism.

3.1 Beyond employment: Sports and extra-curricular activities

Precisely because employment is neither an easy fix, nor a complete solution, complements need to be set in place. Indeed, employment is not solely about income, just as education is not only about future employability — these venues also provide connectedness, direction, social and bridging capital, and relief from boredom. Pursuits that deliver such opportunities, including sports and extra-curricular activities, have been largely unexplored and often discounted as too peripheral to contribute to preventing violent extremism. The

108 Global Open Days, UNAMA ‘Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women’s role in preventing violent extremism’ (2016); ‘Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity’ UNDP, (2016) 13.

109 Nansook Park, The Role of Subjective Well-Being in Positive Youth Development The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Volume: 591 issue: 1, 25-39 (2004).

literature, however, suggests that such activities provide experiences from which youth develop important emotional, social and inter-personal competencies which are needed to cope with and overcome difficult life experiences. Reciprocally, for youth experiencing identity or formational crisis, the opportunities, self-learning and networks that accompany having meaningful ‘stuff to do’ can be remedial by countering lack of purpose and rolelessness. This may be particularly relevant in the West Asia and North Africa regions where ‘waithood’ — the lengthening transition from youth to adulthood — is a particular problem. According to the World Youth Report, when youth face delays in the progression from school to work, marriage and family formation, voluntary or organized activity can act as a ‘gap-filler’ while also exercising efficacy and agency.¹¹⁰

In particular, there is strong empirical evidence that sport — particularly organized and competitive team sports — proffer individual skills such as cooperation, responsibility, self-control and commitment.^{111,112} Research by Danish et al. suggests that the drive to excel promotes self-knowledge and strategies for controlling strong emotions.¹¹³ At least in part, this is because sport provides an opportunity for “managed risk-taking” and facilitates physical encounters on neutral territory where aggression can be regulated, promoting rapprochement and reconciliation between opposing parties.¹¹⁴ This combined with experience in compromise, authority and rule compliance, better position youth to cope with

unfavorable or challenging life events.¹¹⁵ Indeed, sports’ rule-based framework can provide youth with a sense of ‘lived justice’, hence reintroducing norms of societal organization and cohesion.¹¹⁶

Beyond individual ends, sport can bestow broader social benefits. Because teams have a ‘role for everyone’,¹¹⁷ sport is a socializing agent where youth can forge relationships and experience integration within a community. Sport also offers youth an opportunity to diversify their social networks, facilitating connections and social mobility.¹¹⁸

Sports’ greatest potential, however, is perhaps how social bonding can permeate groups marked by differences in socio-economics, ethnicities and viewpoints. At its core, sport is equalizing and democratic, overlooking variances in race, wealth or group membership. Indeed, some research has found correlations between youth sport participation and notions of inter- and intra-group responsibility, belonging and active community membership.¹¹⁹ These include studies of young refugees and immigrants participating in sports with members of other cultural groups.¹²⁰

As in the case of sport, extra-curricular activities geared towards youth tend to yield positive outcomes both at the individual and interpersonal levels.¹²¹ Out-of-school pursuits support adolescent maturation, including behavior control,¹²² and provide a context for

identity exploration and development.¹²³ Particularly when structured towards measurable goals, youth activities can promote initiative,¹²⁴ as well as give young people skills in developing plans, time management, contingency thinking and problem solving.¹²⁵ At the interpersonal level, activities facilitate social connections and relationships beyond existing peer networks, including with people from different ethnic, social and economic groups, adults and the broader community. These relationships provide a source of social capital, which can unlock information pathways and opportunities pertaining to higher education and employment.¹²⁶

In short, beyond giving youth something to do, sports and extracurricular activities provide a context for young people to acquire valuable social capital and bonding social capital. Extra-familial networks allow youth to understand themselves relative to others, and experiment with social relations in safe surroundings, including by resolving conflict, engaging in debate and raising ideas for validation. These relationships are closely related to ‘bridging social capital’ in social-science literature — the notion that forging relationships with people in alternate social networks, who possess different resources, knowledge and experiences, can help unlock opportunities and promote diversity in thinking. Equally important is the confidence that these networks will become operable in situations of adversity, stress and/or uncertainty. Where strong social assets structures are in play, they can somewhat compensate for, or offset deficits in, socio-economic enablers such as livelihoods opportunity, participatory governance and civic services.¹²⁷

3.2 A safe space for dissent and radical ideology

A key observation from the more recent literature is that radical ideology is more widespread than initially

understood;¹²⁸ indeed, it could be argued that the wave of populism observable in Western states today constitutes a form of radicalism. A further observation is that even if radical thinking could be prevented or ‘programmed away’ (which is highly unlikely), this may not be effective in curtailing violent extremism — the connection between radical ideology and violent extremism is too tenuous. (Although steps such as removing educational content that glorifies or idealizes violent conflict, or gives religious support to violence, is essential).

The more tangible connection might be between radical ideology and notions of exclusion and marginalization. As illustrated above, those who hold radical beliefs can have their perceptions reinforced if they are targeted, through ‘prevention’ programs, or discriminated against, for example by ‘stop and search’ protocols or immigration screening. This can drive existing victimization narratives and lead individuals to an extremist group, either as an act of dissent, to rebut perceived injustice, to secure protection, or to find group inclusion. In short, most radicals do not become violent extremists, but they are more likely to if they feel scapegoated or isolated because of their ideology. The lesson to be drawn is the importance of not inadvertently pushing radicals into extremism. Societies need to be sufficiently inclusive that those harbouring radical views feel that they have a safe space to exist, albeit with clear red lines.¹²⁹

Another recent observation is that a decision to join a violent extremist group is more often the result of a cost-benefit analysis than brainwashing or coercion. In many cases individuals leave their family, jobs and other commitments and/or outlay significant personal resources to join an extremist group.¹³⁰ That the ‘pull of the fight’ outweighs these responsibilities and emotional commitments suggests that for individuals who are determined to ‘do something’, neither opportunity — whether that be employment or activities — nor

110 UN World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement (2016) 113.

111 UN Report on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (2005).

112 M Gatz, MA Messner and SJ Ball-Rokeach (2002) ‘Paradoxes of youth and sport’, State University of New York Press.

113 SJ Danish, AJ Petitpas and BD Hale (1993) ‘Life development intervention for athletes: Life skills through sports’ *The Counseling Psychologist*, 352-385.

114 ‘Thinking Outside the Box: Exploring the Critical Roles of Sports, Arts, and Culture in Preventing Violent Extremism’ Global Center on Cooperative Security and Hedayah 2015, 4-5

115 A Johns, M Grossman and K McDonald ‘More Than a Game: The Impact of Sport-Based Youth Mentoring Schemes on Developing Resilience toward Violent Extremism’ *Social Inclusion* 2014, Volume 2, Issue 2, 64.

116 A Johns, M Grossman and K McDonald ‘More Than a Game: The Impact of Sport-Based Youth Mentoring Schemes on Developing Resilience toward Violent Extremism’ *Social Inclusion* 2014, Volume 2, Issue 2, 3.

117 A Johns, M Grossman and K McDonald ‘More Than a Game: The Impact of Sport-Based Youth Mentoring Schemes on Developing Resilience toward Violent Extremism’ *Social Inclusion* 2014, Volume 2, Issue 2, 3

118 See e.g. J Fraser-Thomas, J Coté and J Deakin ‘Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy’ Vol. 10, No. 1, February 2005, 19–40, 24-5; A Smith, ‘Peer relationships in physical activity contexts: a road less traveled in youth sport and exercise psychology research’ *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 4 (2003) 25–39

119 A Smith, ‘Peer relationships in physical activity contexts: a road less traveled in youth sport and exercise psychology research’ *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 4 (2003) 27.

120 A Johns, M Grossman and K McDonald ‘More Than a Game: The Impact of Sport-Based Youth Mentoring Schemes on Developing Resilience toward Violent Extremism’ *Social Inclusion* 2014, Volume 2, Issue 2, 64 67.

121 A Balyer and Y Gunduz ‘Effects of Structured Extracurricular Facilities on Students’ Academic and Social Development’ *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (2012) 4803 – 4807; A Millie, J Jacobson, E McDonald and M Hough ‘Anti-Social Behaviour Strategies: Finding a balance’ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Policy Press, UK (2005).

122 D Hansen, RW Larson and JB Dworkin ‘What Adolescents Learn in Organized Youth Activities: A Survey of Self-Reported Developmental Experiences’ *Journal of research on adolescents* volume 13, Issue 1 March 2003 25–55.

123 AS Waterman ‘Identity Creation: Discovery or Creation?’ *Journal of Early Adolescence* 4:4 (1984); See further J Younis, JA McLellan, Y Su and M Yates ‘The Role of Community Service in Identity Development: Normative, unconventional and Deviant’, *Journal of Adolescent Research* 14(2) (1999); J Younis and M Yates *Community Service and Social Responsibility* Uni Chicago Press (1997).

124 RW Larson Towards a Psychology of Positive Youth Development *American* 55(1) (2000).

125 B Rogoff, J Baker-Sennett, P Lacasa and D Goldsmith ‘Development through Participation in Sociocultural Activity’ *New Directions for Child Development* 67 (1995).

126 Hollande and Andre ‘Participation in ExtraCurricular Activity in Secondary School: What is Known What Needs to be Known?’ *Review of Educational Research* (1987) JS Eccles and J Templeton ‘Extracurricular and After-School Activities for Youth, University of Michigan (2002).

127 A Johns, M Grossman and K McDonald ‘More Than a Game: The Impact of Sport-Based Youth Mentoring Schemes on Developing Resilience toward Violent Extremism’ *Social Inclusion* 2014, Volume 2, Issue 2, 59. see also K Sherrieb, FH Norris, and S Galea ‘Measuring Capacities for Community Resilience’ *Soc Ind Res* (2010) 99: 227.

128 ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 50.

129 Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context Global Counterterrorism Forum 4-5.

130 In WANA’s work with returnee combatants, each of the fighters had commitments; the subjects were married, parents to young children and/or were their family’s principal breadwinner. See N Bondokji and E Harper ‘Journey Mapping on Selected Foreign Fighters in Jordan’ WANA Institute (2017).

enhanced securitization, is likely to be persuasive. Instead the risk-return assessment they make needs to be adjusted in favour of non-extremist options. A clear entry point is thus to enhance the availability of alternative pathways for ‘would-be’ fighters and ideological radicals to constructively, but non-violently, address their concerns.

The idea that frustration and radical thought are positive impulses that can be constructively rechanneled away from violent ends, is a novel one, and one that has certain logical appeal. Few would deny that chronic social injustice in Arab states, Sunni geopolitical marginalization and the Syrian war are all valid sources of angst that have largely been ignored in PVE response strategies to date. It is also clear that some of those who venture into violent extremism do have altruistic intentions, perceive their actions to be utilitarian, or are looking for to attach themselves to structures that allow them to feel politically empowered.¹³¹ This all suggests that entry points such as public discussion and debate, opportunities to engage in protest,¹³² civic action and community service, may prove cathartic and/or constructive.

Indeed, the scholarship on civic action suggests that youth don’t just need something to do, they need something meaningful to do — action geared towards the structures, processes and practices that have relevance to them.¹³³ Studies have positively correlated civic action with confidence, responsibility and agency, alongside important assets for inter-personal development, such as a shared identity, expanded networks, and participatory confidence i.e. the ability to work successfully with others through cooperation and compromise.¹³⁴ A particularly relevant outcome is the insight into processes of community development that participants gain. Because they are able to “see and understand firsthand” the linkages between public interest deficits and their implications, as well as the modalities for closing or ameliorating such deficits,¹³⁵ youth acquire a confidence that they have the agency to make tangible and impactful changes both locally and in governance structures.

But for civic action to be effective and not counter-productive, the space provided needs to be genuine. Authorities would be well advised to acknowledge the validity of certain widely-held perceptions and, where possible and appropriate, take remedial action. Examples include efforts to eliminate corruption and nepotism, communicating (even if this falls short of endorsing) popularly-held viewpoints at global platforms, or facilitating opportunities to directly assist victims of the Syria crisis.

3.3 Promoting effective use of agency

As discussed above, messaging and propaganda has been pivotal in ‘pulling’ young people into violence, but counter messaging has been criticized as being insufficient and, in some cases, counterproductive. Following on from the idea that young people who join extremist groups are acting with intent and agency, a clear deficit is the absence of tools to make better, non-violent, choices.

The evidence suggests that youth do not want to be persuaded; they need to be informed, and to be provided with tools to make better, and non-violent, decisions.¹³⁶ Currently, marginalised youth (both in the Middle East and the West) lack practical skills needed for living in and contributing to a cohesive and context-informed society. These include critical thinking, constructive debate and analysis, along with values such as tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution. Building such skills will require curricula reforms as well as improved pedagogical techniques, both of which are discussed extensively in the extant literature. In Arab states, authoritarianism in the classroom and doctrinal approaches, which tend to inculcate obedience and rote learning, need to be replaced with teaching environments that promote creative thinking, safe idea experimentation, and mutually respectful dialogue. A best practice might be drawn from Tunisia, where the youth-led association

Tunisians Against Terrorism worked with the Ministries of Youth, Education and Interior, as well as members of the National Assembly, to develop a curriculum that includes critical thinking skills, analysis and peaceful interpretations of Islam.¹³⁷ Another good practice from Germany is the Live Democracy program, which aims at reinforcing tolerant attitudes, antiviolenace and all forms of right-wing extremism.¹³⁸

The complement to critical thinking is having safe spaces to discuss issues of radicalism, extremism, political dissent and active recruitment.¹³⁹ A final complement may be making available credible and evidence-based information on the actions of violent extremist groups, thereby setting in place the conditions by which extremist groups delegitimize themselves. In-theatre realities such as internal corruption; brutality against minorities, children and women; and that the vast majority of the conflict’s victims are Sunni Muslims, may be equally effective at pulling sway, provided that the recipients of such information have the skills to interpret, weigh and contextualize it. A key asset in this regard may be returnees themselves, whose experiences might be harnessed to refute propaganda and deter would-be fighters from travelling to Syria.

3.4 De-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration

Even before the military defeat of Daesh, the attention of countries of origin had shifted from how to identify violent extremists, to how they should be dealt with. As at the end of 2017, between 100-500 Jordanians are said to have returned from Syria, suggesting that more than 1,000 others may still attempt repatriation. In the UK and Germany, at least 1,200 people had travelled to Syria, while only around 350 have returned.¹⁴⁰ There is also the issue of children, taken to or born in Daesh-held territory,¹⁴¹ who may seek to return with their parents. Before its fall, there were at least 50 children from

the UK growing up in Islamic State, and around 31,000 pregnant women.¹⁴² Such children have had prolonged exposure to violence, may never have attended mainstream school and have been indoctrinated in extremist ideology with no competition or alternate influences.

The key concern is the risks posed by weapons trained, violence-indoctrinated individuals, and even the potential of an ‘internationalist Islamic movement’.¹⁴³ Experience from the Afghanistan ‘jihad’ is that returnees can bring with them schools of violent ideology that can be difficult to neutralize.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, for those exposed to conflict and brutality and heavily indoctrinated into takfiri ideology, it is difficult to know if rehabilitation has occurred, especially where the challenges that motivated their departure are still present. And certainly, the risks of releasing unsuccessfully rehabilitated individuals into society are severe. There are anecdotal accounts of rehabilitation programs in Saudi Arabia where extremists quickly returned to violence; Jordan’s al-Zarqawi is often named as the poster child of failed rehabilitation. Moreover, there is mounting evidence that staged defection is a tool used by Daesh.

Others argue that such risks are overblown. One study highlights that similar concerns were raised in relation to the conflicts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Gaza, Libya and Mali, but never came to fruition.¹⁴⁵ Others cite the literature on militant trajectories which suggests that “continuities in the commitment after direct involvement in violent conflicts are the exception rather than the norm”.¹⁴⁶ Some may continue their struggle, but in a non-violent way, but most will abandon it. In the WANA’s Institute’s work with returnee fighters, none appeared to remain radicalized or pose a risk in terms of group reattachment. All self-described as traditional Salafis, but not Jihadi Salafis (the school practiced by groups like al-Qaeda, al-Nusra and Daesh), and only one remained in touch with the sheikhs that influenced his decision to go to Syria.¹⁴⁷ Whichever theory holds true, strategies for managing

131 UN World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement (2016) 90-91.

132 Global Open Days, UNAMA ‘Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women’s role in preventing violent extremism’ (2016); ‘Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity’ UNDP, (2016) 22.

133 MA Zimmerman ‘Psychological Empowerment: Issues and Illustrations’ *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23:5 (1995)

134 M Cargo, GD Grams, JM Ottoson, P Ward, LW Green (2003). “Empowerment as fostering positive youth development and citizenship.” *American Journal of Health Behavior* 27(Supplement 1), 66-79.

135 “Volunteering and Social Activism: Pathways for Participation in Human Development” Joint publication of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and UNV, 2008, executive summary.

136 Global Open Days, UNAMA ‘Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women’s role in preventing violent extremism’ (2016); ‘Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity’ UNDP, (2016) 21.

137 “Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder’s Guide” Search for Common Ground (2017) 35.

138 N Benotman and N Malik ‘The Children of the Islamic State’ *Quilliam* (2016) 10-13, 78. ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 74.

139 In and Out of Extremism, *Quilliam* 2(2015) 33.

140 ‘Children and Counter-Terrorism’ UNICRI (2016) 36-37.

141 ‘Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism-Related Offenses’ *Global Counterterrorism Forum*, 2.

142 N Benotman and N Malik ‘The Children of the Islamic State’ *Quilliam* (2016) 8.

143 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 15.

144 R Barrett ‘Foreign Fighters in Syria: The Soufan Group’ (2014) 31.

145 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 14.

146 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 7; Skoutelsky 1998

147 N Bondokji and E Harper ‘Journey Mapping on Selected Foreign Fighters in Jordan’ WANA Institute (2017).

returnees will need to be devised. While many returnees are likely to have committed crimes — potentially ones that violate international law¹⁴⁸ — it is unlikely many will be prosecuted due to evidentiary deficits.¹⁴⁹

Even if they could, most countries of origin do not have the capacity, nor the extraordinary legal mechanisms, required to detain, investigate and prosecute large numbers of returnees.¹⁵⁰ Most likely a screening process will need to be set in place followed by supervision, rehabilitation and — when individuals are deemed to not pose a threat in terms of violence, recruitment, or group reattachment — community reintegration. Even those who do serve prison sentences, most will eventually be released. Rehabilitation strategies thus need to be at the fore of strategy development, both to prevent people languishing in prison in contravention of their rights, or being released without proper support.

Rehabilitation structures and mechanisms are equally important for those who have not been in theatre but who are at risk of joining a violent extremist group.¹⁵¹ Anecdotal studies of fighter trajectories suggest that individuals usually show outward signs. Parents, spouses and friends, however, are often sometimes oblivious to them, or act in non-constructive ways. In some cases, they lack the skills or tools needed; at other times, they fear the consequences involving authorities.¹⁵² One survey conducted by the Jordanian NGO, NAMA, found that only one-third of respondents would take action in a situation where an acquaintance was leaning towards

joining an extremist/terrorist organization, either by offering advice, informing their parents, or reporting the situation to authorities.¹⁵³ A second study of 62 families of men who had left, or attempted to leave, for Syria, revealed that in all cases parents were unaware of their son's radicalization nor of the risk posed by extremism in their community. Critically, however, even had they known, they would not have contacted authorities due to fear and mistrust.¹⁵⁴

Early intervention services should sensitize key actors on the ideologies and extremist recruitment techniques that children and youth may be exposed to, educate on how to detect the early signs and stages of radicalization, and provide tools to be able to speak out against violent extremism. Safe channels, by which individuals can seek advice on questions pertaining to religious ideology or report cases where an individual is showing signs of radicalization, are also needed. These might include networks of trained imams, teachers, health care professionals and community leaders, or telephone or SMS help lines staffed by trained personnel.¹⁵⁵ Such channels must be clearly differentiated from securitized modalities of countering violent extremism. Unless it is clear that discussion of violent extremism and early intervention will be dealt with in a proportionate and assistance-g geared manner, the requisite relationship between individuals and authorities will not evolve and interference may even prove counter-productive.



Despite the need for mechanisms to assist returnee and non-returning violent extremists, as well as UNSCR 2178 which calls on countries to develop and implement rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returning foreign terrorist fighters, few have been developed.¹⁵⁶ For those structures that are operational, the details, procedures and protocols are rarely disclosed.¹⁵⁷

There is likewise little scholarship on de-radicalization processes, techniques or theories. Given that scholars are still struggling to understand the process that makes a violent extremist, perhaps this is not surprising. What is clear, however, is that disengagement, de-radicalization and reintegration are different processes that manifest differently between children, youth and adults. An individual might disengage, either because they no longer believe in the group's purpose,¹⁵⁸ or because they are forced to (Daesh losing its territorial foothold thus forcing members to return home, or members being arrested outside of the conflict theatre). It is unclear whether or how the latter — who still subscribe to violent extremist ideology — can be 'de-radicalised'. This is problematic for governments whose laws or resource capacities may not be able to sustain a large population of high-risk detainees for many years. Where such individuals are children, the case is even more complex.

For those who do disengage — leave the group and its purpose — the environment that they return to is fundamental to the risks they pose over the long-term. In most cases the drivers of their departure will remain unchanged. If this is coupled with securitization, isolation and economic marginalization, returnees will be particularly susceptible to group reattachment as they look elsewhere for community, recognition and meaning.¹⁵⁹ For children and young people, priorities need to centre around social reintegration, filling education gaps, skills and vocational training, reconciling with communities and restorative action. Much can be drawn from the scholarship on diversionary measures for children in conflict with the law, and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers. Such guidance should prove instructional, for example the practices of housing children away from adults, and ensuring access to educational and vocational activities. However, as the UK-based organisation Quilliam highlights, there are nuances specific to children and young people returning from violent extremist groups that need to be taken into account, as highlighted in the best practices below.

148 The Quilliam Foundation reports that Daesh requires child students to carry out an act of (often barbaric) violence prior to becoming a fully indoctrinated and accepted member of a fighting group. N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 78.

149 E Rosand 'Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism' The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism (2016) 8.

150 R Barrett 'Foreign Fighters in Syria; The Soufan Group (2014) 26; As at the end of April 2014, French authorities were reportedly overwhelmed; the counter terrorist prosecution service in Paris was handling 50 cases and a further 26 individuals were in pre-trial detention.

151 'Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism-Related Offenses' *Global Counterterrorism Forum*, 2.

152 In and Out of Extremism, Quilliam 2(2015) 44.

153 Fares Braizat et al., Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan, forthcoming, (2017).

154 Fares Braizat et al., Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan, forthcoming, (2017).

155 In Montreal, a multidisciplinary 'anti-radicalization center' operates where mothers who suspect their children may be vulnerable to recruitment can access assistance and tools, such as identifying the signs of radicalization, without involving the police. A prevention-focused, anti-radicalization center exists in Brussels, where people can access assistance without police involvement (unless an imminent threat is in play). In Bordeaux, the Center for Action and Prevention Against Radicalization of Individuals, uses a multidisciplinary approach involving imams, psychiatrists, teachers, and social workers. A Counselling Centre (including a hotline to help individuals break with their violent jihadist environment) was opened in 2012 in Germany to prevent radicalization by targeting the parents, friends and teachers of vulnerable groups. Hayat was founded in 2011 and is a de-radicalisation programme. Its methods are based on the knowledge gathered in Exit-Germany' work with neo-Nazis. Rather than targeting young Muslims directly (who are usually hostile to German authorities), counsellors work through families and friends of the radicalized individuals. It focuses specifically on young girls and boys that want to travel to Syria and Iraq.

The Hamburg deradicalisation centre provides family counselling, de-radicalisation and exit programs. Importantly it offers tangible assistance in the form of apartment rentals, vocational training, and job placement services to those who are looking to leave extremist circles." It has also formed networks of security agencies, social workers, mosque communities, schools, youth welfare or employment counselors, who are provided with information and awareness-raising. Accredited by the French Interior Ministry, the Center for the Prevention of Sectarian Trends linked to Islam is a de-radicalization initiative that uses various psycho-social approaches (including childhood memory, sound and smell), evidence from theatre and the testimonies of returnees, to dissuade young women and girls from leaving for Syria and Iraq. See E Rosand 'Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism' The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism (2016). Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 75-76.

156 E Rosand 'Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism' The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism (2016) 8.

157 R Barrett 'Foreign Fighters in Syria; The Soufan Group (2014) 28.

158 Likewise, in WANA's journey mapping, fighters returned because they felt betrayed or falsely led into joining a violent extremist group. One, who had been convinced by recruiters that there were no medical services in Syria, recalled that he immediately realised "that they fooled me, and [I] started thinking immediately of how I will go back to Jordan." Another was disillusioned by the irreligious behaviour and double standards adopted by his group's leaders. He explained that the *amir* (leader) was strict on minor religious matters, such as how to stand during prayer, but would badmouth other leaders and embezzle funds. He stated his realisation that these groups were only using Islam to mislead new recruits. N Bondokji and E Harper 'Journey Mapping on Selected Foreign Fighters in Jordan' WANA Institute (2017). John Horgan argues that terrorists can and do disengage from violence, but often without abandoning their radical views, and sometimes even without "leaving" or disavowing the group. This process happens slowly over time, and as a result of certain experiences. First, people may become disillusioned with the group's purpose or operating methods, or realizes that they are unattainable, or gets frustrated with the personal rewards on offer. Alternatively, this purpose or operating methods may clash with the individual's internal moral limits, detracting from their legitimacy. Key to this may be obligations, such as children and spouses, or the desire to live a normal life R Borum 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research', *Journal of Strategic Security*, No.4 Vol. 4(2011) 48-9; In and Out of Extremism, Quilliam 2(2015) 36, 50. See further J Horgan *The Psychology of Terrorism* Routledge (2005).

159 Global Open Days, UNAMA 'Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women's role in preventing violent extremism' (2016); 'Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity' UNDP, (2016) 16; 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU' IPEL PE 509.977(2014) 15-17, 40.

Good practices in the reintegration of children and youth disengaged from violent extremist groups

Recalibrating life direction and purpose	Because members of violent extremist groups receive heavy political indoctrination, they can develop a polarized worldview and their place in it. Some may see that they see no alternatives than war and participating in it. ¹⁶⁰ As such, it is important to build a new sense of purpose and meaning in these people's lives. The engagement of those who have already disengaged and been through the de-radicalisation process may prove useful during such periods. ¹⁶¹
Religious reeducation	In many cases members of extremist groups have been exposed to content manipulated scriptures and fatwa. Religious education should be taken seriously, with proper contextualization and scholarly interpretation. ¹⁶² Critical thinking and contextualization skills help returnees understand the manipulation process and to pull back from it.
Social reintegration	Returnees will often need to build skills for social reintegration and living in society, including antio- violence, problem solving, respect for diversity and tolerance. Sport, which is rule based and promotes trust and camaraderie, can be excellent tools in this regard. ¹⁶³
Livelihoods opportunities	Particularly in the case of children who have lived in Daesh controlled territory, education gaps need to be addressed, as well as livelihoods and vocational skills training to equip them to enter the workforce. ¹⁶⁴
Networks	Social networks to replace the bonds of brotherhood found in violent groups is critical. In WANA's journey mapping, returnees were largely confined to family relations, as friends and neighbors fear increased scrutiny from security forces, enhancing their isolation and perceptions of marginalisation.
Psycho-social	The trauma and psychological impact associated with the violence of war, including the possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder, must be addressed. ¹⁶⁵
Family engagement	Families should be involved in reintegration wherever possible and appropriate.
Case management approach	A case management approach which involves health and mental health practitioners, community workers, correctional officers, educators, religious officials and local leaders is essential.
Community engagement	Local authorities, who often enjoy more trust than the central government, and civil society organizations, who often enjoy more trust than the local authorities, should also be involved in rehabilitation efforts, and be given a lead role where they are best placed to do so.
Community outreach	Because stigmatization is a barrier to reintegration, efforts to communicate the government's policy on returns, safeguards and protocols, should be prioritized. ¹⁶⁶

160 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 46, 49-50

161 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 6-9, 14-15, 23-40, 46-51; In and Out of Extremism, Quilliam 2(2015) 24.

162 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 51-52.

163 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 60-61; Thinking Outside the Box: Exploring the Critical Roles of Sports, Arts, and Culture in Preventing Violent Extremism Global Center on Cooperative Security and Hedayah 2015, 4-5
N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 63-65.

164 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 50-51.

165 on psycho-social approaches, see N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 47, 55-56; M Jordans, W Tol, I Komproe and J de Jong 'Systematic Review of Evidence and Treatment Approaches: Psychosocial and Mental Health Care for Children in War' *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 14:1 (2009); V Coppock and M McGovern 'Dangerous Minds'? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the 'Psychological Vulnerability' of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain, 7-8; European Commission 'The contribution of youth work to preventing marginalization and violent radicalization: A practical toolbox for youth workers & Recommendations for policy makers' (2015) 17.

166 N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 63-67, 70-75; In and Out of Extremism, Quilliam 2(2015) 22.

3.5 Protecting children in conflict with the law

The preceding sections have set out good practices for engaging children and youth with a view to preventing violent extremism. But equally as important as what authorities and programming agencies do to support this group, is what they do not do. As described in part 2 above, children and young people are at risk from joining violent groups through their exposure to security and legal systems. Measures need to be set in place to protect this group's rights and ensure that approaches do not tacitly encourage violent radicalization at all stages – from intelligence gathering and investigation, through to detention and rehabilitation.

A review of legislation in key contributing states shows that children and juveniles in¹⁶⁷ and outside¹⁶⁸ of a conflict theatre face unique risks and vulnerabilities — principally

relating to them being surveilled, arrested, detained and prosecuted for terrorism-related or state security offenses. In the UK alone, 96 children have been arrested for terrorism-related offences since September 2001, with 13 convicted as at March 2015.¹⁶⁹ The chief concern is that in cases of terrorism and violent extremism, children are being dealt with pursuant to a single legislative and regulatory framework, as opposed to a framework that takes into account their special needs, vulnerabilities and status.¹⁷⁰ As such, they may not benefit from the rights and protections guaranteed under the CRC and other international standards and norms of juvenile justice. The legislation review¹⁷¹ makes clear that laws rarely set out special provisions for children in conflict in the law for violent extremist activities, nor norms, such as children being tried in juvenile courts, decision-makers being primarily guided by the best interests of the child, the importance of diversionary mechanisms that process children outside of formal courts¹⁷² and detaining

167 The legal framework relevant to children exposed to or participating in armed conflict, as well as in conflict with the law outside of theatre, is detailed in several treaties and international customary law, including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC, 1990), the *Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions* (I and II, 1949), the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* (2002), as well as non-binding guidance such as the *Paris Principles on Children in Armed Conflict* (2007). An analysis of such frameworks is beyond the scope of this work, however, key principles include that children should be treated principally as victims, that they should be detained only as a last resort and then for the shortest possible time period, and that they should be accorded special measures with respect to rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as the importance of restorative justice. 'Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats', Human Rights Watch (2016). In terms of protection violations, these groups face the greatest risks in theatre, where they are exposed to forced recruitment, armed combat, other forms of violence associated with war. Children who have been brought or born into Daesh face additional vulnerabilities, as carefully detailed in the *Children of the Islamic State*, written by the Quilliam Foundation. N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 10-13, 78. 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 22-27. Both the CRC and the two first Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions prohibit the recruitment of children under the age of 15 in armed conflict, both as part of State forces and non-State armed groups, while the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2002), provides that armed groups should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years. Article 38 of the CRC prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 15 years into State armed forces, and requires States to 'take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities'. International humanitarian law also contains provisions prohibiting the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 years in armed conflict: Article 77 of Additional Protocol I; Article 4(3) (c) of Additional Protocol II. See further United Nations, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, 25 May 2005, UN GAOR A/RES/54/263 of 25 May 2000.

168 The CRC along with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR, 1976), serves as the principal framework for the treatment of children in conflict with the law. Together, they require that states establish a specific system to process individuals above the age of criminal responsibility but under 18 years, who have infringed a state's penal provisions. Article 40(3) of the CRC requires States to promote the establishment of laws, procedures, authorities and institutions specifically applicable to children alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal law. This system — often referred to as a juvenile justice system — should be designed to properly take account this group's needs and vulnerabilities, as well as offer age-appropriate protections and solutions. *Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context Global Counterterrorism Forum*; 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016). See also the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines); the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules); the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules); and the Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System (Vienna Guidelines); *Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism*, Global Counterterrorism Forum (2013); *Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism' Global Counterterrorism Forum* (2014), *Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context Global Counterterrorism Forum*.

169 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 36-37; 'Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats', Human Rights Watch (2016).

170 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 59-60.

171 In Germany, recent trials of persons aged 18-21 who travelled to Syria or Iraq to join jihadist organisations were sentenced in accordance with the Juvenile Court Act and not the ordinary Penal Code, making it likely that any charge against a child also would be subject to sentencing under the Juvenile Court Act. Regardless, under s. 129a and 129b of the Penal Code, individuals accused of terrorism are to be tried at first instance before a specialised chamber of the Higher Regional Court ("Staatschutzsenat") of the relevant State ("Land"). Thus if a juvenile was charged with offences under either of these articles, he or she would also be tried before the Staatschutzsenat instead of a dedicated youth court ("Jugendgericht") but the Staatschutzsenat would need to apply the procedural and sentencing guidelines set out in the Juvenile Courts Act. 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 50. In the UK, under the Terrorism Act 2000 (as amended by the 2001 and 2006, 2015 Terrorism Acts) any person over 10 years of age (the age of criminal responsibility) charged under the act should appear before the Crown Court. The policy, however, has been for those under the age of 18 to be tried in a youth court. ss 11, 12 and 13, Terrorism Act (2000); S.50 Children and Young Persons Act (1933); 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 30-40. Even in Afghanistan, children from the age of 13 suspected of terror offences are tried under the Afghan Juvenile Justice Code of 2005, although they face more severe sentences as set out in terrorism laws. In Jordan, children are prosecuted under the 1959 Jordanian Security State Law. The Court is composed by military and civil judges, who are supposed to follow the principles of the Jordanian Juvenile Law. F Cregut, *Terres Des Homme*, speech at 'Children and Terrorism Side Event 8 March 2017.

172 (CRC article 40(3)b)

children as a last resort and for the shortest possible time period.¹⁷³

This is not only a rights-based argument, it is also a functional one. Alternate mechanisms for children and juveniles hold much appeal. The scholarship makes clear that children who have been detained with lower educational achievement, lower rates of employment, higher suicide rates, and higher re-arrest rates, when compared to peers who have been placed in community-based alternative programs.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, safe and transparent diversionary measures may encourage family, peers and other members of the community to cooperate with law enforcement in situations where they are aware of someone who is vulnerable to extremist influence or a risk in terms of violent behavior, but do not want to see that person imprisoned.¹⁷⁵ In determining whether an individual should be eligible for diversionary measures, a careful balance must be struck between the rights and best interests of child offenders, the interests of public safety and the likelihood of re-offense.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the scholarship on juvenile justice strongly argues that children should not be incarcerated at all, even if prosecuted for terror offences.¹⁷⁷

173 (CRC 37(b) 'Children and Counter-Terrorism' UNICRI (2016) 77-78. While such provisions are important to all children in conflict with the law, the risks that children and youth are exposed to are arguably more pronounced in terror-related cases. Detaining children together with adults, for example, is widely understood to have negative outcomes, including a higher incidence of reoffending. In cases of suspected terror offences, however, children are at greater risk from the adults around them, due to power disparities between children and adults, and children's transitional psychological state and their relative lack of life experience, which operate to leaves them less able to contextualize messages and hence more vulnerable to external influence. Given that an examination of the legal frameworks in individual states is beyond the scope of this work, the table below sets out key risks, non-binding principles and good practices, as well as international legal provisions relevant to children in conflict with the law related to terror offences.

174 'Extreme Measures, Abuses against Children Detained as National Security Threats', Human Rights Watch (2016); E Rosand 'Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism' The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism (2016) 8.

175 E Rosand 'Communities First A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism' The Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism (2016) 8.

176 A comprehensive assessment should take place, which takes into account the gravity of the crime, any mitigating circumstances, a prior history of violence, and the offender's commitment to violent extremism or rehabilitation. Psychologists and other experts might be engaged to make recommendations on sentencing options, and other tools that might assist in a child's rehabilitation and reintegration. C Angus 'Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Resposes' NSW Parliamentary Research Services (2016) 19. Diversion programs for children involved in terror-related offences then need to be individualized, both to the child's circumstances and in proportion to the act committed. They should involve lengthy supervision and/or mentoring, as well as disengagement and de-radicalization components, educational elements/vocational training, and psycho-social support. Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context Global Counterterrorism Forum Good Practices 7, 9. N Benotman and N Malik 'The Children of the Islamic State' Quilliam (2016) 53-55. It is also critical that measures involve a redemptive or restorative element; taking responsibility for wrongs is an important part of the rehabilitation process, and in many cases imperative to secure sustainable reintegration into a community network. The GCTF Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism-Related Offenses offer additional guidance, including on the importance of community and family engagement in diversionary mechanisms, comprehensive public outreach, a system of sanctions and incentives attached to the diversionary scheme, judicial oversight, and a multi-stakeholder approach including the participation of psychologists, religious advisors, lawyers, corrections officers, livelihoods workers etc. 'Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism-Related Offenses' *Global Counterterrorism Forum*, 1.

177 Certainly, the aim of the juvenile justice system is restorative rather than punitive, and the CRC encourages authorities to establish laws, procedures and institutions that deal with offending behavior, without resorting to detention, and in ways that promote their well-being and eventual reintegration into society. These mechanisms might include care, guidance and supervision orders; counselling; probation; foster care; education and vocational training programs, and are well discussed in the existing literature; CRC 40.3b; 'Recommendations on the Effective Use of Appropriate Alternative Measures for Terrorism-Related Offenses' *Global Counterterrorism Forum*, 2-4.



Conclusion

This report has set out how the emergent threats posed by violent radicalization and extremism render disproportionate and negative impacts upon children and young people. In part, this is a product of the fear these threats have instilled and the stereotypes associated with these phenomena. This has facilitated the evolution of security and legal frameworks that, in some cases, threaten fundamental rights, such as freedom of movement, expression and due process. While these rights apply to all, they are especially important to children and youth because of their age-specific vulnerabilities and unique developmental trajectories. These frameworks can also impact children and youth indirectly. When the subject of the law or security imperative is a parent or caregiver, laws that allow the targeting and interruption of livelihoods for security purposes, revocation of citizenship or that restrict movement, fundamental impact younger and more dependent family members.

Another important nuance is how strategies and interventions have been crafted from a deficit-ridden interpretation of how violent radicalization evolves into extremist behavior. As unhelpful as it may be from a policy-programming perspective, it appears that there is no single set of motivations driving individuals — radicalized or otherwise — to join a violent extremist group; it is a complex, dynamic process, the steps within which take no linear form and are difficult to predict.¹⁷⁸ Once we accept this, and understand violent radicalization and extremism as either a response to a state of affairs deemed to be unjust, or one driven by highly personal factors, which is then enabled by social networks and/or religious ideology, it is easy to understand how current approaches are falling short. In some cases, responses target the wrong object, as in the case of counter-messaging. Some approaches actually exacerbate the feelings of discrimination and marginalization that fuel the violent radicalization process. This includes, for example, stop and search protocols and the tailoring of programs around ‘at risk’ youth. At the same time, response strategies fail to target actual drivers. Herein lies the key challenge. Lack of opportunity, geopolitical hostility and systematic marginalization as a tool of governance,

have no simple, fast or cheap solutions. Moreover, the strategies that might be effective are imbued with risk. Economic and educational reform, for example, risks a deterioration in socio-economic wellbeing in the interim term, thereby bolstering the context in which violent radicalization thrives.

This report suggests a new way of conceptualizing the fight against violent radicalization and extremism. Those at risk of recruitment cannot be perceived as malleable and passive participants in radicalization processes. They need to be approached as active agents who are responding to, often very legitimate, sources of angst and social injustice. In this light, the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing violent extremism come down to a battle of wills. We put forward that neither securitization nor persuasion will prevent those determined and motivated from joining a violent group. Instead, they need to be incentivized to route their dissatisfaction and feelings of marginalization towards different, more peaceful and constructive, ends. Adjust the risk-return assessment in favor of non-extremist options means presenting young people with attractive alternatives and tools of resilience. Such alternate pathways include sport and meaningful extracurricular activities; cathartic facilities including public debate, civic action and opportunities to engage in non-violent protest;¹⁷⁹ opportunities — including through educational curricula reform — to build skills in critical thinking, creativity thinking, safe idea experimentation, and mutually respectful dialogue; and facilities to provide information, guidance and support to those at risk of or wishing to disengage from a violent group.

Surprisingly, the practical challenges are few. These initiatives are low cost and easy to roll out at scale. A larger obstacle is winning the support of policy makers to elaborate more space for children and youth to realize alternate pathways. Indeed, there are risks in elaborating youth freedoms and operating space; the potential wins need to be evaluated against threats of diminutions in social cohesion and conflict spillovers. But such a risk analysis needs to be contextualized. Daesh was

militarily defeated in late 2017. This should imply that the group is gone. It has been pushed underground, and because the causal drivers remain, it will return strong and more resilient. And even if it doesn’t, a new form of extremism will grow, as has taken place throughout history. We thus need to use this time wisely, to building understanding and consensus, devise impactful solutions, engage in experiential learning, and to forge new compacts between the children and young people at risk of violent extremism, and the stakeholders they rely upon to protect them.

178 ‘Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalization in the EU’ IPOL PE 509.977(2014) 6, 11, 31.

179 Global Open Days, UNAMA ‘Consultations on Women, Peace and Security: Women’s role in preventing violent extremism’ (2016);

‘Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity’ UNDP, (2016) 22.

