

Transforming Violent Extremism: A Critical Analysis

*Assessing Search for Common
Ground's Approach to Understanding
Radicalisation*



INTEGRITY UK

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About Us

Integrity UK

Integrity UK is an organisation committed to Countering Extremism through innovative approaches to promoting integration, cohesion and social reconciliation within the MENA region and the UK. We take a multilateral approach to achieve our aims which include:

1. Capacity building programmes that promote democracy; empower women and local communities; and strengthen grassroots movements.
2. A media hub that produces counter-extremist narratives; promotes legitimate voices from the Islamic and Arab World; and disseminates positive messaging from the MENA region.
3. Cutting edge research analysis by our expert staff who produce bespoke security reports; daily MENA analysis; and current CVE research

Integrity is a unit within the International Centre for Integration & Cohesion – a UK based registered charity (no. 1126489).

Executive Summary

This report focuses on the debate surrounding Transforming Violent Extremism (TVE) as an extension of the concepts of Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE/PVE). CVE/PVE approaches have thus far involved more of a top-down approach in which policy makers, NGOs and civil society groups claim to hold the key to uprooting the drivers of violent extremism. The concept of TVE aims to bring in “target groups” to contribute to ideas on how best to confront the social, economic and political drivers that motivate violent extremism. This report summarises and provides a critique of the idea of TVE as coined in the “Transforming Violent Extremism: Peacebuilder’s Guide” published by the international NGO *Search for Common Ground*. This report goes on to look at the concept of TVE through the notions of “deliberative democracy” and “agonistic pluralism” and tie them to case studies of previous counter-terrorism and community-building strategies in multicultural societies. It concludes that TVE is not to be regarded as a wholly new concept separate from CVE/PVE. Instead, it embodies an integration of mostly PVE strategies into peacebuilding methods, steering further away from securitisation, and with added emphasis on involving the “target groups” in question when it comes to radicalisation and introducing new drivers of violent extremism.

Summary of Transforming Violent Extremism: Peacebuilder's Guide

- Drivers of violent extremism – material and immaterial factors that feed into radicalisation and violent extremism; attention to gendered aspects of radicalisation and violent extremism
- Prevention of violent extremism – tackling the marginalisation of communities and individuals through a “whole of society” approach that recognises the agency of “target groups and individuals”
- Working with young people – treating young people as partners of constructive change rather than as a passive target group
- Enabling state responses – improving trust between state institutions, non-state actors (civil society) and communities
- Narratives – providing alternative channels through which individuals may express frustration, rather than suppressing opinions

Shortcomings of Peacebuilder's Guide

- Lack of practicality – there is a recognition that the psychological and social needs of marginalised citizens at risk of radicalisation must be met, without providing definitive steps for state and non-state actors to take
- Negligence of important drivers
 - o Class – differing dynamics of radicalisation among working, middle and upper classes of society in the Global North
 - o Global North vs Global South – differing dynamics and drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism between Global North and Global South societies
 - o Acculturative stress – the stress induced by young second-generation immigrants who experience cognitive dissonance as a result of contrasting moral worlds and behaviours between home and host society
- Lack of vision with regards to post-conflict situations – no mention of transitional justice measures as a means of reconciliation between communities in a post-conflict context

Incorporation of comparative democratic concepts to PVE

- Deliberative democracy – a more direct form of democracy where citizens deliberate and make decisions on the very political and social issues that affect them
- Agonistic pluralism (agonism) – providing the space for citizens to express their frustrations and to expose individuals to conflicting perspectives with the objective of moderating views

Case studies

- Islamist radicalisation in Australia – solutions based on multiculturalism in Australia have not reached the core of the problem with regards to radicalisation among Muslims there; agonism and critical negotiation between majority and minority identities provide more useful channels for tackling the issue of radicalisation
- Islamist radicalisation in Molenbeek – the poor and isolated suburb of Molenbeek in Brussels has been infamous for the disproportionate number of Islamist extremists to come from the area; the very people of Molenbeek have suggested that its inhabitants require more dialogue with the rest of Belgian society and more religious literacy for its Muslim youth in order to tackle extremist narratives
- Honour killings in Britain – an issue that has affected multicultural societies in the West where cross-cultural negotiation has been needed; state-supported initiatives in Britain developed deliberation along culture-based and gender-based lines
- Omagh, Northern Ireland – a community blighted by violence between Catholics and Protestants; face-to-face deliberation between members of both communities led to constructive deliberation and moderation of views
- The Aarhus Model – a multipronged counter-extremism strategy implemented in Aarhus, Denmark; it employs ideas close to the “whole of society” concept based on respect for individuals and their agency
- Post-conflict reconciliation in Sierra Leone – a case of NGOs cooperating in a Global South post-conflict context to implement locally relevant strategies that engage local actors to facilitate reconciliation between themselves

The future of CVE/PVE

This report concludes that CVE is not a new concept per se, but is instead a synthesis of CVE/PVE strategies that have proven to work. Nevertheless, this report recognises the need to introduce new drivers of violent extremism that have thus far been ignored and also the need to work more closely with “target groups” and “at-risk” local communities. It concludes that the objective of future strategies that work to tackle violent extremism and radicalisation should aim for community and society-wide transformations rather than focusing solely on “at-risk” individuals”. The objective of tackling the push and pull material and immaterial factors that lead to radicalisation and violent extremism requires strategies that help to foster deliberative communities where issues of marginalisation, cultural incompatibilities, economic depravity and political disenfranchisement are discussed head on by the very community members that experience these problems. The development of new approaches to tackling violent extremism hinges on the cooperation between state institutions, non-state actors, and community leaders and members to prevent the appearance of the material and immaterial driving factors that foster an environment in which radicalism and extremism can thrive.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report seeks to analyse the “Peacebuilder’s Guide” of the international NGO *Search for Common Ground* (*Search*) and extract all the points in the guide that are relevant to the development of the concept of “Transforming Violent Extremism” (TVE). This report will then pick out any shortcomings in the guide.

It will then introduce the concepts of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism that may be used to foster engagement between marginalised communities and mainstream society as a means of moderating the views, perceptions and outlooks of extremists or potential extremists. A number of case studies that include aspects of deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism will then be presented in order to demonstrate how those concepts may be applied practically.

It will go on to propose how to best move forward in the field of CVE/PVE by synthesising former strategies and adding new perspectives. It will critique the idea that there is a need for a complete overhaul of former approaches that would require the establishment of a separate concept called TVE.

This report focuses on radicalisation and extremism in the Global North, with partial reference to the Global South. Although the use of these terms is fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies, and in many cases represents a false dichotomy, they nevertheless provide a useful framework with which to analyse matters such as radicalisation and violent extremism. This report ultimately proposes that the “transformation” sought by new approaches to CVE/PVE should take place within society and not within certain individuals per se. This is a transformation from a passive state of democracy (representative democracy) to a more participatory framework, leading to a “deliberative community”. This transformation is expected to take place on a small-scale at first and if successful, further CVE/PVE strategies may be implemented across communities in whole societies.

2. THE CONCEPT OF TVE

Search released a “Peacebuilder’s Guide” in 2017, in which the concept of Transforming Violent Extremism (TVE) was introduced into the lexicon of the general field of Counter-Extremism. The term TVE has been used by Search as the next stage in the conceptual development of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). Search have defined TVE as follows:

“Transforming violent extremism recognizes that while violent extremism exists, the reasons and motivators leading to an individual being drawn to violent extremist movements can be transformed into a different type of agency or engagement. This is distinct from countering violent extremism which is reactive to extremist violence rather than aimed at altering the dynamics that motivate it.”¹

Search suggest that TVE is meant to provide a more holistic and “human” approach to tackling the issue of extremism, in contrast to the previous methods based on securitisation and stigmatisation, which are deemed to set too much of a distance between the implementers of CVE/PVE programmes and their target groups. A lack of trust between the state, NGOs working on CVE/PVE, and the target groups have brought forth the need for a re-conceptualisation of what it means to tackle violent extremism and how best to deal with the issue more effectively. The preferred outcome of TVE, according to Search, is to build trust among communities and instil individuals within “at-risk” target groups with a sense of self-worth and a meaningful role in society, as opposed to the further marginalisation caused by the less empathic methods of CVE/PVE.

Search’s “Peacebuilder’s Guide” opens up the discussion about a developed re-conceptualisation of CVE/PVE. The guide puts forward a number of different perspectives from which the idea of TVE may be developed. This section will outline and expand on those perspectives.

Drivers

A number of perspectives are discussed in terms of how to approach the driving factors behind radicalisation. The most common drivers have been categorised into “push and pull factors”. Push factors involve elements of an individual’s environment that may encourage him/her to resort to violent extremism as a way of expressing frustration with their status quo. Such elements may include marginalisation and disempowerment. Pull factors represent the features of extremist groups that may appeal to disenfranchised individuals, such as a sense of purpose and belonging, or economic gain. Push and pull factors continue to be a useful base from which to work. However, Search’s guide attempts to make this concept more comprehensive by introducing a number of social science theories to explain drivers of radicalisation. This includes the “resilience-vulnerability spectrum”², which demonstrates the level of susceptibility of individuals to violent extremism in so-called “at-risk” communities. There is also a mention of the use of context theories (focusing on social context) and stage theories (focusing on individual behaviour)³, which have thus far been applied in a somewhat separate manner, but have the potential to be mixed. The emotional dynamics at play in individuals, including frustration, anger, humiliation and alienation, are highlighted as elements that require attention⁴.

Fairly new to CVE research is the focus on the role of gender in violent extremism⁵. Search’s gendered approach recognises the different roles played by men and women in the radicalisation process as well as the varying factors that may “push and pull” women to violent extremism. Men who grow up in patriarchal societies have specific norms of masculinity to live up to, including honour, courage, and being a breadwinner, which may play into the radicalisation process as extremist groups may purport to fulfil those masculine societal requirements. With regards to women, they have traditionally been viewed as victims of extremists and (implicitly) natural allies of counter-extremists, but their role as instigators and even active participants

has been increasingly recognised in recent years. For instance, there was an all-female unit within the ranks of ISIS, called Al-Khansaa Brigade, that enforced the group's strict rules and punishments⁶. Another example is the San Bernardino attack in the US in 2015, in which a husband and wife, who had pledged allegiance to ISIS, killed 14 people in a mass shooting⁷.

Search posit that women's involvement in violent extremism, or, at least, in abetting violent extremism, may be considered a means of emboldening a women's social status at home, since they are normally the primary caregivers. Women are thus often "well-positioned to detect early warning signs of radicalisation and to intervene within the home"⁸. Attention to the dynamics of gender can thus improve previous CVE approaches and be part of the more comprehensive concept of TVE.

Prevention

This section is theoretically the most relevant to the concept of TVE as it mentions a number of ideas that have thus far received little attention. The oft-mentioned push factors that are used to explain why teenagers and young adults join extremist groups include marginalisation and disempowerment. Nevertheless, these factors do not go a long way to explaining the psychological processes that young people go through during their coming-of-age stage in life when their identities and moral worlds are moulded. Focusing on marginalisation rids young people of an opportunity to express their agency and leadership. *Search* state that young people should be seen as active partners in the prevention of radicalisation⁹, as opposed to the traditional approach of seeing them as passive "target groups". *Search* propose drawing up psychological profiles of those individuals that appear to be vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups. This is preceded by an analysis of the environment and social context in which those individuals live. This individual psychological approach takes into account the real psychological and social human needs of the individuals. Socio-psychological theories that refer to the importance of self-worth, sense of belonging, and social status are pertinent in this regard.

This approach then ties into the "whole of society" approach advocated by *Search*¹⁰. "Whole of society" involves both social context and the psychology of individuals. It is only through such a holistic approach that comprehensive policies with regards to CVE/PVE may be drawn up.

Pull factors represent the features of extremist groups that may appeal to disenfranchised individuals, such as a sense of purpose and belonging, or economic gain.

Working with young people

A significant suggestion posited by *Search* with regards to TVE is to **not treat young people as victims or perpetrators but as partners of constructive change**¹¹. They should rather be regarded as the agents of change and the keys to understanding the systemic grievances that exist within particular communities. Nevertheless, securitised and reactive approaches to CVE/PVE have sown distrust between the young people in question and agencies involved in counter-extremism, especially when it comes to initiatives launched by

state institutions. The new approach to young people should recognise young people's need for "respect, dignity and agency"¹².

Suggestions as to how young people may be involved in TVE strategies revolve around educational initiatives. Such initiatives would draw up curricula that include issues related to TVE in a non-securitising manner, as well as promoting dialogue between education and security to increase awareness and involvement among young people with regards the issues that directly affect them, instead of being bystanders or "targets" of state policy¹³.

Enabling state responses

As aforementioned, there is a lack of trust between state institutions and the "target communities" with which they work to counter violent extremism. *Search* build on the points about recognising the "target communities" and individuals within them as partners by focusing on a synergy between them, state institutions and non-state entities (such as civil society actors). Impartiality, visibility, and transparency are essential aspects of a state approach that would not alienate communities and individuals¹⁴.

Search assert that the intersection of roles of these various sectors of society is of paramount importance¹⁵. A comprehensive TVE strategy may thus recognise that communities would be more likely to open up to, and work with, local civil society groups, while the role of the state would be to provide support to those groups to implement a given TVE project on the ground.

Narratives

Individuals who turn to violent extremism are exposed to narratives that justify their actions and channel their emotions of frustration and marginalisation towards violence. J.M. Berger (2016) asserts the notion that the suppression of extremist ideas does not yield positive results and instead leads to a backlash as it simply blocks channels through which frustrated individuals are able to express themselves¹⁶. Instead, *Search* propose the creation of alternative channels, not exactly to counter the extremist narratives head on, but to provide a more constructive channel for frustrated individuals to express their emotions, experiences and perceptions.

Search state that young people should be seen as active partners in the prevention of radicalisation, as opposed to the traditional approach of seeing them as passive "target groups"

New narratives should aim to develop personal interactions with individuals susceptible to violent extremism, as extremist recruiters do so themselves. In line with previous ideas mentioned in this summary of the guide, narratives should maintain a human connection and emotion¹⁷. Such engagement would be more successful in speaking to individuals directly as partners of change. This approach ties in with the concept of "agonism" that will be introduced later in this report.

Summary

The TVE concept introduced by *Search* presents a number of useful points with which the concept may be developed:

- **Moving away from securitisation:** Although PVE has already sought to "de-securitise" the matter of violent extremism and to tackle the factors that lead to radicalisation, TVE seeks to move

further away from securitisation in that the “target individuals” are not labelled as extremists but are themselves involved in the process of tackling radicalisation and violent extremism.

- **Being proactive rather than reactive:** Previous approaches to CVE have more often than not reacted to the factors that bring forth radicalisation and violent extremism. *Search* suggest that state and non-state institutions should aim to be proactive in preventing the spread of risk factors in communities in order to truly avoid a situation where transforming and channelling people’s inclinations to violent extremism towards more constructive tendencies becomes impossible. This notion is already prevalent among PVE strategies.
- **“Whole society”/human approach:** TVE seeks to take into account both social context and the specificities of all individuals. The psychological and social factors of radicalisation have often been ignored and TVE intends to consider the emotional drivers behind individuals’ willingness to join violent extremist groups. Such individuals are thus treated as agents of change and not as objects that require change to be imposed on them.
- **“Why do people not join violent extremist groups?”:** The large majority of people in “at-risk” communities refrain from joining violent extremist groups: this is defined as “resilience” in the CVE/PVE literature. When push and pull factors are discussed there is an assumption that they affect whole communities, but it is only a small number of individuals within those communities who actively seek membership with violent extremist groups and who then commit acts of violent extremism. Understanding the factors that keep individuals away from violent extremism are just as important as comprehending what triggers individuals to resort to violence.

3. SHORTCOMINGS OF PEACEBUILDER'S GUIDE'S APPROACH TO TVE

Lack of practicality

The main criticism directed towards *Search's* Peacebuilder's Guide's approach to TVE is the lack of a practical definition and criteria of TVE that would be applicable in the real world. Although *Search* attempts to get to the crux of the problem of violent extremism, its approach lacks a clear direction that would take individuals inclined towards violent extremism on a path of "transformation". A transformation from what to what? The guide lacks a coherent answer to this critical question.

Although the "whole society"/human approach may be beneficial as a theoretical concept, an applicable TVE theory would require instructions on what aspects of individuals the focus should be placed and how those traits may be gleaned and "transformed" in a positive light. The guide recognises that there are certain individuals whose psychological and social needs are not met. These include an individual's self-worth, sense of belonging and life purpose. It also recognises that violent extremist groups use propaganda to take advantage of disillusioned individuals and fill their emotional void, albeit superficially. The guide, nevertheless, does not propose any definitive steps that may be taken for state and non-state actors to fill this void, apart from a cursory mention of the beneficial aspects of cultural/sports programmes¹⁸ and propagating alternative narratives in social media¹⁹, which are already facets of CVE/PVE. A comprehensive TVE approach that would entail a genuine "transformation" of violent extremism through constructive and positive means requires a redress of the idea of "community". Since disillusionment arises out of a lack of sense of belonging, lack of purpose, and, ultimately, a lack of community relations, TVE requires a further theoretical exploration of this point for it to then propose practical steps to build healthy communities in which individuals actively and emotionally engage with the very people that they live with. This point shall be expanded further in the following section.

Negligence of important drivers

The content of the sections outlined in the guide (Drivers, Prevention etc) are far too close to the approaches that already exist in the paradigms of CVE and PVE. Some of the "drivers" presented in the guide have already been explored in various CVE and PVE programmes. The approach wherein a NGO explores the push and pull factors of radicalisation and works to mitigate those factors has already been recognised as a "soft" approach to preventing violent extremism. This is in contrast to the more securitised approach wherein intelligence forces directly counter extremist narratives online and security forces conduct stop-and-search checks. In any case, the list of drivers has not yet been exhausted and the following are missing from the existing approaches that were mentioned:

- **Class** – one somewhat surprising omission from the literature on and practice of TVE as well as CVE/PVE has been the class factor in radicalisation. Although it has been recognised that the most "at-risk" individuals tend to come from marginalised communities and inner-city ghettos where the socio-economic level is low, there has as of yet not been any comprehensive exploration of the differences between lower, middle and upper-class radicalisation. Indeed, most research done on radicalisation, especially in the Global North, has focused on low socio-economic or criminal contexts. Investigating the differences in the process of radicalisation between socio-economic classes may reveal further social knowledge about what drives individuals to resort to violent extremism. There has already been research undertaken on what is called the "crime-terror nexus"²⁰, which posits that most radicalised extremists that come from Europe are from low social class backgrounds and have

criminal pasts. Their criminal “skills” are then taken advantage of by extremist groups who indoctrinate them. Those from middle or upper-class backgrounds, however, have different motivations for joining extremist groups and they often have more ideological motivations. Salman Ramadan Abedi carried out a suicide bomb attack in Manchester on 22 May 2017. He grew up on an estate in Manchester among other immigrant communities. He was known to perform poorly at a school (Burnage Academy for Boys) that has made headline news a number of times due to criminal incidents²¹. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted to blow up

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a transatlantic flight on Christmas Day in 2009. He is the son of a wealthy Nigerian businessman and received a world-class education²². He committed the attack while studying at the prestigious University College London (UCL). He was described as a “dream student”.

In both aforementioned cases the results were the same: the two individuals were radicalised and resorted to violent extremism, committing terrorist attacks in the UK. However, it is clear that the standard push factors of marginalisation and poor socioeconomic conditions cannot fully

elucidate the process of radicalisation and the similar end-result of both cases since they cannot be applied to the latter case. There are other psychological and social factors at play that may explain differences and similarities in the radicalisation process of individuals from varying socioeconomic and social class backgrounds.

- **Global North vs Global South** – despite inconsistencies and contradictions in the terms “Global North” and “Global South”, they still provide a useful framework for developing TVE policy as it recognises the differences in social, political, and cultural contexts within which radicalisation occurs. Radicalisation in the Global North normally occurs in a social context wherein immigrant communities attempt to adapt to, and integrate with, the host society. Children of immigrants form a real-life connection with both their families, communities and society. Extremist narratives may become appealing to those who experience difficulties adapting to the host society and are “pulled in” to fantasies of a certain great cause that satisfies their needs for a greater purpose and sense of belonging. The dynamics of radicalisation in the Global South include a number of different factors. Those who join extremist groups may do so out of necessity: simply to earn a living or to pledge allegiance to a group that may guarantee their safety in the face of threats from other military groups or a repressive state. Although ideological and cultural factors may indeed come into play, the dynamics of marginalisation that “push” people in countries of the Global South to join or adhere to violent extremist groups are more “in your face” than in the Global North.
- **Acculturative stress** – this refers to a common feature of daily life for second-generation immigrants who feel that the moral and cultural world of their families and local communities are different from that of the society in which they reside. Such individuals experience varying levels of cognitive dissonance, for example, how an individual grapples with inconsistent and

There has as of yet not been any comprehensive exploration of the differences between lower, middle and upper-class radicalisation

sometimes contradictory moral beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. This state of affairs may thus induce varying levels of acculturative stress²³, depending on the individual in question and their social setting. Acculturative stress has been neglected in approaches to CVE/PVE, despite being a primary psychological factor that is tapped into by violent extremist groups that claim to provide a clear and singular moral code, way of life, and identity. This factor is especially significant with regards to young second-generation immigrants living in multicultural societies in the Global North who are in the process of “finding themselves” and attempting to comprehend their cultural and individual identity.

Lack of vision with regards to post-conflict situations

One other shortcoming linked to the TVE approach proposed in the guide is the extent to which refraining from attaching labels to individuals who express extremist tendencies may be upheld as a principle. Once atrocities have already been committed, it is expected that a process of transitional justice will take place. The proposed TVE approach seems to suggest that individuals accused of extremism should be treated as partners with whom it would be possible to work towards the reconciliation of communities. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to imagine bringing together two irreconcilable sides. For instance, during the ascendance of ISIS in 2014, the terrorist group committed targeted massacres against the Yazidi community in northern Iraq. ISIS militants saw Yazidis as a heretic religious cult, a thread of thought that exists among certain Islamic fundamentalist circles, which they used to justify their discrimination and crimes. ISIS’ religious discrimination and extreme misogyny pushed its members to kidnap Yazidi women and use many of them as sex slaves. For this reason, bringing together a former ISIS militant and a Yazidi woman, who was sold by the terrorist group as a slave and sexually abused, would be counterproductive.

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certain regions of the country and a lack of political representation among certain sectors of the population, among other motivating factors. As the conflict has unravelled over the past seven years, much blood has been shed and the Damascus-based government has re-imposed military and political control over much of

Extremist narratives may become appealing to those who experience difficulties adapting to the host society and are “pulled in” to fantasies of a certain great cause that satisfies certain individuals’ need for a greater purpose and feeling of belonging.

In certain cases it may be inconceivable to treat everyone as equal when there is a clear perpetrator and a clear victim in the eyes of justice. This may also be the case when extremist beliefs, including justification for extreme discrimination, are so ingrained in an individual’s mind that bringing two irreconcilable parties together would be nonsensical.

Treating all individuals with respect and involving them as agents of positive change may seem like a humanistic approach; however, once violence has occurred, we become witnesses of violent reactions to previous moral and structural inequalities. For instance, the civil conflict broke out in Syria in 2011 as a result of widespread discontent with economic conditions in

Transforming Violent Extremism A Critical Approach

Drivers of Violent Extremism (According to SEARCH's TVE Guide)

Push Factors

Marginalisation
The state in which an individual or community does not feel included in a larger group or society



Disempowerment
The lack of means for having an impact on society and gaining a sense of self-worth



Frustration
When an individual feels like they have no channel through which to express their emotions or thoughts



Gendered Drivers

Male

Living up to societal norms of masculinity



Pull Factors

Sense of Belonging
Membership to a group can make an individual feel at home



Purpose
Being part of something bigger and having a goal to reach can give meaning to life



Economic Gain
People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be drawn to extremist groups who provide material benefits



Female

Emboldening women's societal status at home



Integrity UK's Proposals

Additional Factors

Acculturative Stress
The stress induced by balancing a life in between multiple cultures, identities, and moral worlds



Extremism in the Global North
Extremism in the Global North is more often than not connected to young second-generation immigrants



Class
The dynamics, drivers and expression of extremism differs between various social classes



Theoretical Solutions

Deliberative Democracy
A more direct form of democracy where citizens deliberate and make decisions on the very political and social issues that affect them



Agonistic Pluralism
providing the space for citizens to express their frustrations and to expose individuals to conflicting perspectives with the objective of moderating views



the land that had been taken over by various rebel groups. On the surface, the Damascus-based government is bringing back the stability that existed in the country before 2011 and much of the rebellious population has now acquiesced to its rule for the sake of this stability²⁴. Nevertheless, the economic and political structural issues that existed before 2011 still remain and are likely to revitalise former frustrations and disillusionment with the central authorities. If TVE initiatives are to treat all sides equally in such cases, it would ignore the very inequalities of the structural problems experienced by disenfranchised communities that they are seeking to resolve.

Although the guide does not seek to treat all individuals and sides as a tabula rasa without their own histories and specificities, it does not suggest how the TVE approach would overcome “stereotypes” and “labelling” without treating all sides with the same level of respect and attention. Where violence and structural injustices have already been committed, it is difficult to see how a TVE approach that refrains from value-free judgments and “telling it as it is” would yield successful results in terms of genuine reconciliation in post-conflict situations.

In certain cases it may be inconceivable to treat everyone as equal when there is a clear perpetrator and a clear victim in the eyes of justice.

4. DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY, AGONISTIC PLURALISM, AND CASE STUDIES

In recent decades, the field of comparative democracy has developed new concepts and theories that aim to tackle the multifarious issues and problems faced by liberal democracies and authoritarian states alike. Two novel approaches to democracy that have arisen out of new trends in comparative democratic theory are deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism. These two concepts are introduced in this report in view of the participatory power they possess for marginalised and disillusioned individuals and communities. This report has mentioned some of the psychological and social driving factors of radicalisation that have scarcely been addressed in previous CVE/PVE strategies, including acculturative stress, identity issues, and disillusionment with the host society and political system. Deliberative democracy, as will be explained later, provides a framework within which marginalised individuals and communities may be included in the political process and feel a part of society. The idea would be that if disillusioned citizens become involved in political and social processes and are provided a platform then they may express themselves to the very society they feel marginalised from. A practical application of this theory would be conducive to fostering the “whole of society” approach as mentioned in the TVE guide. With regards to agonistic pluralism, this concept has been included as it focuses on conflict between individuals and communities in multicultural societies. Agonistic pluralism, which will be elaborated on later, will help to tackle identity, ideational, cultural and social differences in a diverse society where one of the main drivers of radicalisation is acculturative stress. This idea stipulates that individuals would be allowed to express their negative feelings of frustration and disillusionment to institutions, civil society groups or individuals from the other side of the cultural, social or ideational spectrum. The implementation of this idea in reality, along with deliberative democracy, would aim to reduce the influence of extremist ideas by showing the ‘human face of the other’ and providing a channel through which repressed opinions and feelings may be expressed and listened to. These two concepts may be applied practically and the case studies will provide proof of their use. TVE, as conceptualised by *Search* in its current form, lacks the theoretical thrust that would allow it to make practical suggestions about how to foster an environment where the drivers of extremism and radicalisation may be moderated. Deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism are concepts that may form the theoretical basis of innovative approaches to tackling radicalisation and violent extremism.

Where violence and structural injustices have already been committed, it is difficult to see how a TVE approach that refrains from value-free judgments and “telling it as it is” would yield successful results.

This section will first proceed by providing deeper theoretical definitions of these terms and then demonstrating how they may be applied both theoretically and practically in the context of TVE through case studies.

Deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy is a more direct form of democracy than representative democracy, in which the sole duty of the citizen in the political field is voting for the representatives whose views most closely align with theirs. In deliberative democracy, citizens are expected to be part of the decision-making process with regards to political and social issues²⁵. It is especially pertinent to contexts in which individuals within society hold various views, frameworks, moral worlds and ideologies²⁶. The essence of deliberative democracy lies in the art of communication across ideational divides, whether they are based

on ideological or ethnic conflict. One of the main proponents of deliberative democracy, John Dryzek, places the focus on discourse(s) and the public sphere in which discourse is played out. He defines discourse as a “shared way of making sense of the world embedded in language”²⁷. He argues that a deliberative mode of democracy may be successful when such varied accounts of “the world” are shared in an “intersubjectively meaningful fashion”²⁸.

In societies based on a representative mode of democracy, citizens are relatively passive in relation to the political process and to decision-making with regards to social issues.

In societies based on a representative mode of democracy, citizens are relatively passive within the political process and in relation to decision-making about social issues. Tensions that are tangibly felt between citizens, especially in multicultural societies, are normally expressed either through voting for a party for their stance on the resolution of such tensions, or through protests and violence. In both cases, there is no room for dialogue and the discursive fields within which different social groupings live become ever more rigid. The deliberative model offers the possibility of involving disenfranchised citizens in deliberating actively over social and political issues. This space for deliberation allows for divided communities to come together and be exposed to one another’s perspective and debate issues in a more constructive manner. In other words, deliberative democracy is distinctive in that it has the

ability to “bridge divides rather than perpetuate them”²⁹.

Agonistic pluralism

Agonistic pluralism, otherwise simply known as agonism, is a political theory that stipulates the positive effects of conflict. It recognises that political, social and cultural conflict does exist in given societies and that instead of repressing people’s conflictual stances, they should be deliberated in the open and, in certain cases, face-to-face. This form of deliberation ties in closely with the idea that notions based on violence, stereotypes and discrimination may be channelled in a positive and constructive manner, which may then lead to a **transformation** of sorts.

In a way, agonism provides a rational solution to the “irrationality” of differences and emotions that arise from group identity. Chantal Mouffe, an advocate of agonism, believes that the repression of emotions and arguments based on one’s identity serves to perpetuate negative conflict between groups. Instead, these passions should be offered a channel of release as a way of moderating them when it comes to making political decisions: “The prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions, [...] but to mobilise these passions towards the promotion of democratic designs.”³⁰

When individuals deliberate certain issues amongst members of their own group they reinforce each other’s opinions and a sense of belonging and agreement may be fostered based on opinions that may be negative and discriminatory in nature. Agonism recognises the importance of sense of belonging and the self-worth an individual attaches to that feeling, although it also recognises the need for the breaking down of views that are essentially antagonistic in nature. Agonism argues that individuals are unwilling to deconstruct any strong views they hold by being simply exposed to rational counterarguments, a strategy that was proposed in the “Narratives” section of *Search’s* TVE guide. It suggests that individuals

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with hard-line views may be converted as a result of a “particular kind of democratic attitude”³¹, which may be fostered by humanising the ‘other’. This humanisation is more likely to bear fruit during face-to-face deliberation, where emotional bonds are formed, rather than through media campaigns and/or exposure to rational, abstract, detached and dehumanised arguments.

Dryzek (2003) directs some useful criticisms that expose some of the potential pitfalls of agonism if it is to be implemented practically in a real-life social context. He asserts that agonism may set the ground for the reinforcement of mutually hostile identities if discussions revolve around preferences, values and passions rather than the specific needs of parties³². In addition, Dryzek considers the implementation of agonism in a social setting whereby individuals present their perspectives based on emotion and identity to not be conducive to decision-making. He mentions other models that treat democracy as a “procedure for making social choices”³³, in contrast to the negative outlook of agonism on consensus, which is regarded as a cover for power. Dryzek believes that in the agonistic system it would be difficult to reach collective decisions and even when decisions are made, they are “open to further contestation”³⁴.

Although opening up wounds and prejudices may in some way be a therapeutic exercise that exposes individuals to opinions, perspectives and experiences that they are not used to, this process has the potential to take the wrong turn and in fact reify prejudices as a result of “conflictual debate”. Therefore, when implementing the idea of agonistic pluralism in a setting where two sides are at loggerheads with one another, it is important to gauge the level of animosity and the potential for respect or disrespect between the sides. In other words, it is worth toeing the line between “rationality” and “passion” so that the former does not dehumanise issues and so that the latter does not lead to deeper conflict.

Case studies

The aforementioned theories have been situated in the context of societies as a whole. Nevertheless, they provide ample theoretical inspiration for implementation of practical initiatives in the field of CVE/PVE. Scholars have already begun to apply the aforementioned theories in discussions revolving around extremism. The following case studies are all based in the Global North and tackle issues of tensions in multicultural societies and radicalisation in immigrant communities, focusing on Muslim communities.

Radicalism in a multicultural society

Australia

Selen Ercan has already utilised the deliberative democratic approach to analyse extremism in a multicultural society, using Muslims in Australia as a case study³⁵. She explains how liberal solutions based on multiculturalism have thus far failed to tackle radicalisation amongst Muslim youth in Australia as they have left no space for engagement across deep divides within Australian society³⁶. Efforts to deal with the issue have focused on “harmony” and “social cohesion”, whereby the notion of community is associated with the presence of “strong unity and the absence of conflict”³⁷ with Muslim communities being put under the spotlight³⁸.

Ercan argues that the recognition of conflicts that emanate from deep identity differences would yield far better results³⁹, as mentioned by agonist theorists:

“It would be unrealistic to expect individuals to reject that part of their identity conditioned by membership of a cultural/religious groups. Individuals are not always able to give compelling reasons for their actions, critically reflect on their own beliefs, and, when exposed to a better argument, be willing to change their opinions. Radicalised groups may face significant disadvantages when it comes to complying with the rationality-focused communication style of public deliberation.”⁴⁰

Actions and decisions taken by 'at-risk' individuals are based on an emotional connection to ideas and behaviours that they link to their heritage and identity. Agonism opens up the space for deep social and identity divides to be heard and challenged. Liberal tolerance, on the one hand, allows for the "tyranny of the majority", while agonism requires "comparison and critical negotiation between majority and minority identities"⁴¹.

Ercan provides 4 conditions conducive to deliberative engagement:

1. Shift from intercultural difference to intra-cultural differences
2. Shift from rational expression to agonistic listening
3. Shift from consensus to conflict
4. Shift from engagement in formal spaces to informal space⁴²

It is worth toeing the line between "rationality" and "passion" so that the former does not dehumanise issues and so that the latter does not lead to deeper conflict.

Belgium

Sint-Jans Molenbeek, more commonly simply known as Molenbeek, is a municipality in Brussels largely made up of North African and Turkish immigrant communities. Molenbeek has been known to be a breeding ground for jihadist activity⁴³. Individuals from the area have been arrested in connection with the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015⁴⁴.

In 2017, the European Institute of Peace (EIP) carried out an investigation into the causes of radicalisation and violent extremism in Molenbeek, exploring a variety of factors through the analysis of hundreds of interviews with residents of the municipality⁴⁵. Some of the traditional push factors were identified in the research, including low socio-economic levels, lack of education and employment, discrimination, and general marginalisation⁴⁶.

"Promoting diversity and dialogue" was one of the two most significant responses as a solution to violent radicalisation. Many of those living in Molenbeek stated that they feel isolated from the rest of society in Brussels and that they more or less live in separation from Belgian society as a whole. The lack of education and employment opportunities are cited as reason for the Muslim community's seclusion in Molenbeek as the members of the community are at pains to find channels through which to communicate with the rest of society. The people of Molenbeek are thus open to dialogue with other communities and the great majority deplore the extremist cause⁴⁷. The openness to dialogue should be seen as an opportunity to reduce the tensions that exist between "Belgian norms and the everyday practice of Islam", which are acknowledged by the communities in Molenbeek⁴⁸. Deliberative democracy and agonism can certainly play a positive role here to resolve issues related to the acculturative stress experienced by young individuals whose identity feels tied to their local communities, but is notably different from their surroundings.

The other significant takeaway from the research was that those who were radicalised in Molenbeek were largely ignorant of the religion that they professed to fight for. In other words, they were attracted to religious extremist narratives partly due to a lack of religious understanding in the first place (i.e. there was an empty space with regards to religious knowledge that was filled by extremist rhetoric and propaganda). Indeed, a significant proportion of the respondents in the interviews identified religious education as something that should be a priority in future strategies to prevent the radicalisation of young people in Molenbeek⁴⁹. The

lack of credible community leaders also played a part in allowing for the ideological vacuum in Molenbeek to exist, leaving room for extremist groups to spread their narrative among disenfranchised youth.

In addition, the crime-terror nexus evidently played a role in the Molenbeek case as many of the radicalised young people switched from a life of criminality to one emphasised by a false religiosity infused with violent intentions, following exposure to extremist narratives.

Honour killings in Britain

The issue of honour killings has blighted certain communities in Western societies and has led to instances of cultural, social and political conflict between immigrant communities and their host societies. The reaction of the British state to honour killings in the country provides a case in point where constructive deliberations took place across cultural frameworks to encourage mutual understanding and a “softening” of political stances.

Honour killings, which normally target young women, are perceived to bring “disrespect” and “dishonour” to a family or community, and became a common feature of public debates on multiculturalism in a number of Western societies⁵⁰. Initial mainstream reactions to honour killings committed in minority communities in Western societies lent credence to the perception of the incompatibility between “backward” communities and mainstream Western culture, leading to a reifying binary of “us” and “them”⁵¹.

Honour killing became a politically hot topic in 1997 as New Labour came to power and several instances of forced marriages and honour killings had taken place⁵². Selen Ercan’s (2017) qualitative analysis of the debate on honour killing in Britain showed two currents: a culture-based discourse and a gender-based discourse. The former was found to be more dominant in the mainstream than the latter⁵³. The culture-based discourse has been more likely to pinpoint differences in culture and to veer towards supremacy-tinged biases against minority communities. The gender-based arguments focused more on the issue of the projection of male control and dominance over women veiled under the guise of “honour”.

Debates in Parliament about the matter sought to include the wide range of views expressed within both discourses and they also demonstrated a level of “agonistic respect” towards “the illiberal cultural claims of the defenders of these murders”⁵⁴. In fact, parallels were drawn between the nature of honour killings and illiberal practices that also exist in mainstream Western cultures:

“[W]e should not think of honour killings as being linked to non-western civilisations, culture “out there” that are alien to our own western culture...[Britain] is by no means free of the impulsions and imperatives which underlines honour killings more generally”⁵⁵

Ercan states that the “framing of honour killing as such helped to relieve the tension between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and thus transformed the debate from antagonism to agonism”⁵⁶. Aside from the parliamentary debates, the British Government launched a number of initiatives to tackle the issue of honour killings in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A series of consultations with survivors of honour killings, visits to women’s organisations and refuges, a collection of oral evidence from witnesses and survivors, and a six-week online consultation process all implemented in 2007 by the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee
- The Women’s National Council (WNC) launched deliberative forums bringing minority women to discuss issues related to honour-based violence

Ercan argues that, as a result of these deliberations, policies and debates with regards to honour killings and minority communities saw a considerable shift from culture-based to gender-based discourses, which eventually coalesced into hybrid discourses that took into account both factors related to culture and gender⁵⁷. This shift in discourse arguably “moderates” formerly hard-line stances and opens up the debate to a wider range of views, thus providing a more inclusive framework within which debates within multicultural societies take place. In addition, this so-called “soft” approach should be avoided in cases where there is a clear victim-perpetrator dynamic.

Divided communities in Omagh, Northern Ireland

These aforementioned conditions have been practically tested in an experiment⁵⁸ on deliberation in the context of tensions between divided communities in Northern Ireland, in the town of Omagh, which had witnessed systemic violence between Catholics and Protestants. Thus far, political disputes in divided communities like the one in Omagh were prescribed solutions based on “consociational democracy”⁵⁹, which focuses on the following main aspects: executive power-sharing, autonomy or self-government, proportionality, veto rights, and an electoral system that incentivises compromise across group lines. This form of democracy is representative in nature as power-sharing agreements and veto powers are allocated to political elites who represent their constituencies. The possibility of inclusive mass deliberation in Omagh had thus far been dismissed.

A team of researchers conducted a Deliberative Poll (DP) in Omagh where they interviewed a random sample of participants and invited locals to gather together and discuss policy issues⁶⁰. The process was supervised by trained mediators. The researchers chose the future of local schools as the topic of discussion as it was not an inflammatory subject and it also raised issues connected to divisions within the community based on identity and history. The aim of the discussions was to see whether local Catholics and Protestants could “deliberate constructively” and see how the experience might “change both their policy attitudes and their opinions of one another.”⁶¹

The results from the study showed that after a day of face-to-face deliberation there was “significant change in levels of knowledge as well as mutual respect, perceptions of trustworthiness and perceptions of whether or not mutually beneficial changes were possible.”⁶² Participants in the study acquired more positive views of the other community and of inter-community relations in general⁶³.

The Aarhus Model

The Aarhus model takes a multifaceted approach to tackling the issue of radicalisation and extremism and it ticks many of the boxes with regards to TVE as mentioned by *Search's* Peacebuilder's Guide. The two main wings of the Aarhus Model include “early prevention” (aimed at youngsters who do not pose a direct security risk) and the “exit programme” (which targets already radicalised individuals who have the intention of committing acts of violent extremism)⁶⁴.

The Aarhus model is said to be “depoliticised” in that it steers away from right-wing/left-wing politics as it avoids taking a particular stance on divisive issues such as immigration and instead focuses on dealing with the issues at hand. It involves an interdisciplinary collaboration between experts in the fields of politics, sociology, psychology, acculturation and religion at Aarhus University as well as schools, social services, ministries and PET (the Danish Security and Intelligence Service)⁶⁵.

The main facets of the programme implemented according to the Aarhus model include the following:

- **InfoHouse** – parents, teachers, youth club workers etc. reporting people at risk to InfoHouse

- **Mentoring** – mentors employed by the Municipality of Aarhus to point out pitfalls of radicalisation to targeted persons and explain dangerous nature of extremist activism as well as to build personal relationship with mentee to discuss existential, political and religious questions
- **Workshops** – 2-hour workshops held in schools to present threats of terrorism and violent radicalisation and introduce risk factors in addition to inculcating students with values of participatory citizenship
- **Parents network** – network for parents of radicalised/radicalising youth who can gain skills to implement de-radicalisation at home
- **Dialogue with Muslim communities** – improving relations between local/social/governmental institutions and local Muslim communities
- **Exit Programme** – aimed at de-radicalising homecoming foreign fighters under the condition that they have not committed a crime
- **Education and Supervision of Staff** – comprehensive training and teaching of radicalisation processes, risk factors, conflict management, coaching and Life Psychology theory⁶⁶

This model is close to TVE as it is underpinned by the “Life Psychology” theory, coined by Prebel Bertelsen. Just like the “Peacebuilder’s Guide”, this theory postulates that a wholesome programme that effectively tackles radicalisation and violent extremism must regard young people as individuals who strive for agency in their own life. The following are the main tenets of the Life Psychology theory:

- Everybody aspires to a “good-enough” life
- Everyone needs to have skills to cope successfully with tasks of life
- Every human being is confronted with the same fundamental life tasks⁶⁷

The Life Psychology theory recognises the intangible deep-seated psychological factors that may push an individual towards extremism as a violent means of seeking to solve their individual and social problems. The theory revolves around the concept of “embeddedness” which branches into three life skills necessary for anybody to have a “good-enough grip on life”⁶⁸.

These include:

- **Participation** in one’s community and society that would bring about a feeling of self-worth and utility
- **Realistic attunement**, which requires an individual to gauge their own skills, capabilities and personality in order to set realistic goals
- **Perspective taking** in relation to discourses of one’s culture(s) and society

Exclusion from scenarios in which an individual would be able to engage and develop these life skills runs the risk of marginalising individuals who may seek their sense of belonging, purpose and self-worth through the negative paradigm of discrimination and hate and illegal radicalised activism⁶⁹.

The Aarhus model presents a participatory form of democracy in which state institutions and targeted persons act with agency where they work with each other and not one for the other. The multi-pronged, interdisciplinary approach of this model and its recognition of individuals' agency and intangible needs may be incorporated into future strategies against violent extremism.

Nevertheless, this model may only be applicable in a context of a small country where the "target communities and individuals" themselves constitute a minute proportion of the population. Implementing aspects of such a model for a larger country and population, and for a country where state and non-state institutions do not cooperate as effectively as in Denmark, would require a different approach. In this sense, the Aarhus model is one that may be applied in certain local contexts where the abovementioned institutions can work together. However, it is not a full blueprint for tackling macro-level radicalisation and extremist movements.

Post-conflict reconciliation in Sierra Leone

As mentioned before in this report, the context of radicalisation in the Global South presents a different context and thus different challenges. Nevertheless, elements of deliberative democracy and agonism have already been catered to situations in the Global South. The case presented here relates to reconciliation efforts in Sierra Leone following the eleven-year civil war that lasted between 1991-2002. Although the post-war context is one in which radicalisation had already occurred and was technically extinguished following a ceasefire, underlying structural issues, such as the lack of resolution between perpetrators and victims, are potential fodder for future radicalisation of individuals. Thus, tackling the social and political issues that remain in a post-war situation is an important part of preventing the rise or reappearance of violent extremism or the potential for it.

Very often, peace-building initiatives implemented in the Global South are bereft of connection to local context and they also entrench dependency relationships with international humanitarian organisations working in a neoliberal setting. The "Fambul Tok: Community Healing in Sierra Leone" project implemented by the US-based Catalyst for Peace and Sierra Leonean human rights NGO Form of Conscience represents an initiative that takes local context into account and brings together formerly antagonistic sides to reconcile through locally relevant methods⁷⁰. A broad range of individuals, including victims, ex-combatants, women, youth, religious leaders, elders, and local officials, were gathered to attend consultations to gauge whether people were ready for a reconciliation process. Such a forum for deliberation was unprecedented since the end of the war and the community representatives that participated came to the admission that unhealed wounds required healing and that tensions continued to exist in communities where perpetrators and victims were living together⁷¹. The forum for community representatives provided the platform for deliberative democratic practices and the readiness to tackle unhealed wounds represented an opportunity to use agonistic principles of expressing untreated negative emotions in a constructive setting.

The Fambul Tok project was implemented in the Kailahun district, one of the most devastated districts that is located in the east of Sierra Leone, at the village level, after community members argued against implementation at the chiefdom level. The reconciliation and healing process took place in the following manner in each cluster of villages:

"A community truth-telling bonfire is held in the evening, at which victims and offenders have the opportunity to come forward and to tell their stories to their communities. They can ask for forgiveness or offer forgiveness when ready. This is followed the next day by a cleansing ceremony, drawing upon distinctive local traditions of healing."⁷²

Stories⁷³ that arose out of these sessions point to the restoration of broken ties, the opening and healing of old wounds, and, ultimately, reconciliation. Although this exact method of reconciliation may not be applicable

to all Global South societies, the notion behind it may be catered to differing cultures and implemented in relation to other local contexts.

The goal of the Fambul Tok project was “geared toward transforming the identity of victim and offender created through war and toward reconnecting both with their inherent goodness.”⁷⁴ The project’s framework was underpinned by the belief that “each person has the power, the goodness, and the capacity to contribute to society in helpful and healthy ways.”⁷⁵ Fambul Tok’s method of deliberation and healing through agonistic processes, as well as the recognition of the agency and capacity of traumatised and marginalised individuals to transform, come close to constructive societal “transformation” advocated in this report.

5. THE FUTURE OF CVE/PVE

In the aforementioned case studies, Ercan (2017) develops a **theoretical** approach combining deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism to tackling the issue of extremism, while the study by Luskin et al. (2014) provides evidence of the **practical** implementation of deliberation and the positive transformation that such deliberation across divided communities may yield.

The task now is to develop a theory and practical application of new perspectives in CVE/PVE that may be applicable to a range of contexts. For instance, Ercan's (2017) case study focused on a Muslim community in a Global North country (ignoring Australia's geographical location), while the study by Luskin et al. (2014) used a community divided along religious lines after a history of prolonged violent conflict as a case in point.

As mentioned in the section on shortcomings, there are several other contexts that CVE/PVE should take into account if it is to provide a comprehensive framework for tackling violent extremism. These mainly involve differences in socio-economic class and differences between the Global North and the Global South. The concepts of deliberative democracy and agonism have been tailored more to liberal democracies in the Global North, and indeed both case studies have focused on communities in such contexts. In practical terms, these notions are applicable to 'at-risk' and marginalised communities in the Global North where even those at risk of resorting to violent extremism may be included in the debate on social issues, cultural values and inclusion/integration. The deliberative approach, which seeks to cut across experiences, identities, and ideational camps, may also be applied to individuals from different class backgrounds.

The Global South and post-conflict situations present different challenges where violence rooted in colonial experience form part of the general historical context of such societies. The aforementioned theories and strategies must therefore consider the differing social, cultural and historical context of societies in the Global South. The Global South case study mentioned in this report related to the use of tradition-based reconciliation techniques that involved elements of deliberative democracy and agonism, in which unhealed wounds, trauma, and marginalisation were addressed and listened to. There are other examples of initiatives in Global South contexts that approach the definition of TVE as stated by Search. For instance, in the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, where the political project of "democratic confederalism"⁷⁶ (considered to be a branch of direct democracy) is being developed, a woman's organisation called Taa Marbouta has been holding workshops to involve women in countering violent extremism⁷⁷, a strategy recommended in the Gender sub-section of the report.

TVE as a concept should not be perceived as a wholly novel approach to tackling violent extremism, but should be developed in relation to all the previous CVE/PVE approaches that demonstrate respect for individuals' agency and self-worth

This report argues that TVE as a concept should not be accepted as a wholly novel approach to tackling violent extremism, but should be developed in relation to all the previous CVE/PVE approaches that demonstrate respect for an individual's agency and self-worth. The most effective way to develop ideas close to TVE will be to synthesise previous successful PVE programmes, taking into account the different contexts in which they were implemented, and blend them with ideas and experiences of deliberative democracy, as mentioned theoretically and practically in the fourth section of this report.

If we are to return to the question of a “transformation from what to what?” then the use of ideas from deliberative democracy and related concepts speak more of a transformation within societies rather than of individuals. Incorporating ideas from agonism, the deliberative democracy experiment in Omagh (Luskin et al. 2014) is also a case in point. The mixed community of Catholics and Protestants that had experienced violence between one another had their opinions and perceptions “moderated”, and thus “transformed”. Although this case does not tackle the issue of extremism per se, it is an example of a case where voices that are normally neglected are given the space to express themselves and thus transform societal relations. Blending lessons from such experiences with practical ideas from strategies such as the Aarhus model, nevertheless, can help to develop new CVE/PVE strategies as a “whole society” concept that seeks to both involve marginalised communities and disenfranchised individuals and to engage mainstream society with them as a means of fostering a deliberative community that may meet people’s psychological and social needs. This type of transformation thus ties in with the definition provided by *Search* in which the actual “dynamics that motivate [violent extremism]” are tackled rather than reacting to conflict and acts of violence.

6. CONCLUSION

TVE has been introduced as the next stage in the development in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)/Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) strategies. Nevertheless, the concept of TVE is still in the incipient phase, and *Search*, as well as a number of academics, have only vaguely touched upon what characteristics this new concept may hold. They have focused on the more psychological and social factors that drive radicalisation and the need for a more wholesome strategy to tackle cultural, social, and political issues that affect disillusioned communities and individuals. This is in contrast to the more securitised and socio-economic approaches to tackling violent extremism that have not managed to meet marginalised people's intangible needs, which include self-worth, a sense of belonging and life purpose.

This report has brought up driving factors of radicalisation that are unaccounted for by *Search*. These include class, differences between the Global North and Global South, and acculturative stress. The focus has been largely on the Global North and issues of cultural, social and ideational differences have taken centre stage as it has not been within the scope of this report to tackle all the above-mentioned factors in depth.

This report has incorporated the concept of deliberative democracy and elements of agonistic pluralism to promote the view that deliberation across cultural, social and ideational divides, both within and across communities, can help to foster a deliberative community that may begin to meet the above-mentioned psychological and social needs. This may give marginalised people a voice to express themselves and make them feel involved in the political and social processes of a given society.

These concepts may be actualised practically by making use of the experiences of the case studies mentioned in this report. Of note, the Aarhus model provides a practical guideline of how state and non-state entities may cooperate with local communities to nip any potential tensions and problems in the bud (although limited in its micro/individualistic mechanism). Such experiences could inform the problems present in the Australian and Belgian case studies, where the context of poor socioeconomic levels, a lack of credible community leaders and a lack of solid religious literacy contributed to the radicalisation of certain elements of the youth. Experiences such as the deliberative experiment in Omagh also show that it is possible to bring antagonistic elements within a society to the table to “moderate” views and have their opinions listened.

The primary aim of CVE/PVE should be to prevent the initial marginalisation and tense social relations within diverse societies so as to prevent the potential for radicalisation. The objective is not to transform individuals from an “undesirable” to a “desirable” state, but to transform elements of society at a small scale, as evidenced, for instance, in the Omagh (Luskin et al., 2014) and Sierra Leone (Hoffman, 2008) case studies, so as to prevent marginalised individuals from even having the desire to resort to violent extremism to resolve cultural, social and political issues. This represents a more holistic and wholesome approach to tackling violent extremism that is unprecedented in nature and requires further research and experience so as to provide practical guidelines for the future.

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