

**EXPRESSIONS  
OF  
RADICALIZATION**

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*Global Politics, Processes and Practices*

Edited by  
Kristian Steiner and  
Andreas Önnersfors



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Kristian Steiner • Andreas Önnersfors  
Editors

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Global Politics, Processes and Practices

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*Editors*

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## PREFACE

This book is primarily the outcome of an international symposium in Malmö, Sweden (February 11–12, 2016), hosted by the Department of Global Political Studies at Malmö University. The symposium, broadcasted by the Swedish Television (SVT), was a success, and we, the organizers of the symposium and editors of this book, decided to ask the speakers to develop their presentations into book chapters. We are truly indebted to them for willingly doing this. We are also sincerely grateful for the authors Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf, Bruno Oliveira Martins, and Monika Ziegler, who did not participate in the symposium but yet provided us with two valuable book chapters.

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## Introduction

*Andreas Önnerfors and Kristian Steiner*

On 19 January 2016, the Swedish parliament organized an expert hearing on radicalization and recruitment to ‘violence-affirming’ extremism in online environments (Sveriges Riksdag 2016). Two government institutions displayed rather different approaches to the subject. The Centre for Asymmetric Threat and Terrorism Studies at the Swedish Defence University (SEDU) presented a paper on ISIS activity on the Internet. In principle, the talk centred on targeted recruitment, information campaigns, and encrypted information. The speaker framed a solution based on enhanced coordination between national counter-terrorism (CT) efforts. Another speaker from the SEDU focused mainly on the use of Facebook in Islamist extremist outreach. He outlined motives for positive engagement with extremist online media ranging from adherence to humanitarianism, religion, and ideology to attractions to martyrdom, adventure, violence, weapons, and/or community. This speaker concluded with a plea to the Swedish security service to share information more actively within and between central agencies and local authorities.

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The Swedish Media Council (SMC) presented the outcome of a study on anti-democratic messages on the Internet aimed to incite young people to violence in the name of ideology (Statens Medieråd 2013). Left-wing, right-wing, and militant Islamist milieus were investigated, and the study concluded that, apart from differences in content, there are significant similarities in the ways various extremist groups frame problems and propose solutions. All of them uncritically adopt ‘a worldview where hate is a driving force and violence a legitimate resource’ (Statens Medieråd 2013: 2). SMC highlighted four overlapping components of extremist narratives: (1) a strong dualist perception of the world (‘us’ and ‘them’), (2) a rhetoric of self-defence (‘we are under attack’), (3) an explanation of the world through framing narratives of conspiracy, and (4) the idealization of direct action and contempt for discussion and compromise. As a counter-measure, SMC proposed raising young people’s critical faculties, analytical awareness, and general levels of media and information literacy.

For the speakers from the SEDU, tackling online radicalization calls largely for technical solutions and stronger national coordination and enforcement of CT measures such as information exchange between public agencies. Of course, for democratic state actors, coercive measures must primarily be security-oriented to avoid infringing upon basic rights of freedom of thought and expression. The SMC, on the other hand, demonstrated that countering online radicalization requires addressing its worldviews and framing narratives, mainly by enhancing public cognitive skills such as the competence to critically analyse media content.

The hearing in the Swedish parliament was quite representative of the contemporary discourse on radicalization, which seems trapped unproductively between two major positions: (1) the securitizational and behavioural focus of the SEDU and (2) the socio-cultural, cognitive, attitudinal, and contextual explanations of the SMC.<sup>1</sup> Neumann makes a distinction between these two positions as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘European’, and develops their ideal features extensively (2013: 885–91). The current public and academic debate on extremism, terrorism, and political violence and their causes, prevention, and remedies against them oscillates between these two poles.

‘Radicalization’ as an analytical concept has emerged in the official, academic, and public discourse following the attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001 (9/11) (Neumann 2013: 878; Neumann and Kleinmann 2013: 361–364). Radicalization has most commonly been presumed to be a unidirectional process, the ‘action pathway’ (Borum 2011a: 9) leading

individuals ultimately to use lethal violence, particularly terrorism against civilians/non-combatants, to attain their political goals. Most recent policies and studies—and certainly the public view of radicalization—have focused on Jihadist/Salafist terror attacks on the West in response to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Therefore, substantially more interest has been paid to inherent aspects of religious ideas and practices and (more contentiously) cultural or civilizational issues in those areas. We believe that such a limited view of radicalization is counter-productive to its explanatory potential. While some researchers argue for abandoning the term altogether because of its polysemous nature (Neumann 2013: 873; Schmid 2013: 7), we hold that a refined definition of radicalization has more potential to aid both our understanding of global conflict patterns in historical and contemporary settings and our ability to advise policy makers.

As the title indicates, *Expressions of Radicalization* shifts the focus from single-tracked modes of analysis and explanation (born out of the need for securitization) to an understanding of the phenomenon as multi-faceted, dynamic, processual, and (to a certain extent) multi-dimensional. By extending the geographical scope of cases and contexts, as signalled by the subtitle ‘Global Politics, Processes, and Practices’, we aim also to demonstrate that the concept of radicalization is not confined to explaining the habits and actions of predominantly young male second- or third-generation immigrants in Western states. On the contrary: by putting different objects of investigation together on a global scale, we show that the underlying dynamics of radicalization are caused by interplay between the mainstream and the margins and that the process revolves around a set of beliefs we interpret as responses to global crises on multiple levels. With Della Porta and LaFree (2012: 5), we see a need to ‘locate radicalization/de-radicalization in its broader transnational and global context’.

In reviewing the approaches taken in the existing literature, we identified a gap between (1) an understanding of radicalization born out of securitization, with an over-belief in solutions located within the state-centred monopoly of (often punitive and repressive) violence and security, and (2) an understanding of radicalization arising from socio-cultural factors, resorting almost exclusively to economic or discursive explanations. The first approach focuses mainly on case-related and individual instances of behavioural radicalization; second on structural deficiencies in societies, paired with cognitive and attitudinal transformations that push marginalized individuals to resort to or to endorse violence.<sup>2</sup>

One of the aims of this volume is to work to redress this deadlock by acknowledging the respective contributions of these (currently unproductively juxtaposed) positions and trying to establish common ground between them. Before we outline the trajectory of our approach, however, it is worthwhile to delve deeper into the concept of ‘radicalization’ and its history itself, which promises more precision when using this term analytically.

A securitization view of radicalization aims to detect, prevent, and avert a process through which individuals or groups are drawn into violence as means to address political grievances or to attain political goals. But even ‘violence’ is a term that escapes clear definitions. Alex P. Schmid argues (2013: 13) that political violence occupies a large spectrum, ranging from legitimate or justifiable to illegitimate or unjustifiable, and it must be assessed in context. As in theories of ‘just war’, it is necessary to distinguish between the right to political violence under certain circumstances and the appropriate use of violence during political conflicts. In recent years, the outcome of radicalization (in Western countries) has been seen predominantly as the use of violence by non-state actors against non-combatants or ‘de-individualized murder where the victim matters mostly as a message generator’ (15). We will return to this semiotic reading of terrorist attacks as a medium later.

By studying the ostensibly unidirectional process or ‘action pathway’ (radicalization into violent extremism, or RVE), the securitization position represents the legitimate self-interests of states and societies to preserve stability and to deliver security as one of the principal and non-negotiable political goods (Borum 2011a, b; Schmid 2013: 12). It was formulated out of a concrete need for protection against terrorism at home or against (individual or group) recruitment to ‘insurgent’ troops or irregular combatants in war theatres abroad (Schmid 2013: 19). Naturally, the view of radicalization as a security issue originated from within the sphere of government agencies and experts in the security sector. These expert communities are more inclined to an interest in *how* radicalization can be profiled, detected, or averted in behavioural (or CT) terms in the short term than in *why* it occurs in cognitive terms (related to societal cohesion), which requires a long-term perspective (Neumann 2013: 880–881, 888).

Frequently the securitization position is described as only being concerned with surface issues, the crust of the pie rather the ‘deep pie of context’ (Neumann 2013: 892). One reason is that in open and liberal

societies, the state primarily aims to protect its citizens from illegitimate violence but not to curtail ideas. The freedoms of expression and religion are particularly protected as both positive and negative rights, and ideological control is virtually absent. In such a setting, it is easier to restrict and punish outright criminal offences than ‘wrong’ ideas or attitudes. However, radicalization has blurred what were once apparently clear limits, since ideas evoke various levels of support and are reinforced by actions.

Socio-cultural explanations of individual and group attraction to violence and conflict question the simple assertions of the securitization view and focus upon more complex contextual, discursive, or anthropological factors. For example, in this view, the alienation of second- or third-generation immigrants in Western societies, frequently described as a ‘push’ factor towards engagement in Islamist terrorism, is typically explained by larger issues such as structural exclusion from the labour market, reaction to one-sided media narratives or grievances, and peer pressure. ‘Radicalization’ and its meaning is problematized and historicized, and a far sharper focus is placed upon discourse, media narratives, framing, stereotyping, and the construction of enemy images (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 801–2). This volume aims to release our understanding of radicalization from the stalemate between these two positions.

According to Neumann:

the principal conceptual fault-line is between notions of radicalization that emphasize extremist beliefs and attitudes (‘cognitive radicalization’) and those that focus on extremist behaviour (‘behavioural radicalization’). This ambiguity explains the differences between definitions of radicalization; it has driven the scholarly debate; and it provides the backdrop for strikingly different policy approaches’. (2013: 873)

What we aim to highlight in this volume is the complex interrelationship between idea(s) and action(s) and how both are mobilized in terms of power, structures, individuals, and support communities. Combining macro, meso, and micro approaches promises a more refined clarification of what we mean by radicalization on each level, and at those levels of multiple intersections, we hope to elicit ‘a holistic understanding’ of the relationship of ideas and actions, or the ‘complex nexus between belief and behaviour’ (Neumann 2013: 879, 885, 889; see also Della Porta and LaFree 2012: 6).

In subsequent sections, we will discuss the etymology of ‘radicalization’ from a historical perspective, since this will allow us to question prevalent and unreflective usage of the term. It is also necessary to engage with several contemporary definitions, identifying their gaps and drawbacks. Finally, we will present a model of the relationship between cognitive and behavioural radicalization as it emerges from the cases studied in this volume.

## CONCEPTUAL AMBIGUITIES OF ‘RADICALIZATION’

In recent years, several overviews of the contemporary use of the concept ‘radicalization’ have been published in introductory chapters or as separate studies.<sup>3</sup> We do not intend to replicate these, but find it worthwhile to provide a general overview of the etymology, conceptual history, and fuzziness of this ‘great buzzword of our time’ (Borum 2011a: 9–10; Neumann and Kleinmann 2013: 360; Schmid 2013: 1, 19, 39); Schmid (2013: 17–18) presents no fewer than 13 definitions.

### *Conceptual Fluidity*

First, it is important to emphasize that the terms ‘radical’, ‘radicalism’, and ‘radicalization’ have migrated from predominantly positive connotations in conceptual history to predominantly negative understandings in contemporary discourse. What constitutes ‘radical’ depends very much on context, and any positive or negative assessment of past events is largely the outcome of Whig historiography. For example, before 1776 the term ‘revolution’ simply referred to a ‘change of government’ and gained negative connotations only during the period 1789–1792, although even then those connotations depended on one’s political position (e.g., compare the opposing judgements of Burke and Paine). ‘Radical’ and ‘radicalization’ are frequently coupled with other no less ambiguous expressions such as extremism, fundamentalism, terrorism, or, more generally, violence. This shift in meaning over time demonstrates that it is not fruitful to ascribe one exclusive meaning to the term ‘radicalization’ and that we need to be open to more elaborate readings and explanations.

Second, one of the largest conceptual gaps lies in the fact that the opposite uses of these terms (or mechanisms of inclusion in accepted majority positions) are seldom defined consistently and frequently remain empty

signifiers. What, for instance, is the opposite of radicalization? Normalization? Mainstreaming? And if normalization or mainstreaming is implied in opposition to radicalization, what constitutes the ‘normal’ or the ‘mainstream’? A simple majority, an ‘average’ of socially accepted norms and actions, or something else? This touches upon what exactly constitute the benchmarks of analysis. Schmid calls for research to be carried out not only on the ‘deviating’ group of radicals but also on ‘normal’ or ‘mainstream’ control groups (2013: 32). Dalgaard-Nielsen mentioned one study in which this was done and concluded: ‘politically active youth focus on the possibility to effect improvements through their own efforts, whereas the more radical focus on structural exclusion’. In this case, it thus appears that ‘radical’ implies rejecting the possibility of self-determination in a democratic society and instead represents an acceptance of external heteronomous factors, which make it unlikely or impossible to ‘effect change through legal and constitutional channels’ (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 809).

### *Etymology*

Does the etymology of the word ‘radicalization’ offer any generic features beyond the suggestive metaphor? The term refers originally to the Latin word *radix*, root. In scholarship, ‘radical’ was used in mathematics or grammar to denote algebraic or linguistic roots. Radicalization implies a movement downwards (or symbolically backwards in time) to a presumed pristine origin, rooted in the darkness of the soil from which nourishment is drawn and where stability is achieved. The root is associated with the origin and foundation of a living plant, and by extension to the origin or foundation of concepts. Therefore, being ‘radical’ is frequently perceived as similar to being fundamentalist.

In his philosophical study of radicalism, McLaughlin speaks of a ‘fundamental orientation towards roots, foundations, or origins in the socio-political domain’ (2012: 21), which, of course, in most instances of radicalization happens on a merely symbolical and imagined level. Political radicalism is also both a ‘mode of action’ and a ‘mode of thought’, thus it can be behavioural or cognitive, an action or an idea, a distinction we will return to. As a mode of action, it is defined as ‘the attempt to achieve fundamental change with respect to fundamental socio-political norms, practices, relations and institutions’ (22). As a



mode of thought and philosophical argumentation, it represents a ‘fundamental inquiry into fundamental socio-political norms, practices, relations and institutions’ (25). In both modes, McLaughlin argues that we can determine two opposites to the radical position as points of reference: (1) conservation of the status quo (or the mainstream societal compromise) and (2) reform through a slower pace of transformation. Radicalization would thus always imply the ambition to quickly overrun the existing order and to outpace any other attempts at more moderate reform or appeasement of mainstream positions. We find this a fruitful approach since it underlines the necessity of understanding radicalization in relation to other political actions such as conservatism or reform.

In historical research, the term ‘radical’ is already established as an analytical category, although it is used somewhat differently to contemporary usage. For example, ‘radical pietism’ is used to describe a form of uncompromising seventeenth-century Christian belief, dedicated entirely to its spiritual cause and oriented towards idealized perceptions of early Christianity as a ‘purer’ form of belief. Scholarship understands ‘radical enlightenment’ as a revolutionary commitment to secular core values of enlightenment philosophy in active opposition to the dogmatic and coercive powers of state and church. It is, however, in the post-revolutionary context at the end of the eighteenth century that we first find the idea of ‘radical’ implying a fundamental upheaval or restructuring of an existing political order. Finally, the concept of radical political thought in the Western context usually implies a utopian pursuit of expanded political rights to participation in decision making and resource allocation as well as support for the ideological positions that underpin these emancipatory processes.

Radicalization can occur on several levels: individual, collective, and socio-political. Personal lifestyle can be affected, as can group behaviour or the agency of civil societies, and even the fundamental political structure of an entire society. Mutual reinforcement can happen both from the bottom up and from the top down. The radicalization of French society circa 1789 was largely a bottom-up movement leading to the overturn of existing order. Fascist radicalization in Germany after 1933 was mainly orchestrated from the top down.

McLaughlin (2012: 8–18) elaborates the historical and contemporary connotations and etymology of the words ‘radical’ and ‘radicalism’ in both their pejorative and positive senses. The terms are negatively associated,

and frequently conflated, with extremism, revolution, or utopianism, but also positively understood as progress, adequacy in ‘examining and responding to a current crisis’, and/or innovation (12). Thus, over time, the uses and meanings of the terms shifted from fundamental change in general, to socio-political (democratic) reform, to socio-political (particularly socialist) reform or revolution.

Finally, in the twentieth century, right-wing/fascist totalitarian movements were also perceived to push for radical transformations of societal order. McLaughlin (2012: 35) distinguishes between fascist and libertarian radicalism, while Schmid argues that historization and contextualization are generally absent in contemporary studies of radicalization, but that ‘some soul-searching in one’s own history’ would contribute to a better understanding of the concept (2013: 2, 5). Neumann (2013: 876–7) provides examples from American history, where ‘radicalization’ has been understood in a positive sense.

The close and almost fixed association of ‘radical’ with ‘Islam’ is certainly a brainchild of the twenty-first century (Borum 2011a: 10–11; Della Porta and LaFree 2012: 6; Schmid 2013: 1). Maria Schottenius (2015) highlights the irony that ‘radical’ now stands for extremely conservative positions using violence and terror to fight for the supremacy of religion over secular institutions, whereas 100 years ago it meant the diametric opposite. She also elaborates on Danish ‘cultural radicalism’, a movement virulently critical of the political and ideological hegemonies of crown, church, and military. That movement established newspapers and parties to push for political change; its continuing extreme liberal tradition partially explains why the controversy over the ‘Mohammed’ cartoons unfolded so violently in Denmark and revealed such irreconcilable positions (Goerzig and Al-Hashimi 2015: 81–90). As Olivier Roys pointed out, ‘it is not so much about radicalization of Islam, but rather the islamization of radicalism’ (cited in Schottenius 2015). In principle, ‘[radical] Islamism is centered on a narrative [of conspiracy], which claims that Islam and Muslims are constantly attacked and humiliated by the [demonic] West, Israel and corrupt local regimes in Muslim countries’ (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 798, 801). ‘Islamism’ as a politicized and activist interpretation of Islam has both assumed the label of radicalism for itself and been ascribed radical traits by others; the movement obviously enjoys and even receives kudos from such attributions (Schottenius 2015). Borum outlines the

attempts of researchers to analyse and combine the elements of radical Islamism into a political ideology (2011b: 50–55), as summed up by Schmid (7):

The content of the concept ‘radical’ has changed quite dramatically in little more than a century: while in the 19th century, ‘radical’ referred primarily to liberal, anti-clerical, pro-democratic, progressive political positions, contemporary use—as in ‘radical Islamism’—tends to point in the opposite direction: embracing an anti-liberal, fundamentalist, anti-democratic and regressive agenda.

As we will see in several of the contributions to this volume, the same could be said about the religious re-semanticization of radical political positions in general and core elements of neo-authoritarian governments worldwide.

### *Varieties of Radicalization*

Taken together, the term ‘radical’ and its related word forms should be ‘understood with reference to its context’ (McLaughlin 2012: 16). Taking issue with settled, accepted, or ‘mainstream’ positions is an underlying historical feature of radicalism as a dynamic non-static process: ‘yesterday’s radicalism may become today’s orthodoxy and one place’s orthodoxy may be another place’s radicalism’ (16, 34). Neumann concludes, ‘radicalization, like terrorism, is in the eye of the beholder’ (2013: 878). Why it is vitally important to reflect upon benchmarks and the perspectives taken by observers of radicalization will be discussed later in this chapter. In some contexts, ‘certain forms of violent resistance to political oppression’ are outlawed at the national level, but accepted under international humanitarian law (Schmid 2013: iv). As a ‘right to resistance’, these forms of violence have been discussed in political philosophy at least since Locke. National definitions of radical positions, however, might vary considerably. Why, for example, is it conceptually possible for Russia to restrict and punish international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) under its laws against terrorism?

Schmid (2013) argues that often radicalism ‘has been a force of progress’ and that radicalization cannot therefore be used as a plain synonym for terrorism. He proposes a distinction between radicalism and extremism, in which radicalism ‘tends to be more open-minded’ and extremism

‘manifests a closed mind and a distinct willingness to use violence against civilians’ (iv). For Schmid, radicalism entails (1) advocating sweeping political change and (2) system-transforming radical solution for government and society, which can be either ‘non-violent and democratic (through persuasion and reform) or violent and non-democratic (through coercion and revolution)’ (8). Since ‘radical’ can have this open-minded and open-ended character, Schmid suggests that it is difficult to use the term ‘radicalization’ consistently. ‘Extremism’ (at least in democratic societies), however, is easier to define through its clear opposition to the mainstream as ‘anti-constitutional/-democratic/pluralist, authoritarian, fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising, single-minded black or white thinkers, rejecting rule of law while adhering to an ends-justifies-means philosophy, realizing goals by any means’, including the use of violence against opponents (9).

Extremists on both the political left and right, religious fundamentalists, and ethno-nationalists tend to prefer force or violence over persuasion, uniformity over diversity, collective goals over individual freedom, and orders and commands over dialogue. Ideologically, ‘extremists in power tend towards totalitarianism’, as seems confirmed by recent political developments in Europe and America (9).

Although it is historically true that not all forms of radicalization have been characterized by a refusal to consider other views, there is still a strain of closed-mindedness in radicalizing efforts that makes negotiating clear-cut definitions a tedious exercise. For our argument, it is important to consider that seen from a diachronic perspective the terms ‘radical’ and ‘radicalization’ have undergone quite substantial changes in meaning and application. This means that it makes little sense to use them exclusively to denote RVE related to Islamist fundamentalism. Rather, ‘radicalization’ can potentially apply to a variety of political settings if we remember that it denotes complex and dynamic processes of differentiation and positioning between established and challenging standpoints.

### RADICALIZATION RELATIVE TO A REFERENCE POINT

In the following section, we explore the issues of measurement, standard values, and observation biases. If radicalization denotes a process, the question of measurement is obvious to address. Few authors seem concerned about how individuals and groups labelled as ‘radical’ differ from the ‘normal’ against which they supposedly deviate, nor do most authors

define this ‘normal’. This void in positive definitions is a clear drawback in radicalization studies. The securitization position frequently invokes vague references implying that radicalization endangers social and political order through its potential for RVE. It capitalizes on threats against institutions and legal frameworks of the state without addressing the ends of political order such as equal representation, social justice, or fair resource distribution. Such an over-focus on state-centred approaches and institutional stability also risks ignoring the possibility that radicalization can be induced by state actors (especially those dependent upon electoral support mechanisms). In contrast, socio-cultural explanations frequently frame the root causes of radicalization within socio-economic deterministic terms without addressing alternative economic models beyond state incentives and subsidies. These explanations often overlook the global (narrative, attitudinal, and cognitive) nexus of radicalization in favour of traditional social and behavioural norms (e.g., acquiring a social identity through one’s work).

### *Three Reference Points for Measurement*

Measuring radicalization is a complex exercise since standard values and variations often fluctuate considerably in political communities, particularly those exposed to the shifting dynamics of electoral support. Considered from a philosophical standpoint and taking its ambiguous conceptual history into account, radicalization has no obvious essential or inherent characteristics (Neumann 2013: 876). As numerous studies assume, it is a positioning process relative to:

- (a) The socio-political *mainstream* of a given society (the real object of observation)
- (b) The *visual focus* of the observer’s observation (including observation bias and potential assumed ideal reference points)
- (c) The *larger context* of globalized politics (creating expanded references)

To elaborate argument (a), if a given society (such as the Czech, Israeli, Indian, or German societies discussed in this book) is the object of observation, we must ideally establish the positions that represent its accepted (‘mainstream’) socio-political compromises before we can reasonably judge how ‘radical’ to label a phenomenon. The degree of radicalization is relatively easy to determine in the case of a pseudo-religiously motivated

suicide bomber. That individual does not accept conventional engagement in socio-political compromises and resorts to religious ideas for a cognitive basis and lethal violence as appropriate behavioural praxis. Those cognitive and behavioural positions, however, are usually not compatible with the model of a modern secular state and thus deviate from the mainstream. In a political community where intersections between religion and politics are commonplace and where the state monopoly on violence is weak, violence based on religious arguments and a culture of accepted violent behaviours appear less anomalous and thus less radical.

A more complex example would be the refugee policy that was a standard value in Swedish politics prior to 2010 and may even have contributed to the loss of the centre-right government in the national elections of 2014. This public value has since changed dramatically, as demonstrated by shifting electoral support; new socially accepted standards include closed borders, no more support for admitting immigrants' family members, and more aggressive extradition policies. People voicing such opinions before 2010 would likely have been labelled 'radical' according to prevalent standards, but in 2017 these are mainstream positions. Changes in public opinion such as this point to the necessity of analyses (e.g., in conceptual history) to consider a diachronic perspective and to engage in a close study of those actors who push the limits of public opinion (e.g., in societal debate, political parties and groups, media narratives).

As observers (point [b]) we need to reflect upon our own perspectives, potential observational biases, and viewpoints as we describe and analyse the socio-political phenomena of a given society. To counter these subjective influences, it is useful to introduce absolute (impersonal) observation criteria (e.g., the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the European Union's Copenhagen criteria of 1993) against which to measure radicalization, variations to standard values, or radicalization of the standard values themselves. These criteria may be applied to individual, collective/group, and/or state actors. In RVE theories radicalization is seen to manifest itself by endorsing or engaging in violence of any form, which then would make out the absolute (and relatively easy) measurement criteria. As soon as we move to the cognitive, attitudinal, or discursive level, observation will inevitably also include indirect or direct value judgements of the validity of certain concepts in the political discourse.

In another Swedish example, the introduction of personal identity (ID) controls between Sweden and Denmark in January 2016 reflected a perhaps understandable reaction to the refugee crisis and the changing

background of mainstream socio-political positions (a). However, from the larger viewpoint of human rights, those measures still appear to undermine global solidarity, and from a civil rights' point of view, they appear as a gross infringement on the free movement of the people living in the affected area, who had previously enjoyed more than five decades of paper-free travel across national borders (Önnerfors 2016a). To judge whether or not the Swedish government's measures were a 'radical' deterioration of the situation, we must be sure of (and declare) a more absolute position from which to evaluate these actions.

Finally, given (a) the observation of a given society and (b) absolute points of measurement and observation biases notwithstanding, (c) radicalization must also be understood in relation to international and global political settings. Radicalized individuals frequently act upon grievances that assume meaning in a global context, for instance, the perceived discrimination against Muslims. The reference point in most cases of radicalizing individuals is not the given society per se (nor even socio-economic grievances such as unemployment), but events beyond the local, regional, or national level. The new identification controls between Sweden and Denmark appear less radical in a global context that now includes a proposed US–Mexico border wall than they do in the smaller Swedish political context. But both restrictions on movement are nevertheless placed on a sliding scale of coercive measures declared or taken by state actors. Radicalization in our own time is not confined to domestic settings, the delivery of political goods, or ideal points of reference, but is embedded in the complex context of globalized politics and flows of information. Schmid writes: 'the reference point of these "vulnerable youth" is often external to the host society' (2013: 19). Arguably the anarchist and communist acts of terrorism around 1900 had a universal (ideological) agenda, but they were not, as now, triggered by global political events with national repercussions.

### *Globalization Creates Expanded References*

It may only be possible to understand why there is more radicalization among second and third, rather than first, generation Muslims in Western Europe by considering the global context. Goerzig and Al-Hashimi (2015) trace violent Islamist activism back to the publication of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1988. Since then, Western involvement in multiple conflicts in the MENA region has placed severe pressures of identification on

members of societal out-groups in the West, principally Muslim communities, leaving them in a state of double alienation and identity trade-offs (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 800). Wilner and Dubouloz (2011: 423, 432) claim that ‘identity deconstruction and reconstruction is inherent to [Islamist] radicalization’ with feelings of self-doubt and confusion of identity as result. In their study, they treat an insider’s account as an example of ‘transformative ideology’ that lead from pre-radicalization to a trigger phase, with cumulative radicalization in a process of change towards violence and behavioural outcomes. Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010: 799–801) points out that ‘radicalization occurs as individuals seek to reconstruct a lost identity in a perceived hostile and confusing world’ and ‘individualization and value relativism prompt a search for identity, meaning and community’.

Conversely, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 and charged with the divisive rhetoric of Huntington’s ‘clash of civilization’, counter-Jihadism has emerged as a political platform to organize members of societal in-groups in the West, inciting political violence such as the 2014 terrorist attacks in Norway or the 2016 murder of British member of parliament Jo Cox. In these arenas of radicalization, identification processes charge political concepts like ‘Europe’ or the ‘West’ with new meaning, even lending their names to entire movements such as the ‘Identitarians’ and practices such as ‘identity politics’. From these currents in the political mainstream, we now witness a double movement of variations caused by and affecting the globalization of world politics and the flow of information.

### *Cultural Dichotomies in a Globalized Setting*

Powers writes of the competition between strategic actors ‘to radicalize communities against the established organs and apparatuses of a given society’ (2014: 233). While he seems mainly to refer to reciprocal interventions in various national media environments (which, as we will see in some chapters in this volume, do occur), we could likewise claim that the different types of radicalized out-groups and elements of in-groups ‘compete for influence in a more balanced, transnational, ideational playing field’ and that ‘the market for loyalties’ has no national or domestic borders anymore, since the formerly ‘closed ideational marketplace’ is now open to online radicalization (241). Internet-based communication facilitates the transnationalization or globalization of information space



as ‘emerging communication technologies reshape how societies negotiate power and legitimate authority’ (245). As is globalization itself, this is a double-edged sword, since it simultaneously creates a potentially global and free circulation of ideas that simultaneously contributes to and fuels the creation of sealed information environments aiming to destroy that very freedom. Social media ‘play an important psychosocial role in establishing community, or put another way, shared knowledge, norms and interests’ (243).

Allegiances are forged on factors other than nationally shared knowledge/cultures. ‘Moral outrage [about extra-domestic political issues] can trigger violent behaviour’ (Powers 2014: 235) or, as we have recently seen across Europe, mobilize massive electoral support for new right-wing populist parties promoting radical positions communicated in a growingly radicalized political rhetoric of fear. Online radicalization can thus create a considerable ‘ideational influence in the modern media ecology’ and shape imagined constituencies in the ‘domestic market of ideas’ (239 and 236). People search for information that confirms and reinforces their extremist narratives in sources ‘offering stories and identities that in some capacity reflect an ideological perspective’ that resonate with or fulfil their ideational needs in what have been called filter bubbles or echo chambers (239–40). Thus, the credibility of information produced and circulating in the mainstream is under severe pressure to challenge the ‘information sovereignty’ and (pre-satellite television) national monopoly on knowledge (243).<sup>4</sup>

Radical Islamist circles reject the foundational values of Western societies, and right-wing circles assume the right to formulate, interpret, and solve problems to serve their own agendas. Traditional keepers and sources of knowledge, such as academia and the media, are abandoned and undermined in favour of ‘alternative facts’, pseudo-science, or conspiracy narratives. Investigating both positions more closely reveals significant overlaps in how they perceive the foundations of political order and the means to achieve it. Both take pre-political or pre-social/non-human foundations of politics (religious law or examples from nature) for granted and both advocate strong, coercive, patriarchal states of the Hobbesian type with little leeway for the independent self-organization of civil societies or individual liberties in general.

Radical segments of in-groups and out-groups drift apart towards irreconcilable positions, and in democratic societies this inevitably affects

electoral support and therefore government policies and legislation. Such self-encapsulation and isolation ‘is likely to reinforce extremist views and underpin the construction of oppositional identities that are key to violent radicalization’ (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 808). Divisive media narratives reinforce people’s search for acknowledgement of their own position. Della Porta and LaFree argue that ‘radicalized electorates, for example, may exert pressure against conciliatory policies’ (2012: 8). Borum describes the dynamic psychologies of socialization and intergroup relations in radicalization (2011a: 20–22, 44), which are currently fuelled by the ongoing refugee crisis and record numbers of immigrants from hot conflict zones to the Western countries.

Another factor in radicalization is conflict between out-groups, where conflicts originating ‘abroad’ spill over to the ‘domestic’ setting. (Whether these distinctions continue to make sense in a state of globalized politics is not yet clear.) Kurds, Christian Arabs, and Yazidis, for example, are pitched against supporters of political Islamism, leading to radicalization that is rarely covered in the media. Even more complex, following the logic of ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’, is the siding of various segments of out-groups in Western societies with the supposed mainstream radical/populist, right-wing, or ‘Identitarian’ parties of an in-group culture, which provide them with ‘whitewashed’ voices (and hence a clear conscience when framing radical positions) in the political debate. All these exogenous factors put the socio-political mainstream reference under pressure.

### *Defining the Mainstream and Its Movements*

Goerzig and Al-Hashimi (2015: 28) point out that what we perceive as ‘radical is a matter of perspective’, and Neumann asks ‘in relation to what?’ (2013: 876). For McLaughlin, ‘we recognize certain questions as fundamental relative to the existing state of philosophy or the existing state of affairs’ (2012: 34). Powers holds that radical positions

are typically defined in comparison to those held within a particular community, or groups of individuals who share common societal-level values, political and economic systems, and geographic space. Such an approach allows for a coherent baseline against which extremism can be identified. (2014: 234–235)

Schmid argues (2013: 56) that ‘both radicalism and extremism can only be understood in terms of their distance from status quo or mainstream positions on the political spectrum of a given society’ and closely related to this idea (6–7) that

What we see and define often depends, to a certain extent, on who, where and when we are. It is important to keep in mind that we are not all equally middle-of-the-road, moderate, traditional, normal or have the same reference point to measure the distance between an acceptable, common sense, mainstream political position and unacceptable radical positions on the left or right, or along some other political axis (e.g. ecological or religious).

Although we have used the word ‘mainstream’ a few times already, some clarification of the term may be helpful. *The Oxford English Dictionary (Online)* traces the word’s migration from descriptions of nature to literary studies, and from there to politics. The mainstream is where the power of flow is concentrated by force as a natural confluence. From the margins, outside of this confluence, however, the mainstream may be viewed negatively. Noam Chomsky (1997) defined ‘mainstream media’ as a force directing the mass audience, setting the agenda, diverting the people, regimenting the public mind, and manufacturing consent. These elements of mainstreaming public opinion are stabilized by the social elite and prevailing (capitalist) power structures, even in democracies. Chomsky expressed a legitimate critique of the media and pointed out the need for alternative media, but in 1997 he likely could not have predicted the function of today’s social media in creating powerful flows of diverging (self-contained and self-referencing) worldviews and the erosion of trust in traditional media. Nor could he have been expected to imagine that the term ‘mainstream media’ (and its frequent abbreviation, MSM) would be hijacked by different conspiracist readings of world events, particularly in far (or ‘alt’-) right movements. As demonstrated in one of the contributions to this book, the ‘Liar Press’ (*Lügenpresse*) or ‘system media’ (*Systemmedien*) in the new German far right is seen as one of the ways the ‘system’ aims to control public opinion. When we use the term ‘mainstream’, we want to be crystal clear that we don’t subscribe to any readings of fabricated world orders; by ‘mainstream’ we invoke the original meaning of the word and refer to the centre of the informational riverbed formed by long-term socio-political processes of consensus. However, as

mentioned, formerly radical positions can become mainstream and move from the margins to the middle ground of politics, which makes measuring radicalization so difficult.

To begin, let us now look closer at (a) the mainstream as the real observation point against which we can measure radical variation. Any socio-political compromise is defined by the minimum of necessary intersections between the state or in-group and the out-group to uphold order, peace, and stability in a society (assuming these are the legitimate ends of politics). In democratic societies (political systems based on electoral support), this relationship is more complex, since public policies are evaluated against grievances from in-groups and out-groups. These grievances, legitimate or not, historically revolve around key political goods: (1) resource allocation and distribution (physical and more abstract), (2) political representation or access to decision-making processes (particularly with regard to resource allocation), and (3) the privilege to formulate problems and to suggest and express solutions, including ideological positions underpinning these processes (which also entails identification with the political order in question). In open societies, where social order is achieved through negotiation, the goal is to mitigate between positions and interests related to the political goods elaborated in (1) to (3). When this mitigation is not achieved, it is likely that not only parts of the out-groups (minorities, marginalized societal strata) but also parts of in-groups will react by pushing for reform against the conservation of the status quo or by adopting more radical positions of change (Borum 2011a: 13; McLaughlin 2012: 30). Egalitarian socialism, for example, might represent a radical position in a political system where resource allocation and decision making is hereditary or where pure capitalism excludes most people from enjoying legitimate political goods. More recently, resource allocation and distribution in welfare economies has become a matter of fierce competition between nativist and universalist positions. Political parties supporting nativist rights to resources currently receive much greater electoral support than previously. Populism undermines the traditional acceptance of representative democracy by blaming its elites for failure (and even treason) and aims to replace it with more direct means of decision making based on perceived native rights to participation. Traditional media is challenged as the platform of political deliberation and attacked for misrepresenting social issues, while support for political projects such as EU transnational collaboration weakens.

If the mainstream (a), against which we measure political radicalization, represents to some degree the real situation, a more ideal reference point (b) measures radical variation based on more theoretical ideas of norms to which both state and non-state actors should conform. Assuming, as Schmid (2013: iv, 31) proposes, that liberal democracy (democratic rule of law and international human rights standards) constitutes the ultimate measuring point, both state and non-state actors can be measured against their divergence from such ideal norms. Standard reference points are thus ‘Western “core values” like democracy, majority rule with safeguards for minorities, rule of law, pluralism, separation of state and religion, equality before the law, gender equality, freedom of thought and expression’ (11), or

democracy, (gender) equality, pluralism, separation of state and religion, freedom of thought and expression, equality of opportunity, man-made laws, adherence to a constitution and the rule of law, respect for human rights and humanitarian law, and respect for and responsibility, towards minorities. (54)

Schmid further proposes that it is possible to analyse radical speech acts and determine the extent to which they reject these core values to test their deviation from mainstream democratic values. However, Schmid concedes that the separation of church and state in the West has made governments reluctant ‘to have a critical look at the political uses and abuses of religion’ (57). Neumann and Kleinmann argue that extremism ‘may describe political ideas that are diametrically opposed to a society’s core values, which—in the context of a liberal democracy—can be various forms of racial or religious supremacy, or ideologies that deny basic human rights or democratic principles’ (2013: 365).

As researchers, we must ask ourselves, or at least be clear about, whether our perception of variation is based on our own normative biases or more impartial criteria. What we see (or would like to) and how we see it is coloured by our ideological stances and often caused by our privileged position of observation. McLaughlin (2012: 33–34) argues that it is not clear whether there are any ‘certain, universal argumentative starting-points’. It is, however, only this third position, beyond the ongoing interplay between margins and mainstream, that allows us to observe radicalization on both sides—a reflexive process that we will return to. However, if both points of reference (the mainstream and the radical in

relation to the mainstream) move at the same time, we have a situation like Schrödinger's in which it is difficult to determine the true state of the cat: radical, not radical, or both at the same time?

Here we suggest different potential scenarios for further discussion:

1. *Adherence*: the society's majority/mainstream remains unaffected by radical positions and remains in its riverbed of the status quo. In this case, it remains a relatively easy task to establish the relationship between radicalized positions and the mainstream, since the radical position is clearly beyond the accepted social compromise.
2. *Active dissociation*: the societal majority/mainstream moves actively away from radical positions and dissociates itself from them, altering the course of the riverbed and creating an even larger distance.
3. *Mainstreaming*: the social majority adapts to cognitively radical positions (and potentially radical behaviours). At this point, the borders between radicalized and mainstream expressions are blurred, the radical is absorbed by the majority and integrated into a 'new normal' or the new mainstream. It will then be difficult to discern the 'radical' element beyond seeing that the society has developed along a new trend. However, mainstreaming radical positions is contradictory to the normative nature of democracies, unless such mainstreaming is deemed necessary to appease the electorate.
4. *De-radicalization*: formerly radicalized actors give up their previously radical cognitive positions and re-align with the values of mainstream society.
5. *De-engagement*: formerly radicalized actors give up their previously radical (illegal) behaviour and engage in the conventional means of participating in decision making and thus influencing of societal development.

If we can capture and observe such developments, which may come at any pace, we may be able to interpret radicalization as potentially agenda setting and see a formerly radical (versus mainstream) position become normalized. One example of mainstreaming, or normalization, of previously radical positions would be the rapid swing to the right, '*Rechtsruck*', '*droitization*', or 'Trump-ified' politics in contemporary Europe and North America, which has unfolded only over the last decade (Köttig et al. 2017; Önnersfors 2016b). The congruence between formerly radicalized expressions and the mainstream increases in these cases and the

radical loses—or rather achieves the potential of—its transformative power. It *loses* its momentum insofar as it is adopted (or swallowed) by mainstream political institutions (e.g., in public opinion, political parties, or government policies). However, the degree of its congruence with the mainstream demonstrates its achievement of its goal of transformation. In this volume, we will discuss cases in Germany, India, and Israel where radicalization clearly refers to the mainstreaming of radical positions on this macro-level.

### THE ‘CONFLICT DYAD’ OF MUTUALLY REINFORCED RADICALIZATION

Another way to conceptualize radicalization (beyond measuring the mainstream and its variations) is to focus on the dynamics of violence in the ‘interplay between the forces of order and the forces of change in violent and non-violent opposition modes’, or the so-called conflict dyad (Schmid 2013: 13–14). Schmid presents a model in which the relationship between state and non-state actors deteriorates in three steps from a state of peace to a state of civil war. The model not only illustrates the development of violence in various domestic political settings, it also provides helpful insights that demonstrate how both state and non-state actors can radicalize in terms of actions that are triggered and reinforced by cognitive processes, such as ‘othering’ people seen as political opponents. According to Schmid, if the state becomes ‘very repressive and aggressive, it often produces additional mobilisation on the other side’ and the potential for escalation increases. In the first step, *persuasion politics*, opposition is channelled via constitutional means. When the relationship moves to the second step, *pressure politics*, state oppression is countered with non-violent extra-parliamentary action. In the last step, *violent politics*, state actors engage in ‘violent repression for maintaining (control) over state power’ such as ‘state-terrorism’, and the opposing side also uses violence to challenge state power, including ‘de-individuated political murder’.

The terror attacks that have affected Western countries since 9/11 are difficult to place within this model since the radicalized terrorists involved can hardly be said to have exhausted the means of constitutional opposition politics and may have resorted to for other reasons such as revenge or hatred. Regardless of its position on the political spectrum (left, right, religious-fundamentalist, or ethno-nationalist), this radicalization seems to have jumped over this step directly to step 2, or even step 3. What

makes Schmid's model interesting to us is that we now see the other side of the coin represented. Level 2 suggests latent oppressive violence, but it would also be worthwhile to view the model from the perspectives of public opinion and party politics that Schmid considers important to take into account: 'governments and media should be more aware that both verbal rhetoric and non-verbal signalling matter; greater care should be taken in the use of language and other symbols in public discourse' (57).

This would considerably broaden his approach, since radicalized reactions are thus to be understood not only as tools in a domestic political struggle and the actions emanating from it but also as a level of discourse that includes a host of extra-domestic factors of global politics at play in contemporary radicalization processes. As Goerzig and Al-Hashimi (2015: 20–22) forcefully demonstrate, it is not only governmental policies that fuel radicalization but rather the larger public discourse constructed around, for example, the presumed incommensurability of Islam and so-called Western values. Based upon the model of the conflict dyad, Schmid underscores how radicalization is constructed in an almost dialectic fashion:

[Radicalization is] an individual or collective (group) process whereby, usually in a situation of political polarisation, normal practices of dialogue, compromise and tolerance between political actors and groups with diverging interests are abandoned by one or both sides in a conflict dyad in favour of a growing commitment to engage in confrontational tactics of conflict-waging. These can include either (i) the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion, (ii) various forms of political violence other than terrorism or (iii) acts of violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes. The process is, on the side of rebel factions, generally accompanied by an ideological socialization away from mainstream or status-quo oriented positions towards more radical or extremist positions involving a dichotomous world view and the acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilization outside the dominant political order as the existing system is no longer recognized as appropriate or legitimate. (2013: 18)

A few reflections should be added to this understanding of radicalization as a dialectic double helix of mutually interdependent positioning. As previously stated, it is important to note that both sides, including state actors and their policies (and more generally public opinion and thus the language with which political issues are framed), can become radicalized. Schmid's discussion of war crimes is also appropriate in the analysis of



domestic politics. No terrorist attack in Western countries since (and arguably before) 9/11 was occasioned by any war crimes of Western governments directed against their own population, but occasioned rather by these countries' engagement in war theatres abroad.<sup>5</sup> The terrorist attacks came as (proxy) responses to events unfolding elsewhere, were occasioned by general grievances, and were in majority committed by more or less 'home-grown' terrorists with real or imagined links to the countries where warfare with Western involvement did take place. However, it is important to notice that right-wing terrorism frequently accuses its own governments for a war against its own people rather than to use agency by proxy as a motive. This again signals how important it is to take global political developments into consideration. Disproportionate use of lethal violence has evidently (for instance, through drone attacks causing collateral damage) contributed to feelings of victimhood-by-proxy among members of out-groups. Research has tended to be blind to the intended and unintended consequences of actions abroad and at home. There have been 'cases of state radicalization dynamics...[and] state institutions often respond to challenges with repressive means that are prone to escalate conflicts with social movements, oppositional groupings, or external contenders' (Della Porta and LaFree 2012: 9). In recent years states themselves have departed radically from the procedures of democratic rule of law and standards of international human rights; thus, according to Schmid there is a risk that the West will 'unwittingly radicalize [itself] and become more like the radicalized opponents' (2013: 37). States have adopted policies in the name of security that infringe upon constitutionally granted freedoms (Neumann 2013: 877). The analysis of the polarized public discourse in Europe that challenges identity formation in Muslim minorities is characterized by a virulent 'us-versus-them dichotomy... which could be equally classified as radical as a result' (Goerzig and Al-Hashimi 2015: 32). We can also see that right-wing groups have hijacked the rhetoric of domestic warfare as an argument for radicalization (and RVE). In the USA, multiple white supremacist terrorist attacks have attempted to incite a 'racial war', and in Europe, the German far right speaks of governmental migration politics as a 'war against the[ir] own people' which legitimizes 'resistance' and use of violence (see Önnerrfors' chapter in this volume).

Instead of discussing 'rebel factions', it would make more sense to specify which social out-groups or elements of social in-groups do radicalize. We think 'ideological socialization' belongs at a meso-level of analysis,

where radicalization is no longer an issue of individual factors, but is supported by communities with or without ideological exercise of ideological influence. We would like to stress again the reinforcing dynamics and interplay between online and offline socialization. The general elements of radical worldviews certainly are more than merely ‘dichotomous’ and one could add the further factors determined by the SMC: the rhetoric of self-defence (‘we are under attack’), the world explained through framing narratives of conspiracy, and the idealization of direct action and contempt for discussion and compromise.

State actors may endorse violence as means of attaining political goals for various reasons. Apart from a Machiavellian interest in self-preservation or advancement or a detached state reason frequently framed under the guise of ‘security’, we could add a tendency towards pre-political, extra-human foundations of politics such as religion (or any other official state ideology) and thus the acceptance of a (divine) fate, necessity, plan, or determination legitimizing their actions. This appears particularly strong in systems where such positions are an important and integrated part of official political mythology. Public opinion can also adopt the above-mentioned features of radicalized worldviews, stirred up by enemy images and existential fears related to competition for resource allocation, political representation, or the loss of (cultural) identities.

### BETWEEN BEHAVIOUR AND COGNITION: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN IDEA AND ACTION

Against the backdrop of an observable deadlock between radicalization studied through securitization on the one hand and socio-cultural approaches on the other, in the following section, we propose a model (Fig. 1.1) that allows better understanding of the dynamic interplay between ideas and actions.

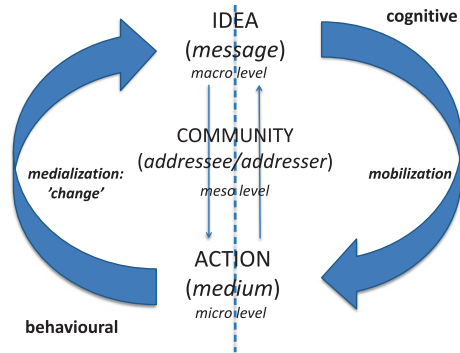
Schmid (2013: 3–5) proposes that radicalization ought to be understood on three levels. While profiling individuals at the micro-level or studying individual life experiences mainly meets the needs of the securitization position, Schmid argues for a meso-level consisting of the internal dynamics of the radical milieu (‘the supportive or even complicit social surround’) and a macro-level (social, political, and cultural environment) representing ‘the radicalization of public opinion and party politics’, since ‘not only non-state actors but also state actors can radicalize’ (iv, 4). The micro-level and person-centred profiling approach (focusing on actions

and behaviours) has several methodological drawbacks related in particular to its blindness to exogenous factors such as global politics. Frequently ‘vulnerable’ individuals (predominantly youth) are considered victims of socio-economic circumstances that determine a presumed teleological path towards direct violence. According to Schmid, there is a ‘preponderance of micro-level research’, and he argues that the other levels deserve more attention (2013: 4, 56). Several studies in this volume are concerned with the meso- and macro-levels of radicalization such as the framing narratives of supportive communities.

The meso-level is particularly interesting to us, since it is in the ‘enabling environment’ that we believe various expressions of radicalization are most obviously manifested. It is here we can study radicalization as a social process and communicative practice, or as Dalgaard-Nielsen explains: ‘radical ideas are transmitted by social networks’ (2010: 801, 803). In addition to Schmid’s proposal (and various details in several contributions to this volume), this is also the level where both online and offline activities take place.

The macro-level is also addressed in several chapters in this volume as the general acceptance of state-enacted violence in conflicts abroad tends to reinforce radicalization at home. In real terms, the macro-level represents a substantial challenge to research. Public opinion and party politics (particularly government positions) might constitute an exact point of reference from which we could benchmark the significant divergence that differentiates the radical position from the mainstream or socio-political compromise. But when the point of reference also moves, both variables are then in flux, and it would require a complex ‘theory of relativity’ to capture the divergence of radical views from the mainstream. Put another way, as observers of two interdependent phenomena in simultaneous movement, we would face the previously mentioned problem of ‘Schrödinger’s cat’: we might only be able to see one radicalized position at once, not both simultaneously. Schmid (2013) discusses ‘dynamic processes driving escalation’ and assumes an ideal point of reference: ‘democratic rule of law procedures and international human rights standards’ (iv, 8). Thus, again, the issue of measuring radicalization against an assumed point of reference is a key concern. Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010: 798, 810) distinguishes between three types of scholarly explanations of RVE: (1) a focus on overall sociological background factors such as globalization and the dissolution of traditional communities and identities, (2) group-level variables, such as the dynamics of social networks and

**Fig. 1.1** Model of the interplay between cognitive and behavioural levels in radicalization



interaction, and (3) empiricist or case-study approaches (individual level factors). She explains their respective advantages and disadvantages in providing explanatory power for a complementary understanding of radicalization as a complex phenomenon.

Our proposed model has three interrelated levels:

- (a) The macro-level of ideas (the message)
- (b) The meso-level of reinforcing support communities (addressees and addressers alike)
- (c) The micro-level of individual action (the medium)

Between these levels lie vertical relationships of multiple kinds. Ideas are instrumental in the formation of communities and communities can likewise refer to ideas. Individuals can be inspired only by ideas, or as members of larger collectives, they can partake in ideas as community-structuring entities. Individuals frequently formulate ideological positions. We place those ideas on the macro-level, since they frame the attitudes and narratives that inform worldviews and policies. As a space of social interaction and communication, the meso-level is also particularly interesting. First, it can constitute an enabling community of support and thus act as an addresser (real or imagined) of the individual; second, it also occupies the role of addressee, since the radical action, the ‘medium as a message’, requires someone able to decode its meaning, without which the action would not make any sense (in a relationship  $A^1 = A^2$  where their meaning is created by identity). The meso-level can also represent a community of reference where a societal mainstream is created, against which the radical

margin assumes its diverging position and in a semiotic sense, its meaning (in a relationship  $A \neq B$ , where the meanings of A and B are created by their non-identity).

It would be possible to further sub-divide the meso-level into four quarters, two on the cognitive and two on the behavioural sides of the circle. Radicalization as a cognitive act includes the formation of enemy images of other groups and collectives that assume the position of imagined negative addressees (or the existent mainstream  $A \neq B$ ). It is also possible to identify positive addressers, imagined or real, on the side of cognitive radicalization, which primarily deliver ideological support ( $A^1 = A^2$ ). On the behavioural side of the circle, negative addressees are antagonists and the target group of actions (the mainstream that is supposed to be moved). Positive addressers are those who incite and support individual actions.

Radicalization theories generally hold that ideas (messages) can mobilize individuals to action (medialization), as represented in our model by the semi-circle to the right. Ideological mobilization can occur in direct encounters with ideologues, literature, rallies of support communities (the meso-level), and online. If the idea is not expressed in any form of action (medium), however, it is confined within a cognitive or attitudinal realm on varying levels of consciousness. In theory, a person can hold 0–100% radicalized ideas without turning the idea into an action or the message into a medium.

The left semi-circle in the figure implies actions from 1% to 100% on varying levels, for example, the expression and materialization of radicalization through offline speech acts, pamphlets, social media postings, attendance at rallies, or direct violence. Whatever medium and conscious actions are chosen, they become the message of (violent) change/distance from mainstream positions (supported by or differentiated at the collective meso-level) and thus always relate to and reinforce the idea on the macro-level, even if cognitive consciousness is not necessarily a precondition. An individual can in theory have from 0 to 100% commitment to an ideological course, but only through actions can fully consent to (and thus be fully liable for) its implications.

The advantage of our model is that we combine cognitive/attitudinal and behavioural approaches and thus strike a balance between positions derived from securitization and from socio-cultural explanations. By the same token, we show that the three levels of radicalization (ideas, communities, and individuals) are interrelated. The social dimensions of radicalization are central to our model, since either radical support

communities or political communities of the mainstream must be taken into consideration, both offline and online. Our model also accommodates the rise of radicalization in both individuals and communities and does not lock the process of radicalization into specific contexts, but is open to multiple settings. However, it was difficult to accommodate the conflict dyad, in which escalating radicalization in established state institutions and their contesters can be visualized. Our model also does not account for observation bias. The (mainstream) benchmark against which radical ideas and actions are measured is more or less impossible to observe and illustrate simultaneously owing to the difficulties arising from multiple movements in both mainstream and radical positions.

While acknowledging that a clear nexus and cogent processual sequence between radical ideas and actions cannot be established with absolute certainty, we do believe that there exists an interrelationship between the power of the idea on the macro-level, social or societal structures on the meso-level, and a host of individual reasons to align with radical ideas or to engage in radical actions on the micro-level. The idea, filtered through socio-linguistic expressions of encouragement and attitudes, can serve to mobilize actions through their legitimation and moralization (Lasswell 1927: 47), on the individual or group level. Likewise, individual or group actions, aided by communities of support and sociability (offline or online, imagined or real, organized or not) and intended to bring about (violent) change in the existing order, can be a vehicle to transport the very idea of change, since change is always relative to the existing order). To elaborate on media theorist McLuhan's famous statement (1964), the medium (*of action towards change*) is the message (*of the idea why change is needed*).

Radicalization, seen as a language, is inherently the possibility of expression through syntax. Radical actions are thus never intrinsically void of significance and meaning in a semiotic sense, but they need not *originate* in the complex and consistent expressions of sign systems (such as specific condensed worldviews or ideologies) communicating them. In the same vein, radical ideas, filled with condensed semantic significance and meaning, need not necessarily materialize in action. However, as Wittgenstein argues in *Tractatus* Proposition 3.02, 'what is thinkable is also possible', therefore beliefs, narratives, fictions, theories, concepts, attitudes, and ideas have the structural and grammatical power to intervene in our lives, and we hence need to study them carefully (1922: 43). For each person or group carrying out an action, the level of ideational consciousness, awareness, or commitment might vary considerably (theoretically ranging

from 0 to 100%), however, as in Roman law, *ignorantia legis non excusat* (ignorance of law excuses no one). Ignorance of the level of ideas that are attached to a medialized action is no excuse for the action taken and thus represents support for the idea itself.

We believe that with our model it is possible to combine the study of behavioural and cognitive/attitudinal aspects in a more sophisticated ‘holistic’ way, as Neumann suggested. As Dalgaard-Nielsen proposed, separate studies on these three levels are not mutually exclusive in establishing conclusive and valid scientific insights. More mixed methods and interdisciplinary approaches are therefore needed, not less. We discussed radicalization as a relational process at length, but questioned the validity of making teleological assumptions of simplistic action-pathways. The process of radicalization and the dangers of making assumptions are even more evident in the chapters in this volume that address counter- or exit-strategies. The relational character of radicalization is the positioning exercise (outlined earlier in this introduction) through which radical ideas and actions receive energy, meaning, and momentum.

A limitation of our method is that radicalization research is obsessed with studying outliers and not ‘normality’ or processes of inclusion, which would be needed as a point of reference. By doing so, research juxtaposes itself instantly, paraphrasing Pike (1954), as an etic outsider to the emic insider milieu of the radical. However, in this volume we aim to lift the lid and peer into different societies and different radicalization processes in an effort towards better understanding of the intertwined relationships between the mainstream and the margins, which in recent years have contributed to a spiralling and truly radical re-orientation of politics on a global scale, including the erosion of democracy as a legitimate idea of representation, the rise of populism and authoritarian post-politics, the rapid return of the political right, the undermining of trust and the proliferation of fear in political rhetoric, and the general rise of political violence in all forms (cultural, structural, and direct; Galtung 1990: 291, 295).

## RADICALIZATION AS A RESPONSE TO MULTIPLE CRISES IN GLOBAL POLITICS

This volume is the outcome of an interdisciplinary symposium, ‘Understanding Ideological Radicalization: Mapping Methods and Models’ convened at Malmö University, Sweden, in February 2016. The symposium

was filmed by the Swedish public educational channel *The Knowledge Channel*, broadcast on Swedish television, and made accessible online.<sup>6</sup> Ten case studies covering various expressions of radicalization in different areas of the world were presented, with a rather wide range in source material, methodology, and theoretical points of departure. On the second day of the symposium, we convened an exploratory workshop in which we extensively discussed common denominators between these topics, which for matters of consistency need to be presented shortly and in a later step more comprehensively. In his paper, Matthew Feldman (Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK) addressed the driving forces behind neo-Nazi terrorism using UK and US examples from court proceedings. Vít Šisler (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic) presented a big data study (conducted with Josef Šlerka) of the radicalization of social media in the Czech Republic and its impact on agenda setting in relation to mainstream media. Kristian Steiner (Malmö University, Sweden) portrayed expectations of peace in contemporary Messianic Judaism in Israel based on field studies and qualitative interviews (conducted with co-researcher, Anders Lundberg). Analysing policy statements, political propaganda, and discourses, Dani Filc (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva, Israel) outlined the current rise of right-wing politics in Israel. Andreas Önnersfors (University of Gothenburg, Sweden) examined the radicalization of language and re-semanticization of political concepts in the German PEGIDA (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*: Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) movement. In his study of the Hindu nationalist group *Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad* (RVKP; Forest Dwellers Welfare Council), Sarbeswar Sahoo (Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi) explored the negative sides of Indian civil society. With support of large datasets on election violence, Megan Reif Dyfvermark (University of Gothenburg, SWE) shed light on the interrelationship of electoral violence and radicalization. Caroline Varin (Regent's University, UK) illuminated voluntary and forced radicalization unfolding in Nigeria, dominated by the Islamist militia-movement Boko Haram. Drawing from ongoing field studies in the UK and the MENA region, Jonathan Githens-Mazer (Exeter University, UK) treated aspects of countering violent extremism on the level of ideas. Finally, Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen (Royal Danish Defence College, Copenhagen, Denmark) shared insights from a comprehensive desk study on de-radicalization.

Discussing the issue of radicalization on an exploratory level (conscious of our own biases), we identified the *crisis of liberal democracy* or the



change of its preconditions as a common denominator. In its most essential sense, electoral violence illustrates the distrust of radicalized parts of the electorate for the mechanisms of democratic decision making and representation. In the Czech case, we can observe how online activities of radical movements contribute to a divisive polarization of clusters in public opinion. What is manifest here is the loss of mainstream information sovereignty, accelerated by a tenacious resistance to facts developed in sealed echo chambers, which negatively impacts on electoral behaviour and support. Closely related to this subject is the function of online radicalization in self-directed terrorism, which creates external influence (rather than direct control) and provides a virtual context for real actions (which seems, for example, to have guided the nightclub killer in Orlando, Florida, in 2016). The creation of support communities that do not represent the consent of majority decisions in society has the power to dismantle conventional forms of decision making. Voicing aggressive conspiratorial critiques of the system and of elites has led the German PEGIDA movement to reclaim the street as a conventional forum of protest in an intricate dynamic between online and offline activism. The foundations of German democracy are questioned in vitriolic Manichean rhetoric regarding the legacy of resistance against the Nazi and German Democratic Republic regimes. In the Indian case, civil society actors (inciting to ethnic and religious violence) likewise contribute to the opposite of what is traditionally assumed to represent their democratizing function. Nationalist religious fundamentalism and radical right populism (fuelled by ongoing conflicts in the area) drive Israeli politics to adopt ever more oppressive and isolationist features. Charged with religious millenarist assumptions, peace expectations among Messianic Jews are low, which implies their acceptance of violence and conflict as part of a divine plan for human societies. Countries with weak state capacity like Nigeria are prey to the influence of ideologues normalizing extremism and thus addressing pressing societal issues such as poverty or equality. Understanding violent extremism in both the West and the MENA region requires engaging with extremist narratives in which violence is presented as a rational choice. Looking at the complex issue of exiting terrorism and violent extremism places a huge burden of proof on democracy to offer a better alternative.

The question is, 'What has triggered this apparent sense of disempowerment and facilitated the creation of an ideological marketplace that offers its opportunistic commodities (radical political/religious narratives) to frustrated seekers?' In many cases, sacred texts are consciously misinterpreted and offered as scripts to guide world affairs. In other cases,

worldviews are expressed in a more diffuse aggregate state, but they have in common the offer of different identity packages to choose from. Therefore, we need a better understanding of the psychology of radicalization and its ontology of identity crisis, with their elements of activity and integrity (existence), demarcation and territory (space), continuity and historical memory (time), coupled with ‘othering’, general fears of loss, alienation or extinction, or more general hopes for victory, redemption, and future felicity (David and Bar-Tal 2009).

Most of the cases treated in this volume demonstrate the nexus between the prospect of change and the general contempt of radicalizing groups for the ability of liberal democracies and societies to manage their expectations, grievances, and concerns about the delivery of political goods. In real time we are already witnessing the normalization of radical positions unimaginable only a decade ago. Institutional means of participation and representation are rejected in favour of concepts of nativist corporative belonging such as ‘ethnocracies’ (*Volksgemeinschaft*), religion-based communities, or a combination of both. Calls for instant plebiscites or direct decision making are frequent on a local micro, rather than a national institutional, level. A related phenomenon in the digital age is a growing ‘slacktivism’: random, interest-based expressions of support for single issues on social media. Installing a divine or natural order of things—government by god or nature—promises stability, but does not require democracy. The blazing prospect of purity, certainty, and ‘truth’ (at the *root*) is contrasted with global crises of insecurity and uncertainty, where hyper-complex issues and murky solutions prevail. When nothing is certain, people grasp for traditional truths and find them in ‘alternative facts’. Embarrassment or the existential condition of disempowerment is countered with the redemptive outlook of bringing or taking power and control back to the deprived (as voiced in recent US presidential and Brexit campaigns). Sense is thus created in a situation of existential fragility. It goes hand in hand with the feeling of perceived distance between the rulers and the ruled, with vociferous critiques of elites, and with conspiracy theories. These processes are accelerated by the centripetal forces of economic globalization, space-time densification, and instant interconnectivity putting pressure on communities. Most of the radical movements and ideas studied in this volume also have clearly defined conceptions of gender-roles. Consequently, a global crisis of masculinity can be interpreted as a driving force behind these radical and radiant visions (in both right-wing and Islamist imaginaries) of pure patriarchy restored as a male manifestation of unalterable divine or organic order.

The contemporary radical ideas explored in this volume stay close to the etymological meaning of the word, since the complexity of multiple global crises makes the prospect of ‘rooting’ and returning to presumably pure or single roots attractive. The marketplace of ideologies is where different ideas can be mobilized and placed on the macro-level in our model of radicalization. The choice to move to action on the micro-level may be motivated by reasons ranging from the intellectual to the psychopathological, but they are always embedded in social practices, expressions, and communities (virtual, real, or both) on the meso-level. We believe that the cases studied in this volume can be interpreted as responses to multiple crises of representation, power, resources, masculinity, and globalization as people try to position themselves vis-à-vis various mainstream positions, particularly the concept of liberal democracy as a prevalent matrix of global political order. Unfortunately, Jonathan Githens-Mazer’s paper is not included in this volume, but we have added studies by Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf (Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, India) on the Islamic movement *Hizb ut Tahrir* and its Indonesian offshoot and by Bruno Oliveira Martins (Malmö University, Sweden) and Monica Ziegler (Aarhus University, Denmark) on EU policies related to counter-radicalization.

## NOTES

1. During the spring and summer of 2016, Swedish media were entrenched in a polarized debate over the interpretation of terms like extremism, terrorism, political violence, and radicalization. In 2015, the Swedish government inaugurated a national resource centre against ideologically motivated violent milieus. This centre, the Segerstedt Institute (SI) at the University of Gothenburg, since released a series of reports that were at the core of the debate (<http://segerstedtinstitutet.gu.se> [accessed 3 June 2016]). Conservative newspapers and ‘terrorism experts’ dismissed the SI reports as relativizing violence and Jihadism. The debate culminated at the end of May 2016 with Magnus Ranstorp and Peder Hyllengren’s opinion piece, ‘Major flaws in the report on the work against extremism (*Stora brister i rapport om arbete mot terrorism*)’, published 25 May 2016 (<http://www.svt.se/opinion/stora-brister-i-rapport-om-arbetet-mot-extrimism> [accessed 3 June 2016]), followed by the SI’s response written by Christer Mattsson, Thomas Johansson, and Clara Lebedinski Arfvidson, ‘The terrorist scientists simplify the image of the work against extremism (*Terrorforskarna förenklar bilden av arbetet mot extremismen*)’, published 27 May 2016 (<http://www.svt.se/opinion/segerstedtinstitutet-om-kritiken> [accessed 3 June 2016]), to which

Ranstorp and Hyllengren, replied on 30 May 2016 in ‘The Segerstedt Institute does not seem to have read its own report (*Segerstedtinstitutet verkar inte ha läst sin egen rapport*’ (<http://www.svt.se/opinion/ranstorp-och-hyllengren-om-extremism> [accessed 3 June 2016]). Linda Nordlund represented the positions expressed in Swedish conservative newspapers in her article, ‘Indulgent, fuzzy, pious hope (*Flathet, flum och from förhoppning*)’ published 23 May 2016 (<http://www.svd.se/flathet-flum-och-from-forhoppning> [accessed 3 June 2016]) and Per Björklund presented a more nuanced analysis of the media coverage in ‘The right’s incomprehensible fear of subtlety (*Högerns obegripliga rädsla för nyanser*)’, published 31 May 2016 (<http://www.fria.nu/artikel/123292> [accessed 3 June 2016]). We presented the results of preliminary research into both the hearing at the Swedish parliament and the Swedish media debate at the EuPRA/AFK-conference in Villigst/Germany in March 2017 on a panel devoted to radicalization. We are extremely grateful for lively discussions and input from co-panellist Timothy Williams, who pointed us towards including an ‘attitudinal’ factor as another way of understanding radicalization that has not (yet) materialized into action.

2. See, for example, Christer Mattsson, Nils Hammarén, and Ylva Odenbring, ‘Youth “at risk”: A critical discourse analysis of the European Commission’s Radicalisation Awareness Network Collection of approaches and practices used in education’, *Power and Education* 2016, 8(3), 251–265. The article explores how the ‘war on terror’ has led to securitization in educational approaches, where tensions in society that may ultimately cause terrorism are individualized and decontextualized.
3. See, for example, C. Goerzig and K. Al-Hashimi, *Radicalization in Western Europe. Integration, public discourse, and loss of identity among Muslim communities* (Oxon: Routledge), 2015: 1–33; P. McLaughlin, P. (2012) *Radicalism. A philosophical study* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 1–39; R. Borum, ‘Radicalization into violent extremism I: A review of social science theories’, *Journal of Strategic Security* 2011;4(4): 7–36 and ‘Radicalization into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research’ in the same journal on 37–62; and the comprehensive bibliography in A.P. Schmid ‘Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review’, ICCT Research Paper, 2013: 61–91.
4. In Sweden, the *Metro* newspaper has started an entire section called *Viralgranskaren* (Viral Checkup) to explore rumours spread via the Internet in social and traditional media (available at <http://www.metro.se/nyheter/viralgranskaren> [accessed 26 June 2016]). The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) has also made efforts to raise the profile in the field of reality checks on disinformation spread on the Internet, likely a

pro-active PSYOP government effort to combat the spread of information that could incite the adoption of radical positions (available at <https://www.msb.se/sv/Insats--beredskap/Psykologiskt-forsvar/Vad-ska-man-tanka-pa-nar-det-galler-kallkritik-och-att-motverka-rykten/> [accessed 26 June 2016]). Right-wing activists also link reports from the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts to issues of domestic politics.

5. Of course, it would be possible to look closer at the violent oppressive politics of states like Great Britain during the Troubles, Western German, or Italian responses to left-wing terrorism, but in a legal sense these actions did not constitute war crimes.
6. See ‘UR samtiden—ideologisk radikalisering’ (available at <http://urkola.se/Produkter/194619-UR-Samtiden-Ideologisk-radikalisering/Om-serien> [accessed 27 June 2016]).

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# Terrorist ‘Radicalising Networks’: A Qualitative Case Study on Radical Right Lone-Wolf Terrorism

*Matthew Feldman*

## INTRODUCTION

Less than a decade ago, Marc Sageman decried the ‘stagnation’ of research on terrorism. Since that time there has been a surfeit of both terrorist atrocities and scholarly approaches to understanding this growing phenomenon—growing in terms of both prevalence and potential destructiveness (Sageman 2008). In early 2014, for example, it was reported that only a dozen religiously motivated terrorist attacks have occurred in Europe in the preceding six years (Obeidallah 2015). Similar to the UK’s present counter-terrorism strategy, ‘Prevent’ (launched in 2005), what the phrase ‘religiously motivated’ usually refers to is *Islamist terrorism*—the subject of an inestimable amount of commentary and research in recent years. Yet it remains the case that this is far from the only form, ideology, or aims motivating contemporary acts of political violence and terrorism.

Thus, in Asia, there have been Buddhist suicide bombers in Sri Lanka and organised political violence by the far-right Hindutva movement in

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Modi's India. By contrast, in western Europe, 'Christianist' terrorism has been perpetrated by the murder of 77 Norwegians by Anders Breivik in Norway on 22 July 2011, adding to a string of attacks by so-called 'Christian Identity' groups in the USA like the Aryan Nations and Phineas Priesthood (Önnerfors 2017). It therefore seems that a key challenge in reliably adding to academic knowledge is avoiding the pitfalls of inductive distention or imbalance in the overwhelming focus upon Islamist-induced terror attacks, even when, as during and following the horrors of 9/11, some cases appear to re-write the rulebook. That is to say, despite a spate of 'spectacular', well-coordinated jihadi Islamist attacks in Europe and the USA—massively destructive in terms of terrorist capabilities and, above all, human life—there are other forms of radicalised political violence that merit scholarly attention.

Accordingly, this chapter will explore two cases of right-wing terrorism in analysing the role played by radicalising networks—oftentimes, today, provided by online spaces. I will also consider how the extent to which this can lead to so-called 'lone-wolf' terrorism. In doing so, I will argue that it is more appropriate to shift focus towards a closer analysis of 'radicalising networks', in this case, via a qualitative analysis of far-right ideology. These 'radicalising networks' form the underpinning of two qualitative case studies (Lewington 2008; Davison 2010) deriving from the author's practitioner experience in the UK Crown Prosecution Service, applicable not only to self-directed terrorists but to the study of terrorism and radicalisation more generally.<sup>1</sup> Thus, as outlined in the introduction to this volume, it is possible to reach a deeper understanding of the dynamics of cognitive and behavioural radicalisation, whereby supposedly individual action of self-directed terrorists can be seen, at the micro-level, to be indirectly supported by extremist communities. In turn, it is hoped that this will contribute to clearer understandings at the meso-level and overarching ideological positions on the macro-level, which all mutually reinforce each other.

### 'LONE WOLVES' VERSUS 'LONE NUTS' AND THE IMAGINARY 'PACK'

The point is elementary, but bears briefly restating. At the time of writing (autumn 2016), a 'lone-wolf' shooter in Houston, Texas, wounded nine before being killed in a shootout by police. Initial reports suggest he had difficulties at work, was of South Asian heritage, and had Nazi 'emblems'

and 'paraphernalia' in his possession at the time of the attack (Marcin 2016). Was this an act of terrorism, or a spree shooting? Ideological attacker or disgruntled worker? Whatever the existing stereotypes, this was clearly not a jihadi Islamist attack; indeed, many such cases can raise these and other conceptual and taxonomic challenges. In the case of Houston shooter Nathan DeSai, if anything, early reports seemed to indicate yet another solo act motivated by radical right ideology—explained in detail below.

Recently, for example, a New America Foundation report found that 48 people were killed by white terrorists, while 26 were killed by radical Islamists, since 9/11 in the USA. This figure excludes the 2016 mass shooting of 49 people in Orlando by Omar Mateen (Plucinska 2015). Furthermore, from 1990 to 2010, there were 145 acts of political violence committed by the American far Right, resulting in 348 deaths (Werleman 2014). By comparison, 20 Americans were killed over the same period in acts of political violence carried out by Islamists in the USA. These statistics naturally exclude the horror of 9/11, and it bears mentioning that mass casualty attacks remain high on jihadi Islamist agendas—from Spain in 2004, to the UK in 2005, and of course the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino in 2015, Brussels or Nice in 2016. These are headline-dominating acts in a burgeoning age of terrorism. Accordingly, they raise all the hallmarks of challenges facing the study of terrorism, not least that of public fears and perceptions as opposed to highly theoretical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> For example, were the unprecedented attacks of 9/11 to be included in the final statistic cited above, murders by Islamist terrorists in the USA would be ten times more lethal than that by right-wing terrorist murders; if counting those in the USA since 9/10 rather than 9/11, the amount would be a hundred-fold. Put another way, how statistics are gathered and framed—even before being analysed—can be as revealing as, at times, it can mislead.

Now, while here advocating the view that far-right extremism is under-researched when compared with jihadi Islamism, this too can be spun out of control—exemplified by a widely circulating online meme of James Eagan Holmes, who attacked a screening of *The Dark Knight Returns* in July 2012. The text accompanying Holmes's mug shot (although it must be noted that there are many variants) suggests that skin colour and/or religion are decisive when labelling acts of mass violence 'terrorism': 'If I were Arab, the shooting would be TERRORISM. If I were Black, I'd be a THUG. But I'm White, so it's MENTAL ILLNESS'. (Dado 2012).<sup>3</sup>

Using multiple (and legally purchased) weapons, Holmes murdered 12 people and wounded 70 more in a spree shooting; afterwards, once in custody, he claimed to be the Batman villain the Joker. While acting alone, it seems that mental illness played a large, even decisive, part in that Aurora, Colorado, mass shooting; at least there seemed to be no clear socio-political motive that might bring this attack into general approaches to terrorism as a political act. But terrorism sells papers, and even recent reports claiming that such outrages, when splashed across front-page news, might even increase terrorist activity are very unlikely to change that (Doward 2015).

As this suggests, at the forefront of challenges is the question of terminology, whether in terms of defining terrorism or its component parts. Take, as a final example at the outset, mental illness—or what, to introduce the penultimate term here, was identified as the distinction between lone wolves and what have been called ‘lone nuts’ (Burton and Stewart 2008). Returning to the meme above, the seeming lack of political motive, reports of schizophrenia, and the post-attack behaviour of James Holmes might seem to make him a classic ‘lone nut’, in contrast to the actions of another (still alleged) American mass murderer, Dylann Roof, in the latter case, for the murder of nine black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, on 17 June 2015. That the shooter acted alone in a pre-planned assault on unsuspecting victims seems beyond doubt, while a posted ‘manifesto’ linked to Dylann Roof betrays links to a number of racist, even politically revolutionary groups (one of whom was the Council of Conservative Citizens, the successor of the White Citizens’ Councils, essentially the non-hooded face of the KKK during the struggle for desegregation and Civil Rights in the 1950s and 1960s in the USA; see also Quarles, 1999). The following is a telling excerpt from this 2500-word text, uploaded online the day of the Charleston killings:

Europe is the homeland of White people, and in many ways the situation is even worse there. From here I found out about the Jewish problem and other issues facing our race, and I can say today that I am completely racially aware [...] I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. (O’Connor 2015)

Now, the apparent radicalisation of Dylann Roof raises a number of questions about its specific American context: race relations, gun culture, the heritage versus hate symbolism of the Confederate flag, and so on. But that is not the focus here. Yet there are three previously mentioned key elements present in the Charleston attack that do form the backdrop to the remainder of this chapter—namely, lone-wolf terrorism, far-right ideology, and what will be termed here ‘radicalising networks’.

There is an assumption that, like Theodore Kaczynski, the so-called Unabomber—who carried out several bomb attacks between 1978 and 1995—lone wolves are necessarily ‘loners’, even agoraphobic or autarkic individuals. But this is rarely the case, whether for group-based political violence or from *self-activating* terrorists—the preferred term employed here—as is evident from a long and bloody history that stretches back to anarchist ‘propaganda of the deed’ in the nineteenth century. Self-activating terrorism, there can be no doubt, is a pan-ideological tactic. It is promiscuous precisely because it is hard to detect, harder to interdict, and can be horrifically lethal—whether in the case of Mario Buda’s anarchist car bomb on Wall Street in 1920 that claimed 38 lives or John Gilbert Graham’s similarly mid-air bombing that murdered 43 in 1955. Yet I have argued elsewhere, it remains the case that far-right extremists have historically been the most enthusiastic practitioners of this genus of terrorism (Feldman 2013a, b: 275). Valuable scholarship by Ramon Spaaij has also shown that violent extremists with white supremacist and nationalist ideological motivations were responsible for the majority of attacks by self-activating terrorists between January 1968 and May 2007 (Spaij 2012; Spaaij and Hamm 2014).

At the same time, Spaaij warns against overly mono-causal approaches to breaking down ‘lone-wolf’ attacks, with case studies often a variable combination of political and personal motives (Spaij 2010: 861). This view has been extended in recent scholarship to incisive consideration of the challenges of defining self-activating terrorism more broadly.<sup>4</sup>

Commenting on the difficulty of defining self-activating terrorism, in *The Dynamics of a Terrorist Targeting Process*, Bjørge and Hemmingby have recently (2016) offered a helpful aside in their study of Breivik progression through the ‘terrorist cycle’ (usually understood as comprising target selection, planning, deployment, the attack, escape, and propaganda/exploitation). There, they note the ‘lack of consensus’ and ‘limited amount of in-depth studies on the topic’ and argue for a ‘rather narrow definition’ of what they prefer to call “‘solo terrorist’ actions’

(Bjørngo and Hemmingby 2016: 88). A good and early example of this narrower approach was already provided by the Dutch agency for crisis management, COT in 2007:

In the case of lone-wolf terrorism, such intentional acts are committed by persons:

- (a) who operate individually;
- (b) who do not belong to an organized terrorist group or network;
- (c) who act without the direct influence of a leader or hierarchy;
- (d) whose tactics and methods are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or direction [...] Their terrorist attack or campaign, however, results from their solitary action during which the direct influence, advice or support of others, even those sympathetic to the cause, is absent. (COT 2007)

In keeping with these approaches, crucially, the self-activating terrorist needs to go through the terrorist cycle alone and unaided—a telling contrast between, for instance, Anders Breivik and, for example, the 1995 Oklahoma City Bomber, Timothy McVeigh (who was convicted alongside an accomplice, Terry Nichols). Acting alone is surely more psychologically and logistically demanding; it is therefore more difficult to undertake. In Breivik's case the financing, perseverance, and, perhaps, ability or luck—as in not killing himself when constructing his fertiliser bomb—were instrumental in his undertaking of history's deadliest self-activating terrorist attack (Feldman 2012).

In recent years, Britain faced the real possibility of similar onslaughts by two would-be Breiviks: Lewington (2008) and Davison (2010).<sup>5</sup> That the two individuals to be considered below failed to carry their plans to their deadly conclusion was not for want of trying. But before doing so, it is important to build upon the operational distinction between truly self-directed terrorists and what Bjørngo and Hemmingby rightly term 'accomplices', who are 'practically assisting' an act of terrorism (Bjørngo and Hemmingby 2016: 89). Attacks like the Boston bombings carried out by the Tsarnaev brothers in April 2013 and the husband and wife Islamist pair in San Bernardino that killed 14 people on 2 December 2015 have sometimes been called 'lone-wolf packs' (Pantucci 2011). Most problematic in this term is that it neglects the motivational reinforcement offered by a co-conspirator involved in the 'terrorist cycle'; put simply, two or more people fundamentally change terrorist dynamics.

This is but one reason ‘small cell’ acts of terrorism, involving two or three terrorists—like with the horrific May 2013 murder of Lee Rigby in Britain—should be carefully separated from the wholly *self-directed* process through the terrorist cycle by a lone individual. It also acts as a terminological caution against broader and even maximal definitions of lone-wolf terrorism, such as that offered in Jeffrey Simon’s 2013 *Lone Wolf Terrorism: Understanding the Growing Threat*:

Lone wolf terrorism is the use or threat of violence or nonviolent sabotage, including cyber-attacks, against government, society, business, the military (when the military is not an occupying force or involved in a war, insurgency, or state of hostilities), or any other target, by an individual acting alone or with minimal support from one or two other people (but not including actions during popular uprisings, riots, or violent protests), to further a political, social, religious, financial, or other related goals, or, when not having such an object, nevertheless has the same effect, or potential effect, upon government, society, business, or the military in terms of creating fear and/or disrupting daily life and/or causing government, society, business, or the military to react with heightened security and/or other responses. (Simon 2013: 266)

In making this important distinction, Bjørgo and Hemmingby build upon Beatrice de Graaf’s and Edwin Bakker’s influential report for the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague in 2010, which rightly stresses that lone wolves are people who may be ‘inspired by a certain group but who are not under the command of any other person, group or network. They might be members of a network, but this network is not a hierarchical organisation in the classical sense of the word’ (2). These ‘radicalising networks’, as considered presently, can be either *active* or *passive* and are often vital in the process of radicalisation.

Indeed, if total isolation and lack of contact with others were to form a definitional feature of self-activating terrorism, perhaps the only true ‘lone wolf’ since 1945 would be the Unabomber. To take this point further, an active support network can come in the form of friends or family, marches or demonstrations, and even online relationships (such as through social media or email). By contrast, a passive, or indirect, radicalising network refers to someone that is not participating in such dialogue, but might be reading extremist material online, or simply being radicalised by events or mainstream media reportage. These contacts with the wider world are invariably present for lone wolves; again, with the caveat that the person

or persons forming this ‘network’ have no operational role in the necessarily self-directed terrorist cycle or attacks (Gill 2015). My definition of self-activating terrorism reflects these external actors in defining so-called ‘lone wolf terrorism’:

self-directed political or religious violence undertaken through the ‘terrorist attack cycle’ by individuals—typically perceived by its adherents to be an act of asymmetrical, propagandistic warfare—which derives from a variable amount of external influence and context (notably now online), rather than external command and control. (Feldman 2013a, b: 282)

Before moving on, I should clarify that this is emphatically not to embrace the so-called ‘conveyor belt’ theory of terrorism, whereby fundamentalism invariably leads to ‘non-violent extremism’ and, ultimately, religiously motivated terrorism. The vast majority of fundamentalists are neither political nor extremists; likewise, the majority of non-violent extremists do not take the final step towards engaging in terrorist violence. Even if the path can be a conveyor belt, it usually is not.

#### FASCIST IDEOLOGY AS COGNITIVE MACRO-FRAMEWORK OF RADICALISATION

In pursuing this idea of *active and passive* ‘radicalising networks’, I want to focus on one qualitative example of each, drawn from previous experience in acting as an Expert Witness for the Crown Prosecution Service in Britain. In both cases to be discussed, in 2009 and 2010, respectively, the would-be lone wolves were apprehended prior to attempting their attacks, and when their property was seized, their writings clearly indicated that they were neo-Nazis. My role was to inspect these writings and report on their relationship to fascist ideology, as I had construed it in my academic work:

a specifically modern form of secular ‘millenarianism’ constructed culturally and politically, not religiously, as a revolutionary movement centring upon the ‘renaissance’ of a mythic people (whether perceived nationally, ethnically, culturally, or religiously) through the total reordering of all perceivedly ‘pure’ collective energies towards a realisable utopia; an ideological core implacably hostile to democratic representation and socialist materialism, equality and individualism, in addition to any specific enemies viewed as alien or oppositional to such a programme. (Feldman 2008: xviii)

This rather technical definition gave way to a more specific characterisation of neo-Nazism, a distinct form of fascism, which can be understood as seeking to unite mythically defined 'Aryans' through a programme closely derived from the motivations and policies of Hitler's Third Reich. A working definition was provided in an entry to the 2006 two-volume encyclopaedia *World Fascism* (459–60):

Neo-Nazism is an ideology or political movement in the tradition of historic National Socialism. *Tradition* in that context refers mostly to ideological aspects, such as racism or anti-Semitism, as well as the use of well-known symbols such as the swastika. Neo-Nazism is often linked with the international movement of Holocaust denial. Its propaganda is aggressive. Neo-Nazistic [sic] activists tend to use violence against foreigners, colored people, Jews, or political opponents [...] it holds that the 'white or Aryan race' is destined to dominate the rest of mankind, but in the postwar world of mass immigration to Europe from her former colonies, it is blacks or Asians rather than Jews who are highlighted as having inferior status.

This is, then, literally *neo-Nazism*, insofar as it is an updating of Nazi doctrines to include contemporary society rather than attempting any substantial revisions of National Socialist ideology—essentially bar one. While the Third Reich tended to view its racial-purifying mission in comparably national terms (with the notable exception of the SS 'International Brigades' established in 1942), post-war neo-Nazis see Aryans as a racially threatened, intrinsically superior, but most importantly, *globally diffuse* ethnic group. This was the milieu from which these two middle-aged, working-class white British males emerged which will be treated subsequently. Yet one appeared to be connected to a 'radicalising network' only indirectly, while the other was more directly connected by way of a group he co-founded called the Aryan Strike Force (hereafter ASF).

#### PASSIVE LINKS TO 'RADICALISING NETWORKS': NEIL LEWINGTON (2008)

But first I want to turn to the case of Neil Lewington, arrested at Lowestoft on 30 October 2008 while changing trains on his way to a blind date that he had met online (CPS 2009). He was drunk and urinating in public at the



time, shouting abuse at a female train conductor who called the police. Upon being detained and searched, police found two viable explosive devices on his person. Lewington was arrested and his home in Tilehurst, near Reading, was searched under Section 18 of the Police & Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984. There, according to *The Daily Mail*, authorities found a ‘bomb-making factory’, including ‘shrapnel bombs disguised in tennis balls which he planned to hurl into the homes of Asian families’, alongside

drawings of electronics and a cocktail of explosive ingredients including weedkiller, firelighters, firework powder, electrical timers and detonators. Lewington also kept video footage about bombings in Britain and America as well as fascist literature including a handbook for ‘Waffen SS UK members’ which he wrote himself. (Camber 2009)

Described by Guido Knopp as ‘the political soldiers of National Socialism’, the Waffen-SS was established in autumn 1939 and ultimately grew into a force with nearly a million members and 38 divisions by the end of World War II (2003: 231, 246, and 281). The Waffen-SS international brigades, above all, have given nostalgic rise in some right-wing extremist circles to forms of neo-Nazism. I was provided scans of this 18-page ‘Waffen-SS handbook’ which, perhaps surprisingly, contained no other references to this World War II paramilitary force. I was also provided scans that fell into three groups: images taken from Lewington’s phone; writings from his notebook also taken from his person upon arrest; and third, a black folder containing texts relating to bomb-making as well as newspaper clippings, taken from his bedside drawer. The latter derived largely from the weeks after 9/11, in what may well have been a radicalising event for this anti-Muslim extremist.

I was asked to analyse the first three types of material, that is, the ‘Waffen-SS UK Members Handbook’, phone images, and Lewington’s notebook entries. The terms of reference centred upon whether or not this material is related to right-wing extremism and whether neo-Nazi activists would normally possess such texts and images. Correspondingly, fitting Neil Lewington into the ‘extreme right wing’ of neo-Nazism—rather than the ‘radical’ or ‘far-right’ of then-visible British National Party (BNP)—depended upon specific content analysis of the 100 or so pages of writings and the dozen images provided by anti-terrorist police. Of the written material, much was banal—shopping lists and train timetables—and irrelevant to neo-Nazism, including the pages of racist ‘jokes’ of the crude, one-liner variety. Many entries were anti-Semitic, with dozens

identifiable as clearly anti-black or anti-Muslim in nature. I ultimately selected seven items that I linked to one of two post-war fascist movements: four to Combat 18/Blood and Honour and three to Christian Identity/KKK. The latter was initially formed in 1865 following the defeat of the Confederacy in the American Civil War and soon had offshoots all across the Deep South. One of these was the White Camelia Knights of the KKK, first founded in 1867, said to have rivalled the KKK in membership figures in the past (Quarles 1999: 34). This racist group was explicitly referred to in Lewington's notes.

While this seemed unusual at first, when taken together with two phone images and a transcribed Bible verse from St Luke's Gospel also in Lewington's notes, it was clear that all three had derived from the webpage of the White Camelia Knights, a KKK offshoot reformed a generation ago and now based in Texas. It has been reincarnated as a 'Christian Identity' movement. The strange and complex history of this doctrine derives from late nineteenth-century British Israelism, but progressively established itself amongst post-war American racists after the landmark 1954 desegregation case, *Brown v. The Alabama Board of Education*. Christian Identity, in a summation by Martin Durham, 'is an American creation. It appeals both to the religious identity of most American extreme rightists and to their belief that not only they or the white race but America is special' (2007: 82). This belief is predicated on an apocalyptic worldview holding that 'Jews not only are Satanic but also represent a separate genetic seedline from Aryans', with the latter representing the actual 'lost tribe' of Israel (Berlet 2006: 128). Put simply, Christian Identity is a racist bastardisation of Christianity that has spawned a host of extreme right-wing groups in the USA, from the birth of Aryan Nations in the 1970s—under the late Christian Identity pastor Richard Butler—to the larger Posse Comitatus and violent Phineas Priesthood groups. According to the specialist Michael Barkun: 'Christian Identity clearly believes that the Last Days are imminent, a characteristic shared with most millennialists in contemporary America. Unlike many of their fellow chiliasts [adherents of millennialism], however, a high proportion of Identity believers adopt an active rather than a passive stance' (Barkun 1997: 208). These views are readily apparent on the group's webpage, titled 'Who We Are':

WHO—The White Camelia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is a group of men and women (families) that share a common belief in religion and race. We are not the Knights of the White Kamellia, Ku Klux Klan. Neither do we have any affiliation to this organization.

WHAT—An organization of White Christians dedicated to the truth and education in a world of lies and ignorance.

WHERE—The White Camelia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is based in Texas, but with membership spread throughout many other states.

WHEN—The original White Camelia was organized in 1867, two years after the original Ku Klux Klan was formed in Puluski, Tennessee. It has been reported that the White Camelia became larger than the original Ku Klux Klan in membership and power.

WHY—The White Camelia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan believes that White Christian ideals are under attack by anti-white and anti-Christ forces. We believe our race, country and our Christian way of life is being systematically destroyed.

HOW TO JOIN—Requirements for membership are simple. You must be 100% White, have an open mind to learn Christian Identity and be willing to follow Klan rules and regulations. (White Camelia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan 2011)

In the last decade, the web has been the KKK's main recruiting ground, albeit not been the only one. On 10 June 1999, the BBC carried a news story entitled 'KKK plans infiltration of the UK'; since that time, KKK activists in the UK have been unmasked or imprisoned (Hosken 1999; Parry 2011; Morris 2014). By recourse to what may be a more cell-based structure, the Klan has established 'churches' in Wales and the rest of Britain, amongst a number of countries in Europe. This naturally extends to a web presence as well, from the Imperial Klans of America International Headquarters to European groups such as the UK-based European White Knights of the Burning Cross based in Britain. It was this small band of online white supremacists that formed one strand of Lewington's indirect 'community of support' online.<sup>6</sup>

The other strand was not imported from the USA but was the domestic hate group Blood & Honour. With their name taken from inscription on Hitler Youth daggers, Blood & Honour was created by the ex-National Front member Ian Stuart Donaldson in 1987, lead singer of the lionised neo-Nazi 'Oi!' band, Skrewdriver. A year after his death in 1993, the White Noise CD label, ISD Records, was created to disseminate White Power music, thereby gaining neo-fascist skinheads 'a reputation as the

most consistently violent element of the diverse right-wing extremist constellation’ (Cotter 2004: 33). A well-circulated slogan from this movement was one of the images on Lewington’s phone: ‘100% White/100% Proud’. During the 1990s this movement merged with, and indeed in the UK was virtually indistinguishable from, Combat 18. Formed in 1992 as the bodyguard for the BNP, Combat 18 progressively divorced itself from the electoral ‘opportunism’ of the BNP in favour of perpetuating paramilitary violence and ‘advocated a policy of violent ‘direct action’, [and] instructed its readers on how to prepare bombs and openly incited racial hatred’. Members targeted Asian and other ethnic minorities in Britain, while openly identifying with Nazism and anti-Semitism, as revealed by the group’s numerological code, referring to the first and eighth letters of the alphabet, with A H referring to Adolf Hitler. Reflecting on his time with Combat 18 during the 1990s, the journalist Nick Ryan claimed that the ‘reality on the ground for Combat 18 was football violence and the far-right music scene’ (Ryan 2004: 28).

Yet in Lewington’s case, there was no evidence at all that he had direct contact with Combat 18 activists, no evidence that he had attended racist skinhead gigs or been a football hooligan, and no suggestion that he had any operational assistance in his terrorist radicalisation; a loner, he hadn’t spoken to his father for ten years—despite living in the same house. Like Breivik’s imagined ‘Knights Templar’, Lewington’s Waffen-SS UK ‘command council’ was entirely fictitious, as was his claim to have 30 fellow members, split into two-man cells, who were trained and willing to bomb the UK indiscriminately until only British people as ‘defined by blood’ remained. This attempt to start a race war, then, was totally imagined. More to the point, it was wholly derived from an indirect ‘radicalising network’ online.

Underscoring this point is the following statement, provided in both Lewington’s ‘Waffen-SS UK Members Handbook’ and his notebook (mistakes and capitalisation in original):

NO LONGER WILL THE WEAKLINGS RULE THE WHITE MAN BY LIES AND DECIET, BUT, THE WARRIOR WILL MAKE HIS COMEBACK, AND, RULE BY STRENGTH, HONESTY AND LOVE FOR HIS RACE.

This statement actually originates with Ian Stewart Donaldson and is contained in the *Ian Stuart Song Book* from 2001. Yet the printed original is

different from the above in one crucial respect: the added commas before and after ‘but’. This variation, instead, comes from the Combat 18/Blood & Honour homepage.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Neil Lewington, then, his support network was wholly online. To this day, all the evidence suggests that he was a lone actor radicalised by websites and racist fantasies passively—meaning that there was no evidence presented at trial of dialogue amongst fellow right-wing extremists. Lewington was convicted in July 2009 on seven of eight terrorism-related charges and handed an indefinite sentence in September 2009 after being told by the judge:

You were in the process of embarking upon terrorist activity [...] designed to intimidate non-white people and it was for the purpose of pursuing the ideological cause of white supremacy and neo-fascism. (BBS News 2009)

#### ACTIVE LINKS TO ‘RADICALISING NETWORKS’: IAN DAVISON (2010)

Although clearly also pursuing the ‘cause of white supremacy’, Ian Davison was at the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of ‘radicalising networks’ (CPS 2010). Davison was a founding member of the ASF, which he launched in early 2008 with his son, Nicky, who was underage at the time, alongside two older neo-Nazis, Trevor Hannington, based in north Wales, and Michael Heaton, based in northern England. At its peak, the movement purportedly had up to 350 virtual activists worldwide, with perhaps two dozen activists allegedly carrying out paramilitary-style ‘street ops’ to earn membership. Using the avatar ‘Sweaney88’, Ian Davison was in charge of propaganda, in which he was assisted by his son, who posted under the name ‘Thorburn’.

For a year, this quartet operated the ASF website—its server was located in Ohio to avoid hate crimes or incitement charges—before a falling out led to Heaton’s departure from the group and his founding of the much smaller British Freedom Fighters, while the three remaining ASF committee members ‘rebranded’ their larger organisation as Legion88/The Wolfpack. A fair summary of their views is contained in the ‘ASF Official Statement’, posted by Davison in January 2009 (mistakes in original):

We at the ASF are a young organization that are fully committed to the defence of our people by any and all means necessary. We do not fight

against our people but for our people yet still The British security forces have chosen to attack us. Unfortunately for them what they have found is that the ASF are alot stronger than we led them to believe, we are also ahead in the security game. This has been the first true test of ASF grit as the security forces smashed down doors and came away with nothing. Still Zog [the alleged 'Zionist Occupation Government'] has taken things to the next level and the ASF stands ready to meet this challenge head on and smash our enemies and grind them into the dirt that spawned them. So we say this to the Zog agents that have wrecked our comrades home and imprisoned without trial. Release our freedom fighter, our brother, our family or suffer the consequences of your cowardly actions. The ASF will not shrink under the persecution of Zog troops, instead we will take the fight to you at every turn. Our brothers and sisters now stand ready to strike, the coming blood will be on your hands.

Following a counter-terrorism investigation, Ian Davison was arrested in June 2009—shortly after The Wolfpack's YouTube site uploaded videos of two pipe-bombs being detonated. Concerning though this was, it was dwarfed by the findings at Davison's Burnopfield home: a jar of ricin, which contained up to ten lethal doses of the biotoxin. It seems Davison had purchased castor beans online and then used paramilitary manuals to auto-didactically turn this into castor oil, the precursor of one of the world's deadliest substances. To put this into perspective, when Davison was caught, the so-called coalition of the willing was still in Iraq trying to locate weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that we now know could be built (if not weaponised with a dispersal agent) by a self-directed terrorist—needing only an Internet connection and a credit card. This, then, was a brave new world, whereby a working-class milkman with self-taught computing knowledge and a belief in neo-Nazism could seem to single-handedly cross the threshold of WMDs.

I say 'seem to' since, like Lewington, Davison was unwilling to speak with the authorities upon arrest—a stark contrast with the narcissistic Breivik, or other lone wolves like the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, the so-called Laserman (John Ausonius), or Peter Mangs in Sweden, convicted for multiple racist murders. Yet there was no suggestion that Davison shared his bombing plans or preparations with other activists from the ASF or its successor organisations—including his son, who was later charged with possessing materials useful for acts of terror. To be sure, all members of the online ASF forum had access to paramilitary manuals,

thanks to uploads by—amongst others—the head of the ‘US division’ of the neo-Nazi group (mistakes in original):

I wanted to provide the latest tactical as well as military training manuals to the Wolfpack, but at the same time I wanted them to be able to be accessed safely and easily so that no one felt the need to have them on their person i.e. there home or elsewhere. I also believe that these should be in pdf so they are accessed and viewed easily and securely. Well I have found a safe and secure method to view these on line, and you may still download if you like; if and only if it is legal in each of your geopolitical regions. I have promised this week they would be provided; so here they are in a safe web format to view and do with what you may.

Not to be outdone, by the end of 2008, Davison had personally uploaded 21 book-length texts to the ASF website, including *Mein Kampf*, George Lincoln Rockwell’s *White Power*, and several paramilitary manuals, such as *Silent Killing*, *The Dark Art Of Death*, *Converting Model Rockets Into Explosive Missiles*, *Homebuilt Claymore Mines*, and the *Arsenal of Improvised Weapons*.

This was a small portion of the material I was tasked to inspect from the ASF’s and associated websites. Unlike the scans provided in the Lewington trial, this took the form of CD-ROMS containing films and images, online books and links, as well as public blogs and private messages. These were presented to me in October 2009 alongside with a similar remit to that above: to consider the ideological make-up and motivations of the group, as well as any political and international aims.

Whereas Expert Witness testimony in the Lewington case had been made challenging by a dearth of material, an opposite challenge faced me in the Ian Davison case: an almost unmanageable volume of captured material. I was presented with thousands of posts that contained all manner of racist hatred, incitement to violence, and aggressive expressions of neo-Nazism. Yet in this context, the trials against the membership committee of the ASF offered a rare opportunity to see the workings of a neo-Nazi ‘small cell’. To make the 52 discs’ worth of captured material manageable, I broke the texts into four categories: (1) glorification of Nazism/‘Aryanism’; (2) violently racist and anti-Semitic language; (3) propaganda dissemination and international links with right-wing extremists and paramilitary; and finally, (4) materials towards paramilitarism and physical attacks.

In stark contrast to Lewington—and indeed to Breivik and others more recently, perhaps including Dylann Roof—Ian Davison had a very active ‘radicalising network’: daily exchanges online, an organisation he helped to lead for some 18 months, and a son who appeared to share the same values. This, in turn, raises an unusual proposition: a would-be lone wolf who was passively collecting information on terrorist attacks online, while at the same time cultivating an active support network via the offline ASF cell.

There seem to be other important contrasts between active online posters like Davison, on the one hand, and those more passively drawing upon ‘radicalising networks’ like Lewington. First, as noted above, Davison was trafficking paramilitary manuals online, as well as related extreme right materials. Davison was also very clear on the ASF forum about his neo-Nazi views. This frequently extended to both general threats of violence—such as the relatively tame ‘i’m out tonight and scum is on the menue and this Aryan is f\*cking hungry’ (sic)—to far more violent expressions (mistakes in original):

Its worth noting that in an incendiary attack on scum housing sometimes the letter box can be a better point of attack than the window. The letter box usually leads to the stairs, usually carpeted lot the time coats and things are behind that door and stairs are made of wood and represent the heart of the house. The same can be said of large buildings like flats, bars, restaurants and mosques. A fire starting on the stairs usually quickly takes out the building and removes the stairs as a means of escape.

Comments were sometimes directed at individuals alongside, in one instance, circulating a female police officer’s home address. Amongst a motley crew of online racists, in fact, Davison typically used the most extreme expressions and threats. His violent language doubtless would have drawn attention to himself by anyone monitoring the Aryan Strike Force (mistakes in original):

OK most muzzies work in some sort of food trade this we know they pool the resources of there fellow pedo worshipers to drive out white traders and take up local businesses usually corner shops, take aways and finally cash and carry now you can buy cockroaches for live feed in the hundreds and under the right conditions cockroach colonies will about double in numbers in about a month, cockroaches will fit through a letterbox and are very good at not setting off the alarm.



Yet it was more than just talk in Davison's case as well. Reflecting on ASF 'training days' in Cumbria he helped to organise, Davison proudly declared: 'the [Wolf]packs paramilitary are picking up the pace'. In another post, Davison asserted (mistakes in original):

street lads should be able to concentrate on the job they are doing but remember we cant use these lads later for paramilitary action. i say that because there faces and names will become known. once there faces are know to the enemies i wouldn't want them working on assassinations or other strikes.

Were all this not ominous enough, finally and perhaps most chillingly, Davison announced shortly before his arrest that he had recently 'worked on some germ warfare plans in the past but as always lacking resources were the biggest obstacle'. Davison ultimately pled guilty to six terrorism-related charges and remains the only person in the UK convicted under the 1996 Chemical Weapons Act. His active engagement with neo-Nazi fora clearly contributed to his 2010 sentencing (Lynn 2010).

Indeed, several of the above and cognate postings constitute prosecutable offences in the UK. But so-called keyboard warriors and other fantasists make these kinds of offensive statements all the time online—and not just on neo-Nazi forums. Surely this has to be balanced against the cost of compromising surveillance that may have been on-going for months, or even years. It also poses a challenge when policing right-wing extremists actively engaging with their 'radicalising networks': how do investigators know who is 'all talk', and who is a legitimate security threat? How does one separate the rhetoric of many aggressive posters online to those that, like Davison, deserve to be tried in a court of law?

To conclude, finally, it also may be worth considering how direct and intimate—as opposed to, like Lewington, passive and indirect—interactions with self-activating terrorists' 'radicalising networks' might increase the risk factor for acts of political violence and the challenges this poses in a legal context. For example, if Davison's online texts did indeed lead to his arrest and trial, at what point was the threshold crossed? And what online posting crossed that threshold: those with incitement to hatred, those circulating paramilitary manuals useful to terrorists, or was it incriminating statements about hate crimes and violence? Perhaps a final question that is equally pertinent for academics working in this area is the following: can working with legal and policing practitioners help us in sharpening our conceptual and analytical approaches to extremism?

## CONCLUSIONS

Radicalisation, obviously, is not simply a matter of Islamist extremism and terrorism. As this chapter makes plain, both in Europe and the USA, radical right-wing terrorist attacks are a prevalent and recurrent feature of the violence-prone environment of political activism. Furthermore, the term 'lone wolf' is, when disregarding the enabling meso-level of support communities, as misleading as the perception of 'lone nuts', which risks marginalising extreme right solo actor terrorism. As I have demonstrated with regard to the two high-profile cases above, Lewington (2008) and Davison (2010), it is possible to distinguish between two different forms of interaction with and support from what I have called 'radicalising networks', indirect (or passive) and direct (or active). In both cases, it is crucial to stress the dynamics between online and offline radicalisation. Whereas Lewington predominantly constructed a fictitious community of support in more or less an entirely virtual reality ('Waffen-SS UK'), Davison used the Internet as a tool to encourage radicalisation among his online and offline supporters, the ASF, while at the same time single-handedly constructing a chemical weapon in his home. These different uses of the Internet highlight that we need to refine our tools of analysis when it comes to digital radicalisation and, moreover, that relevant perspectives for research can be substantially aided through collaboration with practitioners and specific case studies.

## NOTES

1. See the Crown Prosecution Service website for statements on these two cases, online at: [www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest\\_news/132-09/index.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/132-09/index.html), and [http://cps.gov.uk/news/latest\\_news/118\\_10/index.html](http://cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/118_10/index.html) [last accessed 19 Mar 2017]. <http://www.cps.gov.uk> for information on the cases.
2. For more on this theme, see my review of Roger Griffin's *Terrorist's Creed* in *Modernism/Modernity* 20 March 2013.
3. For instance, [http://www.arabamericannews.com/2012/07/29/If-Colorado-shooter-was-an-Arab-or-Muslim-would-he-be-labeled-a-terrorist/?-\\_html](http://www.arabamericannews.com/2012/07/29/If-Colorado-shooter-was-an-Arab-or-Muslim-would-he-be-labeled-a-terrorist/?-_html) [last accessed 19 March 2017].
4. For example, see the useful introductory chapters to two recent, book-length studies: Paul Gill, *Lone Actor Terrorists: A Behavioural Analysis* (Routledge, 2015), and Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivation and Prevention* (Springer, 2012).

5. The murder of Labour MP Jo Cox in June 2016 by Thomas Mair would certainly also be subsumed under this category, since the offender displayed clearly far-right sympathies. The investigation revealed that Mair was motivated by extreme right-wing beliefs.
6. See, for example, [www.freewebs.com/ikcukkkk/index.htm](http://www.freewebs.com/ikcukkkk/index.htm) [last accessed 8 March 2017].
7. See Combat 18/Blood & Honour homepage, no date, online at: [www.skrewdriver.net/index2.html](http://www.skrewdriver.net/index2.html) [last accessed 8 March 2017].

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# Who Is Shaping Your Agenda? Social Network Analysis of Anti-Islam and Anti-immigration Movement Audiences on Czech Facebook

*Josef Šlerka and Vit Šisler*

## INTRODUCTION

The internet has become a crucial tool for people with similar interests to reach out to each other for information and support, to share ideas, and to create personal networks (Rainie and Wellman 2012: 107). Several researchers have suggested that online interactions and materials should be considered key elements in radicalization (Bouchard and Levey 2015: 2). Indeed, radical movements increasingly use the internet to advance their goals (Bouchard and Nash 2015: 53). Beyond easy access, little or no regulation and censorship, the anonymity of communication, and the fast flow of information, the internet offers the ability to shape coverage in traditional mass media (Weimann 2006: 30).

The democratization of mobile internet access around the world and the emergence of Web 2.0 have led to a more user-centric online environment. Radical movements can now rely on a crowd of anonymous

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sympathizers who are collectively engaged in the virtual dissemination of narratives and media content supporting their cause (Ducol 2015: 84). Social media extend the traditional frontiers of radical online milieus by blending into platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook (see Weimann 2010). Today, any understanding of radicalization must take into consideration the impact (or lack thereof) of social media on social settings, media consumption, and the production of knowledge.

As Steiner and Önnertfors write in the introduction to this volume, radicalization is a multi-faceted, dynamic, processual, and multidimensional phenomenon that defies easy definition. By the same token, Schmid (2013: 7) notes that “radical” is a relative concept whose meaning has changed over time. As Neumann (2013: 876) argues, radicalization has no obvious essential or inherent characteristics; rather, it is a process of positioning relative to chosen points of reference. As such, it can only be understood in terms of its distance from these points of reference, be they “status quo or mainstream positions on the political spectrum of a given society” (Schmid 2013: 56).

In this chapter, we study radicalization as a social process and communicative practice, where “radical ideas are transmitted by social networks” (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 803) and contribute to the polarization of public political discourse. Such radicalization processes include, yet are not limited to, advocating sweeping political change and system-transforming solutions for government and society that depart from “the democratic rule of law and international human rights standards” (Schmid 2013: 8). This chapter focuses on the radicalization of public discourse in light of the contemporary migration crisis and on the role of anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements in shaping the agendas of mainstream media through social network sites.

User-generated data connected to the proliferation of social media are growing exponentially. Analysis of these “big social data” opens up new perspectives for research in social sciences and the humanities (boyd and Crawford 2012; Halavais 2015; Manovich 2011). Meanwhile, advances in information and computer technologies present new research methods and new approaches. Being able to quantitatively process large datasets through automation opens a path to new research questions and new ways to answer them (Šlerka and Šisler 2017).

Manovich (2011) argues that the rise of social media and advances in computing tools to process massive amounts of data make possible a

fundamentally new approach to the study of human beings and society. We no longer must choose between data size and data depth. We can study exact trajectories formed by billions of cultural expressions, experiences, texts, and links. The detailed knowledge and insights that before could only be gathered about a few can now be gathered about many. In Manovich's (2011) terms, we are no longer forced to choose between surface data about the many or deep data about a few.

In light of current debate about the migration crisis and the simultaneous proliferation of radical movements in the public sphere, we are in crucial need of critical investigation of the structural and dynamic aspects of audience formation and agenda shaping on social network sites. With Bouchard and Levey (2015: 4), we believe that integrating network concepts and network methods into the study of radicalization is fundamentally important (from theoretical, empirical, and policy perspectives) to bringing the field forward. The network methods approach allows the structural aspects of various groups to be accurately depicted without potentially false assumptions about the ways these groups function. It lets patterns and unexpected findings to emerge from the data (Bouchard and Nash 2015: 50).

Digital media can "support the formation of a public sphere, where a diversity of opinion and information can interact, or, conversely, to function as an echo chamber that reinforces established perspectives and opinions" (Colleoni et al. 2014: 317). Given that both these scenarios are well established and simultaneously contested in the research on political communication on the internet (see, e.g., Brundidge 2010; Stroud 2010), exploratory research analysing big social data through network methods is particularly viable for enhancing our understanding of online radicalization. It is also very important to ensure that our research methods are transparent to allow other researchers to engage with, replicate, and possibly falsify our research and findings.

This chapter presents exploratory research on the social network sites of Czech anti-immigration and anti-Islamic movements. It analyses the audiences of these movements' sites on Facebook and explores their similarities, differences, and affinities through social distance computed based on their fans' likes. The chapter uses the new, formally defined, quantitative method Normalized Social Distance (NSD) developed by Šlerka (2013) and detailed by Šlerka and Šisler (2017). NSD calculates the distance between various social groups based on members' intentional stances as



expressed on social networking sites. NSD provides an opportunity for distant reading of social network sites, enabling us to formally represent and analyse the structural aspects of big social data.

The primary aim of this chapter is to investigate how near to, or far from, each other Facebook audiences of Czech anti-immigration and anti-Islam movements are in terms of NSD. We also analyse their distance from major Czech news media, established political parties, and politicians active in public debate about the migration crisis. The secondary aim of this chapter is to examine the structural interplays between Czech anti-immigration and anti-Islamic movements' active audiences and the news media's shaping of agendas on Facebook. Through quantitative analysis of the most popular posts, we explore how diverse audiences elevate particular stories on Czech news media through the distribution of likes on Facebook.

More generally, this chapter aims to present a new methodological framework for the analysis of big social data, especially data from Facebook. The case study itself serves as an example of the method using a concrete dataset, which explains or clarifies possible further interpretative approaches. The methods proposed in this chapter constitute a coherent set of tools, which could be adopted relatively easily by a variety of actors to support their research or decisions with empirical evidence.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND SELF-REPRESENTATIVE PERFORMANCE

The term “social media” conveys several meanings. Most authors in the field agree that social media constitute a virtual space in which the possibility of social interaction between users plays a crucial role and these interactions have a specific impact on the creation of user identities, communication situations, and communities (boyd and Ellison 2007; Obar and Wildman 2015). Nevertheless, the term blurs the distinction between different platforms and communication channels (Obar and Wildman 2015: 746).

Given the analytical ambiguity of “social media” we have opted to use the term “social networking sites” instead. In accordance with boyd and Ellison (2007), we define social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a defined system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they

share a connection, and (3) view and go through their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

We have argued elsewhere that these connections shared with other users on social networking sites are the result of social actions and possess an intentionality of their own (Šlerka and Šisler 2017). The user's behaviour in social networks is not only a social action taken towards others, but also a representation of an intentionality that presupposes other subjects and anticipates their interpretations of such behaviour. The analysis of actions on social networking sites is thus an analysis of data representing not only certain behaviours, but also "intentional stances" (Dennett 1996).

If we understand user behaviour on social networking sites within Goffman's (1959) framework of dramaturgical sociology, the user's profile and social action conducted through that profile could be considered part of a "personal facade" or as actions happening on the "front stage." From this perspective, all the elements that form a personal profile on a social network site are elements of the facade that users select to represent their personal identity. The choice of name, profile photo, description, privacy settings, and so on could all be perceived as expressions of the user's identity and front stage performance.

Social actions conducted on social networking sites (e.g., status posts, comments, "likes" of other users' pages or posts) are forms of self-representative performance (Wallace et al. 2012). Social networking sites can thus be seen both as spaces for daily self-presentation and stages for performance and interaction. Actions on social networking sites have intentionality and can be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. From the perspectives of digital humanities and automated computational processing, it is quite possible to process all these social actions in an exploratory manner and search for structural patterns in the resulting data (Šlerka and Šisler 2017).

## EXISTING RESEARCH

Existing research on social networking sites relevant for our study can be divided roughly into three research clusters: (1) users' online behaviour, (2) media consumption and agenda shaping, and (3) online radicalization.

Kosinski et al. (2013) demonstrate how publicly accessible information about users' Facebook likes can be used to predict automatically and

accurately a range of highly sensitive personal attributes including sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious and political views, personality traits, intelligence, happiness, use of addictive substances, parental separation, age, and gender. Taking a different tack, Pelletier and Horkey (2013) present exploratory qualitative research to look at the motivations and consequences associated with liking commercial brands' pages on Facebook. Wallace et al. (2014) similarly explore a typology of fans (i.e., individuals who like different brands' pages on Facebook). Recent exploratory qualitative studies have investigated individual users' motivations to like their friends' posts on Facebook (Basalingappa et al. 2015).

Social networking sites may play a significant role in how people gather political information (Bode 2016). Social ties play a major role how the public learns about politics, offline social networks play a role in the dissemination of information (Ellison and Fudenberg 1995), and information from trusted people is deemed more credible and is more likely to be taken seriously (Huckfeldt et al. 1995: 1027). Today, exposure to political information within social networking sites is much like that from the sources that came before them, such as news websites and more traditional media (Bode 2012). However, research suggests that the potential for users to gather political information from social media is not always realized within the general population (Bode 2016). News publishers take social networking sites seriously and include them in their media strategy. A recent report published by Parse.ly (2015), an analytics firm that collects data for digital publishers, suggests that Facebook already drives more traffic to news media websites than Google. Consequently, larger news and media sites have become much more reliant on Facebook and shape their editorial policies accordingly (Ingram 2015).

Content on Facebook's News Feed is selected by algorithms based on a user's previous behaviours (Pariser 2011) and individuals are increasingly exposed to information from like-minded individuals (Flaxman et al. 2016), leading to renewed speculation about "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles" devoid of attitude-challenging content (Bakshy et al. 2015: 1130). Increasing reliance on Facebook as a gateway to news media could lead to reaffirmation of people's existing political orientations. In their seminal study, Bakshy et al. (2015) examined how 10.1 million US Facebook users interacted with socially shared news. They measured ideological homophily in friend networks and the extent to

which heterogeneous friends could expose others to cross-cutting content. Their findings suggest that (1) with Facebook's automatic ranking of posts, people on average have slightly less cross-cutting content in their News Feed, and (2) exposure to ideologically different content is further limited by individual choices (Bakshy et al. 2015: 1131). Nevertheless, "despite these tendencies, there is substantial room for individuals to consume more media from the other side; on average, viewers clicked on 7% of hard content available in their feeds" (Bakshy et al. 2015: 1131). In other words, rather than people browsing only ideologically aligned news sources or opting out of hard news altogether, Bakshy et al.'s research shows that social network sites "expose individuals to at least some ideologically cross-cutting viewpoints" (2015: 1132).

A limited, albeit growing, body of research on social network sites addresses online radicalization. Social ties and social influence have been found to be central to the radicalization process (Hegghammer 2006; Sageman 2004, 2008). Social network sites are used by various radical movements to spread beliefs and ideologies, recruit members, and create online virtual communities with a common agenda (Agarwal 2015). As Ducol (2015: 86) argues, interactive features of modern web-based technologies, including social networking sites, have facilitated a broader dissemination of autonomous, user-generated content outside official websites and digital platforms. Meanwhile, they have also eased the emergence of undefined online communities, radical digital milieus (Conway 2012), that encompass a broad cross-section of producers and consumers who all contribute to the everyday re-making and dissemination of radical narratives through cyberspace.

Agarwal's (2015) comprehensive review of research on online radicalization includes characterization, classification, and an in-depth meta-analysis of about 100 conference and journal papers published over the past ten years, revealing that most such studies target events specific to a country or region (mainly USA and Latin America) and mine English language texts. Most studies use a variety of information retrieval methods, automated text processing, and methods of analysis based on machine learning.

As far as we know, no other study has used NSD to analyse social networking sites' audiences to examine online radicalization and none has discussed anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements on Facebook in the Czech Republic.

## NORMALIZED SOCIAL DISTANCE

The concept of NSD was introduced by Šlerka (2013) and detailed by Šlerka and Šisler (2017). For the sake of brevity, we describe only key features of NSD here and refer readers to the above-mentioned studies for details.

NSD is a formally defined method that calculates distance between social groups based on intentional stances expressed in group members' activities on social networking sites—in our case, on Facebook pages. The resulting number expresses how *far* or *close* various sites' audiences are in relation to each another. Importantly, NSD relies on *post likes* (i.e., likes given to specific posts published by the page in question) rather than *page likes* (i.e., likes given to a page in general). This methodological distinction assumes that while a *page like* could represent a variety of intentional stances ranging from interest in the page's activity to support of the ideas expressed, a *post like* probably expresses affirmation of the ideas in a particular post (see Wallace et al. 2014).

Theoretically, NSD stems from McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook's (2001) concept of homophily in social networks, from Lin's (1998) information-theoretic definition of similarity, and particularly from Cilibrasi and Vitányi's (2010) concept of normalized web distance.

Homophily is the principle that contact is more frequent between similar people than dissimilar people (McPherson et al. 2001); it assumes that similarity breeds connection. The homophily principle structures network ties of every type including marriage, friendship, work, advice, support, information transfer, co-membership, and so on. The result is that people's personal networks tend to be homogeneous in many sociodemographic, behavioural, and intrapersonal characteristics. Homophily limits people's social worlds in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience. Homophily also implies that distance in social characteristics translates into *network distance*, the number of relationships through which a piece of information must travel to connect two individuals (McPherson et al. 2001).

Introduced by Cilibrasi and Vitányi (2010), normalized web distance (NWD) is a semantic measure of similarity derived from the number of hits returned by an internet search engine for a given set of keywords. Words or phrases with the same or similar meanings (in a natural language sense) tend to be close in units of web distance, while words with dissimilar

$$NSD(x, y) = \frac{\max(\log(f(x)), \log f(y)) - \log(f(x) \cap y)}{\log N - \min(\log f(x), \log f(y))}$$

Fig. 3.1 Normalized Social Distance equation

meanings tend to be further apart. We can perceive NWD as an expression of semantic distance. Using internet search engines, particularly Google, NWD often relies on contexts expressing a large body of common-sense knowledge. In a series of experiments, the accuracy of NWD was evaluated against expert opinion with positive results (Cilibrasi and Vitányi 2010).

NWD comes with the idea of a semantic layer of information, but we propose that there is another, more pragmatic, layer above it that depends on the degree of similarity expressed by the online behaviour of two different social groups. We can also formally define the method of calculating the distance between these two social groups (Šlerka and Šisler 2017).

Formally, we define NSD as follows, where  $f(x)$  is the number of members in the group  $x$ ;  $f(y)$  is the number of members in the group  $y$ ;  $f(x, y)$  is the number of elements that are simultaneously members of both groups; and  $N$  is the number of all elements in the given corpus (Fig. 3.1):

With distance thus formally defined, we should be able to measure the distance between any two social subgroups that fall under the umbrella of another one. NSD is a universal metric that can be adjusted for data from any social network sites. In the following case study, we applied the formula to Facebook pages; calculating the proximity of these pages based on post likes from these pages' active users. The resulting matrix is a bimodal network with a relatively low density that can be examined using traditional exploratory techniques such as hierarchical cluster analysis, multidimensional scaling, or principal component analysis (Šlerka and Šisler 2017).

## CLUSTERING OF ANTI-IMMIGRATION AND ANTI-ISLAM MOVEMENTS ON CZECH FACEBOOK

The first aim of this study was to conduct exploratory research on anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements on Czech Facebook. Primarily, we analyse how close or far audiences of these movements are in relation to each other in terms of NSD. Secondly, we analyse the proximity of these movements' audiences to key Czech news media, established political parties, and politicians active in the public debate on the migration crisis.

### *Dataset*

We identified 56 Facebook pages for Czech anti-immigration and anti-Islamic movements, news media, political parties and movements, think tanks, campaigns, and individual politicians who are active in the public debate on the migration crisis. A list of these pages is provided in the Appendix.

For clarity, we have translated these pages' names into English wherever possible (e.g., Green Party) or labelled these pages according to the following key:

- (n) = news media
- (m) = political movement or party
- (p) = individual politician

In specific cases, we provide a full description of the page in parentheses (e.g., Miloš Zeman [President]).

### *Method*

We adopted the following procedure to compute the NSD of the selected pages to each another:

1. We downloaded all public posts by all the pages' administrators between 1 September 2015 and 28 December 2015 for a total of 19,321 posts.
2. We downloaded a complete list of 540,775 unique online identifications (IDs) for those liking at least one of these posts. These users distributed 3,351,034 likes among the 19,321 posts.
3. Based on information from Facebook Audience Insights (2016), we estimated the Czech Facebook region to include 3,500,000 unique users.
4. Based on these data, we computed the NSD between all the selected Facebook pages.

### *Results*

The results of NSD can be visualized in several ways. For this study, we combined graphic visualization and clustering analysis.

Figure 3.2 depicts only significant pages (i.e., those with significantly overlapping audiences in terms of NSD). The nodes in the graph denote individual pages; the links denote significant proximity in terms of NSD (i.e.,  $NSD(x, y) \leq 0.5$ ).

Figure 3.3 illustrates our (*k*-means) clustering analysis. This method aims to partition our observations into clusters in which each observation belongs to the cluster with the nearest mean, which serves as a prototype for the cluster. This results from partitioning the data space into Voronoi cells. (The results of NSD analysis are multidimensional, and their visualization in a two-dimensional space should be understood as a mathematical approximation.)

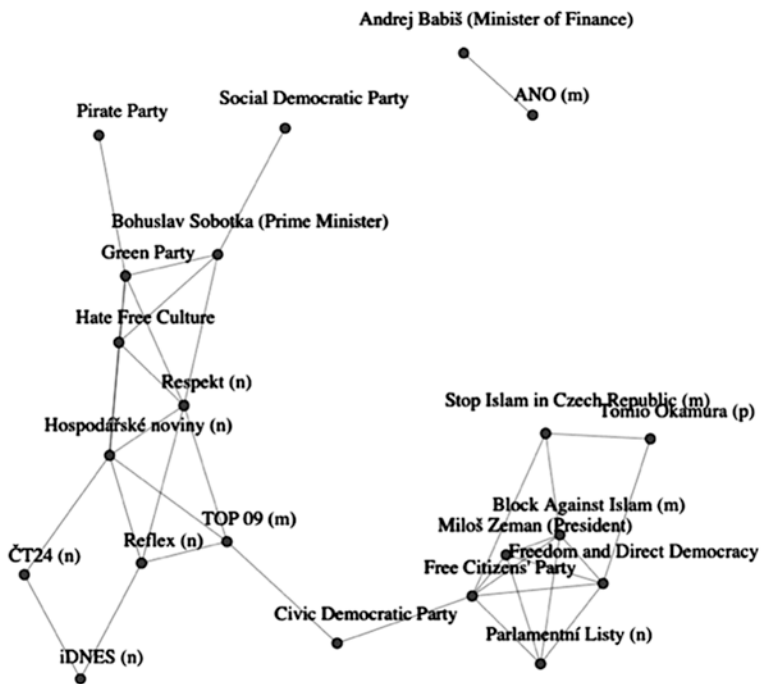
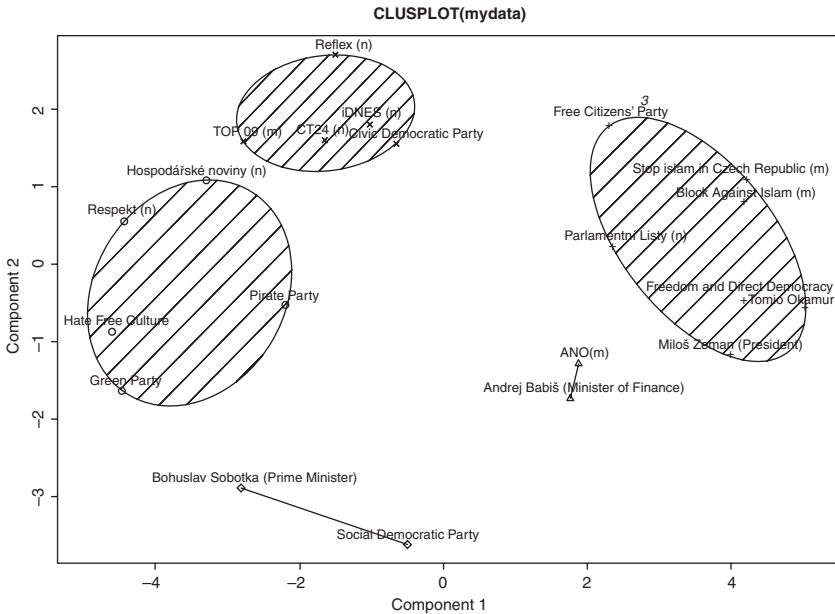


Fig. 3.2 Anti-immigration and anti-Islamic movements' proximity to media, politicians, and political parties on Czech Facebook based on the NSD metric





These two components explain 60.3 % of the variability.

**Fig. 3.3** *K*-means clustering of anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements, news media, politicians, and political parties on Czech Facebook based on the NSD metric

### *Discussion*

NSD analysis provides us with an opportunity for the distant reading of social network sites and their audiences. This distant reading clarifies structural aspects not necessarily visible on the level of “lose reading, (i.e., content analysis or interviews).

In our case study, the results of NSD analysis (in both the graph visualization and the clustering analysis) show several key findings about the anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements and the proximity of these pages’ audiences to one another; as well as to Czech news media sites and the sites of Czech political parties.

The findings show several tightly connected clusters of pages on Czech Facebook whose audiences are significantly *close* to one another and share similar intentional stances. The users in these clusters like and share similar content and rarely reach out to different clusters.

Among these clusters, we can identify one, which could be labelled as anti-Islamic, anti-immigrant, nationalist, and/or anti-European Union (EU). This cluster consists of audiences active on the pages of the anti-Islamic political movements, *Block against Islam* and *Stop Islam in the Czech Republic*; the anti-EU and nationalist party, *Freedom and Direct Democracy*; and the libertarian/conservative *Free Citizens' Party*. All these parties use strong anti-immigration rhetoric. Importantly, this cluster includes Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, who is known for his strong anti-Islamic and anti-immigration discourse. The news site *Parlamentní listy*, which also plays a prominent role in this cluster, publishes the un-redacted opinions of politicians and authors from across the political spectrum, yet still commonly linked to conservative and nationalist media. These pages' audiences are very close to each other in NSD terms and show a significant overlap. They tend to rely on similar or close news sources and to like significantly similar content.

Another cluster consists of the active audiences of the liberal/left *Green Party*, the liberal *Pirate Party*, and an anti-discrimination campaign, *Hate Free Culture*. These pages' audiences are close to the liberal weekly *Respekt* and the liberal daily newspaper *Hospodářské noviny*. As in the previous cluster, these audiences tend to rely on similar or close news sources and to like significantly similar content on Facebook.

At first glance, the public debate on the migration crisis seems highly polarized in the Czech Republic. News media tend to portray Czech society as fundamentally divided into two camps, corresponding roughly to the two audience clusters mentioned above on Czech Facebook (Šlerka 2016). Similarly, many politicians perceive the migration crisis to be a divisive topic that can score them significant political points and they use it as such.

The NSD analysis reveals that, although these two audience clusters are significant and very active on other pages on Facebook, there are at least two other similarly significant clusters that seem to be primarily unrelated to the migration crisis debate and are rarely mentioned in the news media. These two clusters include, first, the audience of the ANO ("YES") political movement and its leader, Andrej Babiš (also the Czech finance minister). ANO is a relatively new political entity that has often been portrayed as anti-establishment or populist; positioning itself as an alternative to the older "corrupt" parties. It has a vaguely defined programme and primarily promotes the "proper" technocratic management of public affairs (Šlerka 2016). The other significant group unrelated to the migration debate is

the audience of the Czech Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka. Importantly, these two parties currently make up the government and lead the polls. These clusters have no significant proximity to any particular media outlets and have no significant overlap with the two active clusters identified earlier.

In summary, the NSD analysis reveals that, although public debate on the immigration crisis seems highly polarized into two adversarial clusters, it is more significantly fragmented in at least four different clusters, whose audiences rarely share the same content and whose intentional stances, as manifested by Facebook likes, rarely overlap. This structural fragmentation negatively influences public debate, while, in Habermasian (1989) terms, the possibility of communicative actions and mutual reasoning is seriously limited.

### *Limitations*

NSD is a quantitative method best suited to exploratory research. Unlike semantic methods in the digital humanities, NSD is featureless and is in principle unrelated to the content of the data analysed. It focuses on the actions of social network sites' audiences (typically Facebook likes) and computes the distance between the audiences of different sites based on these actions. The assumption of the NSD method is that user behaviours on social networks are not only social actions, but representations of intentionality that presuppose other subjects and anticipate their interpretation of such behaviours. The analysis of actions on social network sites is thus the analysis of data representing not only certain behaviours, but also the intentional stances they represent. The NSD method allows falsification of results through qualitative analysis of the content users share and like. The falsifications the authors of this chapter have conducted so far suggest a possibly significant correlation between NSD and qualitative analysis, but further research is needed to confirm or refute this.

## POST OVERLAPS RELATED TO THE MIGRATION CRISIS DEBATE ON CZECH FACEBOOK

The second aim of the study was to analyse the structural interplays between the active audiences of anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements and the agenda shaping of Czech news media on Facebook. Through

quantitative analysis of the most popular posts, this part of the study explored how diverse audiences elevate particular news on Czech news media Facebook pages through likes.

### *Dataset*

We used the same dataset of Facebook pages as in the previous section (i.e., the 56 Facebook pages of Czech anti-immigration and anti-Islamic movements, news media, political parties and movements, think tanks, campaigns, and individual politicians active in the public debate on the migration crisis listed in the Appendix).

### *Method*

In the second part of the study, we used but a more straightforward, quantitative analysis of post overlaps than the NSD:

1. We downloaded all the posts by the pages' administrators from September and October 2015 and all unique user IDs for those who liked at least one of these posts.
2. We filtered these posts based on two additional criteria: popularity and overlaps. For the final data sets we selected only posts that (a) gained at least 50 likes in each selected month and (b) had at least a 15% overlap in likes with at least one other page on the list.
3. We treated the data from the two months as separate datasets to compare their structural patterns. The final dataset from September 2015 consists of 6554 posts that attracted 1,072,425 likes from 261,833 unique users. The final dataset from October 2015 consists of 6918 posts that attracted 930,570 likes from 220,575 unique users.
4. We computed the percentage of likes for individual posts from users who simultaneously liked another post on a different page in the dataset during the given period. From this basic matrix, we computed percentage overlaps among all the pages in the dataset. The algorithm for the computation is detailed in Šlerka (2016).

### *Results*

The results of the post overlap analysis are twofold: First, we can visualize the complete data as a correlation matrix, using the Pearson product-

moment correlation. The Pearson correlation is a measure of the linear correlation between two variables  $x$  and  $y$ , giving a value between  $+1$  and  $-1$  inclusive, where  $+1$  is a total positive correlation,  $0$  is no correlation, and  $-1$  is a total negative correlation. The Pearson correlation is a measure of the degree of linear dependence between two variables. We have visualized the significant post overlaps among the pages in the dataset from September 2015 (Fig. 3.4) and October 2015 (Fig. 3.5).

Second, we can visualize the results as a table, listing all the posts with significant. For brevity, we include only one detailed example here. The complete results can be found in Šlerka (2016).

In the following example, we analysed Facebook posts from ČT24, a Czech national TV station operating as a public broadcasting service, and their overlaps with other audiences active in the migration crisis debate. In October 2015, ČT24 posted 1301 posts on its Facebook page and an

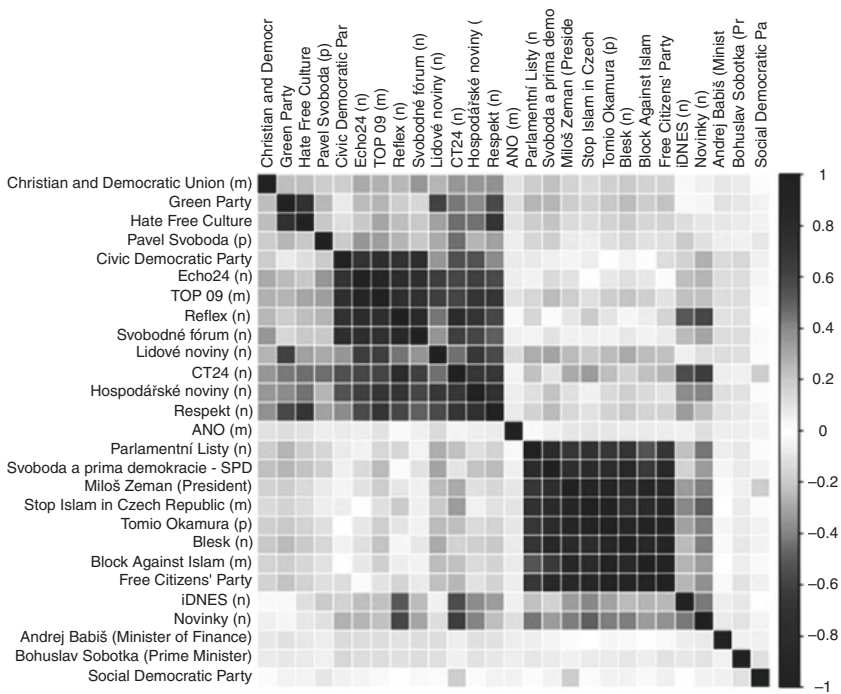


Fig. 3.4 Post/page overlap in September 2015

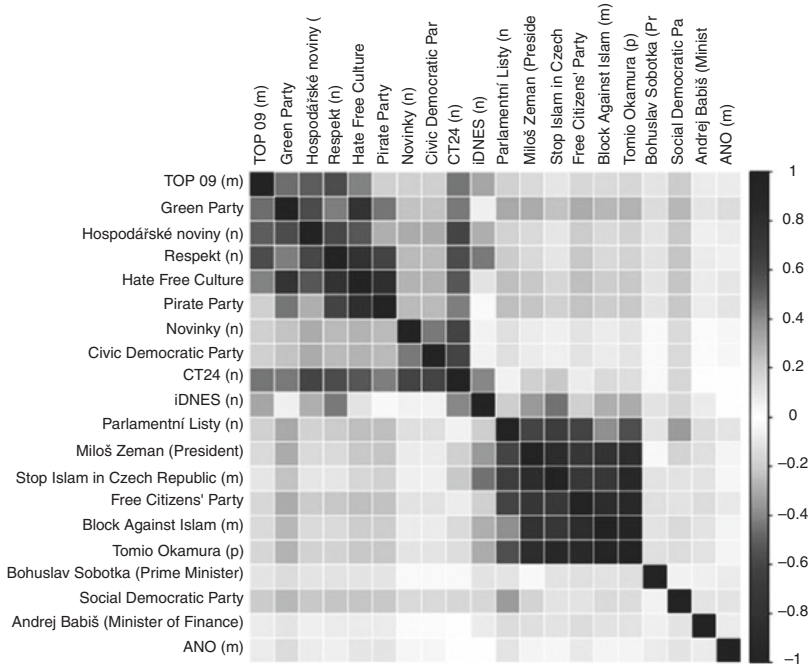


Fig. 3.5 Post/page overlap in October 2015

average post gained 169.5 likes (median = 64.0). From these posts, only 116 posts gained at least 300 likes and had at least 20% overlap with the audiences of other pages. These could be labelled as “trending” posts that were highly visible on Czech Facebook. Most (93) of these post overlaps were between ČT24 and other news media, and we therefore excluded them from our analysis. From the remaining 23 posts, 14 were related to the migration crisis debate and had significant overlaps with other active audiences (Table 3.1).

### *Discussion*

The findings in the second part of the study are twofold: First, the Pearson linear correlation of the page/posts overlap can be perceived as a falsification method for the NSD analysis conducted in the previous case study. Although it uses a different dataset (the posts that active audiences of

Table 3.1 Post-/page overlaps on ČT24

<i>Posting page</i>	<i>Page with overlap</i>	<i>Name of the post</i>	<i>Total likes</i>	<i>Likes overlap (%)</i>
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	Euroseptic party, Alternative for Germany (AFD), wants to file a criminal complaint against Chancellor Angela Merkel	387	37.47
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	Due to the open policy towards refugees, the German Public Prosecutor received hundreds of criminal complaints against Merkel	395	36.96
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	The Bulgarian border police shot dead a refugee, who illegally crossed the border, on the border with Turkey	360	33.06
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	Three-fifths of Czechs aren't satisfied with EU membership	330	32.73
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	Harsh criticism for Merkel during a CDU regional conference	314	31.53
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	The Czech Republic will send two dozen soldiers and special military equipment to help the Hungarian army	447	26.17
ČT24 (n)	Stop Islam in the Czech Republic (m)	Czech Army sends 650 soldiers to the Austrian border	340	25.00
ČT24 (n)	TOP 09 (m)	President Zeman scares the public with his statements about refugees	574	24.39
ČT24 (n)	Hate Free Culture TOP 09 (m)	Eastern Europe should show more solidarity with refugees	453	24.28
ČT24 (n)	TOP 09 (m)	Pope Francis denounces vicious campaigns waged against refugees in Europe	508	21.65
ČT24 (n)	Tomio Okamura (p)	Three-fifths of Czechs aren't satisfied with EU membership	330	21.52
ČT24 (n)	Tomio Okamura (p)	Due to the open policy towards refugees, the German Public Prosecutor received hundreds of criminal complaints against Merkel	395	21.27
ČT24 (n)	Hate Free Culture	Pope Francis denounces vicious campaigns waged against refugees in Europe	508	20.67
ČT24 (n)	TOP 09 (m)	Eastern Europe should show more solidarity with refugees	453	20.09

individual pages liked on different, third-party pages), we can see that the correlation matrix creates clusters of pages with significant overlaps that significantly correspond to the clusters resulting from the NSD analysis. Like the first part of the study, we can identify two adversarial clusters and two smaller, unrelated clusters.

Second, the ČT24 example provides empirical evidence on how the active audiences of individual sites elevate particular news stories on Czech news media sites through likes. The findings indicate that specific content, particularly material related to the migration crisis, gains significant prominence on social networks through the actions of relatively small, yet coherent and active, audiences for anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movement pages on Facebook.

This elevation then influences the way news media and politicians prepare and promote their content on social network sites; shaping public debate on the crisis. Facebook closely monitors what content is trending for each page and automatically offers page editors the option to “boost” already-successful posts via paid display (promoted content). At the same time, Facebook encourages page editors to learn what kind of content their audience cares about most and repeat that style or use similar content when preparing future posts (Facebook 2013).

Through concrete examples, we can identify which posts that alert readers to the negative consequences of immigration regularly gain significant, above average, numbers of likes on Facebook. In most cases, more than a third of these likes come from a relatively small audience: the active audience of the radical Stop Islam in the Czech Republic movement. By the same token, news aimed to bring soberer analytical information to readers is disproportionately liked by the active audience of the anti-discrimination Hate Free Culture campaign.

Given that each additional like further spreads a post to the Facebook profiles of all the “friends” of the user who liked that post, what emerges is a further solidification of “small worlds,” where similar media content circulates and similar world-views permeate.

## CONCLUSIONS

As Bouchard and Levey (2015: 2) note, the internet “may act as a facilitator and *conduit* for radical views online, but rarely as an all-encompassing creator of radical offline behaviour.” So far, very little is known about how individuals experience and react to the consumption of radical materials



found online or about what influence it has on them (Ducol 2015: 87). Although the internet is often singled out as the key means through which individuals are radicalized, “research thus far has fallen short of unearthing the actual mechanisms through which this radicalization takes place” (Edwards and Gribbon 2013: 40). In the words of Ducol (2015: 97), the internet “represents only one piece of the radicalization puzzle. Future research should pay closer attention to diachronic dynamics that may exist between online environments and ‘real world’ social settings.”

Importantly, social network sites involve real people who cannot be considered outside the socializing settings that constrain their beliefs and inform their guiding rules and daily actions in the real world (Ducol 2015: 90). Primary empirical research appears to be essential to gaining a more detailed picture of how social network sites might influence the processes of media consumption and knowledge production.

In this chapter, we have presented an exploratory study on the social network sites of Czech anti-immigration and anti-Islam movements. We analysed audiences of these movements’ sites on Facebook and explored their similarities, differences, and affinities through social distance based on their fans’ likes. We used the new, formally defined, quantitative method of NSD that calculates distances between various social groups based on the intentional stances expressed by these groups’ members’ activities on Facebook. The results of NSD can be visualized in graphs or dendrograms and methods of network analysis can be applied to them. As such, NSD provides an opportunity for the distant reading of social network sites, enabling us to formally represent and analyse the structural aspects of big social data.

The methods proposed in this chapter constitute a coherent set of tools and interpretive approaches, which enable the formal representation, replication, and validation of the structural analysis of big social data and could be relatively easily adopted by other researchers in different contexts. The case study presented in this chapter could serve as an illustrative example, clarifying further possible interpretative approaches.

The main findings of this study show that, although public debate on the immigration crisis on Czech Facebook is partially highly polarized into two adversarial clusters, it is more significantly fragmented into at least four different clusters, whose audiences rarely share the same content and whose intentional stances, as manifested by Facebook likes, rarely overlap. The main findings tend to support the argument that social network sites could indeed create echo chambers and filter bubbles, thus strengthening

confirmation bias (Stroud 2010; Pariser 2011; Flaxman et al. 2016). Nevertheless, the results are highly dependent on a specific context, that is, the Czech migration crisis debate, and can by no means be generalized to all political communication on Facebook. Further research is needed to pinpoint specific conditions under which similar—or different—clustering occurs.

The secondary findings of this study reveal how the active audiences of individual sites elevate particular stories on Czech news media sites through likes. Specific content related to the migration crisis gains significant prominence on Czech Facebook through the actions of relatively small, yet coherent and active, audiences for anti-Islamic and anti-immigration movements. The structural aspects of the interplays between social network sites' audiences and news media are largely neglected by both academia and policy-makers, despite their possibly significant influence on public attitudes. Beyond a theoretical framework, this chapter offers concrete methods and tools for enabling a complex structural analysis of social media sites' audiences. Because the datasets our methods work with are publicly available, the methods and tools we propose could be used by a variety of actors (researchers, media analysts, media outlets, think tanks, governmental agencies, etc.) to support their research and decision-making processes with empirical evidence.

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## APPENDIX: COMPLETE DATASET

Daniel Herman (Minister of Culture), Martin Stropnický (Minister of Defence), Jan Veleba (p), Svobodné fórum (n), Alexandra Udženija (p), Andrej Babiš (Minister of Finance), ANO (m), Pavel Bělobrádek (Minister of Science), Blesk (n), Block Against Islam (m), Pirate Party, Milan Chovanec (Minister of the Interior), Social Democratic Party, ČT24 (n), Echo24 (n), Jiří Dienstbier (Minister for Human rights), Referendum (n), European Commission CR, European Values, Generation Identity, Hate Free Culture, Freedom and Direct Democracy, iDNES (n), Hospodářské noviny (n), Miroslav Lidinský (p), Stop Islam in Czech Republic (m), Jana Černochová (p), Marian Jurečka (p), Miroslav Kalousek (p), Christian and Democratic Union (m), Martin Konvička (p), Communist Party, Lidové noviny (n), Lubomír Zaorálek (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Michaela

Marksová-Tominová (Minister of Social Affairs), NO to Brussels—National Democracy (m), Svatopluk Němeček (Minister of Health), Novinky (n), Civic Democratic Party, Parlamentní Listy (n), Petr Fiala (p), Pravý břeh (n), Miloš Zeman (President), Czech Radio—Radiožurnál (n), Reflex (n), Karla Šlechtová (Minister of Regional Development), Bohuslav Sobotka (Prime Minister), Green Party, Pavel Svoboda (p), Free Citizens' Party, Tomio Okamura (p), Tomáš Zdechovský (p), TOP 09 (m), TV Noe (n), Respekt (n), Kateřina Valachová (Minister of Education)

Note: For clarity, we have translated the Facebook pages' names into English wherever possible (e.g., Green Party) or labelled these pages according to the following key: (n) = news media, (m) = political movement or party, (p) = individual politician. In specific cases, we provide a full description of the page in parentheses.

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# Moving the Mainstream: Radicalization of Political Language in the German PEGIDA Movement

*Andreas Önnorfors*

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary political climate, linguistic framings of political challenges and approaches to their solutions are undergoing a profound transformation. Multiple financial crises, geopolitical conflicts, neo-authoritarian styles of rule, ongoing migrations from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the continuing inability of transnational political institutions like the European Union (EU) to agree upon appropriate responses have put pressure on the previously positive and universalist momentum of the European integration project. Although key EU concepts have shaped mainstream political language and agendas for more than two decades, since about 2010 right-wing populist parties and their agendas of national particularism have attracted a growing proportion of European voters (Hellström 2016). In Hungary and Poland, normative agreement on such concepts as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights appears to have been derailed, and the new ‘right-wing speak’ emerging in Poland has even received its own name, *PiSomowa* (Thielemann 2016: 75; for

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similar German studies, see Scharloth 2017). Even in open societies with a long history of democracy, phenomena like the rhetoric around Brexit, the Greek financial crisis, and the 2016 presidential election in the USA are the outcome of a toxic mix of increasing xenophobia, diffuse emotions of indignation and disempowerment, conspiracy narratives, over-belief in the legitimacy of short-term populist decision-making, and deep scepticism towards the capacity of traditional elites to safeguard core societal interests (Hofstadter 1964; Thompson 2016: 16–17; Wodak 2015). This process would not have been possible without profound cognitive changes allowing the fact-resistant acceptance of ‘post-truth’ positions, which are in turn mirrored linguistically, rhetorically, and semantically.

This chapter investigates to what extent the political language of the German ‘right-wing populist movement of indignation’, PEGIDA (*Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* [Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident]), can be interpreted as an expression of radicalization and how it contributes to moving mainstream societal positions steadily to the right (Bitzan 2017: 67, 71; Vorländer et al. 2016: 139). PEGIDA was established in November 2014, and its first 12 months constitute the main time frame of my study. In November 2015, I conducted a field trip to Dresden and other places in Germany to gather information and to connect with supporters of PEGIDA. The movement is notorious for its rejection of media and other representatives of the ‘system’ (such as academic researchers), which makes it a challenge for an ‘etic’ outsider to penetrate the sphere of ‘emic’ insiders (Lett 1990: 130); however, within the movement, Sebastian Hennig’s *Pegida—Spaziergänge über den Horizont, Eine Chronik* (Pegida—Walks across the horizon. A chronicle; 2015) was constantly proclaimed to tell the truth.<sup>1</sup> Considering the book is written by an acknowledged representative insider, it (together with other material and observations) is the main empirical focus of this chapter. A close reading allows us fresh and direct insights into how followers of PEGIDA linguistically construct and defend their radicalized worldviews.

To achieve this overarching aim I introduce the field with a sort of a meta-study: a substantial survey of the existing studies, which are mainly available only in German and are generally quantitative in nature. My qualitative approach concerns the semantics of political language in the contemporary right-wing spectrum, but to place PEGIDA in its proper context, I begin by summarizing Salzborn’s (2016) recent overview of the historical development of the German ‘new right’. I then turn to Wodak,



who has devoted significant effort to studying political semantics using methods from critical discourse analysis. Wodak's (2015) proposed framing model using eight elements to analyse right-wing populist rhetoric is applied in this chapter, and previous studies of PEGIDA conducted primarily by a team of political sociologists at the Dresden University of Technology (TU Dresden; Vorländer et al. 2016) are cited extensively. In the conclusion, I argue that PEGIDA clearly operates using the typical right-wing 'rhetoric of fear' proposed in Wodak's model and thus contributes to the radicalization of political language by continually pushing the mainstream to adopt and normalize positions previously excluded from societal consensus. Radicalization in PEGIDA expresses itself through an intricate interplay between cognitive and behavioural dimensions, manifested not least by an online–offline dynamic that reinforces the idea of radical societal change and legitimizes the actions necessary to achieve it.

### 'RECHTSRUCK': PEGIDA AND THE CONTEMPORARY RISE OF THE GERMAN NEW RIGHT

Started in autumn 2014 as an online initiative among Facebook friends in and around Dresden in eastern Germany, PEGIDA managed at its peak to mobilize up to 25,000 people each week to go offline and onto the streets of the 'Florence of the North'. The movement has continuously exploited popular disaffection with current political affairs in Germany. Between 2014 and 2016, around 20 or 30 sister organizations and offshoots surfaced around Germany, establishing 'chapters' across Europe and even as far as Canada (Önnerfors 2016a: 9). PEGIDA nurtures its activism from a paranoid perception that 'the system' of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and its mainstream media—or rather 'Lügenpresse' (the 'Press of Lies' or 'Media Liars', a concept that became prominent even in and beyond the 2016 presidential election campaign in the USA)—controls the political discourse and creates a hegemonic 'system language'.<sup>2</sup> The system therefore suppresses or manipulates the truth and certain issues become impossible to express. Drawing momentum from East German experiences of the use of language during the German Democratic Republic or pan-German memories and perceptions of Nazi propaganda, PEGIDA claims to represent a forum for articulating and verbalizing the truth. As we will see, PEGIDA is engaged in different forms of 'language games' in which concepts, slogans, and terms agglomerate in a 'word cloud' of sometimes conflicting meanings (Wittgenstein 1953). The sig-

nificance of these language games, however, reaches beyond mere semantics; it is embedded in performative acts such as the PEGIDA rallies and their use of an intricate dynamic between online and offline activism, a feature also addressed in on the polarization of the Czech media landscape (Sisler and Slerka).

I argue that the rise of the PEGIDA movement since 2014 illustrates the growing radicalization of political language in Germany, undercutting the mainstream and moving it farther to the right. Dani Filc's chapter on political radicalization in Israel demonstrates how such a process comes to affect politics at the governmental level. And, as reflected by the activities of Hindu nationalist organizations in India described in Sarbeswar Sahoo's chapter, PEGIDA also questions well-established claims of the positive impact of civil society actors in political communities (Geiges et al. 2015: 179–185; Önnerrfors 2016b: 7–10). Changed language and the re-semanticization of political terms are used to discuss key political areas like resource generation and allocation, representation in decision-making processes, and identity concepts related to these areas. However, this *Rechtsruck*, as the shift to the right is called in German (or *droitisation* in French), is ambiguous since the language used at PEGIDA rallies and in its online presence does not coalesce in a coherent ideology. Rather, it diffuses into a contradictory word cloud of expressions and concepts that are difficult to position on the traditional left–right spectrum. Thus, it appears that a radicalized anti-democratic body of thought has arrived in the 'political centre', which has adopted extremist positions (Neu and Pokorny 2015: 3); sociological studies (Vorländer et al. 2016) confirm that the supporters of PEGIDA are located in that same segment of the political spectrum.

Political scientist Samuel Salzborn (2016) recently made the case that right-wing extremism in Germany has undergone considerable change. The right-wing party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) has, since its emergence in 2013, entered several local state parliaments with double-digit electoral support. Although the AfD has fundamentally influenced the political landscape in Germany, it will not constitute a point of reference for this chapter. According to Salzborn, PEGIDA 'represents a new type of public action in terms of social movements' (36). Institutions like the *Bibliothek des Konservatismus* ('Library of Conservatism'), the quasi-academic *Institut für Staatspolitik* (IfS, Institute for State Politics), and the journal *Sezession* have developed momentum. The nationalist and conservative weekly *Junge Freiheit* has increased its print run since 2008 by

almost 80% to a total of 30,000 copies (Friedrich 2016: 29). If these changes reflect transformations at the level of ideas, there has also been a measurable increase in Germany of xenophobic attacks and new forms of political violence and terrorism originating in the far right. Between 1999 and 2014, the right-wing terrorist group *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* (NSU, National Socialist Underground) carried out a series of racially motivated murders (Köttig 2017; McGowan 2014). In spring 2016, a right-wing terrorist group was disrupted in Freital close to Dresden. In autumn 2016, one policeman was killed and several were wounded during a shootout with a member of the so-called *Reichsbürgerbewegung* (Movement of the Citizens of the ‘Reich’). The movement denies the legal existence of the modern FRG and wraps itself in a fact-resistant, conspiracist worldview that the Third Reich still legally exists. The German ‘New Right’ appears to re-shape itself in far-reaching ways. It gears up for a serious radicalization of politics in post-unification Germany, where the threshold to political violence has been significantly lowered.

Tamir Bar-On (2014), a leading scholar on the *nouvelle droite* (ND, new right) that originated in the writings of Alain de Benoist, has described ND ideology as a blend of Weimar conservatism (e.g., the ideas of Carl Schmitt) and the political or revolutionary activism of the ‘1968 generation’ of protesters. Bar-On argues that ND intellectuals challenge the traditional right–left political division and seek to prepare the ground for an alternative modernity with re-sacralized politics beyond neo-liberalism and socialist paternalism. They adopt quasi-fascist features in their radical promotion of ideas of national preference (10). Salzborn notes (2016: 37) that the German ND has established new media outlets in the ND-spectrum, developed ‘novel forms of action and agitation’ and now has a political arm through the AfD. The party formally dissociates itself from (neo-) Nazism, but clearly draws upon a protectionist, ‘organic, ultranationalist and populist conception of the nation with welfare chauvinism privileging ethnic nationals above “foreigners”’. It also plays the anti-system, anti-capitalist card that was formerly reserved for the political left (Bar-On 2014: 12), a development anticipated by political philosophers such as Žižek and Mouffe.

What we witness today, argues Salzborn, is a struggle for ‘right-wing cultural hegemony, an attempt to achieve influence in the pre-political sphere’, or meta-politics, and ultimately a ‘conservative cultural revolution’. Its main aim is to intellectualize right-wing extremism and ‘to take

control of public debates, shaping them on a theoretical meta-level by coining particular ideas, terms and meanings' (2016: 38). These positions are infused by ethno-nationalism and 'residues of fascist ideology in its call for cultural regeneration' (Griffin, quoted in Salzborn 2016: 38). The ND aspiration of meta-political hegemony tries, however, to avoid more traditional political means of representation, such as parliamentary party politics. Its orientation 'towards influencing attitudes and value judgements on a wider social level' (38) clearly includes its ambition to assume the prerogative of interpreting key policy areas and thus key concepts in the political discourse. This is why studying the linguistic dimensions of protest expressed by PEGIDA matters.

According to Salzborn, the failure of previous nationalist parties on federal and state levels in Germany prompted the German ND to adapt forms of activism to prepare a larger acceptance of right-wing positions. The strategy of political mimicry was adopted, copying 'the terminology and strategies of political opponents and work[ing] them into one's own public discourse in a camouflaged way' (Salzborn 2016: 39), overlapping, for example, with leftist environmentalist, anti-capitalist, anti-US, and anti-NATO positions. The concept of 'ethno-differentialism', that ethnic inequality is an organic and natural matter of fact, is an attempt to rebrand outright racist positions. It has led the ND to develop an 'ethnopluralist' vision of Europe, in which each ethnic community fulfils its destiny best within well-defined national borders—a return to late-nineteenth century positions. Its anti-universalism is not, however, (yet) aggressively supremacist, exclusionary, or expansionist (as in Nazi ideology), but it does promote the ideal of sociobiological segregation, 'a strict spatial separation and geopolitical division of people according to ethnic and cultural criteria' (Salzborn 2016: 41). Thus, the ND promotes an idea of people based not as subjective individuals, nor as egalitarian individual rights-holders in the liberal tradition (which, of course, it rejects), but as members of presumed collective ethnic and mono-cultural identities. Yet, the concept of 'identity' is very vaguely defined, although it has been adopted as the battle cry of the violent vanguard of the ND, the 'identitarian movement' (Blum 2017).

Identity formation requires dichotomy and demarcation between oneself and an 'other', which has led the ND, and particularly its identitarian spearhead, to adopt and promote aggressive images of enemies such as 'foreigners', 'multi-culturalists', 'corrupt elites', and the generation of the 1968 protesters. Concepts of ethnic nationalism combined with

authoritarian (post-democratic) statism are prevalent. Salzborn also notes that ND discourse is frequently infused with esoteric spirituality and religion. However, on the European level it is possible to differentiate between a (quasi-) Christian, mostly Catholic or Orthodox, phalanx and a more pagan/secular wing. In PEGIDA, for instance, most supporters are non-religious, but display Christian symbols to protest the presumed ‘Islamization’ of Europe.

Salzborn claims that conservative post-unification governmental policies in Germany during the 1990s opened ‘the door to mainstream politics for New Right positions’ (2016: 42–45). The ND managed to influence societal discourse on a few occasions and exploited social milieus that could act as a bridge between more extremist and mainstream political arenas. Although these initiatives lost momentum for a decade or so, its new rise has characterized the political landscape of Germany since about 2010, following two strategies: intellectualization through extra-parliamentary meta-politics and achieving cultural hegemony, ‘no matter how’ (Salzborn 2016: 46). The intellectualization paradigm has resulted in the creation of new institutions and publications. One of the key players in this development is Götz Kubitschek (a former officer in the German armed forces), who headed the IfS, the journal *Sezession*, and the publishing house Edition Antaios. Kubitschek, whom I visited and interviewed in the autumn of 2015, has close ties to PEGIDA and is presented more extensively below. Salzborn (2016: 49) holds that the editorial policy of *Sezession* propagates a ‘re-sacralization of politics’ in the spirit of Carl Schmitt (Falk 2014). Since the terrorist attacks on the USA in September 2001, contemporary geopolitics seem to be in an *Ausnahmezustand*, a state of emergency, and conservative strategies of resistance and revolution have received renewed momentum.

The formation of PEGIDA is considered a ‘second step’ in the intellectualization strategy, tapping into the legacy of social activism and traditional mass movements. PEGIDA, Salzborn claims (2016: 50), ‘functions as a propaganda tool against immigration and encourage[es] *völkisch* nationalism, also with enormous media effectiveness, [because] Pegida demonstrations are staged as large-scale events’. These demonstrations are organized every week. PEGIDA activists initially refused to talk to journalists and academics because of their conspiracy theory that media and academia represent the ‘system’ and that mainstream media are liars (*Lügenpresse*). Even if ‘Pegida is a movement generally characterized by racism and conspiracy fantasies’, Salzborn argues (2016: 52), ‘it is

nonetheless a very heterogeneous one, uniting many different right-wing sectors'. It is, as we will see, this heterogeneity that characterizes the diffuse word cloud of concepts under which PEGIDA unites.

Salzborn (2016: 58–59) cautions against reading too much into the appearance of ND positions in Germany as a new reality and points to their relatively marginal impact. Yet the contemporary German ND has illustrated its ability to 'directly initiate social movements' such as PEGIDA, through which 'a public channel has been created that can open perspectives for a quantitative expansion of efforts to encourage the acceptance of New Right positions'. The electoral success of the AfD is further proof of its momentum. Against the background of the contemporary rise of the German ND, PEGIDA appears to be no exception. However, Salzborn's overview provides no consistent explanations for why Dresden and its surroundings, located as they are in the eastern part of Germany, are a hotbed of German ND support. As it will emerge, *Ostalgie* ('ostalgia', a persistent irrational longing for the political institutions and culture of the GDR) is also part of the indignation exploited by PEGIDA.

#### ANALYSING POLITICAL LANGUAGE ON THE DISCURSIVE LEVEL: A MODEL

Given that PEGIDA contributes to a re-semanticization of key political terms, it is a historical irony that Dresden was the place where Viktor Klemperer (1881–1960) wrote his influential Philologist's Notebook (Klemperer 2006) in which he recorded the linguistic transformation of the language of the Third Reich, or 'Lingua Tertii Imperii' (*LTI—Tagebuch eines Philologen*, 1946). His account is a documentary of how a political system adopts a certain terminology, which structures patterns of thought and everyday actions alike.

In an appendix to *1984*, George Orwell outlined the principles of 'Newspeak', the official language of his imaginary totalitarian dystopia Oceania, 'devised to meet the ideological needs' of its ruling party dictatorship. With Newspeak, 'world-views and mental habits proper to the devotees' of the ruling party were expressed and 'all other modes of thought impossible [...] at least as far as thoughts are dependent on words' (1989 [1949]: 312) In Orwell's novel, this was done, for example, by inventing words to impose new understandings. The relationship

between language and politics has been studied in political philosophy since the days of Plato, who regarded political rhetoric as a populist shadow play. It has received new momentum since the second post-structuralist ‘linguistic turn’, spearheaded by theoreticians like Butler, Foucault, and Bourdieu. Essentially, the assumption is that reality is mainly constituted through language and that power over language or the ‘discourse’ is identical to political power. The ND-approach to influencing meta-politics makes sense from this perspective, since it is about to conquer the post-material, symbolical levels of politics. Bourdieu and Wittgenstein stress the performative aspects of language (‘speech acts’ or ‘language games’) in which concepts do not necessarily need to be clearly defined linguistically to assume meaning. In the case of PEGIDA, slogans, catchwords, set phrases, and concepts (fuzzy in their actual content) and their performance offline (at rallies) and online (through Facebook, YouTube, and other social media) are intrinsically tied to and reinforce each other.

A linguistic approach to the Newspeak of the European far right has been boosted by new methods in analytical and applied linguistics. Ruth Wodak has conducted several studies on the language of European right-wing populism (e.g., Wodak 2015), arguing that its discursive strategies underpin a ‘politics of fear’. These right-wing populist discourses aim mainly to create and instrumentalize scapegoats among minorities and to legitimize the politics of exclusion. Wodak claims that we live in ‘media democracies’, where media performance of politics is more important than traditional participation in decision-making (10). Geared to gain attention in the media, the agenda is set and disseminated through provocation and scandalization. Several elements commonly recur in right-wing populist linguistic strategies (Table 4.1).

According to Wodak (2015: 10–11) right-wing populism differs from traditional fascist movements in that ‘it does not convey a coherent narrative’, but rather promotes a contradictory conglomerate of ‘beliefs, stereotypes, attitudes’, which attract and mobilize different and incoherent ‘segments of the electorate’.

Taking these approaches together, it is obvious that far-right discourses in Europe share common traits. And exploration of voices from inside PEGIDA promises to reveal their awareness of language and the terms by which formerly radical positions are normalized and moved into the mainstream. In this chapter, Wodak’s eight elements of right-wing rhetoric will be adopted in a framing model in the analysis of PEGIDA positions.

**Table 4.1** Elements of right-wing populist rhetoric (adapted from Wodak 2015)

(1) Representing ‘the people’/the traditional body politic and using the metaphor of family	Revisionist view of history, rhetoric of exclusion, xenophobic dichotomy between a nativist ‘we’ and a foreign ‘them’
(2) Diffuse political style	Polysemous political images that can relate to various ideologies, not only one (compare with ND)
(3) New social divides	Cutting across the left/right divide (compare with ND), for instance, critique of elites
(4) Performance strategies	Adapted to media democracies and online–offline dynamics
(5) Personification and commodification	Focus on charismatic leaders
(6) Frontstage performance	Celebrity culture, context-dependent appearances and performances
(7) Anti-intellectualism	Arrogance of ignorance, return to pre-enlightenment positions
(8) Pseudo-emancipatory gender politics	Adopted for (Islamophobic) exclusionary purposes

## PEGIDA ON THE STREETS: SOCIOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

The leading PEGIDA researchers, Hans Vorländer of TU Dresden and his team, diligently followed and observed the movement from October 2014 to June 2015 and published the first meta-study on the movement in 2016. Because their work has not received appropriate attention in anglophone research, it deserves extensive presentation here. Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller assembled and sampled the outcomes of all empirical studies into PEGIDA at the time and compared them with the findings of established research into right-wing extremism, populism, and political culture.<sup>3</sup>

PEGIDA was established on Facebook in the autumn of 2014 among a small circle of friends in Dresden and within weeks developed into a protest movement. Between October 2014 and January 2015, participation in the demonstrations grew almost exponentially to 25,000. As a rule, the events in Dresden were composed of three parts: (1) a stationary opening rally, followed by (2) the ‘evening walk’, which was concluded by (3) a final stationary rally. The rallies were marked by speeches and addresses, and powerful dynamic was frequently developed between speaker and audience when the latter interjected a variety of chants like ‘We are the people’, ‘Media Liars’ (*Lügenpresse*), and (surprisingly frequently, and in



English) ‘Ami, go home!’ (Vorländer et al. 2016: 49). During the rallies and walks a great many banners and signboards with different, sometimes conflicting, slogans were exhibited (50–1). Pegidistas also carried various flags that assumed increasing meaning. Apart from the German national flag, those of Israel, France, Ukraine, and most notably Russia have been displayed, as well as German regional flags (from both existing areas and those of older periods of German history) and lambda banners from the identitarian movement. The intensified use of the so-called ‘Wirmer’ flag, a national flag designed during the Nazi resistance and appropriated and reinterpreted by the German ND, is particularly charged. This flag places the German colours of black, red, and gold in an arrangement like that of the Norwegian flag. It has increasingly become a symbol of PEGIDA, insinuating that the current political system of Germany can be compared to a totalitarian state and that supporting PEGIDA is an act of resistance (51–2). As a closing ritual during the second rally of the evening, if it was dark enough, participants would raise their mobile phone flashlights or lighters ‘to let the politicians see daylight’, and end with (or substitute on summer evenings) singing the German national anthem (47).<sup>4</sup>

Following an organizational split in early 2015, attendance at the Monday ‘evening walks’ dropped dramatically and has since stabilized at around a few thousand. It should be noted here that one of the splinter groups called itself ‘Direct Democracy for Europe’, expressing a claim to direct participation in decision-making that is also found in the PEGIDA position papers. Counting the crowds became a battlefield of interpretation between the movement itself, the authorities, and researchers (8).<sup>5</sup> These protests, moving offline beyond the online community of social media and taking to the streets with action, had two unifying and recurring themes: (1) ‘diffuse and critical, partly aggressive resentments articulated against Muslims, asylum-seekers and refugees’, and (2) ‘[resentments] against elites in politics and media of the Federal Republic’ (137). Media attention amplified the impact of the movement, not least because of empirically ungrounded assumptions related to the background and agenda of the Pegidistas, which fuelled anger among the local population.<sup>6</sup> Vorländer and his co-authors discuss ‘an enormous polarization of the discourse, a systematic classification’ of ‘understanders’ (*Versteher*) and adversaries splitting the media and online debates (21).

At the zenith of its present development, at the turn of the year 2014 to 2015, most sympathizers could not clearly be characterized as right-wing extremists, Islamophobes, or xenophobes, as was the recurrent

spontaneous conjecture of media and political commentators. Only about a third of the ‘evening walkers’ displayed diffuse xenophobic sentiments and attitudes. Instead, most were fundamentally critical of the politics, media, and type of representative democracy in the FRG (138). The name of the movement, Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization of the Occident, however, still signals an ideological ‘line of attack’ (31). Lutz Bachmann, the main initiator of PEGIDA, also became the main speaker at its events.<sup>7</sup> Points raised in his addresses are consistent with the ‘19 theses of PEGIDA’, first published in December 2014 and condensed to 10 in February 2015.<sup>8</sup> It is possible to discern in the talks at the rallies a focus on ‘Islamization’ combined with harsh critiques of the media and the political establishment.

On April 13, 2015, the Dutch right-wing populist Geert Wilders was invited to Dresden as a keynote speaker, creating a link to the counter-Jihadist political milieu in Europe. According to Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller, a bridge to the ‘identitarian movement’ was built through repeated appearances by Götz Kubitschek, representative of the German ND. Tatjana Festerling, an unsuccessful PEGIDA candidate in the 2015 mayoral election in Dresden, condemned the political-cultural establishment for its ‘political correctness’, for being engaged in ‘phantasies of self-extinction’, and for allowing a radical ‘socialist-queer-sexual’ minority lobby to traumatize German school children with ‘gender-mainstreaming’ and early sex education (34). These and other denounced policies were used justify calling for re-erecting a wall between the ‘patriotic East’ and the ‘Green Empire’ of the West. The February 2015 split in PEGIDA’s organizational team over ideological and personal issues negatively impacted their public support. Until the end of July 2015 their rallies drew only a few thousand people, except for the April appearance of Dutch populist Geert Wilders, who drew about 10,000. Although the PEGIDA candidate Tatjana Festerling lost the Dresden mayoral election, her almost 10% support among the electorate could be considered a success. It seems that PEGIDA aimed to transform itself from a movement into a political initiative with its own candidates in elections, undermining its cooperation with the German protest party AfD (39–46). Ongoing fragmentation of PEGIDA’s leadership and participants prompted a considerable and measurable move to the right among its remaining sympathizers.

Initially, media and political commentators assumed that support for PEGIDA was strongest in those with little or no income, structurally excluded from the labour market and with little prospects for the future.

However, repeated socio-demographic empirical studies have concluded that this is not the case. Instead, its largest foothold is found among ‘the middle-class of Dresden and Saxony and its fragile segments’, predominantly male, aged between 30 and 60, employed (or self-employed), and with relatively high levels of income and education. Having a final degree in natural sciences or engineering is remarkably frequent. Another significant uniting feature is a lack of religious and party affiliations. Most Pegidistas, however, show direct support for the German protest party AfD (53, 57, 61, 63, 138). Surprisingly, the concepts expressed by the overtly anti-Islamist name of the movement were not given by supporters as their motives for protest. The main reason was ‘a general sense of distance between politicians and people’ on par with ‘discontent with asylum politics’, followed by ‘discontent with media coverage’ and ‘discontent with the political system of the German Federal Republic’. Considerably lower ranked was ‘discontent with migration and integration politics’, and the lowest was ‘reservations against Islam’ (67). Thus, it appears that the perceived divide between rulers and ruled has led to a deep sense of alienation that has been catalysed by the more recent cluster of issues concerning the ‘other’: migration, refugees, and asylum politics.

Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller have recently and thoroughly investigated the measured affinity of PEGIDA sympathizers to a set of three broad indicators: (1) Islamophobia, (2) right-wing extremism (subdivided into xenophobia, nationalism, and ethnocentrism), and (3) attitudes towards politics, media, and democracy (subdivided into critiques of democracy and media, political deprivation and alienation, authoritarianism, and populism). I can point only briefly to some of their findings here. Although Islamophobia is a central element of right-wing extremist and populist orientations (73), and positions critical of, or even hostile to, Islam are prevalent among Pegidistas, the authors conclude that their abstract fear of ‘cultural dispossession’ leads to their using of Muslims mainly as a screen upon which to project their rejection of ‘the Foreign’ (80). Right-wing extremist positions are conventionally described in German research along six dimensions: (1) affinity with dictatorship, (2) nationalism/chauvinism, (3) belittlement of National Socialism, (4) xenophobia, (5) anti-Semitism, and (6) social Darwinism (81). Among PEGIDA sympathizers these factors are not conclusively representative and do not allow a clear-cut categorization of the movement as far right. However, it is obvious that PEGIDA sympathizers are frustrated with the current political system and clearly lack trust in the democratic

decision-making structure. They employ simplified understandings of democratic representation, fuelled by their experiences of the authoritarian system of the GDR, and ‘the technical intelligence of academics trained in natural sciences and engineering [... and] frequently socialized in the former GDR, which judges political processes according to the stringent dualisms of “right and wrong”, “causes and effects”, and “problems and solutions”’ (111).<sup>9</sup>

The media is a particular target of PEGIDA sympathizers, revealing a deep and potentially irreconcilable crisis of confidence. Not only are media representatives vilified as ‘liars’, but the media is identified as entangled with the rule of a political elite and branded as ‘system media’, a term very close to the pejorative term ‘mainstream media’ prevalent in contemporary right-wing discourse. The media is thus no longer perceived as integral to a deliberative democracy, where it occupies an official place as a forum for public opinion. Instead it is suspected of manipulation and conscious disinformation, which was proved for the Pegidistas by initial negative reports of their protests and several ‘cover-ups’ they assert were undertaken by the media in relation to policy areas relevant to PEGIDA’s agenda. This all plays into political alienation and weakens the concept of democracy in a substantial part of the electorate that feels disempowered and disconnected from important decisions. Right-wing populism has arrived in the well-educated and well-off camps of the German middle classes, who are increasingly asking identity questions and displaying anxieties about their loss of economic status, political influence, security, and cultural belonging. These processes appear accelerated in a generation that already has experienced a major systemic change as a formative (and not necessarily successful) event in their life stories (117).

The sort of populism promoted by PEGIDA might best be characterized as ‘identity populism’, emphasizing a certain identity (perceived as traditional) and tending to devalue the ‘Other’ through the ‘radicalization and essentialisation of [one’s] own cultural belonging’ (127–8 and sources quoted therein). Traditionally, populist positions pursue single-issue politics, whereas identity politics have larger ramifications. Another difference between PEGIDA and conventional populist movements is the absence of a clear leader. Despite Bachmann’s important coordinating role, the choir of voices in PEGIDA is rather polyphonic and presents no clear soundscape: ‘populist phenomena and elements of ideology can develop public potency without being ignited by demagogic figures’ (128). Without spelling it out, this is of course very close to the contemporary concept of ‘lead-

erlessness' promoted in both left- and right-wing movements. PEGIDA's populism displays 'a political mentality in which defensive solidification-processes of existing conservative-ethnocentric and historic-regressive orientations are expressed and are positioned against perceived threats [to one's] own cultural identity' (128).

This sense of threat, desire for self-defence, and feeling of disempowered victimization was furthered by societal transformations over the last 20 years: the opening of borders, the digital revolution, economic globalization, and the acceleration of changes caused by globalization. These factors attained a new dimension through mass migrations that catalysed the experience of alienation. Thus, the crisis of representative democracy is evident on three levels: (1) representative decision-making processes appear too complex (fuelling expectations of direct democracy as a universal remedy); (2) globalization undermines the logic of territorially fixed power through national jurisdictions; and (3) the media has succumbed to a 'dramaturgy of the visual'. As the authors put it, 'uncoupling democracy as a representative political system of decision-making and democracy as societal way of life' might explain the dynamics involved in the mobilization of PEGIDA (130–1). A great part of the electorate is thus exposed to political actors who fill a real or imagined void with attractive propositions. All these developments are enhanced by undigested East–West biases in Germany and a profound lack of mutual trust.

A central motive behind the 2014 formation of PEGIDA was a remarkable combination of global, national, and local events. Religiously motivated violence by IS/Daesh in Syria and Iraq exacerbated tensions and ignited violence among groups of immigrants in Germany, particularly between Kurds, Yazidis, Arab Christians, and Muslims from regions affected by the conflict. On the very local level, in and around Dresden, plans to house and help refugees and asylum seekers from these regions (and other conflict zones) provoked resistance. At all levels focal points arose around which 'various motives of indignation could be attached and mobilized' (138). One set of motives circled around nationalist and xenophobic resentments; another set released anger against political and medial elites. These emotions, now erupting in public during the 'evening walks', were less substantiated by socio-economic anxieties than by 'diffuse fears of *cultural dispossession* [*kulturelle Enteignung*]' (139). Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller define the feeling of 'cultural dispossession' as the fear of losing traditional, regional, or national identity to Islam and perceived 'Islamization'. Critiques of and hostility towards another religion did,

however, act to ‘locate [and ignite] indignation against badly communicated and organized asylum politics and immediate close-range concerns’ on the level of principal issues (139). Thus, gates were opened through which a host of different frustrations and disappointments could be publicly staged.

The authors conclude that it is difficult to classify PEGIDA along the lines of conventional research into new social/protest movements. Conventionally, twenty-first-century grassroots movements pursue single progressive issues or stage themed protests such as the Occupy and Attac demonstrations, or at various international political and economic summits. PEGIDA has been characterized as representing the ‘dirty side of civil society’, referring to its perceived misanthropic agenda (139 and sources quoted therein). The combination of high emotionality, confrontational attitudes, open indignation, and successful communications in prominent squares and streets creates a protest movement of a new kind, a ‘right-wing populist indignation movement’ (139). The quality of ‘indignation’ has hitherto been reserved to characterize left-wing movements such as Occupy or the Spanish anti-austerity movement *Indignados* (carrying righteous anger already in its name). An important feature of these and other contemporary movements is the interplay between online and offline mobilization their occupation of both virtual and real space. PEGIDA, according to Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller, first became a mass movement through publicly staging its protest in the prominent and symbolic surroundings of Dresden, structuring the ‘evening walks’ along a recognizable ritual structure, and through its (almost weekly) repetition imbuing a sense of community in the participants. Like-mindedness was not created through a one-issue protest or by asking for clear proposals for solutions of political challenges, but instead through the display of collective anger and indignation, a ‘sentiment of “that-does-it!”’ (140).

The deeper causes of the success of mobilizing this right-wing populist indignation are located by the authors in the observable signs of disintegration of the democratic infrastructure in Germany (141). Political parties, worker’s unions, and civil society in general have failed in the long term to attract and to organize sizable parts of the electorate. ‘Established paths and procedures of democratic participation’ have increasingly run dry (141). Established institutions of democracy have, however, aligned with the immanent logic of media attention, attempting in real time to comment upon and react to immediate developments and events. In this state of ‘simulative democracy’ political actors withdraw from sustainable

arenas of engagement (141 and sources quoted therein), the divide between citizens and rulers deepens, and the democratic principle of congruent consent is undermined. These tendencies are amplified through the East German experience of transformation and its (ongoing) aftermath: ‘Simplified concepts of democratic decision-making as much as justified expectations [of] liberal democracy collided with experiences of societal and economic deprivation, consequently fuelling patterns of political disappointment’ (142). The political culture in Germany is—in the eyes of PEGIDA protesters—still coded with West German hegemonic references and causes a ‘collective sense of alienation’ and a ‘loss of the prerogative of interpretation (*Deutungshoheit*)’, which undermine their trust in the societal elites of the ‘Berlin Republic’ (142).

Finally, Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller attempt to outline why PEGIDA was established in Saxony in general and Dresden in particular, and they do not conceal the speculative character of their assumptions. On empirical grounds, it is possible to refute the idea of latent xenophobia in this part of eastern Germany. However, the authors attribute to Saxony a sense of pride in its cultural and historical past, which even during the time of the GDR encouraged a distinct communal identity. After the ‘turn’ of 1990, Saxony was only the second of the German federal states (after Bavaria) to be named a ‘Free State’. Saxon pride was also enhanced by the accomplishments of the civil rights movement in the GDR to bring about political self-determination. All these factors might fuel a specific ‘ethno(cultural)-centrism’ or ‘Saxon chauvinism’ (144). Furthermore, Dresden itself ‘constitutes an impressive backdrop for demonstrations of all sorts’. On 13 February, the anniversary of the Allied bombing of the city, Dresden has regularly been the setting of European neo-Nazi rallies. Styling itself as the victim of political circumstances during two totalitarian regimes, it was possible, the authors argue, for Dresden to underplay the Nazi past of the city and to imagine ‘a nostalgic vision of the restoration of [Dresden’s] past [urban] beauty’ (144).<sup>10</sup> All these factors might explain why globalization, Islamist terrorism, and large migrations are interpreted in Dresden as immediate and amplified threats to a long-awaited state of normality, stability, and security in the city.

At the beginning of 2016 the authors, judging from the outcomes of empirical social research, speculated that PEGIDA might either fall into oblivion or function as a harbinger of future cultural and political conflicts of interpretation. As a ‘movement of indignation charged with populism’ PEGIDA is seen to be in a ‘pathological relation to democratic order’; it

can be interpreted as a threat to democracy or as a symptom of its degeneration. However, the movement can also be seen as a call to claim and redeem political goods. (145)

No matter the ultimate outcome, as Vorländer et al. concede, PEGIDA has already contributed to a dramatic change in the climate of political discourse in Germany: ‘Social media in particular display an alarming “normalization” of uninhibited xenophobic statements and aggressive denigration of the elites’ (146), or as stated elsewhere:

The radicalizing effect of xenophobic statements criticizing immigration and partly glorifying violence, expressed by many Internet users in the surroundings of the discursive congruence of PEGIDA’s Facebook page, generally speaking resulted in a ‘normalization’ of such positions in the discourse. (22)<sup>11</sup>

It is also possible to assert a link to the increasing level of attacks against asylum sites during the first six months of 2015. Thus, it seems that PEGIDA ‘willingly or unwillingly’ has contributed ‘to a discursive and political disinhibition’ (146). The results of Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller’s empirical studies demonstrate how, as a right-wing indignation movement, PEGIDA can play the role of a battering ram, fuelling the radicalization of political language, while also acting as a locomotive to which other political wagons can easily be connected, with potentially unpredictable consequences.

### STUDYING PEGIDA FROM INSIDE: HENNIG’S WALKS ACROSS THE HORIZON

With his book *Pegida—Spaziergänge über den Horizont, Eine Chronik* (2015) author and artist Sebastian Hennig provides a particular and complex insider account of the movement. Hennig (born 1972 in the former GDR) has converted to Islam, but in the autumn of 2014 was still attracted to the banner of anti-Islamization. He has contributed to the far-right Putinist mouthpiece, the journal *Compact*, and has more recently published several pieces in which he reflects upon the decay of contemporary German society. In his first-hand account of the movement up to September 2015, it is more interesting to consider his background and socialization in a particular East German mindset than to speculate about possible psychological motives. Against that East German backdrop, he



constantly evaluates events occurring around PEGIDA and the year of the ‘turn’ (*Die Wende*) 1989 becomes for him particularly symbolic. Hennig’s almost 200-page chronicle is introduced by a peculiar foreword worth analysis in its own right. Its author, Michael Beleites, was an environmental activist and campaigner during the time of the GDR and has studied agronomy, consulted with the Green Party, and worked with the Stasi Record Agency in Saxony.

Beleites refers to parallels between 1989 and 2014/2015: ‘Problems have accumulated, the dimension[s] of which cannot be expressed with the language regime of the prevalent political system’ (11). According to Beleites, legitimate concerns raised by PEGIDA were countered and stigmatized by the ‘consolidated’ press as Nazi sympathies. His use of ‘consolidated’ refers to the German term *gleichgeschaltet* (co-ordinated or forced to conform), immediately creating associations with the Nazi usurpation and rectification of parties, the press, and civil society. Beleites claims that the GDR civil rights movement in 1989 not has lost its legacy and its invocation is surprisingly fresh: ‘In our country, communication between state and society obviously is disturbed’ (11). The removal of taboos about discussing asylum politics had led to a split in German society, with only few instances of effort to create dialogue. It almost appeared to Beleites as if the ‘political[ly] correct German of the newspapers’ had invaded the discourse, but PEGIDA’s activism proved that wrong (12). The ruling system, he writes, is characterized by a ‘one-dimensional political system of coordinates’ where pressing issues cannot be discussed. Bias in German politics is promoted by ‘an education of the people’ through ‘language regimes’ where critiques of asylum politics are compared to a desire to re-open Auschwitz, the ‘biological fact of [the] geographic racial diversity of human beings’ is denounced as racism, and critics of a ‘parasitic economy’ are stigmatized because such positions also were expressed under the Nazis (14). People now recall the end of the GDR, when the absurdity of a similar situation evoked popular anger. No one believed the state and its media anymore (see also 166).

Beleites continues with an extensive discussion of the disadvantages of migration and interprets European generosity as cementing colonial patterns of behaviour. Population growth constitutes an ecological threat. Mass migration causes brain drain, uprooting, and alienation. The controversial Italian population geneticist Cavalli-Sforza claimed that moving people outside the ecosystem to which they are acclimatized goes against human nature. Since there is no standard climate, there can also be no

standard human being. This argument holds North America as a forceful example of migration leading only to a cultural abyss. Beleites claims that ‘it cannot be ignored that for many PEGIDA protesters the Islamization of the Occident [is] a lesser (and less acute) problem [than the] Americanization of Europe’ (18). The German studies on PEGIDA do not highlight its anti-American stance, but it is a recurring theme in Hennig’s book. Hennig frequently refers to the Anglo-American ‘destruction’ of Dresden in February 1945 and the urban reconstruction occasioned by this event (116–7). According to Beleites, current developments might lead to a re-cultivation of villages and small-scale agricultural production, a solution both for Germany and the countries from which migrants arrive. Quoting Islamic scholar Hossein Nasr, Beleites makes essentialist claims about Islam and all religious traditions, underscoring their principal incompatibility with secular values. He sees the current problem in Germany as one of representative democracy, the need to motivate people to stay in their countries of origin and to prepare migrants to Germany for their return to their origins. This problem cannot be addressed through language conforming to the system. Finally, Beleites refers to his own experience, when the falling GDR was a society in which many yearned for escape. However, the system fundamentally changed when those who cried ‘We want out!’ were drowned and outnumbered by those who chanted ‘We stay here!’ Beleites claims forcefully that, ‘not escape, but the determination to remain forced the despot to withdraw’ (22). The preface to Hennig’s book thus amalgamates eco-fundamentalism with anti-Americanism and essentialist assumptions about the natural order of races (and religions) within given climates and adapted to pre-existing preconditions. All these factors speak against migration. And legitimate concerns cannot be raised within the existing language norms imposed and preserved by ignorant power elites aiming at total control.

Throughout the book, Hennig refers to 1989 and the feeling that an original achievement of the GDR population became a victory for the FRG as an inherently alien enemy ‘system’. But although popular expressions of political will were basically neutralized during the transition, PEGIDA now appears to be a new power to count on, displaying non-compliance on the streets. This ties in to a history of resistance, ‘alert love of the homeland and individual moral courage’ already in place during the GDR. Parallels are made between local activism against uranium mining in 1989 and the lodging of asylum seekers in 2014 (29–30). As a (converted) Muslim himself, Hennig takes pains to justify the motto of PEGIDA, but

explains that the protests in 1989 were also unspecific. The terminology is directed rather against ‘isms’ of all kinds, it is there the true danger lies. Germany is exposed to the logics of externally heated conflicts and now has to balance the destabilization (caused by ‘colonial roguery’) in the Middle East and is forced to become involved in proxy wars (31). Hennig provides an affectionate portrait of Lutz Bachmann, a leading figure of PEGIDA (‘in his words the indignant voice of the people is articulated’), but also describes him to a certain degree as an anti-leader, cunningly improvising and allowing leeway for heterogeneity: ‘Why define clear goals in a confusing situation? It is more important first to leave the view open in order to recognize the situation’ (34, 183–84). Hennig is fascinated by the diversity and ‘cocktail’ character of the movement (‘The lamb grazes next to the lion’) and his comments on the variety of speakers and their respective topics (178) demonstrate a level of critical awareness, but also a degree of unsophistication.

A reader of his account cannot escape the impression that he underestimates the impact of extreme positions in some of the speeches. His own religious bias also seems to cause him to filter out, ridicule, or reduce the significance of clearly Islamophobic statements; this stands out in his comments on the guest appearance of Geert Wilders in April 2015, characterized by Hennig as ‘the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of PEGIDA’ (75, 91–3, 96, 147). A Coptic speaker is accused of ‘brewing [a myth] according to a Jewish-Zionist recipe’ related to the allegedly violent persecution of his minority by Islam. This is not the only passage in the book in which the reader may perceive that Hennig’s Muslim sympathies also incorporate latent anti-Israel or even anti-Semitic patterns of thought (see also 178). More important, Hennig contends in his conclusion that ‘sociologically speaking, Pegida is the middle German equivalent of the popular movement of the moderate Egyptian Muslim brotherhood’ (85). It would indeed be tempting to follow up on this statement.

Throughout the chronicle, Hennig is obsessed with the different flags displayed by participants of PEGIDA-protests: those of the old kingdom of Saxony, old and defunct provinces of the GDR such as Silesia, the ‘Spartan’ lambda flag of the Identitarians, and of course, the Wirmer flag of the German resistance (79, 133, 163, 173). Repeated and idyllic enthusiasm towards the public display of flags at mass rallies creates a forceful impression of persistent nostalgia. In general, Hennig’s book cements the impression that PEGIDA mobilizes elements of East German society and culture that have been buried in deeper layers of

consciousness over the last 25 years. For many people growing up in the GDR, the societal glue created by collective rituals is often idealized as a positive value, despite its ideological content. No wonder that standard bearers, chants, and public singing are elements that create ‘goose bumps’ (*Gänsehaut*) among the participants, as they often remark on the PEGIDA Facebook page.

Hennig’s chronicle suggests that the ambiguous anti-religious rhetoric of PEGIDA (at least when it comes to Islam) might have roots in the secular education of the GDR. As Vorländer and his team have demonstrated, most participants do not regard themselves as religious, generally dislike fundamentalist religious positions, but also embrace elements of Christianity that appear in German culture, such as singing Christmas carols, displaying a cross in the colours of Germany during rallies, and favouring a cross as a symbol on the ‘Wirmer’ flag, which supposedly originates from the conservative resistance movement against Hitler (45–6). Several times, Hennig praises the presence of young PEGIDA sympathizers, often hooligans and security functionaries of local soccer fan clubs, at the rallies: ‘Such a movement cannot be initiated without the virile power of youth. This was [the same] in 1813 as it was in 1989 or a quarter of a century later’ (53, 97). By 1813, Hennig refers to the anti-Napoleonic activism among German students, who formed militias to fight for the liberation of Germany. Their legacy is celebrated in the German and Austrian right-wing student fraternities, the *Burschenschaften*, which still exist today and have close ties to the German ND. Hennig explains that ‘the development from subversive riots directed against the state into a people’s movement critical of the government’ depends upon the ability of ordinary people to unite with the ‘radicals’ and ‘neutralize their potential for violence’ (53). Thus, violent radicalization is motivated and legitimated in so far as it is channelled into and contained within a larger popular movement of unrest.<sup>12</sup>

Hennig frequently notes anti-American sentiments voiced in PEGIDA. Individual speakers use conspiracist terms to condemn US warfare in the Middle East as a joint venture of IS/Daesh and the CIA and describe the Taliban and al-Qaeda as creations of the USA and the ultimately causes of the refugee problem. The USA is also denigrated as an occupying power: ‘Leave Germany, leave my fatherland!’ one speaker exclaims. Others chant ‘Ami, go home!’ (57 and a plethora of further references). This slogan, quoted frequently by Hennig, has a revealing conceptual history, since it was coined as an anti-American motto in the early

GDR, transported into the language of the 1968 protests against the Vietnam war, and later repurposed by the West German antiproliferation movement of the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

The chief conductor of the Dresden Staatskapelle orchestra, Christian Thielemann, an exceptionally high-profile representative of German cultural life, has argued in favour of tuning into the PEGIDA protesters. In an interview about the climate of the German discourse, he stated that, ‘for certain things we have only the choice between slogans and political correctness and have no differentiated language. To be able to speak and to listen belongs together. People do not listen anymore, which concerns me’ (66). Hennig draws a parallel between Thielemann and the actors of the Dresden theatre, who in 1989 stepped outside their roles to participate in the popular protest against the regime. By doing so, Hennig aims to appropriate the star conductor to the case of PEGIDA and thus to insinuate unity between cultural workers and protesters. Hennig also repeatedly states his satisfaction with what he perceives as support for PEGIDA from professor of political studies (also at TU Dresden), Werner Patzelt (e.g., 82–4).<sup>14</sup>

Hennig’s book is replete with references to ‘media liars’ (*Lügenpresse*): ‘Journalistic language has deteriorated into its very essence’, journalists are placed at the crossroads of their ‘indigenous’ readership, and ‘the demands of the quasi-religious democracy-fundamentalism of a leadership [of printing houses] almost exclusively originating from the old Federal Republic’ (77–8). Hennig cites Patzelt’s assertion that annoyance with media arises because ‘all discourses are West German discourses and spear-headed by West German elites’ (82). Apart from obvious pride in the civilian overthrow of the GDR regime, Hennig refers several times to speakers and positions expressing blatant ‘ostalgia’ such as reminiscing about GDR youth organizations or heavily idealizing its societal order (123, 145, 156, 162). One speaker is even able to incite crowds to join chants like ‘Our adversary is the Federal republic. We are the people! Our adversary is the society. We are the people!’ (125). Throughout Hennig’s book, the impression increases that the legitimate government of the federal republic is engaged in an assault against its own population, that democracy in reality is a *Demokratatur* (literally ‘democratorship’, a corruption of ‘democracy’ and ‘dictatorship’) (55). The spread of Islam on German soil is likened to the Christianization that occurred a millennium earlier and seen as a weapon of mass extinction. Tatjana Festerling suggests there is a ‘mass rape of European countries’ (147–8) and writes, ‘We don’t want to

become Indians [read: a persecuted indigenous minority] in our own country’, again evoking anti-American stereotypes of the GDR period (156).<sup>15</sup> More radically, in August 2015, Festerling stated, ‘The treatment of the asylum issue is a declaration of war [by] the political establishment against us’. If Germans only stood together, the entire ‘dump’ would collapse within a week. Festerling also appealed for a shopping boycott vaguely directed against the economic elites (167). Now, Festerling claimed, was the time to deport asylum seekers and to leave the EU, followed by chants from the crowd of ‘Deport, deport!’ and ‘Exit, exit!’ (169, 172, 173, 174). This is a standing topic in PEGIDA rhetoric: instead of ‘a functionalized Euro-bureaucracy’ the aim is to create ‘an organic Europe of fatherlands’ (53, 173). Hennig concludes his book with the thought, ‘In Dresden commences the salvation of the European spirit from the European Union and hope is nurtured for the peace that Germany has been awaiting since 1918’, thus questioning the legitimacy of the Versailles treaty (188). Time will show whether the movement will attempt to mobilize people to fight to the death. Only then will references to the resistance under the Nazis be proven right.

Although the book presents a personal account, there is no doubt that it is accepted as a testimonial of an insider. Its publication by a house with a host of dubious titles resonating well within the PEGIDA galaxy may be proof of this.<sup>16</sup> Taking Hennig’s argument altogether, he perhaps makes his most significant summary early on: ‘After nine months, PEGIDA has possibly not achieved anything, but [perhaps has] changed everything’, a sentence he must have included retrospectively during the summer of 2015 (37).

### THE PARANOID STYLE OF PEGIDA: RADICALIZING THE LANGUAGE OF THE MAINSTREAM

Paraphrasing Hofstadter, the last part of this chapter investigates how far the language used by PEGIDA accords with Wodak’s eight elements of right-wing populist rhetoric and thus promotes a radicalization of political semantics:

1. *Representing ‘the people’*. First, it is obvious that PEGIDA openly ties into the 1989 momentum of representing ‘the people’ to boost its legitimacy and identity. In this process, it exploits persistent emotions of nostalgia and hostility towards the ‘victorious system’ of

Western Germany, which it represents as a corrupt style of liberal democracy. The legacy of Western Germany is rejected as a false invention and alien imposition, originating as early as 1918 with the Treaty of Versailles. The underlying message is constructed around exclusion and a dichotomy between the nativist ‘we’ and a foreign ‘them’—an element that clearly also relates to the presumed split between the representatives and the (un-)represented, the elites and the electorate. Strong emotions are nurtured and exploited to impress upon followers that the political representation imposed by the West is defunct and that participation in existing decision-making processes is effectively perverted.

2. *Cultivating a diffuse political style.* PEGIDA actively promotes a diffuse political style without clearly identifiable ideological elements. On the contrary, and as Hennig repeatedly praises, the cacophony of voices symbolizes strength, as displayed in the symbolic and heterogeneous sea of flags at PEGIDA rallies. On the linguistic level, multiple polysemous political images are represented in PEGIDA, both for and against several causes such as support for Israel or Russia or various visions for the future of Germany (including the politics of conflicting memories).
3. *Exploiting new social divides.* PEGIDA exploits new social divides such as critiques of elites, fuelling across a broad spectrum of politics the idea that representation is disrupted and alienated from everyday aspects of life. Thus, societal resource allocation is pictured as in a state of grave decay, which enables the mobilization of traditional left-wing politics, such as conspiracist anti-globalism or environmentalism.
4. *Staging different performance strategies.* PEGIDA has developed a successful concept of performance strategies that places their message at the centre of media attention in new informational environments. Traditional street activism is mingled with an active social media presence, creating a mutually reinforcing and effective relationship between online and offline communications. Like many other contemporary right-wing initiatives (and more recently the Trump presidential campaign), PEGIDA exploits the potential of scandal, which in turn propels media attention.
5. *Branding through personification and commodification.* Lutz Bachmann, the unlikely frontman of PEGIDA, has developed a low-key style of reliable stubbornness. Thus, he presents himself as an

anti-leader rather than a charismatic ideologue; this is his brand: instead of high-gloss showmanship, he offers a pop-up economized activism that attracts through its unpretentiousness. With a down-scaled branding concept and few but significant symbols and symbolic actions, PEGIDA could attract a heterogeneous crowd representing a broad range from the centre and right of the political spectrum.

6. *Developing frontstage performance.* Despite its impromptu, do-it-yourself character, PEGIDA also references frontstage performances and medialized celebrity culture, placing the ‘common man’ in the centre of attention. Lutz Bachmann repeatedly described individual speakers with the laudatory phrase, ‘This is big, big cinema’ (Hennig 2015: 70, 115, 146, 184).
7. *Displaying anti-intellectualism.* PEGIDA expresses anti-intellectualism mainly through its criticism of the conventional and supposedly corrupted elites (such as journalists, academics, and intellectuals in general) of the FRG, whose authority is simply rejected on the conspiracist grounds that they represent the ‘system’ and thus by definition misrepresent the ‘truth’. Another element, however, observed only in Beleites’ preface to Hennig’s book, is a pseudo-scientific deep-ecological reading of world events, determined by biological and climatic factors and the idea that humans must submit to an alleged ‘natural order’.
8. *Nurturing pseudo-emancipatory gender politics.* In its first phase, PEGIDA clearly exploited pseudo-emancipatory gender politics for exclusionary purposes. The movement touted its anti-immigrant anti-Islamist agenda as means to protect (homo)sexualized and female bodies, thus reversing traditional right-wing body politics (which as a rule are heteronormative, male-dominated, and pro-life/anti-choice). However, in a later phase this position was abandoned. Tatjana Festerling, in particular, displayed virulent hatred against what in the German discourse has been called *Gender-Wahn*, the ‘gender delusion’ of sexual equality and tolerance thought to be ‘poisoning’ German children and adolescents.

As empirical studies have pointed out, these basic concepts forming the ‘brand’ of PEGIDA were not the major impetus for people to take to the streets of Dresden and other German cities in protest. Instead, indignation was (and is) created by other factors, mainly the substantial crisis of confi-



dence between politicians and citizens, rulers and ruled. This indignation is unpacked in a forceful critique of media and decision-making elites, further undermining trust and mutual understanding. The main area of policy under fire (and assumed by PEGIDA to be subject to cover-ups by opinion-makers and journalists) is migration in general and refugee and asylum policies in particular, especially since the Syrian civil war. The increased arrival of ‘foreign’ people to Germany also leads to the resurgence of an ongoing subliminal discussion about ‘culture’—rather than ‘religion’, which is regarded as a subset because most sympathizers neither consider themselves religious nor express religious motives for their activism.

A clear *leitmotif* of indignation emerges in Hennig’s book, rising from frustrations related to a clear divide and continuous tensions between the eastern and western parts of Germany. This is also how PEGIDA successfully ties into the legacy of the 1989 GDR civil rights movement and attracts the East German ‘generation of transformation’. Phenomena such as sympathy for Russia’s politics against Ukraine or blatant anti-Americanism, as well as the ritual performance of the ‘evening walks’ with features like flags, slogans, and chants strengthen the impression that PEGIDA can mobilize conscious or subconscious nostalgia as a recipe for success.

Despite its nebulosity, the conceptual fuzziness that characterizes PEGIDA is not immune to challenge, and it is in this arena that we need to study the complex dynamics of re-semanticization. In this process ‘something’ (as yet to be established) brings political concepts and terms floating in the societal discourse into the name, the banners, the speeches, and the chants of PEGIDA. Many or most of these expressions aim to undermine existing political authority as well as the moral authority of the traditional media as a constitutive part of deliberative democracy. Substantial experiences and tropes of the 1989 movement are re-cycled and again projected on the same (but different) targets. Fears related to ongoing migration movements, described as a ‘flooding’, ‘invasion’, and ‘dissolution’ of Germany, are incited and exacerbated. The language used to address these events focuses not on individuals, but on anonymous crowds, and has long since abandoned any expressions of sympathy, empathy, or philanthropy. Elected politicians are accused of treason; ‘resistance’ is evoked to legitimize political positions directed against the existing order (as in the last part of Hennig’s book), with fateful overtones of violence and sacrifice for the common national good. Cognitive and behavioural radicalization thus go hand in hand.

PEGIDA can be interpreted as a driver of radicalization on various levels of the model proposed in the introduction. Cognitive and behavioural aspects of radicalization reinforce each other. PEGIDA is equally a movement of disparate macro-level ideas and micro-level actions offline on the streets and online on social media. At the meso level, PEGIDA lives in the tension between the online and offline support communities with which it resonates and is able to connect ('the people') and the various imagined communities from which it sets itself apart, those internal and external enemies, including both representatives of the 'system's' betrayal and the 'foreigners' threatening to submerge the country. At the highest level, PEGIDA promotes a radicalized political language propelled by the rhetoric of fear. During the first 12 months of its existence, it framed societal challenges increasingly forcefully. In 2015, the atmosphere at PEGIDA rallies also developed a more distinct edge of confrontation, particularly through Tatjana Festerling's almost demagogic speeches supported by more and more aggressive chants from the sympathizers. By constantly and stubbornly pushing and expanding the limits of what is possible to reframe, previously extreme positions become observably normalized, not only among German stakeholders, but also in both social and traditional media. Through its sheer numbers and its broad online and offline presence, PEGIDA constitutes a virulent support community of radicalization at the meso level. During its rallies, radicalized and polysemous ideological positions are openly expressed despite their seeming contradictions. This creates visible legitimacy for a range of increasingly extreme political concepts. Once adopted through various speech acts they become normalized and thus move the linguistic framing of problems and proposals for their solutions in an increasingly extreme direction.

## NOTES

1. <http://www.pegidabuch.de> (with a number of links to reviews); <https://www.sachsen-depesche.de/kultur/anders-als-man-erwartet-sebastian-hennig-und-sein-buch-„pegida---spaziergänge-über-den-horizont“.html>; <http://www.flurfunk-dresden.de/2015/11/21/pegida-spaziergaenge-ueber-den-horizont/>; and for a more critical reading <http://michaelbittner.info/2015/10/28/pegida-von-innen-die-chronik-spaziergaenge-ueber-den-horizont-von-sebastian-hennig/>; <http://www.arnshaugk.de/index.php?v=0&korb=&autor=Hennig,%20Sebastian>; all accessed 6 January 2017. The first print run was 2000 copies. Currently (as of January 2017), the edition is sold out on amazon.de. The book has its own Facebook page,

- [https://www.facebook.com/Pegida-Spaziergänge-über-den-Horizont-404550896422490/?hc\\_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/Pegida-Spaziergänge-über-den-Horizont-404550896422490/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf), visited 6 January 2017.
2. The term ‘paranoid’ is understood as in Hofstadter (1964: 77) who makes clear that he doesn’t use it in a clinical sense for classification of a certain pathological disposition, but ‘because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind’.
  3. The two most recent studies are Hans Vorländer, Maik Herold, Steven Schäller, *Wer geht zu PEGIDA und warum? Eine empirische Untersuchung von PEGIDA-Demonstranten in Dresden*, Schriften zur Verfassungs- und Demokratieforschung 1/2015, Dresden: zvd, 2015 and by the same authors *PEGIDA: Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung*, Berlin: Springer, 2016.
  4. Hennig (70) interprets the use of the mobile phone as a flashlight as a symbol for the movement moving from virtual to real space: ‘So wie der Austritt aus den virtuellen Netzwerken auf das Straßenpflaster von Dresden, ist auch diese praktische Reduktion des Handtelephons zur Lampe symbolisch aufzufassen’.
  5. See also Nils Wegner, ‘PEGIDA—Chronik’, in *Sezession*, special issue ‘PEGIDA’, 2015, p. 8.
  6. Vorländer et al. 2016, 18–20.
  7. In my forthcoming article, ‘Between Breivik and PEGIDA: The Absence of Ideologies and Leaders in the Contemporary European Far-Right’, *Patterns of Prejudice* (Önnerfors, forthcoming 2017) I investigate Bachmann as an anti-leader of PEGIDA.
  8. These theses have since been removed from the PEGIDA Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/pegidaevdresden>, accessed 17 January 2016 (almost 200,000 ‘likes’). The PEGIDA Facebook page would also be an illuminating research topic. I have used the reproduction of the theses as given in the German journal *Focus*, 19 December 2015: [http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/woechentliche-demonstrationen-19-punkte-programm-was-will-pegida-wirklich\\_id\\_4359150.html](http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/woechentliche-demonstrationen-19-punkte-programm-was-will-pegida-wirklich_id_4359150.html). Accessed 17 January 2016. See also <http://www.i-finger.de/dresdner-thesen.pdf>. Accessed 18 January 2016.
  9. I find this interpretation extremely revealing, since Marc Sageman and other researchers of terrorist have come to the conclusion that individuals pursuing engineering or science studies appear to be an easy prey for radicalization. Paul Valley, ‘Are scientists easy prey for jihadism?’, in *The Guardian*, 5 December 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/03/scientists-easy-prey-jihadis-terrorists-engineering-mindset>, accessed 18 January 2016. Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia: UPP, 2008, where a study of collective biographies of Jihadis points in the same direction.

10. Compare with Hennig (182): 'Where once was Dresden, today is a stage'.
11. For internal criticism, see also Hennig (104–05).
12. His support for aggressive activism must also be seen in the light of the events that had recently unfolded in Cologne on 26 October 2014. The Network 'Hooligans against Salafists' (HoGeSa, inspired by the English Defence League) rioted in the Cologne city centre with many structural similarities to the New Year's Eve events of 2015/2016 (short of organized sexual attacks and flagrant crimes): exclusively male, highly alcoholized, crowds throwing fireworks and bottles at law enforcement personnel and trashing public property. See Patrick Gensing: 'HoGeSa—wie Hooligans rechte Brücken schlagen', <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/199362/hogesa-wie-hooligans-rechte-bruecken-schlagen>. Accessed 18 January 2016.
13. Further page references to the slogan 'Ami go home!', see Hennig (125, 127, 136, 139, 147, 152, 159, 184). The journal *Compact*, to which Hennig has contributed more than 20 times, devoted an entire issue (8/2014) to the subject 'Ami go home: Deutschland muss souverän werden' ('Germany needs to become sovereign'). The website of *Compact* also offers translation to Russian and generally demonstrates support of the Putin-regime. Its editor Jürgen Elsässer has been characterized as 'national bolshevist', referring to a particular right-wing movement in Russia (and the political philosopher Alexandr Dugin) with clear links to the rest of Europe. See Hennig (94–97) and Mark Bassin, 'Lev Gumilev and the European New Right' in *Nationalities Papers* (2015), 43:6, p. 840–865.
14. Professor Patzelt has also conducted empirical studies of PEGIDA rallies, but simultaneously took part in a number of public discussions and repeatedly proposed the need to listen to PEGIDA. A representative interview demonstrating his appeasing positions was published in the German conservative newspaper *Die Welt* 22.1.2015, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article136665559/Pegida-ist-antireligioes-nicht-antiislamisch.html>. Accessed 18 January 2016. Patzelt also reviewed Hennig's book in positive terms, see footnote 1 for a reference.'
15. In the GDR, re-enactments (or 'Live Action Role Play') of 'Wild West' North American settings were extremely popular, and clubs for 'Indianists' were established everywhere: 'Indians were called 'victims of US imperialism', and the destruction of their communities and natural environment was attributed to unchecked American expansion and aggression.' See the article by Anna Altman, 'Socialist Cowboys' in *The New Yorker*, 12 April 2012 and academic sources quoted therein, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/socialist-cowboys>. Accessed 18 January 2016.
16. Verlag Arnshaugk <http://www.arnshaugk.de/index.php?v=9&korb=>. Accessed 18 January 2016.

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# Political Radicalization in Israel: From a Populist Habitus to Radical Right Populism in Government

*Dani Filc*

## INTRODUCTION

The 2010s have been a time of right-wing radicalization in Israeli society. The right-wing leader Binyamin Netanyahu won the 2009, 2013, and 2015 elections, and his governing coalitions have become increasingly radical in their composition, their discourse, and many of their policies. A critical element of this process, and the focus of this paper, is the transformation of Netanyahu's party, Likud, from an inclusive populist party with nationalist characteristics to a radical right populist party. Analysis of such a transformation responds to this volume's goal to show that radicalization involves an interrelationship between ideas and actions.

As discussed in the Introduction, 'radicalism' is a contested term. Its polysemy, moreover, addresses various levels. Radicalism may be defined from a securitization or a sociocultural perspective; it may be considered a progressive or conservative force; and it may be viewed as synonymous with terrorism, political violence, or political action. When claiming that

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Likud is becoming a radical right populist party, I do not understand radicalism as terrorism or as political violence, but as a force aiming to create a fundamental disruption of the existing social and political structure. In this sense, my understanding of the term is in line with Alex Schmid's (2013) distinction between extremism, closer to violent action, and radicalism (see the Introduction to the present volume). Such distinction, in turn, is akin to Betz and Johnson's (2004) claim that radical right populist parties are radical in both their discourse and the political project they put forward. Moreover, following Mudde's suggestion in his conceptual analysis of these parties, we may claim that their radical nature is defined in opposition to key features of liberal democracy, such as the protection of minorities.<sup>1</sup> Radical right populism is radical in its rejection of the ideas of liberty and equality which are central to the Enlightenment tradition, in its rejection of human rights as both central to any political community and as universal, and in the xenophobia that always goes along with nativism and is a central feature of radical right populism. As Ruth Wodak argues, this type of populism has recently undergone a process of further radicalization that she calls the 'Haiderization' of politics, increasingly xenophobic, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic (Wodak 2015: 2).

Populism, as Margaret Canovan so aptly describes, haunts liberal democracy like a shadow (Canovan 1999). According to different scholars, populism is a loose ideology that combines nostalgia for a primordial community, a belief in 'the people' as virtuous, xenophobia, and welfare chauvinism. Alternatively, it has been considered a political style characterized by a belief in 'the supremacy of the will of the people' and a stance that is 'moralistic rather than programmatic', anti-intellectual, based on 'mystical contact' between the leaders and the masses, loosely organized, opposed to the establishment, and supported by a multi-class constituency.<sup>2</sup>

I see the populist phenomenon as a political project supported by some common ideological premises that appear in societies where conflicts around the inclusion or exclusion of subordinate groups prevail. Building on Canovan's suggestion that populism can be better understood as a 'family' of phenomena, I argue that it may be divided into two main types based on whether it follows a general doctrine of inclusive or, as Hans Betz calls it, exclusionary, populism (Betz 2001). Exclusionary populist movements are radical right populists, whose strength stems from their radical rejection of mainstream liberal democracy. Drawing from my previous research on Likud as an inclusive populist party and the consolidation of a

populist habitus, I study the discourse of emerging figures within this party to support my claim about the mainstreaming of radical right populism.

### EXCLUSIONARY POPULISM

Mudde's 'thin' definition of populism understands it as an ideology that 'considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the pure people and the corrupt elite, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people' (Mudde and Rovira-Kaltwasser 2012). Yet before we can delve into the opposition between the 'people' and the 'elites', we must specify how we define the people. Margaret Canovan (2005: 2) proposes three definitions: 'the people as sovereign, peoples as nations and the people as opposed to the ruling elite (what used to be called the common people)'. Populist ideology relies on this polysemy, using the various meanings as if they were one and the same. The contradictions between them are erased, and 'the people' is simultaneously the sovereign people, the plebs as opposed to the elites, the nation as a whole, and, as Guy Hermet (2001) notes, also an organic group (which sometimes corresponds to an ethno-national community, as expressed by the German term 'Volk'). Populist movements and leaders play with these different meanings, which can be articulated in more than one way.

These various articulations enable us to distinguish between inclusive and exclusionary populism. Inclusive populist movements stress the notion of the people as plebeians, thereby allowing the political integration of excluded social groups and enlarging the boundaries of democracy in the process (Mouzelis 1985; de la Torre 1998a, b). Inclusion, however, is always partial: first because populist movements do not structurally modify the unequal distribution of resources and second because the claim for inclusion is based on a particularistic statement 'we, the excluded, also belong to this people', rather than a universal statement like 'all men and women are free and equal'.

Exclusionary populism, by contrast, emphasizes the organic understanding of 'the people' as an ethnically or culturally homogeneous unit.<sup>3</sup> It thus conceptualizes the people from a nativist perspective, which promotes the belief that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the nation widely held to be the native group and that non-native people and ideas represent a threat (Mudde 2007). Exclusion is also partial. Many of the social groups that support exclusionary populism see in it a protec-

tion against their own exclusion (i.e., welfare chauvinism). Exclusionary forms of populism are characterized also by the scapegoating of the ‘other’—holding specific groups such as Muslims, Jews, or immigrants responsible for all the problems of the ‘native’ society (Wodak 2015) and, as a consequence, denying them certain rights.

Inclusive and exclusionary processes have symbolic, material, and political dimensions (Filc 2010). Symbolic exclusion is grounded in an exclusionary discursive definition of the people. Exclusionary movements appeal to a common past that is not shared by immigrants or ethnic minorities. They also rely upon historical symbols that are irrelevant to those groups, ignore regional dialects, and so on. Nativism often plays a vital role in this vision by excluding immigrants from the nation/people.<sup>4</sup> Nativism is hence closely related to xenophobia and racism. Symbolic exclusion is central to the links between exclusionary populism and the radical tradition, in its Manichean (good versus evil) view of society, its millenarian promise to reconstruct an idealized past in which the ‘true’ people were pure and whole, and its view of history as a conspiracy of the elites and the ‘other’ against the ‘true’ people (Wodak 2015). Material exclusion means limiting excluded groups’ access to welfare services and other entitlements or restricting their access to the labour market. In the political dimension, exclusion involves preventing immigrants’ access to citizenship, denying them the right to vote, hindering their ability to organize, and criminalizing them.<sup>5</sup>

### POPULISM IN ISRAEL

Populism is prevalent in Israeli politics because conflicts concerning the inclusion/exclusion of subordinate social groups have marked Israeli society since its inception. Such conflicts stem from the interplay of several factors: the tension between the dominant understanding of the Jewish people as a religious collective and its heterogeneous nature, the lasting clash with the indigenous Palestinian population, the ongoing colonial situation in the Occupied Territories, and Israel’s Eurocentrism. Thus, Israel has experienced persistent conflicts about the inclusion/exclusion of different social groups such as Israeli Arabs, Mizrahim (the name given in Israel to Jewish immigrants from Arab countries), and immigrants from the former USSR or from Ethiopia. In such a divided society, the signifier ‘the people’ has become a major reference point in the constitution of the dominant political identity, and populism has become a central feature of the political system.

The Likud party (previously called Herut) became a populist inclusive movement under Menachem Begin's leadership (Filc 2010). Begin and his party developed a narrative of Israeli history that symbolically incorporated Mizrahim into the common 'we', implemented some economic and social policies aimed at their material inclusion, and politically included them by opening the party to a young Mizrahi leadership that emerged locally and reached the national level (Filc 2010). The relative success of Likud in including the Mizrahim and enabling their becoming a relevant political subject through their identification with the party, combined with the persistent conflicts, contributed to the consolidation of a populist habitus in Likud, but also in Israeli society as a whole.

Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus as a set of representations and 'ways of doing things', resilient through time, which can be transferred to following generations. It is 'a system of durable and transposable dispositions (schemes of perception, appreciation and action) produced by particular social environments, which functions as the principle of the generation and structuring of practices and representations' (Bourdieu 1979: 72). Habitus is the historical product of past experiences, and it mediates between past and present, producing both individual and collective practices. This concept, thus, helps us to understand the endurance of conducts and preferences.

Just as individual identities are shaped by habitus, so are group identities shaped by a common habitus, which is the product of the group's social. The homogeneity of the conditions of existence in a social group produces a similar habitus in the members that further homogenizes the social group. Group identities created and supported by habitus play a crucial role in the production of group values, preferences, and voting decisions.

The Mizrahim became a politically active social group through their participation in Likud. Previously, they had shared practices and schemes of perception because of their common experience of exclusion—of their proximity in the social field. Such proximity and their common habitus led to the development of a political identity due to their recognition by and identification with Likud. Begin's inclusive discourse contributed to their becoming both part of the 'people' and opposed to the 'elite' and to the people's enemies. Identification with several local Mizrahi leaders, who emerged within Likud and mediated between the movement and its members and sympathizers, also contributed to Mizrahim's adherence to the movement. As one party member put it, 'people don't understand that for

us Likud is our home' (Filc 2006). Another member said, 'Show me another party in Israel where members look like me, speak with the same accent, and look like common people' (Filc 2006).

This populist vision is not limited to individual identity. It is also reflected in citizens' view of representative democracy and of the relationship between the people and the ruling elites. Only 15% of Israelis believe that government actions are carried out for the benefit of the people, only 19% believe that 'they or their friends' can influence government decisions, and just 21% have confidence in political parties. More than 60% are dissatisfied with representative democracy, 50% consider that to succeed in politics you must be corrupt, almost 60% would like a 'strong leader', and 70% think that politicians do not consider the 'common people' (Herman 2016).

### *Exclusionary Populism in Israel*

In the late 1990s, a new party emerged. Yisrael Beytenu (Israel Our Home)<sup>6</sup> presented all the features of radical right populist parties.<sup>7</sup> It promoted the nativist idea of an ethnically homogeneous people as a natural community, xenophobia, scapegoating the 'other' (leftist Israeli Arabs and their allies), nationalism, anti-elitism, obsession with security, a 'law and order' approach to social issues, and an anti-liberal understanding of democracy. Like many radical right populist parties, Yisrael Beytenu expressed a yearning for a strong leader, embodied in the party's founder, current Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman.<sup>8</sup>

One of the main goals of the party is the consolidation of the Jewish people's sovereignty in Israel, and its image of this people is as a homogeneous collective. It embraces a nativist vision of the people and longs for a homogeneous community, free from

the existence of minorities, which creates conflict among people with different identities living under the same roof ... only in a Messianic future will the wolf and the sheep, the tiger, the leopard, and the goat live together. The laws of nature will not change in our time. Where two peoples or two religions coexist, there is potential for conflict. This is true of Northern Ireland, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and even flourishing Canada. This is even truer in our case, where the identity struggle combines nationality and religion. (Yisrael Beytenu)

For Lieberman, 'the Arab minority in Israel [which threatens the imagined homogeneity of Israeli Jews] represents a more acute and dangerous prob-

lem than our conflict with the Arab countries or even with the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria' (Lieberman 2006: 46).

Nativism is closely related to xenophobia and extreme racism. Thus, for Lieberman and his party, opposition to the idea of Israel as a Jewish state is a form of betrayal and should be punished with denial of citizenship or even exile (Lieberman 2009). In what represents a radical rejection of liberal democratic values, Yisrael Beytenu states on its website that

the state of Israel was bound to be the Jewish state, and not the state of the Jews or the state of all its citizens. The definition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state is not trivial. *Israel is first a Jewish state, then a democratic state. The order is not coincidental or semantic.* It makes clear which term must prevail. (Yisrael Beytenu. [Author's emphasis])

On the question of whether he would accept an Israeli Arab as the country's president, Lieberman states, 'My unequivocal answer is no' (Yisrael Beytenu).

To pursue ethno-national homogeneity, the party claims that peace negotiations should aim to redraw the borders of Israel and of the future Palestinian state in such a way that the two states would be as ethnically homogeneous as possible. The party platform asserts that

the only solution for the Israeli–Arab conflict is the exchange of land and population. Only thus shall we ensure the Jewish nature of the state of Israel. Only thus shall we be able to realize the Zionist aspiration of a protected home for the Jewish people.... The core of this idea is to divide the Jewish and Arab peoples and to create a separate political framework for each. (Yisrael Beytenu)

Yisrael Beytenu justifies their proposed solution not only because it guarantees ethnic homogeneity but also because it represents the people's will to be one and unified. The party platform claims that 'there is wide consensus among the Jewish people that in view of the dilemma between the wholeness of the people and the wholeness of the land, the former is preferable. The unity of the people is of utmost importance' (Yisrael Beytenu). Yisrael Beytenu's xenophobia is not limited to Israeli Arabs. Like that of many European radical right populist parties, it includes a more generalized Islamophobia. In the party's worldview, the Israeli-Arab conflict is part of a worldwide struggle against those who are bound to destroy 'every way of life that is opposed to Islam'. Israel's 'destiny', then, is to struggle

against Islamic extremism, which ‘threatens to radically change our situation into one that has never been imagined’ (Yisrael Beytenu).

In Mudde’s terms, Yisrael Beytenu voices an anti-elitist discourse in which elites collaborate with a foreign enemy against the people. In Lieberman’s view, traditional dominant groups (the ‘social oligarchy’) have forged a kind of unholy alliance with the foreign enemy against ‘us’, the people (Lieberman 2002). People who are ‘us’ are defined as ‘the new immigrants, the residents of development towns, the settlers in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank], and ultra-orthodox Jews’. Those defined in opposition as ‘them’ are first and foremost the judiciary (especially the Supreme Court), the left, the media, the police, the state bureaucracy, and government officials (especially Treasury officials) (Lieberman 2006: 93).

While the elites are considered egotistic and self-centred, the people are held to be the source of all that is good:

Those who present this struggle as a struggle between the rabble and the elites are wrong. First, unfortunately, we do not have elites in Israel. This is a social oligarchy ... Second, I have news for you. This ‘rabble’ is the huge majority of the country. They are the people who make this country. All those seen as marginal by the social oligarchy are the true foundation of this country—all the immigrants, the residents of development towns, and the settlers in Judea and Samaria, and the ultra-orthodox. We are the majority and we will change the definition of ‘good people’ and ‘evil people’. (Lieberman 2006: 93)

Yisrael Beytenu aims to constitute

a real threat against this oligarchy, this thin stratum that occupies all the centres of power and wealth ... this is a struggle between those who hold the reins of power and do not want to share them, and us, the rest, who are the majority. This is a war of democracy against the oligarchy. (Lieberman 2006: 157)

By presenting his struggle as democratic, Lieberman refers to an anti-liberal notion of democracy that stresses its definition as ‘the will of the people’ but rejects democratic procedural features and the centrality of rights. This anti-liberal notion characterizes Judaism as the merging of the Jewish people with the Jewish religion, so there cannot be a separation between state and church. Yisrael Beytenu is also against pluralism—because pluralism undermines the imagined original unity of the people—

and hence sees ‘leftists’ as traitors. In a radio interview in 2007, Lieberman blamed the left for ‘all [Israel’s] victims and problems’ (Lieberman 2007a). During a discussion in the Knesset he said

To all those intellectuals and writers who say, ‘We must talk with Hamas’, I answer, ‘Go learn’. There was once a famous writer, a Nobel Prize winner, the Norwegian Knut Hamsun. Go and see what you can learn from that Nobel Prize winner. (Lieberman 2008)

The party also conditions human rights in terms of security, which it considers the most important goal. Both the legislative and the judiciary branches should subordinate civil rights to personal and collective security. Furthermore, anti-majoritarian checks and balances, such as judiciary review, should be curtailed. In arguing for a bill that would free military orders from juridical supervision, Lieberman stated:

Not only do we have to cope with terrorists, not only are we slandered by the world’s media. Now we also have to deal with those who try to exploit democracy, the only democracy in the Middle East, who try to destroy us. I was astonished to see how many groups are only interested in hindering the efforts of the security corps to protect the state, and the efforts of the army to protect the citizens. In my opinion, those NGOs [non-governmental organizations] want to destroy us ... I think that the Supreme Court’s interference with the decisions of commanders in active service is unprecedented. The goal of this bill is to free military decisions from juridical review in real time, for life and the lives of our soldiers precede any juridical consideration or theory. (Lieberman 2007b)

To further limit oversight, the party promotes divesting the Supreme Court of its role of custodian of the constitution (which it fulfils through its power of juridical review) and establishing a Constitutional Court whose members would be elected by ‘the people’s representatives in the Knesset’ (Yisrael Beytenu). This court would replace the current Supreme Court for all issues concerning the interpretation of the constitutional framework and the relationship between the three branches of government. To ‘reflect Israeli society and be the voice of all social sectors’, it would be heterogeneous, and it would respond to

the will of the people ... Since this court will deal mostly with matters of principle, ideological, and even political matters, the judges will have to lift



their eyes from the legal text and base their decisions not on narrow juridical considerations but on everyday life. (Yisrael Beytenu)

Finally, Yisrael Our Home has an authoritarian, ‘law and order’ approach to social issues (Mudde 2007). When asked if he compares himself with Putin, Lieberman answered, ‘I say “If you want to shoot, shoot, don’t talk”. Be a leader, bring order. The country needs someone in charge, and I’ll do my best to achieve this’ (Lieberman 2009). For Yisrael Beytenu, ‘the state’s first obligation is to ensure the citizens’ personal safety’ and ‘the rights of common citizens are more important than those of the criminals’ (Yisrael Beytenu). To meet this goal, the government must ‘strengthen law enforcement ... No more courts that work at an unbearably slow pace, but a swift and efficient prosecution and judicial system’ (Yisrael Beytenu). The party proposes to adopt a ‘zero tolerance’ approach by ‘severely punishing not only serious crimes but also minor offences, and strengthening the police and increasing their budget to double the number of policemen’ (Yisrael Beytenu).

Lieberman’s voters and supporters share the party’s nativism, xenophobia, anti-elitism, anti-liberalism, and authoritarianism. In a survey conducted with a colleague, we found that 87% of the party’s voters oppose full citizen rights for Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, and 63% oppose recognition of migrant workers’ rights (compared with 40% of the general public). They do not trust the Supreme Court (66% expressed low confidence in the Supreme Court vs. 21% of the general population), or researchers and university professors (45% vs. 27% of the general public).

Yisrael Beytenu’s adherents regard elites as conspirators. Most of them (65%) believe that ‘capitalists and big business rule the political system’, while 69% support the claim that ‘a true national leadership should emerge from the common people, not from the old elites’. Only 30% of the party’s voters (vs. 58% of the general population) support the Supreme Court’s ability to abolish a law enacted by Parliament on the grounds that it opposes the basic laws; 77% consider that the Supreme Court’s interference in governmental decisions is a problem, and 90% support the transfer of constitutional powers from the Supreme Court to a Constitutional Court.<sup>9</sup> These attitudes point to the existence of an exclusionary populist habitus, an assumption strengthened by similar results reported by Shumsky (2001).

In sum, Lieberman’s (and his party’s) discourse includes several features of radical right populism: nativism and xenophobia, a Manichean, anti-elitist conception of society, an anti-liberal notion of democracy, and

the belief in a strong authoritarian state. Lieberman's main goals, moreover, are similar to those of European radical right populism, namely,

to make the voice of the people heard and defend their rights against the arrogance and fraudulence of the powerful; to protect the people from the dangers that threaten them all around; [and] to preserve their genuine attributes and the traditions which serve as the basis for their identity. (Tarchi 2008: 92)

### THE MAINSTREAMING OF RADICAL RIGHT POPULISM: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LIKUD

At the height of its popularity, Yisrael Beytenu won 12 seats in Parliament (12.5% of the vote). Towards the 2013 election, it merged with Likud with the expectation that their combined forces would win more than 40 seats (a result that no party in Israel has achieved since 1992). The merger, however, was an electoral failure. It won only 32 seats, a significantly lower number than their joint strength in the previous Knesset. Nonetheless, their alliance represents a milestone in the process of transforming Likud into an exclusionary populist party. This process is important because Likud is currently Israel's strongest political force and it may be defined as a mainstream party because it is 'positioned in such a way relative to the power centre that it captures the support and represents the interests of a major part of the voters' (Moscovitz 2016: 142).

The transformation of Likud, then, implies the mainstreaming of radical right populism. To study this process, I focus mainly on two relatively new political figures in the Likud party, namely, Miri Regev, Minister of Culture and Sports, and Danny Danon, Ambassador to the UN. I analyse the discourse of both politicians as it appears in the protocols of the 19th and 20th Knessets (2013–2015 and 2015–present) and in the online edition of the *Jerusalem Post* from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2016. The selected time span covers the two Knesset periods since the temporary union between Yisrael Beytenu and Likud because it was the union between the two parties for the 2013 elections that represented a significant shift in Likud towards the adoption of a radical right populist stance. The Knesset Protocols were selected as a main source, since discussions in Parliament are an important forum for the expression of party positions. The second source selected was the *Jerusalem Post*, one of the two main Israeli newspapers published in English, chosen to avoid the need to translate quotations

from Hebrew newspapers. The analysis focuses on the main aspects of radical right populism: nativism and xenophobia, anti-elitism, anti-liberal conception of democracy, and authoritarianism. However, radical right populist discourse also emerges among other Likud politicians, including the Likud leader, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

Both Regev and Danon were elected for Parliament for the first time in 2009. They began their careers as backbenchers in the 18th Knesset and rose quickly within the party. After the 2013 election, Danon was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence (and was fired by Netanyahu for criticizing the Prime Minister's 'softness' during the 2014 Gaza war). Following the 2015 election, he became Minister of Science and Technology and was later appointed Ambassador to the UN. Regev was chair of the Knesset's Internal Affairs and Environment Committee following the 2013 election and is currently Minister of Culture and Sports. They are both major figures within Likud. Regev ranked fifth on the list for the last election, in March 2015, the highest ranking a woman has ever attained within the party. Danon, who ranked ninth, challenged Netanyahu for the party leadership in 2014.

Regev and Danon see themselves as true followers of Begin's vision of Likud as the common people's party. Both claim to support the party's 'social' role, distinguishing themselves from Netanyahu and his radical neoliberalism. Danon, for example, has repeatedly called 'for Likud to keep socioeconomic portfolios such as Construction and Welfare. That would be essential to win back the trust of the voters on issues such as housing and the cost of living' (*Jerusalem Post*, 8 April 2015). Regev, for her part, opposed raising the value-added tax, describing the measure as 'spitting in the face' of the middle class (*Jerusalem Post*, 17 June 2013). In addition, she supported cancelling this tax for southern residents who want to build 'safe rooms' in their homes, calling on the government to 'take responsibility, like a country should, for its residents' (*Jerusalem Post*, 26 August 2014). While this 'social' stand is intended to bring Likud back to its populist past and away from Netanyahu's neoconservative view, their populism is not the inclusive type of Begin's vision, but a radical right populism quite similar to Lieberman's.

### *Nativism and Xenophobia*

As we saw above, Israel's nativism is unique to Israel. It is not territorial (Arabs born in Israel are not native in the eyes of exclusionary populists);

it is defined by the boundaries of Judaism. In Israel, the ‘native’ population is the Jewish people, even Jews born abroad. The non-native ‘other’ is represented by Israeli Arabs, migrant workers from developing countries, and asylum seekers (mostly African). Both Regev and Danon have outspokenly attacked these groups; in the case of Israeli Arabs, they have mainly targeted Members of the Knesset (MKs). They also promoted legislation to ban Israeli-Arab MKs and to intern or expel undocumented migrants and asylum seekers.

On excluding Israeli Arabs, Regev ‘actively supported Gapso [the Nazareth Illit mayor] and his racist campaign regarding the Arab inhabitants of Nazareth Illit in the recent municipal elections’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 3 November 2013). She also referred to Arab MKs who opposed the activities of a priest who encouraged Arab Christians to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as ‘Trojan horses’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 22 September 2014). Regev tried to prevent Israeli-Arab MK Basel Ghattas from wearing a keffiyeh in the Knesset. When she failed, she declared: ‘Ghattas is another one of those Trojan horses that take advantage of the Knesset’s stage and represent terrorist organizations ... Therefore, they belong out of the Knesset’ (Knesset Protocols 12/11/14).

Danon collected signatures to promote legislation that would bar Israeli-Arab MK Haneen Zoabi from running in the 2015 election, arguing that ‘there is no doubt that there is more than enough to clearly prove [Zoabi’s] teachings are extremist and dangerous to the State of Israel’, and ‘as such, it is clear to all that the State of Israel must defend itself and prevent MK Zoabi from running for the 20th Knesset’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 23 December 2014). Danon’s attacks were not aimed solely against the Israeli-Arab political leadership, but also against Israeli Arabs as a collective. He claimed, for instance, that ‘it cannot be that a whole public carries a blue identity card [proof of Israeli citizenship], votes for the Knesset and does not contribute to the country!’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 31 May 2013).

Miri Regev was particularly active against asylum seekers (whom she considers ‘infiltrators’) who have arrived in Israel, mostly from Sudan and Eritrea. Time and time again she presented them as a threat to the needs and welfare of the Jewish working-class population living in Southern Tel Aviv neighbourhoods (home to most African asylum seekers). She even called Sudanese migrants ‘a cancer in the body of our nation’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 16 July 2013). As chair of the Knesset’s Internal Affairs and Environment Committee, she called ‘for the police to issue detailed statistics on crimes committed by illegal migrants’ and declared that ‘Israel

must work to expel infiltrators’ (ibid.). Moreover, she expressed her will to see Saharonim, an internment camp for asylum seekers, ‘filled with 7000 infiltrators’, and to carry out plans ‘to disperse the migrant population across Israel, to ease up the high concentration of migrants in south Tel Aviv’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 11 June 2013).

When the Supreme Court invalidated some articles in the Anti-Infiltration Bill because they did not meet the requirements of the Basic Law for Human Freedom and Dignity, Regev attacked the court, arguing that its action went against the people’s interests:

The court is disconnected from the people. The court’s decision is essentially calling everyone in Africa to come to Israel, because infiltrators can move around freely. The court didn’t think of the good of the Israeli public in its decision and will make the situation intolerable. (*Jerusalem Post*, 22 September 2014)

Showing both her nativist-xenophobic views and her anti-elitism, she framed the issue as the elite’s detachment from the people’s needs, claiming that the justices were ‘alienated from the Israeli public’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 29 July 2015).

Danon, for his part, wrote in an op-ed piece:

One of the biggest accomplishments of the previous government—and one that has been woefully under-reported—was our successes at halting the decade-old phenomenon of increased illegal infiltration into Israel. The implementation of the amended Prevention of Infiltration Law this month is another step in the right direction...Since 2005, more than 60,000 sub-Saharan Africans have illegally crossed our southern border with Egypt. To our friends aboard this may seem like a small number, but this constituted a real demographic threat for a state of fewer than 8 million people, and to its Jewish and democratic makeup...The influx of undocumented men into our cities did real damage to the social fabric of our society...these illegals infiltrators contributed to a significant increase in crime... the amended law is vital in acting as an effective deterrence against illegal infiltration...we significantly increased the number of government officials and policemen who are enforcing the law and restoring order in the neighbourhoods where there are many illegal immigrants... The Likud government is proud of its track record on this issue and will work tirelessly until there are no more infiltrators crossing our borders and the number of illegal residents in our cities is severely reduced. (*Jerusalem Post*, 19 December 2013)

Scapegoating is another characteristic of radical right populism linked to nativism and xenophobia (Wodak 2015). Since 2013, Likud leaders have over and over accused Palestinians and Israeli Arabs as enemies. On the last election day, Netanyahu called Jewish citizens to come to vote because ‘the Israeli Arabs are galloping to the ballot boxes’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 6 May 2015). When a series of fires spread through Israel in the autumn of 2016, Likud politicians accused Palestinians and Israeli Arabs of instigating a ‘fire intifada’. MK Nava Boker wrote on Facebook: ‘200 fires in one day—the time has come to say it openly. This is ecological terror’. Likud MK Amir Ohana said that the fires showed that ‘they want to destroy the one Jewish State more than they want to establish the 22nd Arab state’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 24 November 2016).

### *Anti-elitism*

Both Regev and Danon voice a discourse that builds an opposition between the people—the (Jewish) living in the geographical and social periphery—and the elites, equating ‘elites’ with ‘the left’. At a Labour party demonstration during the 2015 election campaign, the painter and writer Yair Garboz attacked the supporters of Netanyahu, arguing that they ‘think that democracy means the tyranny of the majority’ and that they are ‘kissers of amulets, idol-worshippers and people who bow down and prostrate themselves on the graves of saints’ (*Haaretz* 09/03/15). Miri Regev called on Garboz to apologize and asserted that nothing had changed in more than 30 years.

The Left is the same Left. Then it was the Chachchahim Speech [alluding to the 1981 elections campaign, when the actor Dudu Topaz used the derogatory term Chachchahim to refer to Begin’s Mizrahi supporters], and now it’s the Mezuzah Kissers and Bowers on Rabbis’ Graves Speech ...[Garboz’s] dark speech belongs to the dark ages’. (*Jerusalem Post*, 8 March 2015)

Regev’s anti-elitist discourse has been especially evident during her tenure as Minister of Culture and Sports. Her decision to cut public funding to theatres and artists holding ‘extremist’ views (an Israeli-Arab theatre for staging a play that humanized a Palestinian terrorist, and the Jerusalem Film Festival for their decision to show a documentary on Yigal Amir, Yitzhak Rabin’s murderer) faced the opposition of many artists and intellectuals. One of them described her and her followers as a ‘marching herd

of beasts chewing straw and stubble’, while Regev answered attacking ‘the hypocrisy of the self-styled intellectual elite’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 20 June 2015).

She made the following statement in an interview:

I, Miri Regev-Siboni from Kiryat Gat, daughter of Felix and Marcelle Siboni, have never read Chekhov and almost never went to plays as a child. I listened to Jo Amar [a Moroccan-Israeli singer, pioneer in introducing Moroccan Jewish liturgy music into Israel] and Sephardic songs, and I’m no less cultured than all the consumers of Western culture.

And she added that ‘someone who has never been in a theatre or cinema and who never read Haim Nahman Bialik [the founder of modern Hebrew poetry] can also be cultured’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 18 November 2015).

In line with this approach, Regev issued a call for the public to air its views on the ministry’s programmes to help ‘re-examine and formulate the ministry’s funding policies’. The issues to be addressed included ‘budget needs, conditions for receiving ministry support, the criteria for the distribution of funds between different institutions, and any other relevant issue’ concerning the performing arts (theatre, music, and dance) (*Jerusalem Post*, 24 June 2015). In her call, Regev stated that

the diverse human fabric that makes up Israeli society has changed over the years, and we must take care to ensure that the budget allocation method adjusts itself for Israel of 2015 ... The criteria for support that exist[s] today, according to which money is divided among cultural institutions in the country, have accompanied the ministry’s work for many long years, and I find it necessary to open the discussion to the general public, to listen to the important insights that come from within, and to formulate new policies accordingly’. (*Jerusalem Post*, 24 June 2015)

Two months later she further explained her goals as follows:

As I have said in the past, I have no intention of interfering in the content of artwork or freedom of expression, however, I do intend to implement my policies and make culture and sports accessible to the periphery, to the non-Jewish sector, and to the ultra-Orthodox sector’. (*Jerusalem Post*, 9 August 2015)

In a similar vein, she confronted former Minister of Defence Moshe Ya’alon, who opposed her intention to modify the playlist of the Army’s

radio station, Galgalatz, to include more Israeli artists and Mizrahi music. ‘I understand the Minister of Defence seems to have forgotten that the IDF is the army of the people’, Regev said at a press conference. ‘The army radio is an elitist station, it is no secret’, she added.

The decision of the defence minister shows that he is not sensitive to the public and to the calls from the Israeli public ... he is backing Yaron Dekel [the head of the radio station] and Galgalatz to continue with a playlist which only represents one branch of Israeli music and to continue to present a social barrier that basically strengthens what the public thinks—that Galgalatz is an elitist station ... I will not rest until Galgalatz will be a multicultural station that grants expression to every genre in society’. (*Jerusalem Post*, 5 November 2015)

While Danon’s anti-elitism is less blatant than Regev’s, he also underscores his (and his party’s) role as representative of ‘the people’ and of the (Jewish) subaltern classes. Just before being fired by Netanyahu from his post as Deputy Minister of Defence, he stated in an interview:

I don’t know too many people in politics or the press who give up a job. I was in charge of the reserves and the ministry’s security and social affairs department that helps released soldiers and Christians, ultra-orthodox Jews and other minorities. ... If I have no choice, I’ll return to my modest office in the Knesset’. (*Jerusalem Post*, 19 April 2014)

When he became Minister of Science and Technology, he stated that he dreamt ‘of the day when an Israeli from the periphery will win a Nobel Prize’. Then he added:

We must ensure that the scientific and technological world is not a world closed to the ultra-Orthodox [and to] minorities or residents of the periphery. We will work hard to strengthen research and development, with stress on applications, and ensure that all children are exposed to science and, if they choose it, to achieve’. (*Jerusalem Post*, 17 May 2015)

### *Anti-liberal Understanding of Democracy*

While both Regev and Danon speak about, and even in the name of, democracy, they share an anti-liberal view of it. Neither are they republican, for republicanism stresses political participation, and Danon and Regev aim to limit the engagement of Israeli Arabs. Theirs is an ethnic



majoritarian understanding of democracy. In this view, democracy is mostly about ‘the rule of the (Jewish) people’ understood as the will of the majority. Therefore, they oppose essential aspects of liberal democracy such as judiciary review, the independence of the judiciary, and individual rights because they weaken the will of the people. They address real democratic deficits of anti-majoritarian instruments, articulating their criticism within an exclusionary discourse. Therefore, their views fit Schmid and Mudde’s definitions of radicalism.

As I mentioned earlier, Regev and Danon have repeatedly criticized the judiciary branch, and especially judiciary reviews by the Supreme Court. When the Court overturned, a law sanctioned by the Knesset that allowed illegal migrants to be held in detention up to three years, Regev claimed that the decision was ‘detached from reality’ and that ‘the High Court decreed that residents of south Tel Aviv must live in fear, and declared infiltration kosher’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 16 September 2013). A few days later she referred to the court’s disconnection from the people and to its bias towards ‘infiltrators’ to the detriment of ‘the Israeli public’ (*Jerusalem Post*, September 2014).

In the Knesset, she publicly criticized the court, arguing that, while she respected it, ‘it is not the Court that establishes the rules. The Court is not responsible for policy. The Court dictates what is fair, and there is nothing fairer than protecting our borders ... and allowing our citizens to live safely’ (Knesset Protocols 8/12/14). As chair of the Internal Affairs and Environment Committee, she proposed an amendment to the law, saying that she wanted

to make clear that the bill you are voting today is fruitless, it is a bill that I bring to you because I have no alternative ... I wanted to bring good news to the inhabitants of South Tel Aviv, look them in the eye and tell them, ‘We are not closing the internment camps’. But the Attorney General would rather look towards Geneva and is out of touch with what is happening here to the Israeli people. (Knesset Protocols 10/12/14)

Regev also questioned a bill aimed to suspend mayors indicted on corruption charges. She argued that the bill had been ‘forced on the Knesset by the Supreme Court’, and added: ‘I made it clear to Interior Minister Gideon Sa’ar that an indictment isn’t stronger than the voters’ choice’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 10 December 2013). Her reaction to a decision by the Office of the Attorney General illustrates her attitude towards the notion

of checks and balances among government branches. When this office established that, as a minister, Regev could not censor cultural institutions and performances based on her interpretation of their content, for this would result in ‘limited artistic freedom of expression’, Regev referred to the Attorney General as ‘garbage’ and to his subordinates as ‘shits’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 18 November 2015). Danon, for his part, was less vocal but more effective; he pushed forward a bill intended to limit the ability to petition the Supreme Court (*Jerusalem Post*, 29 March 2015).

Regev also believes that security considerations should trump individual rights. As chair of the Internal Affairs and Environment Committee, she spearheaded the passage of a law that authorized force-feeding hunger strikers, in clear violation of individual autonomy and medical ethics. Responding to criticism, she claimed that ‘if force-feeding is a problem, [I]’d rather let the prisoners die’ (*Jerusalem Post*, 16 June 2014). She has also called for the state to stop paying for public defenders for detainees accused of terrorism. In a letter to the Minister of Justice, she described her proposal as ‘another step’ towards tightening laws to fight and deter the current wave of terrorism across the country, along with prior measures such as ‘invalidating citizenship, eliminating financial benefits, and house demolitions’. She added that she understood

the importance of legal representation in a state of democratic rule, but terrorists should have to finance this with their private funds and not from the funds of the citizens of Israel who they themselves are trying to murder—this paradox must end. (*Jerusalem Post*, 13 October 2015)

Regev also presents human rights organizations as opposed to the common people’s interests, arguing that they are ‘leftist’ and only care for the rights of ‘infiltrators’. In a speech in Parliament, she asserted that there are

thousands of infiltrators that are helped by human rights organizations, leftist human rights organizations, since there are no organizations caring for the human rights of the [Israeli] citizens, those who pay taxes and go to the army ... human rights are only for infiltrators ... They will get medical care at the Tel Hashomer hospital, at the Ichilov hospital [both in the Tel Aviv area], while my parents, who live in the South, have an extremely hard time getting care at Tel Hashomer ... But for infiltrators everything is possible, since they have human rights organizations and Supreme Court judges. (Knesset Protocols 8/12/14)

Danny Danon, as mentioned above, pushed forward legislation limiting the right to appeal to the Supreme Court. He also sponsored bills criminalizing support for a boycott against Israel and banning prisoners indicted for terrorist acts from studying in prison, as well as a bill making certain rights (for example, the right to obtain a driving licence) contingent on Israeli Arabs' pledging alliance to Israel as 'a Jewish and democratic state' (*Jerusalem Post*, 15 April 2015).

### *Authoritarianism and Law and Order*

Regev and Danon share a 'law and order' approach to social problems, especially those concerning 'the others'—Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, Israeli Arabs, undocumented migrants, and asylum seekers. In her first meeting as chair of the Internal Affairs and Environment Committee, Regev stated, 'We will make sure ... that a person feels safe walking down the street, protected from violence and by the police' (Knesset Protocols 17/4/13). As ministers, both Regev and Danon voted for a law supporting the death penalty in cases that took place in Israel and in the OPT (*Jerusalem Post*, 9 July 2015). In addition, Danon has promoted legislation facilitating the deportation of asylum seekers, and Regev introduced a bill establishing a five-year prison sentence for throwing rocks or other objects at police officers and moving cars (Knesset Protocols 17/11/14).

Summing up, we can see that Regev and Danon's views present all the features of radical right populism, and the rise of their stars within the party is a recent sign that Likud is becoming a radical right populist party without losing its mainstream role in Israeli politics. A second sign is the fact that historical figures of its inclusive populist past such as former Minister and MK Michael Eitan and Benny Begin and Dan Meridor (sons of Likud's founders) lost the internal elections and stayed out of Parliament after long and successful political careers. Finally, this process of transformation is shown also by Likud voters' views, as assessed by the seventh round of the European Social Survey. The data for Israel show that most Likud voters share the populist assumption that the current political system is impermeable to the people's will. When asked whether the people influence government, 60% gave negative answers (0–3 on a 0–10 scale) and a same proportion answered negatively to the question of whether politicians care about what people think. A slightly higher percentage, 63%, answered negatively to the question of whether the people can influ-

ence politics. Likud voters would like to reduce the gap between the elite and the common people, and 73% think the government should reduce differences in income levels. This ‘egalitarian’ aspiration, however, is reduced to the ‘native’ (Jewish) group, as almost 50% disagree (and only 12% agree) with the statement ‘government should be generous judging applications for refugee status’).

## CONCLUSIONS

Radical right populism is by no means the sole form of political radicalism in Israel. The most extreme—and violent—form of political radicalism is Jewish Orthodox nationalism, a political current from which have emerged violent extremists such as Yigal Amir, who murdered Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Baruch Goldstein, who murdered 29 Palestinians in Hebron. In another chapter in this book, Kristian Steiner analyses another form of religious radicalism, the Messianic Jews. However, radical right populism is the most extended form of political radicalism in Israel currently, and—as is this chapter’s main claim—it has undergone a process of mainstreaming. Several features of Israeli society explain the pervasiveness of populist movements and these movements’ tendency towards exclusionary patterns. First, the way in which social stratification is shaped by Israeli society’s heterogeneous, multicultural character (a significant Arab minority and the heterogeneity of its Jewish population), making for permanent conflicts about the inclusion/exclusion of certain social groups. Second, the most significant minority group, Israeli Arabs, belongs to a national collective with which the largest ethnic group is in conflict. This situation, as Cas Mudde argues, facilitates the emergence and strengthening of exclusionary populism (Mudde 2007). Third, secular Zionism was unable to substitute a territorial definition of ‘we the people’ for the religious, biological definition of Judaism (a Jew is the child of a Jewish mother), thence the tendency to conflate *demos* with *ethnos*, which facilitates the emergence of exclusionary populism.

Populism has thus been a constant presence in Israeli society for more than half a century. Under Begin’s leadership, Likud evolved from a radical nationalist minority party in the early 1950s (still under the name Herut) to the inclusive populist party (with a strong nationalist character) that won the 1977 election. In this way, it opened the way for the development of a populist habitus. When Avigdor Lieberman split from Likud in 1999 to form a radical right (exclusionary) populist party like its European

counterparts, he did not succeed in becoming the leader of the whole right-wing spectrum, but he was instrumental in the emergence of radical right populism. This type of populism is fast becoming a key factor in the political mainstream due to the transformation of Likud, the biggest party in Israel and the head of the governing coalition. As we saw, Likud has undergone a process of right-wing radicalization, adopting topics characteristic of political radicalism, such as a Manichean view of history and society, nativism and xenophobia, scapegoating the excluded other, manipulation through the politics of fear, and an authoritarian understanding of social order that aims to limit human rights, especially minority rights.

## NOTES

1. My choice to define radical right populism against liberal democracy is a descriptive rather than a normative approach. Since liberal democracy is the dominant way of implementing democratic ideas and right-wing populist parties want to challenge this order, it is against such domination that they can be considered radical. As the editors mention in their Introduction, radicalism today is defined as a departure from liberal democratic standards.
2. Amid the rich literature on populism, see Canovan (1981); Ionescu and Gellner (1969); Laclau (1977); Laclau (2005); Di Tella (1977); Germani (1978); and Mudde (2007).
3. Fascist and neofascist movements differ from radical right populism in that fascism does not rely on the interplay of the different meanings of the word 'people'. Instead, it reduces this notion to its organic, ethno-cultural meaning, and considers that the elite best represents the organic nature of the people.
4. Cas Mudde defines nativism as 'an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state' (Mudde 2007: 19).
5. While inclusion and exclusion take place in three different dimensions, this paper focuses only on the symbolic dimension.
6. The party platform depicts a vision for Israeli society as a 'pyramid with three levels. The base is security, namely, national, personal, economic, and educational security; the middle layer, the Jewish nature of the state of Israel and the connection with the Jewish people in the Diaspora; and the vertex, an efficient government regime'(Yisrael Beytenu, <http://www.beytenu.org/the-vision-of-yisrael-beytenu-israel-our-home-2/>, homepage).

7. Israel has never been a liberal democracy because the ethno-national nature of the citizenship regime and the prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territories have increasingly eroded the democratic system. Still, Lieberman's party represented a radical upheaval of this system.
8. Lieberman was among the first to support Binyamin Netanyahu in 1988, shortly after the latter returned from the USA and vied for a place in Likud's list for Parliament. When Netanyahu was elected head of Likud in 1992, he appointed Lieberman (until then a relatively obscure Likud activist) as the party's director-general. When Netanyahu became prime minister in 1996, Lieberman was appointed chief of staff. In 1999 he left Likud and created Yisrael Beytenu.
9. Survey conducted by the author and Udi Lebel in 2003.

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# Loving Violent Arabs: A Study of Radicalism Within the Israeli Messianic Movement

*Kristian Steiner and Anders P Lundberg*

## INTRODUCTION

Messianic Judaism is a religious movement espousing a largely evangelical theology, while adhering to a Jewish cultural heritage, including the observance and celebration of life-cycle events, the Sabbath, and the Jewish feasts (Kollontai 2004: 195). The present movement took shape in the United States in the 1960s, but it has a nineteenth-century British Hebrew Christian background (Cohn-Sherbok 2000: 68; Kollontai 2004: 195). A handful of Messianic Jewish families lived in what is now the State of Israel before its inception in 1948, and the first attempt to establish a Messianic congregation took place in 1925 (Cohen 2013: 107).

Traditional Judaism defines Messianic Jews as apostates (Cohn-Sherbok 2000: x–xi), and the movement has suffered persecution from Orthodox Jews (Cohn-Sherbok 2000: 79). Unconfirmed estimates put the number of Messianic Jews in Israel at between 6000 and 20,000 across 150 congregations, and that number is probably growing.

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This chapter presents a study of Israeli Messianic leaders' understanding of the current Middle Eastern conflicts. The two aims addressed are (1) to gain an understanding of how these leaders analyse and respond normatively to these conflicts, and (2) to approximate the extent to which their discourse can be understood as radical in relation both to Israeli mainstream politics and ideals and to the wider global context.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, we describe the three methodological steps undertaken in the study: selection of interviewees, interviews, and analysis of interviews and other available data. To meet the study's requirement of a representative selection of Israeli Messianic leaders to cover different segments within the movement, we first selected congregations of different ages and sizes, with different geographic, ethnic, and theological characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we interviewed leaders of smaller and larger evangelical and charismatic congregations founded before and after the Russian immigration of the 1990s in both urban and rural areas, in the north and in the south, and in the occupied territories. We also strived for representation across age and gender in the interviewees. In all, we interviewed 15 pastors and leaders who we believe reflect the movement's leadership. The fact that we could find only one female leader with a formal position might reveal the position of women within the movement.

The interviews were conducted on October 17–25, 2015, during a wave of violence sometimes called the Knife (or Stabbing) Intifada. Ergo, although we believe the selection of interviewees is representative, the timing and context were extraordinary:

1. Interviewee 1<sup>2</sup> is an Israeli-born Jew in his 50s, leading a Messianic congregation in one of the urban areas.
2. Interviewee 2<sup>3</sup> is an Israeli-born Jew in his 50s, leading a Messianic congregation in one of the urban areas.
3. Evan Thomas is a New Zealand-born Jew in his 60s, pastor of Beit Asaph in Netanya, one of the older Messianic congregations in the country.
4. Eitan Shishkoff is an American-born Jew in his 60s who moved with his wife to Israel around 1992 and started the first of several congregations in 1975. Shishkoff leads a congregation in Kiryat Yam, north of Haifa, and has published a book on Gentile-Jewish relations.

5. Sergei Bosharniko is a Ukrainian USSR-born Jew in his late 40s, leader of the congregation Ruach HaChayim in Nazareth Illit.
6. Eliav Levin is a Ukrainian USSR-born Jew in his early 40s, associate pastor at Ruach HaChayim in Nazareth Illit.
7. Yo-Yakim Figueras is an Israeli-born non-Jew in his 40s and leader of the congregation of Hasdey Yeshua in Arad.
8. Joseph Finkelstein is an American-born Jew in his 60s who made Aliyah<sup>4</sup> late in life. Finkelstein is co-leader with Figueras of Hasdey Yeshua in Arad.
9. David Ortiz is an American-born non-Jew in his 50s, and leader of the congregation Kehilat Ariel in the Ariel settlement on the West Bank. He is married to Leah Ortiz.
10. Leah Ortiz is an American-born Jew in her 50s who became a Messianic believer in the 1970s. She is currently associate leader of the congregation of Kehilat Ariel.
11. Liron Shany is an Israeli-born Jew in his late 30s and associate pastor in the congregation of Kehilat Haderech in Karmiel.
12. Ray Pritz is an American-born non-Jew in his late 60s who has been living with his family in Israel for many years. Pritz is one of the leaders of the congregation Kehilat Modi'in in Modi'in Illit.
13. Olavi Syväntö is a Finnish-born non-Jew in his 80s. Syväntö was one of the founders of the congregation of Nachalat Yeshua in Beer Sheva in the 1970s.
14. Howard Bass is an American-born Jew in his 60s and current leader of the congregation of Nachalat Yeshua in Beer Sheva.
15. David Lasoff is an American-born Messianic Jew in his 50s, teaching at the University of the Holy Land.

The interviews were semi-structured, using both pre-set questions and spontaneous follow-up questions (Bryman 2015). They covered issues related to the interviewees' faith and to the conflicts in the Middle East. If certain topics relevant to the study aims were not addressed by the interviewee, we followed up with precise, and sometimes controversial, questions. The interviews were held in English (in one case with the assistance of an interpreter), recorded, and transcribed (O'Reilly 2005: 175).

In our analysis, we take a hermeneutical approach (Silverman 2016), emphasizing how interviewees interpret phenomena around them in a meaning-making process. We apply internal triangulation to achieve validity in data gathering by probing with various sets of questions and by

combining data from the interviews with onsite observations, with books, booklets, and brochures published by the interviewees or their congregations, and with congregational websites (cf. O'Reilly 2005: 154; Seligmann 2005: 239). Our interviewees are public figures whose identities, except for two who wished to be anonymized, we have kept public.

## MESSIANIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN CONFLICTS

Our interviews concerning Messianic understandings of the conflicts in the Middle East touched upon six themes: (1) the meaning of peace, (2) the onset and essence of the Middle Eastern conflicts, (3) the character of Arabs, Muslims, and Islam, or Judaism and Israeli Jews, (4) the possibilities for, and obstacles to, regional and universal peace, (5) expected future developments in the Middle Eastern conflicts, and (6) morally acceptable responses to the conflicts, both as Messianic believers and as a nation. The discussion is therefore conceptual (theme 1), descriptive (themes 2 and 3), analytical (themes 4 and 5), and normative (theme 6).

### *The Meaning of Peace*

A few interviewees had a utopian and otherworldly understanding of peace, making it difficult for them to settle for imperfect political compromise. They seemed to expect peace, 'but', said Shany, 'it is not the peace that the world is talking about'; rather, peace is a state of complete harmony or 'unity' (Shany). This utopian understanding of peace is contrasted to political attempts to make peace in the Middle East, which are labelled 'false', 'temporary', 'a 'band-aid kind of peace', and 'not the kind of peace that Jesus says he gives us. It is the peace that the world will give' (Bass; cf. Shany).

God's peace is different: 'Jesus died on the cross and gave his blood. That is God's peace plan. Either you believe that, or [if] you don't believe, you don't have peace' (Bass). Interviewee 2 added:

Heavenly peace is having no enmity between you and God. And when you have no enmity between you and God, then God fights for you ... God brings the victory. If both of us have peace with God ... then we both have fellowship next to the feet of Christ. ... Real peace is having no enmity between us and God.

As we will see, this utopian understanding of peace has consequences for how these interviewees interpret practical work for peace and how they assess ethical responses to the conflicts.

### *The Onset and Essence of the Middle Eastern Conflicts*

In conversations about the onset and essence of the conflicts, almost all interviewees revealed a distinct nationalist Zionist historiography. About half the interviewees claimed that Jewish immigration to the region was divinely ordained. Sometimes their understanding of the conflict did not allow them to see the conflict from a Palestinian perspective. For instance, Shany seemed unaware of their situation, claiming that Israel used to treat Palestinians on the West Bank ‘as citizens or as people with equal rights’ and he could not understand the reasons behind the Second Intifada because ‘there was such harmony’.

In a Zionist vein, David Ortiz stated that ‘the land was empty’ before the Jews arrived and that Palestinians have roots outside of Israel, and Bass, Lasoff, Interviewee 1, and Syväntö maintained that Israel’s enemies were entirely responsible for the conflicts in 1948 and/or 1967. Interviewee 1 alleged the purpose of the Arab states in 1948 was to get the Jews out of this land and that the Palestinians do not want peace: ‘the Palestinians and the Arabs refused to resolve it’. Only two interviewees (Pritz and Thomas) questioned this Zionist narrative and believed responsibility for the current conflicts was shared.

When asked, most interviewees located the *onset* of the conflict in ancient history. The conflict supposedly started 1400 years ago, with the foundation of Islam (Interviewee 1), or even earlier ‘at the time of Abraham, and Isaac, and Ishmael’ (Bosharniko; cf. David Ortiz, Shany; Shishkoff;). In any case, ‘throughout the Bible history, the conflict has always been there’<sup>5</sup> (David Ortiz). Consequently, the conflict appears ‘endless’ (Bosharniko) and maybe permanent.<sup>6</sup>

The interviewees are divided on the *essence* of the conflicts; just as many (five interviewees) emphasized its *worldly* and human essence (i.e., social, national, political, and psychological factors), as its *spiritual*, even demonic and apocalyptic essence. Pritz and Thomas belong to the first category, believing (in Pritz’s words) that ‘Satan can probably take a vacation here; he doesn’t need to do much work, because it is being done for him’. Pritz and Thomas also claimed that Arab and Jewish actors share responsibility for the conflict, that ‘the violent acts were absolutely not limited to one

side or the other' (Pritz), and that the Arabs are frustrated and caught in an intractable 'spiral of violence' (Thomas). The conflict is defined as generally human and not as 'particularly specific to Jews and Arabs' (Pritz). Both Thomas and Pritz emphasize Jewish immigration during the second half of the nineteenth century as a propelling factor, making Arab groups feel threatened by Jewish purchase of land (Pritz; Thomas).

The five interviewees who thought the conflicts were essentially spiritual still this did not absolve Palestinians or Muslims from responsibility for the conflicts. A recurring idea in our data is that Muslims, and sometimes Christian Arabs, do not embrace the 'divine order' in which God gave the land to the Jews. To Bass, this refusal has led to an 'enmity over what eventually comes down to the inheritance' and this makes the Middle Eastern conflicts unique. Islam is particularly destructive in this respect, since it represents 'a driving force that is aimed to the elimination of the Jews from this land' (Interviewee 1). Islam thus, fosters a 'refusal to embrace God's plan ... for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live in this land' (Shishkoff; cf. Bass). And the fact of 'one son being chosen over the other for a position of greater privilege ... created a resentment we are still living with' (Shishkoff). All in all, 'until these two members of the family agree with Him, the Father, there is no peace' (Bass).<sup>7</sup>

For about half the interviewees, salvation history plays an important but varying role in their understanding of the spiritual essence of the conflict. In this logic, the conflict 'is not about land. It is not about holy sites. It is spiritual' (Shany). Their basic idea is that God will save humanity forever at the end of time and the Jewish people are one of God's tools in this endeavour. Regrettably, 'they [Muslims] want to divert, break God's plan. We are a part of this plan, so we are receiving the clashes... [there is] a war between the heavens' (Interviewee 2; cf. Bosharniko; Interviewee 1), and 'the spirit at work is against the Lord' (Bass), fighting 'against Judo-Christian biblical truth' (Interviewee 2).

For five of the interviewees, an alleged Muslim tendency to territorial dominance, primarily over Israel but in the long run over the entire world, is one such spiritual cause of the conflict. Apparently, 'the heart issue is Muslim domination over this land. And not just the West Bank and Gaza; it is Muslim domination over the whole Israel' (Interviewee 1). Thus, the conflict will be global in the end:

Islam is the mouth of the devil. ... Forget it, it will never be satisfied. When they are finished with us they will come to you. What do you think? You

spoke too much in Europe. You criticize Israel too much. So now God gave you a bonus; take all the refugees. You count one year, two years. And you will see a mosque under your house. And I want to see what you think about the problem. (Interviewee 2)

Lasoff has a clearer definition of the conflicts' spiritual essence. To him, Islamic *radicalization* is the problem:

We are living in a time where Islam is radicalized to the point where they openly advocate ... nobody stands up in a synagogue and says 'kill the Arabs', but it's okay in the mosque to stand up, hold a knife and say 'boys, stab the Jews'.

Later in the interview he modifies his position, claiming that 'there is a polarization on both sides. The middle is dying'.

Figueras summarizes one Messianic position well, stating that the spiritual essence of the conflict lies in Islam, since 'Islam is a religion of peace only if you are a Muslim', and that the core of Islam is violence:

The last words of Mohammed were 'You look for the Jews and for the Christians to kill them, and if you don't find them, the stones and the trees will tell you, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him'.

### *The Character of Israeli Jews, Arabs, Muslims, and Islam*

In our pursuit of Messianic understandings of the Middle East conflicts, we need to understand how the movement's leaders characterize the in-group and the out-group. Before turning to the analysis, a few general remarks about the data: first, in the interviews, remarks about the character of the out-group are much more prevalent than remarks about Israeli Jews. Interviewees focus mostly on Islam and Muslims, to some extent on Arabs in general, and rarely on Christian Arabs. Negative depictions dominate. Depictions of the in-group are rare, except for some negative depictions of Orthodox Jews, who can be considered an 'internal other'. The descriptions of the out-group are generally negative and often emerged in passing during description the conflicts or other issues, we rarely had to ask for characterizations of the out-groups *per se*. Two interviewees, Thomas and Pritz, deviated clearly from negative depiction of Muslims

and two other interviewees also avoided negative depictions of Muslims and Arabs.<sup>8</sup>

The most recurrent characteristic ascribed to the out-group is *violence*. Most of the interviewees, at least initially, try to uphold a distinction between Islam's violent creeds and Muslims, with whom they claim to maintain good relations and, in one case, even claim to love (Interviewee 1). Declarations of love and good relations, however, are often followed by exclamations such as 'Islam is evil. Islam is an evil religion' and 'it is not the people, it is Islam. And with Islam they say again and again they want to destroy you' (Shany).

The separation between the creed and its followers is not systematic. In Shany's utterance above it is unclear whether 'they' refers to Islam (in that case it should have been an 'it'), or to Muslims. Moreover, it is believed that spiritual forces behind Islam influence its followers:

There is the people and there is their religion. And behind the religion there are spiritual forces acting. Okay? ... Islam is a problem for the whole world, not just for the Middle East. And you begin to sense it in Europe now. (Interviewee 1)

Thus, what Europe is allegedly experiencing is not a creed, but Muslim behaviour caused by spiritual forces. Ergo, Islam is something more than a creed, it is a spiritual force. Under this force, Muslims do not have the full capacity to ethically reflect on Islamic values, as followers of other ideologies supposedly do.

Despite their declared concern for Arabs, at least one interviewee seems to have very little tolerance for Arab criminality or violence:

I do believe that we not should hate the Arabs. ... If a person was born here and lives here it is his place, exactly as it is mine. And I should deal with him as a citizen. On the other hand, this person needs to respect the land and love the land, respect the authority, and go to the army or go to the civil service. If you hold democracy in one hand and in the other hand a gun, I would volunteer to put a bullet in his head. I am sorry and that is because he is a criminal and a criminal is a criminal, regardless if it is a Jew or Gentile. (Interviewee 2)

And according to some interviewees, blood (Interviewee 2), 'blood-lust' (Shishkoff), and ISIS are illustrations of Islam in general and of core Islamic values:



Interviewee 2: Frankly what is ISIS? It is a fundamental Islam. This is the clean Islam. This is Islam as it is written. Without the Shiites and other things. This is the netto Islam. See what we have? Heads all over.

Interviewer: So, the core of Islam is blood?

Interviewee 2: Absolutely yes. What is Islam mean in Arabic? Surrender. And if not, then you will be in two pieces. That's it. That is not Christianity. That is not Judaism.

David Ortiz also blurred the line between Islamic violence and Muslims. According to him, 'moderate Islam is not very appealing to Muslims' and the Taliban and ISIS are 'the kind of Islam a Muslim wants to die for'. Other forms are 'phony Islam'. He also generalized the 'Muslim mentality' as a death cult, and alleged that dying, as well as killing, is an integral component of Muslim identity. Muslims, David Ortiz said, do not think they have anything to live for, and instead focus on what they can die for. 'What am I going to die for today? What is worth dying for? Am I going to go to the checkpoint? And pull a knife at a soldier. Maybe that's worth dying for'.

This allegedly violent character was also reflected in the depiction of the conflicts. We were told that Arabs states started the conflicts in the Middle East (Lasoff; Interviewee 1; Shishkoff), and unlike Israel, they have not been constructive in trying to solve them (Figueras; Shany; Shishkoff) or the situation of the Palestinian refugees (Interviewee 1). Moreover, when Islam did make peace, it was construed a mere tactic, since Islam 'says you have to kill, eventually. Maybe right now, we will stay low until we get the power' (Figueras). Because of this Islamic character, we cannot expect real compromise: 'To kill all the Jews and make this an Arab place, and then the problem would go away. That is the solution for many Arabs' (Lasoff). Lasoff also contrasted a peaceful rational 'us' to an irrational violent 'them':

We are a civil society in Israel, and you are a civil society in your country. We can talk to you, and we can talk to Britain, we can talk to the United States about our differences. But we are not going to pull out a gun and go to war with you because we see things differently from you. We are in the West, where the West is the rule of law. That is *not* the game they are playing.

Shishkoff maintained the reason for this is probably 'the Palestinian viewpoint, being "no, you guys don't belong here. And you have ripped off the land from us"'. The Palestinians and/or their leadership were also said

to have been very unconstructive in the peace process. ‘Whenever we offered a solution, they started a new upraise [sic] or a new problem’ (Shany), and every Israeli retreat is supposed to have been met with aggression.

This violent Muslim attitude is allegedly perpetuated through childrearing. We were repeatedly told that Palestinian parents (Lasoff; Shany; Shishkoff) and schools (David Ortiz; Shany) teach their children to kill and hate Jews:

Her [13-year-old stabbing girl] parents did not beg them to stay at home. No, they go: ‘be a *shahid*, be a martyr’. They think it is according to Islam; it is love because their children will get 70 virgins in heaven. I don’t know. (Shany)

Another repeatedly stated Islamic characteristic is *expansionism*, sometimes violent, and *dominance*. Allegedly Islam took the Middle East by the sword without ‘discourse’ (Interviewee 1). And after they conquer, Islam ‘just takes a dominant role, a superior role. I am a *dhimmi*,<sup>9</sup> and the rest of the Jews are’ (Finkelstein). And this attitude still prevails, ‘there is no end. Islam will claim the whole world’ (Bass; cf. Interviewee 2) since ‘it is in their religion to take over whatever’ (Interviewee 1). Moreover, Muslims in Europe, unlike other immigrants, also allegedly seek power. They are

interested in becoming a parliament member and being the Prime minister. In Islam, you don’t think in stages ... In the city council, I want to make decisions in the community. ‘How long have you been in Sweden?’ ‘Two weeks. I want to make decisions’. (David Ortiz)

Muslims supposedly have a few manipulative strategies for these ends. They use their mosques (David Ortiz), they use ‘flattery’, ‘intermarriage’, and ‘if those things don’t work, then comes terror, but it’s the last resort’ (David Ortiz).

Palestinian *corruption* and *lack of democracy* are two additional characteristics appearing in our data (from six interviewees). Allegedly the goal of the Palestinian leaders is never to ‘make a good life for their people. If you use your people as a shield in war, to me that’s not like you’re really seeking a good life for your people’ (Shishkoff). One telling example was when one interviewee was asked whether he prayed for justice. Without answering the question, he began lamenting Palestinian corruption:

The amount of money they receive from the world ..., since the last peace accord, is larger than the whole than the entire European continent [sic]. It is huge amount of money. They could have used that money for good things. (Shany)

Still a few of the interviewees could see one positive outcome of this mismanagement: ‘right now, you see more and more Christian Arabs [in Israel] siding with Israel’ (Figueras). Sometimes it was difficult for the interviewees to distinguish not only between Islam and Muslims but also between Islam and Arabs. For instance, David Ortiz not only claimed that ‘Islam sees the democratic government as against God’ but also underlined that ‘there is no democratic system in the whole Arabic world’.

As we already have seen, Arabs and Muslims were repeatedly depicted as morally inferior. A few interviewees even characterized them as intellectually inferior. David Ortiz stated that Muslims are ‘primitive’ while we ‘are people of science, of culture, mathematics’, ‘we are up here, and they are down there’. ‘We’ must ‘come down to his level’ in order to reach him: ‘For I am waiting for him to come to *my* level, which is so much higher’ (David Ortiz). In a different interview, the interviewer (Steiner) told Interviewee 2 how Christian Zionism often contrasts successful, talented Jews to backsliding and undemocratic Arabs. Initially the interviewee was reluctant to use such depictions, but he did not deny their empirical validity: ‘Very few Muslims are Nobel Prize laureates; they are not a blessing to the rest of the society as [are] Jews or Christians’, and he concluded:

You cannot argue with the facts ... that this religion does not encourage the blessings that the Judeo-Christianity encourages. If you take a black person who believes in Judeo-Christian foundation, you will have a million better results rather than you take the same black person or yellow or white whatever, who upholds Islam according to what is written. (Interviewee 2)

Related to this issue is the interviewees’ depiction of Arab and Muslim *self-image*. In this case, attitudes diverged. Some interviewees thought that Islam sees itself as superior (Figueras) and does not accept ‘infidels’ as equals (Interviewee 1). Bosharniko, on the other hand, claimed that Arabs could now see their own inferiority clearly; as Israel’s economy grows, the gap between Israel and its neighbouring countries increases, and they are ‘really jealous’. This jealousy he said started with Ishmael, and ‘if he was not that jealous and had done what God told him to do, there would be no problems at all’ (Bosharniko).

Finally, the interviewees were asked whether Islam could be reformed. Only one explicitly said no and depicted Islam as *static*:

I think in the heart of it, it cannot be reformed ... As a whole, if you look at the history of Islam, the amount of wars and battles it has against Western civilizations and Christianity, it is in the hundreds. It is not something new. (Interviewee 1)

Still, since most interviewees depicted the conflict as permanent, there was an implicit tendency to suggest that Arabs and Muslims do not change because their conflict behaviour remains the same.

In all the interviews, we found very few descriptions of Jews, Israel, and the Messianic group in particular, although we tried to gather this kind of information. This is not exceptional. Negative identity formation is universal; it is often easier to create an identity by contrasting oneself against the other. Occasionally the interviewees gave Bible-based depictions of Jews as world improvers (Bass), messengers people (Shishkoff), and a blessed (Bosharniko), but very seldom *explicitly* depicted Jews in real life. More commonly we saw a clear strategy to *implicitly* depict Israel as innocent and ethical. A clear strategy was to *marginalize* any unethical Israeli actions by defining them as atypical<sup>10</sup> or to *contextualize* Israeli violence.

Orthodox Judaism was an exception to that rule, and was repeatedly depicted negatively. One interviewee claimed that these Jews ‘actually worship idols’ (Shany), but more commonly, Orthodox Jews were said to persecute Messianic Jews. Some interviewees had experienced weekly demonstrations outside their homes or congregations (Bass; Figueras). Eliav Levin, associate pastor in Nazareth Illit, had his car burnt up. David Ortiz and his family were subjected to a terror attack carried out by an Orthodox Jew, when a bomb almost killed his son. David Ortiz also described violence carried out by Orthodox Jews during street evangelization. ‘They are trying to discredit us in every way that they can’. Still, none of the interviewees described Orthodox behaviour as typically Jewish or originating from Jewish culture, religion, or values. Thus, their behaviour was marginalized within Judaism.

We found a few cases where (potentially) immoral behaviour was given an explanatory context. In one case, Bass described how during his first visits to Israel, he found Israelis to be impolite and rough, and even to live in sin. Still, he immediately contextualized their behaviour, depicting it as an effect of the pressure they experienced living under constant death

threats. Likewise, Shishkoff described how civilians ‘are beginning to carry weapons’, but allegedly only to defend themselves. He called this ‘some upsetting trends’, but considered that the conflictual context made it ‘very logical’ (Shishkoff). Lastly, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) had undeniably been killing large numbers of civilian Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, but again because of the context, Israel was not to be blamed:

OS: There is *no* room for manoeuvre. They are using the mosques, they are using schools they are using hospitals, they are using civilian homes. To shoot from. There is no ... whatever you do it is a lose-lose situation, for them and for us. Because we hold ourselves from retaliating, and eventually you have to put a stop to it, so it is a scenario every few years, there’s a big operation in Gaza, a lot of people are getting killed on both sides, you know, and they would do it again. How to fight? This is not a tank against tanks or airplanes against airplanes or soldier against soldier.

In fact, the interviewees never depict Israel, Jews, or Israelis in general as inherently violent. Shishkoff believed that the ‘desire of the *vast* majority of Israeli citizens, from *all* kind of political persuasions, is for peace’. Israel could compromise and did not want to occupy or colonize the West Bank (Shishkoff). In fact, ‘Israel has continued to make shipments of aid [to the Gaza Strip], and not to cut off electricity and water, things that are necessary for life’ (Shishkoff). All in all, ‘there is no blood lust in the religion or culture of Israel’ (Shishkoff). On the contrary, ‘Israel has tried to engage in peace’ (Interviewee 1).

These values are also manifested in Israeli and Jewish behaviour. Through childrearing, Israel was said to consciously pass on these peaceful values to coming generations through the educational system: ‘We are taught in school is love your enemy. Love the Arabs. ... You know it is a very humanistic and very peace-oriented way of thinking in the education’ (Shany). Likewise, the IDF are depicted as disciplined and ethical, with its primary problem possibly its leniency towards Palestinians: ‘The fire opening regulations are so strict. Israel is so afraid what the media and the world will say that it actually risks the life of the soldiers’ (Shany). Three interviewees also claimed that Israeli governments have reached out for peace with the Palestinians, but in vain (Finkelstein; Interviewee 1; Shany).

The Messianic movement, finally, was given few, but always positive, characteristics. We were told that ‘among the Messianic believers, I don’t find anyone who hates the Arabs or the Palestinians. They all talk about forgiving the Palestinians’ (David Ortiz), without indicating any thought

of asking for forgiveness themselves. Some interviewees also emphasized having Muslim or Bedouin friends (David Ortiz; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2), and said that Arabs are welcome to join or visit their congregations. Interviewee 1, before he became a believer, was impressed by Messianic Jews who had the capacity to love ‘even Arabs’.

### *Possibilities for, and Obstacles to, Peace*

All our interviewees saw major obstacles to peace, although this pessimism was expressed to various degrees and for various reasons, often reflecting how the interviewees defined the essence of the conflict and the character the enemy.

Almost half the interviewees emphasized secular obstacles to peace more than spiritual ones. Pritz and Thomas not only focused on secular obstacles to peace, they also divided the responsibility for the gloomy future between Israel and various Arab and Muslim actors. Thomas saw a ‘zero-sum mentality’ on both sides and a lack of the leadership that would

...have the courage to force the nation to sit down in ways that change this course from zero-sum mentality into looking for ways of a win-win solution in various areas of the conflict. So right now, we do not have those peoples.  
(Thomas)

Pritz echoed Thomas, saying ‘I think there needs to be a change of mind-set’, and did not believe peace was possible unless ‘there come forward leaders who are more interested in peace than they are in maintaining their own image and their own power’. But Pritz saw no willingness to compromise, and Thomas could not see ‘a real will on either side to resolve the conflict, [nor a] will to compromise to such an extent that would pave the way for common ground’, possibly, as Pritz put it, because politicians feel they have to respond to violence from the other side, or risk not being re-elected.

Thomas and Pritz also pointed out religion as an obstacle to peace, but as a social and immanent phenomenon, not a demonic force. Religion, Thomas said, complicates compromise as several actors claim that their demands are divine and have the power to create clear symbols (Thomas) and to polarize (Pritz).

Most interviewees, however, either mixed worldly and spiritual reasons for the conflict or emphasized spiritual ones, and all, except Thomas and

Pritz, saw the Arab/Muslim camp as the main obstacle to peace. One alleged worldly reason for the conflict was Palestinian and Muslim anti-peace norms. These norms included a refusal to let the Jewish people live in Israel, and, as Shishkoff put it, ‘you can’t create self-rule with people who are determined to destroy you’. Allegedly, Palestinians and/or Muslims have no willingness to compromise, nor any willingness to lay down their arms (Shishkoff). The Muslim leadership and Islam were said to play central roles in forming such uncompromising norms. The Muslim leaders ‘want to keep the Palestinian problem always alive. Because it serves their interests’ and ‘Islam does not want peace. It will never, it can never happen’ since ‘Islam does not want Judaism existing at all. Especially not in the land’ (Shany). It ‘is an insult [to Islam] that Jewish people are living here’ (Shishkoff). Muslims may tolerate Jews as long as the Jews live under Muslim rule as second-class citizens (David Ortiz; Interviewee 1), but never accept peace if it implies a Jewish state (Bass). ‘Therefore... you cannot solve it with “okay, I give you a territory” or “okay, I give you autonomy”’ (Interviewee 2).

This uncompromising attitude makes the conflict incomprehensible for the Western world since it cannot understand the ‘fanatic driving force behind the Islamic that refuses to accept us back in the land of our fathers’ (Interviewee 1). Ergo, a peace deal to a Muslim would contradict core teaching:

If you are Muslim, what hope does it give you to make peace with someone that your religion says you have to kill? Eventually, maybe right now, we will stay low until we get the power. This is what your religion tells you in the end. So, in that sense, I am very pessimistic. (Figueras)

Seven interviewees claimed that the hegemony of such anti-peace norms was perpetuated because Palestinians, mainly children, were continuously brainwashed and indoctrinated to commit violence against Israelis (Figueras; David Ortiz) and to hate Israel and Jews (Interviewee 1):

The problem is that the teaching, from cradle to the grave, if you look at the teachings of the Quran, you see how the young people are being raised in the schools, and what they are getting in the mosques, and what they get in their homes, and what they get in the media. It is very, very difficult (Finkelstein).

At least five interviewees state that the Middle Eastern conflicts are spiritual or even demonic (Bass; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2; Shany;

Shishkoff). This interpretation stems from a fatalistic theology called salvation history. Its basic idea is that Israel is God's tool in the salvation of the earth. Since Israel is so important to God, it is 'always in the focus of Satan'. Thus, the closer we get to the redemption of the world, the harder Satan will work to thwart God's plan. Ergo, the conflicts in the Middle East will have to escalate before the return of Christ. Unsurprisingly, Shany did not think *any* peace agreement would work, since 'Satan is fighting as hard as he can to prevent all these prophecies from being fulfilled'. Ergo, 'there will be no peace between Jews and Arabs and there will be no peace between ... no true peace between people before the Messiah comes' (Shany). According to this theology, the Jews must reside in Jerusalem and believe in Christ at His return, and this is what Satan is trying to prevent (Shany).

Finally, some interviewees saw a possible way to peace through the mass-conversion of Muslim Arabs and Jews to Christianity, since 'without Jesus there is no hope' (Bosharniko), and Jews and Arabs would have a 'joint basis' in Christ (Shany). 'Unity can only come in Christ' (Shany). But salvation through Christ is not sufficient; it is also required that Arabs adopt a Christian Zionist theology stating that Jews are the chosen people and that God's promises were given to the Jewish people (Bosharniko).

### *The Future of the Middle Eastern Conflicts*

The interviewees were not only pessimistic about the chances for peace. All of them also pictured a future worse than the present, with even more violence. A few also expected the political isolation of Israel. Those interviewees who emphasized a spiritual force in the Middle Eastern conflicts also foresaw the apocalypse or Armageddon, and some of them mentioned the risk of a false peace under the Antichrist.

Bosharniko, Lasoff, Thomas, Pritz, and possibly Figueras were the most reluctant to elaborate on the future in *prophetic* terms. They were pessimists though, but for immanent political reasons. Thomas thought 'the future, the forecast of it, is extremely bleak' and Pritz was 'not too optimistic that it will be possible to reach some sort of political arrangement where everyone is happy'. On the contrary, Pritz predicted a growth of the 'right-wing on both sides. ... And it ... is not ready to stop yet'. Still, Pritz hoped for 'a reaction, back towards the centre' where



people ‘are less radical in their world view, or their national view’. Figueras, too, was pessimistic for political reasons and concerned that Iran’s atomic capability, combined with the collapse of some Arab states and their subsequent Islamization, might pose an imminent security threat for Israel.

Five interviewees formulated spiritual ideas about escalation of violence and the apocalypse, and thus saw no peace before the return of Christ (Bass; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2; Shany; Shishkoff). Possibly, ‘we are right now in a paradise compared to what will happen’ (Interviewee 2). There might be shorter peaceful periods, but sooner or later ‘it will always explode. There is always this tension’ and it will always be ‘very volatile’ (Shany). Some interviewees expressed these notions spontaneously, others emphasized other issues as more vital and described their ideas about the future only after being asked.<sup>11</sup>

Five interviewees also foresaw the future political isolation of Israel before the apocalypse. ‘God will bring all the nations against Jerusalem, and Islam is stirring up all the nations against Israel’ (Bass; cf. Bosharniko); ‘a spirit against the Lord is at work’ (Bass). Bass, Interviewee 2, and Shany believed that devastating bloodshed would come at Armageddon, where ‘many Jews are going to die (Bass)’. One Messianic leader, interviewee 2, was more verbal and explicit. He believed the conflicts would escalate ‘because that is what the Bible speaks of, the tribulation time and so on’ and continued:

Within seven years about two thirds of all the population of the world will be dead. In today’s number, it’s something above five billion people. Above five billion people! Can you understand it? It is five thousand million ... God fights against his enemies. Their blood will stream from Megiddo to the desert. Three hundred kilometres. In the level of the mouth of the horse, one point two or one point one metres. That is what it is. God will crush all the enemies who come against him just before his return. (Interviewee 2)

This immense bloodshed will also affect Israeli Jews:

At the end of the tribulation, one third will be left. That will be all Israel. That is why it is said that all Israel will be saved. In Romans 26 it is talking about the third that is left over now. This last third will now be the one hundred percent. (Interviewee 2)

*Ethically Acceptable Responses*

Interviewees were asked to describe ethically acceptable responses to the conflicts, and envisaged responses were all consistent with their analyses of the conflicts. We found a variety of arguments, all of which argued against making peace. First, most interviewees (with Pritz and Thomas being the clear exceptions) would not actively work for peace, since they understood such work as ‘humanistic’ (Shany), unspiritual, or (more frequently) a hopeless endeavour in this age (Bass; Bosharniko; Figueras; Finkelstein; Shishkoff) leading to no lasting solutions (Bass; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2). On the contrary, such efforts might contribute to

a false peace, because that is what the Bible says. ... The Bible is teaching us that there will be peace in the future. ... If Christ is not absolutely as the Bible describes him, there’s only false peace. [Later in the interview:] You see, it’s a deal of a peace that will bring out the worst war ever. So, Antichrist ... will come, enforce a covenant with many according to Daniel 9:27. And many will enter into this peace thinking that he is the Messiah. Wow. He will bring peace, he will restore the temple, he will bring the Jews to the land. (Interviewee 2)

Second, none of the interviewees<sup>12</sup> suggested territorial concessions as their first choice. Almost all were fiery opponents of territorial concessions and a Palestinian state,<sup>13</sup> and might exclaim like Bosharniko that ‘we should not give up anything’. One argument against territorial concessions was simply that God had said so: he wanted Israel to be managers of the whole land (David Ortiz) and gave specific territorial promises to the Jews (Shany) and its tribes (Figueras), and the promised territory is ‘bigger than the land is now’ (Bass). Some interviewees went further and claimed that politicians who make territorial concessions will be punished since ‘God will judge those who divide his land’ (Bass), or as Interviewee 2 put it: ‘if someone fights against it [God’s sovereign decision], it is a problem with God’. Syväntö came to the same conclusion by inference: dividing Jerusalem must be against God’s will, since ‘Jesus will not return to a Muslim Jerusalem. ... It will be in Jewish hands, according to the Lord’s promises’. Moreover, dividing the land is futile. ‘A two-state solution sounds good. ... But since 1995 the Palestinians have proved that you can’t trust them’ (Interviewee 1), a Palestinian state would be Islamist and ‘will not bring peace’ (Bass; cf. Shany), and territorial concessions will not give peace: this is a leftist illusion (Figueras).

A third argument against peace was that Palestinians are not entitled to statehood or to the land, either because they are not a true ethnic group with a clear identity (Interviewee 1) or because the land was historically taken by force by Muslims (Interviewee 1). A fourth argument, tainted with colonial attitudes, is that territorial concessions followed by the establishment of a Palestinian state, will *not* be beneficial for Palestinians. The interviewees underlined three main reasons for this: (1) lower salaries and other benefits (David Ortiz), (2) Palestinian corruption (David Ortiz), and (3) no freedom of religion for Christians (Bass; Shany). Allegedly, many Arabs do not trust the Palestinian government (Lasoff) and Arab Christians ‘know that they are much better off under Israeli sovereignty than under any other Muslim sovereignty’ (Shany). And among Palestinian Christians in Israel within its recognized borders

you see more and more Christian Arabs siding with Israel, saying ‘Okay, we are going to send our children to the Israeli military, because we need to take sides in what is happening here in Israel. What will happen when the Muslims will attack us in Nazareth? We want to be part of that thing that is called the State of Israel’. (Figueras)

Bosharniko concludes:

Most of the people who live there on the West Bank and in Gaza, they want to live peacefully and quietly. They do not want the terrorists to be there. .... They want the Israeli army to come back. They really like that. They dream about it. I know that for sure. ...this is what the simple people think. (Bosharniko)

Neither human rights nor justice for Palestinians were central to mainstream Messianic ethics, although some interviewees paid lip service to them (Bass; Shishkoff). Most saw (only in theory, and with several reservations) Palestinians Israeli citizenship as a way to give them full rights (Bosharniko; Lasoff; Interviewee 1; Pritz; Thomas). When Shany was asked how he prays for Palestinians on the West Bank, he gave a spiritual answer: ‘My heart’s yearning is... that we will have unity in Christ’. He denied praying that the IDF would treat Palestinians fairly: ‘I do not pray about how Israel should treat the West Bank. It is not in my prayers. I pray for the salvation of the people’. When asked if he prays for justice, Shany gave an evasive answer: ‘For God’s justice. For God’s will to be done’.

All interviewees were devoted Zionists, believing in the right of the Jews to 'return' to Israel. A few would even claim that 'when the Jews are in the Diaspora, that is not their natural place. Their natural place is Israel ... their real place is here. It's not natural for the Jewish people to be abroad' (Figueras). However, none of the Messianic leaders saw it as a congregational obligation to finance or otherwise facilitate Jewish Aliyah. 'I would not put it as a priority' (Interviewee 2; cf. Bass; David Ortiz; Interviewee 1; Shany). 'God is going to do it' (David Ortiz), so it is not a mission for the believer. Although no congregation collected money to help Jews immigrate, almost all congregations helped needy, often immigrant, Jews.

It seemed that a one-state solution was the priority for all interviewees, including Thomas and Pritz. Still, Pritz had an entirely different approach from the rest based upon a radically different theology. To him the 'return' of the Jews is foretold in Scripture, but neither Jewish sovereignty nor statehood is. Pritz preferred a one-state solution, but not a *Jewish* state, admitting that this idea is controversial and calling himself 'extremist'. Thomas appeared unprepared for the question of whether he preferred a one- or a two-state solution; only after a somewhat hesitant discussion did he seem to favour a one-state solution, although he remained open to the other option. Thomas believed that Israel should not be an ethnic Jewish state, but a state for all its inhabitants. Moreover:

My personal preference would not be to create an independent state of Palestine ... but to incorporate the Palestinian peoples in the State of Israel. Make them Israeli citizens, providing for them all the facilities from education and everything. (Thomas)

Bosharniko and Lasoff took an intermediate position between Pritz/Thomas and those who saw Israel as a Jewish state. Bosharniko seemed to imagine a future when all Palestinians, with a few reservations, were citizens and would 'go to the army'. The discussion, however, revealed that Bosharniko was not aware of the demographic effects of such a measure; that incorporating the entire Palestinian population would jeopardize Israel's Jewish character and dominance. Lasoff, although he was aware of the demographic effects, still advocated giving the Palestinians Israeli citizenship, although possibly restricting them to living in 'cantons'. Neither the Jewish character of Israel nor Jewish dominance was important to him. What mattered was that Israel always remains 'the state of refuge for the Jews' (Lasoff).

Surprisingly, the remaining interviewees seemed to have only vague ideas about what should happen to Palestinians in a greater Israel. Most appeared unprepared or hesitant to discuss the matter, as if they had never reflected on the question. To some, the question was sensitive (Bass).

Most interviewees seemed able to imagine all Palestinians becoming Israeli citizens, but they cited so many reservations that this solution became highly improbable. Interviewee 1, for example, said his 'heart's desire' was to see Palestinians treated equally, but only on condition that Palestinians be willing to live in a Jewish state, under Israeli laws. And since he believed such willingness to be absent, he seemed finally to lean towards the status quo, that is, continued occupation. Shishkoff also struggled with the question: 'Within my life experience I have a passion for the equality of human beings. That is unquestionably part of what drives me'. Shishkoff was also aware of the demographic effects that including all the Palestinians in Israel would imply: '[There would] theoretically be so many Arab citizens of Israel that the nature of the state would change'. In the end, his solution was 'self-rule' without citizenship (Shishkoff). Finkelstein and Figueras, who were interviewed together, agreed with Shishkoff's idea. They also realized the contradiction in trying to combine democracy with a greater *Jewish* Israel:

Do you want to get all the Palestinians on the left side of the Jordan to become Israeli citizens? Okay, then you are not left with a Jewish democratic state. Maybe with a democratic state, but I believe when the Arabs have enough power, the Jews will not be around here. (Figueras)

Later in the interview, Finkelstein and Figueras explicitly rejected citizenship for Palestinians on the West Bank, 'because that would be the end of the Jewish state' (Finkelstein). When these two interviewees were asked whether this solution, annexing the West Bank without accompanying citizenship for its inhabitants, would not resemble apartheid, Figueras suggested a limited Palestinian self-rule, but reiterated that 'biblically, I think the land belongs to Israel, to the Jewish people' (Figueras). Still, he adds:

I would try to give the Palestinian population as much freedom to govern themselves, to decide for themselves, to feel as less friction with the Israeli army as possible. As much honour as human beings as possible. (Figueras)

Figueras also restricted this self-rule to what he believed to be possible, a temporary condition, since God would eventually give the Jews the entire land.

Most interviewees narrowly limited the role or calling of believers in the conflict. Because the conflict cannot be solved and humanity cannot be reformed on its own, most of the interviewees saw prayer and evangelization as God's primary commandments. One interviewee explicitly set evangelization against promoting peace, saying that 'we have a gospel to take to the people so they can get saved. To try to promote any peace agreement will be unsatisfactory in any way' (Bass). Other interviewees claimed that we should 'manifest the life of Yeshua' (Shishkoff), pray, since prayer is the key to 'church-growth' (Bosharniko), and to 'share the gospel wherever we can' (Leah Ortiz; cf. Bass Interviewee 2; Shishkoff), to give people peace with God and save them from God's wrath (Bass), telling them that 'Jesus is coming soon, that he saves' (David Ortiz). Ergo, 'we should all teach, preach, and evangelize' (Shany).

This reluctance to believe in political peace does not imply passivity. In addition to spreading the gospel, grass-roots work for reconciliation with Arabs and humanitarian aid for immigrants were also seen as commendable. Some interviewees said that they actively tried to live in harmony with Arab Christian believers (Interviewee 1; Shany) and to welcome Arabs to their congregations (Figueras). They also tried to live in peace with Palestinians and prayed for Palestinians during Israeli military operations (Interviewee 1). Unlike political peace, grass-roots work was thought to be meaningful. Or in Figueras words: 'What is in your garden? Take care of the garden around you. Do something good to the Bedouins here outside, show my face to the ultraorthodox Jew that hates you because you are a believer' (Figueras). To a limited extent, these ideas materialized in active peace work with a limited relationship at the leaders' level between Messianic Jews and evangelical Palestinians. One example mentioned a few times was the Masters' programme at Israel College on the Bible in Netanya, with 50% Israeli Arab and 50% Jewish students (Interviewee 2; Shany; Thomas). In northern Galilee, where Arabs had Israeli citizenship and the relationship between Arabs and Jews was better, prayer meetings were organized. Only one interviewee, though, mentioned the work done by Musalaha, an evangelical organization promoting reconciliation between Arabs and Jews.

As on several other issues, Pritz and Thomas deviated from the Messianic Jewish mainstream regarding individual political measures. They also seemed to deviate on 'land theology' (the meaning of the Holy Land in

God's universal plan of salvation). Pritz expressed his concern about the spread and increasing prominence of nationalism in the Messianic movement, and Thomas clearly distanced his congregation from land theology. While mainstream Messianic Judaism seemed to see a contradiction between evangelization and political work for peace, Pritz described another view:

I believe that the commands that we have are timeless. ... The commands that we have are to be peacemakers ... 'ministers of reconciliation', and to be first and foremost servants of the good news. ... I think that the believer should be focusing more on their own values, the Bible's values for us. And if we will live that out, I think it will influence what goes on around us. ... I am very concerned, concerned means worried, about the tendency that I see among (Messianic) believers today, in the country, to be quite polarized, and to be far more political than we *should* be.

One last subtheme concerned attitudes to violence within the Messianic leadership. None of the interviewees were pacifists, and all who had the legal duty to serve in the IDF had done so. Only one interviewee, Thomas,<sup>14</sup> hesitated. All were Zionists and considered its military operations necessary. This means that almost all interviewees understood violence as necessary to the protection of Israel, but *none* of the interviewees suggested using violence to further God's purpose in salvation history or to hasten the apocalypse and the end of history. Most importantly, since the state of Israel is legitimate in the eyes of the Israeli Messianic leaders, there were no indications that they supported unlawful violent actions or any kind of violence outside IDF's chain of command.

### RADICALISM WITHIN THE ISRAELI MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

It is frequently stated that 'radicalization has ... no obvious essential or inherent characteristics' (c.f. Introduction in this volume), but can be only understood in context. In this section, we develop three reference points based upon the discussion in the introduction and assess the extent to which interviewees articulated radical positions in relation to:<sup>15</sup>

1. The contemporary Israeli mainstream (socio-political *mainstream*);
2. Human rights standards and Enlightenment principles (*visual focus* of observer's observation);
3. International Christian Zionism (*larger context* of globalized politics).

In the first part of this section, we establish an Israeli mainstream to assess whether the Messianic movement can be labelled ‘radical’ in the Israeli context. In the second part, we introduce absolute observation criteria (as discussed in our Introduction) called ‘the superior viewpoint of human rights’ against which we measure radicalization. The positions of the Israeli Messianic movement might not be interpreted as radical against the background of Israeli socio-political mainstream positions, but using human rights and political principles derived from typical Enlightenment principles (such as tolerance, freedom of religion, separation of powers, and human agency) as a reference point might give us a different result. In the last part of this discussion, we assess Messianic radicalization not in relation to ‘global political settings’ but to an international evangelical and Christian Zionist setting.

Finally, although we stressed in the introduction the importance of studying both the cognitive/ideological and the behavioural aspects of radicalization, we will not address the behavioural aspect of radicalization in the Messianic movement because no such data exists for that discussion: the interviewees did not ever suggest, support, or legitimize any illegal violence.

### *Contemporary Israeli Mainstream as a Point of Reference*

In 2013–2015 Israeli politics took a turn towards the right. A major step in this direction was Likud’s transformation into a radical right populist party after its 2012 merger with Avigdor Lieberman’s extremist party, Yisrael Beiteinu Beytenu,<sup>16</sup> which led to the mainstreaming of Lieberman’s extremism (see Filc, Chap. 5 in this volume). Another step was Likud’s choice of coalition partners after the elections in 2015. At that point, Likud was the biggest party in the Knesset, but lacked a majority. Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of Likud and Prime Minister, chose to build a coalition with ‘several smaller center- and far-right parties’ (Benn 2016: 22) instead of searching for a centrist coalition partner, and thus began the mainstreaming of right-wing extremism in Israel (Benn 2016: 24ff). But does the leadership of the Israeli Messianic movement articulate a radical ideology in the context of the extreme right-wing ideology of mainstream Israeli politics?

To examine this question, we identify the discourses of the Likud party and the Zionist Union,<sup>17</sup> the two largest political parties or alliances in the 2015 national elections, as representative of the contemporary Israeli political mainstream. This analysis draws on studies by Kleczewski and



Amossy (2016) and Navot and Rubin (2016), and compares their results with the data in this study.

The discourse of most of our interviewees is very similar to that of Likud and Netanyahu. From this perspective, Messianic discourse cannot be defined as radical. There is one difference though: unlike our interviewees, Netanyahu is not religious and rarely refers to religious ideas. For example, Netanyahu claims that the Middle Eastern conflicts are an ancient ‘thousand-year-old feud’ based on Muslim hatred of Israel (Netanyahu in Navot and Rubin 2016: 633), but in Netanyahu’s case this hatred is not related to biblical promises, nor is it about obstructing God’s universal salvation. Instead, ‘Radical Islam ... hates Israel [and its secular and rational values system] because it is an organic part of the West’ (Netanyahu cited in Navot and Rubin 2016: 637, n. 45).

Both Netanyahu and our interviewees characterize Islam, Muslims, and Arabs negatively, most commonly as violent. Our Messianic interviewees gave a detailed and complex image of Islam, and sometimes Arabs/Muslims, as inherently violent, although this was sometimes combined with a declaration of love for Arabs and Muslims. In the election campaign in 2015, Arab and Islamic hatred, violence, and threats to annihilate Israel were regular parts of mainstream Israeli political rhetoric (Navot and Rubin 2016: 634; Kleczewski and Amossy 2016: 775). Arabs, including Israeli Arab citizens, were used to instil fear. Regrettably, Navot and Rubin (2016) and Kleczewski and Amossy (2016) discuss the image of Arabs and Muslims only briefly, making it difficult for us to draw any detailed conclusions regarding the similarities between the mainstream Israeli and Israeli Messianic movement’s depictions of Muslims and Arabs.

Not being religious, Netanyahu does not expect a divinely preordained escalation of the Middle Eastern conflicts. But like the Messianic leadership, he is a pessimist; he believes that peace is impossible, and that Israel therefore needs the West Bank as a buffer zone against Islam (Kleczewski and Amossy 2016: 776f).

Netanyahu emphasizes the clash between Western and Muslim civilizations and value systems. As a politician, he must produce not only security threats but, in order to be re-elected, functional solutions to make him appear able to manage such threats. Unlike Messianic leaders, in his capacity as a statesman, Netanyahu cannot use a fatalist discourse, but must provide a vision for the future to retain popular support.

Lastly, Netanyahu’s solutions to the conflict are quite similar to the ones put forward by our interviewees. Unlike the Zionist Union, our

interviewees and Netanyahu do not support a land for peace policy. The Messianic and Netanyahu's arguments are instrumental; land for peace would put the state of Israel at risk (Kleczewski and Amossy 2016: 776f), since a 'Hamastan will appear at the heart of our country' (Netanyahu 2015-02-18, cited in Kleczewski and Amossy 2016: 777). Messianic leaders make the further claim that land for peace is bad also for Christian Arabs.

Another similarity between Netanyahu and most of our Messianic interviewees sets them both apart from the Zionist Union (Kleczewski and Amossy 2016: 774ff): they avoid discussing the demographic consequences of a one-state solution. Moreover, some of our interviewees were even more radical than Netanyahu when they not only explicitly demanded the West Bank, but were also hesitant to grant Israeli citizenship to the Palestinians living there. In the context of mainstream right-wing Israeli politics, the Messianic movement does not appear radical.

### *Human Rights Standards as Point of Reference*

The political philosophies advanced by Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and other Enlightenment thinkers, along with the establishment of the USA in 1776 and the French Republic in 1789, indirectly implied a separation of political power and religion in the West. The subsequent gradual secularization of society diminished religion as a basis for politics and merged Western democracy with the separation of powers, representative institutions of decision-making, and rule of law as codified in the 1993 EU 'Copenhagen criteria'. These criteria also include respect for human rights as enshrined in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Taking these two sets of norms, the Copenhagen criteria and UDHR, as an absolute vantage point enables us to assess the positions taken by the Israeli Messianic leadership.

First, most interviewees had a pessimistic understanding of Arabs and Muslims. In contrast to Enlightenment ideas on human capacity and ability to change guided by free choice and perfectibility through reason, the Messianic stance implied that Islam and Muslims cannot reform, change, and improve since they seem to appear unable to benefit from ethically inspired teaching and education. They are assumed to be stuck in irrational conflict-generating behaviour. This pessimism leads to fatalism and little hope for future prosperity and progress.

Second, since human rights assume universal validity, it is problematic, to say the least, to structurally exclude members of a political community from access to resources and participation in decision-making on the grounds of religion or ethnicity. The UDHR ascribes to individual rational human beings and human communities huge autonomy in creating their own destiny. The fact that none of the interviewees preferred a two-state solution would not necessarily contradict human rights if everyone under Israeli rule were given citizenship and equal individual and collective rights. Most interviewees supported granting Israeli citizenship to Palestinians, but only *in theory*. Some interviewees rejected the idea categorically and those who accepted Palestinian citizenship imposed so many strict reservations that the actual effect was that almost all interviewees supported policies that *in practice* would lead to an apartheid-like society with restricted access to decision-making and resources.

All in all, by suggesting a subordinate position for Palestinians in a greater Israel, most Messianic leaders supported a political solution that runs contrary to equality and dignity of man. Moreover, since they denied Palestinians an equal position in Israel and rejected an independent Palestinian state, these Messianic leaders effectively denied Palestinian popular sovereignty. In the interviews, they seemed unaware of this consequence of their political agenda. This lack of consequential analysis is characteristic of populist movements pushing for radical social change (based on the popular vote) in which the implications of boldly stated policies are rarely assessed in terms of for viability and sustainability.

Third, the notion that human progress (such as peace) or societal strife (such as war) is divinely predetermined runs contrary to the idea of human liberty and freedom of choice. Half the interviewees believed that the conflicts would inevitably escalate and depicted peace as beyond human agency and in the hands of a transcendent deity. Some interviewees believed that peace would come only with the return of Christ; some even argued against working for peace, fearing that it might lead to a false peace under the Antichrist. Such notions directly contradict core Enlightenment values, so in this context Messianic Judaism seems a clearly radical movement.

### *Christian Zionism as Point of Reference*

Using Christian Zionism as an international point of reference, we cannot claim that the Israeli Messianic movement has adopted a radical ide-

ology. First, Israeli Messianic Judaism more or less reflects Christian Zionist pessimism about peace, probably because both movements are influenced by dispensationalism.<sup>18</sup> Christian Zionism may have an even more elaborate pessimistic discourse (Weber 2004: 45; Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 125).

Second, Christian Zionism and Israeli Messianic Judaism make the same analysis of origins and essence of the Middle Eastern conflicts. Both movements claim that the conflicts are ancient, dating back to Abraham (Steiner 2013: 12, 14), and that their essence lies in demonic forces and Muslim territorial domination.

Third, Christian Zionism repeatedly generalizes against Arabs and Muslims, sometimes even *more* negatively than our Israeli Messianic interviewees. According to Christian Zionism, Muslims, and Arabs will play a destructive part in the eschatological end-time drama (Steiner 2013: 61), increasingly so after the end of the Cold War (Wojcik 1996: 316; Weber 2004: 207) and the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US (Cimino 2005: 166; Smith 2013: 191). Arabs are depicted as obstacles to world peace (Spector 2009: 58) and God's plan (Weber 2004: 219; Spector 2009: 50), who will, at the end of time, side with Satan and his plans (Kamphausen 2013: 57). Arabs/Muslims/Islam are depicted as essentially violent, brutal, fundamentalist (Cohn-Sherbok 2006: 176–177; Spector 2009: 80, 85; Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 126), unreliable, undemocratic (Steiner 2013: 53ff, 57ff; Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 126), underdeveloped (Carenen 2012: 80), intellectually inferior (Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 126), an evil (Smith 2013: 8) terrorists (Smith 2013: 18), who are Satan's army (Spector 2009: 91). Arabs and Muslims are also portrayed as static: they cannot be transformed (Spector 2009: 51). Unlike Israeli Messianic Judaism, Christian Zionism repeatedly praises the alleged Jewish character. Jews are God's chosen people, they are talented, capable, democratic, progressive, and ethical (Steiner 2013: 54ff, 60ff; Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 127).

Finally, like the Messianic Jews in Israel, Christian Zionism hardly ever supports work for political peace (Spector 2009: 141). Indeed, such peace initiatives might be against God (Frykholm 2004: 172; Steiner 2013: 64f) and pave the way for the Antichrist (Kamphausen 2013: 59; Steiner 2013: 64f). Such a peace is false (Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 130), and peace initiatives of this kind are regularly described as 'appeasement' (Spector 2009: 71) or even Satanic (Lienesch 1993: 238).

## CONCLUSIONS

How the leadership of the Messianic movement understands the Middle Eastern conflicts is interesting and perhaps even remarkable. Those interviewees who explained peace as something otherworldly or flawless found it difficult to accept an imperfect political compromise. All interviewees emphasized the complexity of the Middle East conflicts, and most tended also to emphasize their permanence, sometimes even claiming that they are ancient, began with Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. And lastly, half of the interviewees described the conflicts in fatalistic and religious terms, for instance as a covenant issue or a clash with an expanding, violent, and unredeemable Islam.

Messianic images of out-groups are ambivalent. Christian ethics require that Messianic believers should love Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, but most let their negative attitude to Islam colour their view of Muslims. Most interviewees depicted their antagonists as inferior, intellectually and/or morally. When Arab or Muslim immoral behaviour was discussed, it was regularly seen as a reflection of intrinsic Islamic qualities, and sometimes of demonic influence. Except for Orthodox Jews, Jews in general were depicted, although relatively infrequently, in a positive vein. Their immoral behaviour, unlike that of Arabs, was systematically contextualized and explained away. On the cognitive level, these positions intensify essentialist dichotomies and strongly polarized narratives, which in turn indirectly propel radicalization.

Most interviewees described Palestinian and Muslim behaviours and attitudes, often characterized as having a demonic dimension, as the main obstacles to peace. This pessimism about chances for peace and negative understanding of Arabs and Muslims colour Messianic expectations about peace; the Messianic leaders expected an escalation of the Middle Eastern conflicts, usually until the apocalypse and the return of Christ.

All interviewees chose a one-state solution as their primary option. The majority claimed to wish to grant Palestinians citizenship, but usually only in abstract terms. When concrete issues were discussed, most Messianic leaders circumvented Palestinian citizenship with many reservations, most importantly the preservation of Israel's Jewishness.

Working for peace was rarely recommended; it was understood either as hopeless task or as possibly leading to a false peace. Still, grass-root relationships with Arabs were encouraged, and so was social work and evangelization. There were no indications that the interviewees supported

unlawful violent actions, but they still displayed acceptance of violence as part of an ever-escalating conflict. Even though violence was not endorsed for attaining political or religious goals, the Messianic movement affirms and accepts violence indirectly under the auspices of the IDF or as an ultimate consequence of the divine plan for Israel.

In an Israeli context, the Messianic movement cannot be defined as radical. On the contrary, the movement is very close to the Israeli mainstream right. Although Netanyahu, unlike most of our interviewees, uses a secular discourse, his understanding of the conflict is very like that of our interviewees. The majority position of the Israeli Messianic leaders on the inevitable escalation of Middle Eastern conflict and the expected apocalypse, motivated by 'Christian' fatalism, is also neither very radical nor particularly sensational from a Christian Zionist perspective. The only context in which Messianic Judaism appears clearly radical is when its ideology is seen from the absolute vantage point of Enlightenment philosophy, liberal democracy, and human rights. The ideas that Islam and its followers can neither develop nor improve, and that peace is not imminently attainable contradict enlightened philosophical arguments of free will and perfectibility through reason. Some interviewees' suggestion of annexing the West Bank without granting citizenship to the Palestinians living there, along with others' suggested restrictions on possible citizenship for Palestinians, is indeed a radical position from a natural rights perspective.

Lastly, the leaders of the Israeli Messianic movement that we interviewed, with very few exceptions, seemed to be deeply immersed in the mainstream Israeli right. The Messianic movement's following and acquiescing to a more general pattern of radicalization, exemplified by the development of the Likud, presents us with an interesting situation: we seem to have an example of a radicalized movement whose radicalization is made less visible because it differs very little from its mainstream environment, an important reference point.

This fact has not only made it harder for us, as outsiders, to approximate the position of the Israeli Messianic movement in terms of radicalism, but also made it more difficult for the movement itself to see its own radicalization. In other words, sharing norms and values within the surrounding society creates a structure of plausibility in which one's own worldview appears to be absolute and nothing short of natural (c.f. Berger and Luckmann 1967). Being surrounded by like-minded voices, it is difficult to see the peculiarities and shortcomings in one's own worldview.

Instead, facing a growing rift between themselves and the Palestinians, the Messianic movement risks not registering its own radicalization; rather, this rift is seen more and more as a result of a one-sided, Palestinian radicalization, making work for peace even more problematic.

## NOTES

1. According to Akiva Cohen ‘a growing polarization between more evangelical Messianic Jewish leaders and more Rabbinic/heritage positive Messianic Jewish leaders has been evident in recent leadership conflicts’ (Cohen 2013: 111).
2. This interviewee preferred to be anonymous.
3. This interviewee preferred to be anonymous.
4. Aliyah is the immigration of Jews living abroad to Israel.
5. In this study, the authors quoted the interviewees word by word. Grammatical mistakes might occur and are original.
6. There are a few deviant voices. When Interviewee 2 was asked about the commencement of the conflict, he presented a very different idea: ‘The conflict started when the Jewish people rejected Christ. ...The issue is our enmity between us and God. Between Israel and its Messiah. That is the bottom-line, all the rest is a side effect’, and therefore he does not regard the Arabs as the main cause or origin of the conflict.
7. Agreeing with God regarding His Divine order.
8. Two interviewees gave stereotypical but benign images of Arabs. Bosharniko depicted Arabs as blessed by God and Ortiz depicted them as hardworking.
9. *Dhimmi* is a protected non-Muslim living in a non-Muslim state.
10. Howard Bass is the only one who does not marginalize the negative images of Israel and Judaism: ‘Israel is not a Christian country or non-Christian country; it is an anti-Christian country. Islam and Judaism are both anti-Jesus’.
11. Bosharniko was one of the Messianic leaders claiming to live in the present.
12. Regrettably, territorial concessions were never discussed during the interview with Ray Pritz.
13. Still, it must be said that none of the interviewees suggested ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.
14. Thomas told us a story about how he consulted a Palestinian leader within the evangelical movement.
15. A detailed account of the principles behind these points of references is given in the introduction to this volume.
16. The coalition was dissolved again in 2014.

17. The Zionist Union is an Israeli centre-left political alliance, established in December 2014 by the Israeli Labour Party, Hatnuah, and the Green Movement.
18. Dispensationalism is a theological interpretative framework in which Israel plays a decisive and redemptive role before the return of Christ and world history is divided into seven distinct periods, called dispensations (Steiner and Lundberg 2015: 119).

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# Dealing with the Intimate Enemy: Civil Society and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Contemporary India

*Sarbeswar Sahoo*

## INTRODUCTION

The complex multi-ethnic and multi-cultural composition of Indian society has long baffled theorists of democracy and nation-building. With a population of over a billion, India has nearly 4693 separate communities<sup>1</sup> and eight major world religions.<sup>2</sup> India's Constitution recognizes 22 official languages and over 1600 mother tongues listed in the 1971 Census of India, of which 33 were spoken by people numbering upward of 100,000 for each (Sheth 1995: 25). The peaceful co-existence of these diverse communities became increasingly problematic with colonialism and the divide and rule policies of the British, culminating in the 1947 territorial division of British India into the Islamic state of Pakistan and the Hindu-dominated, but secular, India.

Since partition, language, religion, and ethnicity have continued to challenge democracy and pluralism in India, especially when expressed violently as in the Khalistan movement in 1970s and 1980s, the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992, the Godhra riots of early 2002, and the

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anti-Christian violence in Kandhmal in 2006. Indian civil societies, once vaunted for their democratic contributions, now play sectarian politics and threaten the secular, multi-ethnic character of Indian society. Non-state civil organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS: National Volunteer Organization)<sup>3</sup> have played significant roles in victimizing and promoting violence against religious minorities. Five judicial commissions have exposed the role of the RSS, the subject of this chapter, in the communal riots in Ahmedabad (1969), Bhivandi (1970), Tellicheri (1971), Jamshedpur (1979), Kanyakumari (1982), Mumbai (1992–1993), and elsewhere.

Steiner and Önnersfors argue in the introduction to this volume that “the outcome of radicalization is predominantly the use of violence by non-state actors against non-combatants” (PAGE NUMBER). The violent actions of the RSS and its affiliates against religious minorities, motivated mainly by an exclusivist radical view of India as a Hindu nation and of Islam, Christianity, and other religions as culturally alien to Indian civilization, exemplify this outcome. Analysing the “mutual interrelationship between idea(s) and action(s)” (see the Introduction of this book) of the RSS thus helps us understand its role in political radicalism. Particularly, it helps demonstrate how the RSS and its affiliate organizations, as non-state civil society actors, have used developmental and welfare services as a medium to promote exclusivist Hindu nationalist ideology and to polarize communities in the tribal regions.

With the failure of the state to provide basic services to the poor, several non-state civil society actors emerged in the late 1970s to reach out to the poor and marginalized communities and provide them with basic welfare services. Jayal argues that

the intensity of civil society activity in India since the late 1970s is manifestly a response to two developments: first, the centralizing tendencies of state structures; and second, the inadequacy of state policies and their implementation, especially in the sphere of development. Indeed, it is in the twin contexts of broadening and deepening democracy, and fostering a sustainable pattern of development, that civil society has gained salience. (2001: 116)

Though the RSS emerged as a non-state actor in 1925, it began to play an important role in development in the 1970s, particularly by providing social services and development/welfare benefits to marginalized groups.

Today, the RSS has emerged as “the largest [non-state] volunteer organization in India with a membership of 1.3 million” (Jayal 2007: 144).<sup>4</sup> It has 49,734 *shakhas*<sup>5</sup> (branches) all over India through which it “coordinates the mobilization of activists for a variety of campaigns” and grassroots development activities (Deo 2007: 144–145). However, in the process of “doing development”, the RSS and its affiliate organizations have spread illiberal political ideologies (discussed below) and have been responsible for victimizing minorities. Instead of deepening democracy, the RSS and its affiliates have undermined secular-democratic values in Indian society and created what Steiner and Öennerfors refer to as the *crisis of liberal democracy* (c.f. *Introduction*). In this context, I discuss the role of an affiliate organization of the RSS, the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad (RVKP: Rajasthan Tribal Welfare Association), and show how the RVKP has utilized the discourse of development to promote radical Hindu nationalist political ideology and to polarize communities in rural Rajasthan. Contrary to the traditional liberal notion that civil society actors are always constructive and good for democracy, the case of the RVKP shows how such actors can also promote radicalization and polarization within a society.

### CIVIL SOCIETY, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND POLITICAL RADICALISM

With the “third-wave”<sup>6</sup> of global democratization, many communist and authoritarian regimes were forced by civil society groups to make the transition to democratic forms of governance. Following this, civil society institutions came to be considered not only an indispensable instrument for the survival and sustenance of democracy, but also the “hitherto missing key” developing countries needed to attain a Western form of political development. This view of civil society as a democratic force was further strengthened in the 1990s following the publication of Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti’s *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993). Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti argued that norms of reciprocity and interrelated networks of trust, cooperation, and civic engagement (or the “robustness of associational life” or “social capital”) influence development and democracy. He believed that abundant social capital produces the dense civil society that is a necessary condition for modern liberal democracy (see Sahoo 2013b: 258–259).

The civil society argument thus posits that a robust, strong, and vibrant civil society strengthens and enhances liberal democracy (Putnam et al. 1993; Diamond 1999). Although this assertion is largely true, there are also strong “uncivil” groups that could undermine democratization and the functioning of democracy. The essential question is, “What *type* of civil society and state contribute positively to democratization?” The choice is not between civil societies and states, but rather between different types of civil societies and states, their natures, and the interests that dominate them. In this chapter I argue that civil society should not be treated as a monolithic category; rather, it is essentially a pluralistic concept that entails both civil and uncivil forces. If it is to contribute positively to democratization, civil society must be dominated by groups with an interest in democratic civility and in moving the state in a liberal democratic direction.

Not only civility, but the politicization of civil society is also important to advancing the democratic project. While Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti’s theory of social capital was very popular, several scholars criticized them for presenting a depoliticized notion of civil society (Harriss 2002). As I have argued elsewhere (c.f. Sahoo 2013a), even high levels of trust, cooperation, and networks of civic engagement (social capital) do not necessarily lead to development. Were this the case, poverty and economic marginalization would long ago have disappeared from India’s rural village communities, where social capital and cooperation seem very high. So, the pool of social capital or associationalism by itself does not effect a desired end. It needs to be mobilized, politicized, and directed towards that end (Sahoo 2013a: 2).

Some scholars therefore define civil society as a site of fundamental struggle and political mobilization. For Chandhoke (1995), it is a sphere in which groups organized on social bases including class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and environment engage in political and ideological struggles. But does the politicization of civil society lead to democratization? Research has shown that vigorous politicized associational life does not always help to consolidate democratic order or institutional performance because such associationalism can also be mobilized and politicized for anti-democratic ends. Berman (1997) argues that dense networks of “civil society can often serve to weaken rather than strengthen democracy” and offers the example of the National Socialist Party (Nazis) in Weimar-era Germany. Civil society is not necessarily a sphere of freedom and pro-democratic forces, and it should not be confused with a “good” or “virtuous” society.

An important question related to democratization is whether civil society is mobilized for the broad public interest or for special interest groups such as caste and ethnicity. The former is more democratic by nature, and although the latter could also contribute to democratization, groups working to broaden democratic values usually represent broader societal interests than those advocating narrow group interests. In India, Beteille (1999), Gupta (2000), and Kaviraj (2001) have condemned the hierarchical nature of civil society groups and urged the establishment of horizontal associations governed by the principles of openness, equality, and citizenship. They argue that caste and religious groups are irreconcilable with the idea of civil society because they are pre-civil, hierarchical, repressive, and more likely than groups with a broader focus to produce a political order opposed to autonomy, citizenship, and principles of choice.

Although civil society is important to democratization, the state directly helps shape what kind of civil society may emerge. As Chandhoke (2001: 8) notes, the state enables civil society by providing it “a politico-legal framework that institutionalizes the normative pre-requisites of rights, freedom and the rule of law”. She further notes that the “constitutions, judiciaries, and even the police, which are required for any meaningful implementation of civil liberties” are in fact established by the state. The irony is that “the very state that civil society supposedly positions itself against, *enables* the latter in the sense that it provides the legal and the political settings for the sphere to exist and maintain itself” (Chandhoke 2001: 8). This reflects Hegel’s suggestion that “the state is a precondition for the existence of civil society” (in Chandhoke 2001: 8). Taking this argument further, Krygier (1996) notes that a vigorous civil society requires a strong state and facilitating state. In his examples, states may be strong in various ways: despotism can inhibit and obstruct civil society by preventing its emergence or undermining it, while liberal democratic states can provide it a strong supportive base. Similarly, facilitating states are not only benign and tolerant enough to allow civil society, but they also actively provide the capacity, ability, and power needed for it to emerge and thrive.

Obstructive states, on the other hand, inhibit civil society by restricting the sphere of the politically permissible. Krygier (1996) argues that while strong obstructive states are detrimental to civil society, weak states are no better. Where the state is weak, a market develops for entrepreneurs of violence and protection. Strong and facilitating states are thus vital to democratization. This, however, does not mean that civil society needs a

benign state to survive. Through struggle and mobilization, civil society can also force the state to respond benignly to the demands of the people, as seen in state responses to Poland's Solidarity Movement or Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution.

Although civil society has the capacity to engage constructively with the state to bring about positive political change, it is important to remember that civil society is a heterogeneous entity that can include uncivil, hierarchical, and authoritarian elements. In the Indian context, civil society includes organizations like the RSS and the RVKP, which represent narrow exclusivist group interests and have been involved in political radicalization by polarizing communities along ethnic and religious lines. As McCauley and Moskalenko (2008: 416) wrote, "political radicalization means increased preparation for and commitment to intergroup conflict" in response to a "change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the group".

Neumann and Kleinmann distinguish between violent extremism and radicalization and argue that radicalization refers to "the process whereby people become extremists". Though extremism is a highly ambiguous term, they argue that

... it may describe political ideas that are diametrically opposed to a society's core values, which—in the context of a liberal democracy—can be various forms of racial and religious supremacy, or ideologies that deny basic human rights or democratic principles. (2013: 365)

How then do non-state groups spread extremism, change people's beliefs, and justify intergroup violence? McCauley and Moskalenko argue that

Radicalization of many kinds may be associated with a syndrome of beliefs about the current situation and its history: We are a special or chosen group (superiority) who have been unfairly treated or betrayed (injustice), no one else cares about us or will help us (distrust), and the situation is dire—our group and our cause are in danger of extinction (vulnerability). (2008: 416)

In rural Rajasthan, the RVKP uses a similar discourse to change tribal people's beliefs and to politically mobilize them. In particular, it uses the cultural politics of development to enter tribal villages and spread its polit-



ical ideology (Hindu supremacy). It depicts tribal societies as formerly culturally and economically rich and blames their current poverty and marginalization on their continuous exploitation and victimization by Muslims (injustice). The RVKP also portrays missionaries as a threat to “Hindu” tribal culture by converting their brothers and sisters to Christianity, gradually making Hindus a minority in their own country (vulnerability). They insist that the prime objective of missionary activity is not to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal people, but to divide Hindus and destabilize India both culturally and politically. Thus, through the discourses of development, marginalization, victimhood, and proselytization, the RVKP polarizes communities in rural Rajasthan and mobilizes them towards conflict and violence.

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF RURAL RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan is India’s largest state and has a significant tribal population—nearly double the national average (see Fig. 7.1). The southern part of the state is heavily populated by the Bhil tribes, who comprise 39% of the state’s total tribal population. In Udaipur, almost half of the population is tribal and some Blocks such as Kotra have tribal concentrations as high as 90%. The Bhil (derived from *villu*, “bow” in the Dravidian language) reside mainly in the hilly region of Rajasthan. The primary sources of their livelihood are shifting cultivation, hunting, and collecting forest produce. Under feudal rule, the Bhils were heavily exploited as bonded labourers. With the arrival of the British, they were classified as a violent “criminal tribe”<sup>7</sup> and their right to use the forest became heavily restricted (see Sahoo 2013a: 4). Consequently, the Bhils suffered from poverty and marginalization. As Bordia wrote,

The civilizing mission of the colonial state led to “reforms” in agricultural practices through, for instance, cordoning off forests, restricting tribals’ access to forests and establishing settled cultivation. These policies deprived tribals of landholding and have led to extreme forms of economic marginalization of Bhils and Girassias in this region. (2015: 55)

However, with independence, the post-colonial developmental state of India took several measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal people. The Constitution of India made special employment and educational provisions for tribal people, protecting their rights under its



Fig. 7.1 Map of India and Rajasthan. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Map\\_rajasthan\\_dist\\_7\\_div.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Map_rajasthan_dist_7_div.png)

fifth and sixth schedules. The government also passed the Panachayati Raj Extension Act for Scheduled Areas in 1996 to protect the tribal lands of India. Despite all such acts and policies, however, the Bhil tribes of Rajasthan continue to live in poverty and are exploited by corrupt government officials. In 1981 and 1991, 54.16% and 44.73% (respectively) of Rajasthan's population lived below the poverty line (see Sahoo 2013a: 4–5). In 2011–2012, although poverty levels declined to 15% in official records, several reports showed high concentrations of poverty in certain districts, particularly in tribal populations in forested and hilly areas (Bhandari and Chakraborty 2015). The hierarchical bureaucratic struc-

ture and widespread corruption and bribery have deprived the Bhils of the benefits of development.

With the failure of the post-colonial state to reach out to tribal people, many non-state actors have taken part in tribal development. In south Rajasthan two major non-state actors working with the Bhils are the Christian mission organizations and the RSS-affiliated RVKP. The Christian missionaries and their “civilizing mission” have a long history among the Bhils. James Shepherd of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland was the first missionary to work among the Bhils of Udaipur in 1877 (Hardiman 2006: 144). Since then the intensity of Christian missionary work among the Bhils has increased significantly, with more than 15 mission organizations working with the tribal populations in the Jhadol Block (Interview 4, 26 November 2006).

Through their active developmental ministries, Christian organizations have worked to improve the socio-economic and educational conditions of the Bhils. However, while “doing development” they have also spread the Christian gospel and converted Bhils to Christianity. The RVKP has vociferously opposed this work, and to stop religious conversions and contain missionary activities in the tribal areas, they and other organizations of the RSS have tried to strengthen their support among tribal people. Through its development work, the RVKP has successfully mobilized Bhils to the cause of Hindu nationalism and to voting for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political wing of the RSS that strongly advocates Hindu supremacy. The BJP has ruled the state several times since the 1990s and does so currently. Scholars have attributed BJP’s win in Rajasthan to Hindu nationalist groups’ development work at the grass-roots level (Lodha 2004).

### THE RVKP AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE INTIMATE ENEMY

The RVKP is a state-level organization of the all-Indian Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), which is affiliated to the RSS. The VKA is grounded in the idea of dealing with the “intimate enemy” or “threatening others” such as Muslims or Christians who are regarded as aggressors propagating values that threaten the idea of Hindu *Rashtra* (“homeland”; Jaffrelot 1996). The primary influence in the formation of the VKA was the proselytizing nature of Christianity. In the 1950s, most tribal people in central India who demanded a separate state based on their tribal identity (the Jharkhand movement) were Christians who had converted during the colonial period.

Several Christian missionaries had been active in the region during the time of the movement, which created suspicion among Hindu nationalists that missionaries were instigating tribal people to demand a separate state. To counter such separatist tendencies, the VKA was established on 26 December 26 1952, at Jashpur, Madhya Pradesh (now in Chhattisgarh) by RSS volunteer Balasab Deshpande. Ostensibly created for the development and welfare of the tribal population, its latent objective was to stop religious conversions by Christian missionaries.

In response to increasing missionary activity among the tribal people, the conservative Congress Party chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Ravi Shankar Shukla, ordered an enquiry in 1954. B.S. Niyogi, a retired chief justice of the Nagpur High Court, was appointed chair of the enquiry commission, which submitted its report in 1956:

the number of missionaries in India had gone from 4377 in 1951 to 4877 three years later and that during this fairly short time period—1951/1954—the tidy sum of 2.9 billion rupees (two-thirds of which came from the United States) had been spent to build schools, orphanages and hospitals where conversion to Christianity were occasionally obtained by deceitful means. (Jaffrelot 2011: 201)

The commission concluded that

Evangelization in India appears to be a part of uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing western supremacy and is not promoted by spiritual motives. The objective is apparently to create Christian majority pockets with a view to disrupt the solidarity of the non-Christian societies, and the mass conversion of a considerable section of Adivasis with this ulterior motive is fraught with danger to the security of the State. (cited in Jaffrelot 2011: 201)

This conclusion of the Niyogi commission justified the creation of the VKA, which worked very closely with the state of Madhya Pradesh to contain missionary activities among the tribal peoples. The VKA remained confined to Jashpur and worked as a regional organization. However, the demand for separate states in Christian-dominated regions grew in the 1960s and 70s. Particularly, the creation of Nagaland in 1963 provided increasing legitimacy to the Niyogi report as four-fifths of the Naga tribes were Christians (Jaffrelot 2011: 202). Following this growing demand for separate states in the tribal regions, it was suggested by the then RSS

*Sarsanghchalak*, Balasaheb Deoras Ji, to spread the work of the VKA to other parts of India. Several state-level branches of the VKA were then opened to stop the so-called “conspiracy” of foreign forces, especially the missionaries that aim to divide the country (RVKP 1994: 17).

By “effectively linking conversion with issues of national security and cultural actualization, [the Hindu nationalists] argued that proselytizing is part of a conspiracy to destroy ‘Indian’ culture and to destabilise the ‘Indian’ polity” (Menon 2003: 43). A leader of the women’s wing of the RSS argued that “conversions from Hinduism are part of a larger world conspiracy to divide India along religious lines”, arguing that “this was how Pakistan was ‘taken away’ and how ‘they’ tried to take away Punjab by calling for the separate Sikh state of Khalistan” (cited in Menon 2003: 46). Other Hindu nationalists have blamed violent rebellions in many northeast Indian states on terrorist organizations they claim are supported by international Christian missionaries. According to Menon (2003: 46), they argued that

Their strategy is such that we will concentrate on certain pockets and those certain pockets will be made anti-Hindu. And anything which becomes anti-Hindu becomes anti-India. We believe that once somebody changes his religion he changes his nationality also. Solid proofs are Kashmir where Islam is the dominant factor. They say that we don’t want to live with India. Here the dominant factor is Christianity. They say we are a different country.

Extrapolating from the British colonial divide and rule policy, Hindu nationalists argue that the main objective of Christian missionaries is not to serve marginalized communities but to divide and colonize Hindu society. Although Hindu nationalists consider tribal people an integral part of the Hindu social and religious order, missionaries have argued that tribal people are not Hindus but people without religion and hence eligible for conversion to Christianity. This has fuelled the anger of Hindu nationalists who see conversion as a major threat by Muslims and Christians aiming to increase their own demographic strength through dividing the Indian Hindu society. In response to the dominant presence of Muslims and the spread of missionary activity in Rajasthan and as a part of its All India expansion programme, the VKA opened its Rajasthan unit in the Kotra tribal region on 25 August 1978, with a student hostel. Although the stated objective of the RVKP was to promote development, its latent agenda has been to stop religious conversion in the tribal regions.

To achieve its objectives of preventing missionary work and Muslim dominance in the tribal regions, the RVKP has implemented several development and welfare projects in health, education, social organization, and economic development and conducted numerous casual, needs-based programmes. The RVKP uses these development and social service projects to enter tribal villages, gain people's trust, and spread the ideology of Hindu nationalism. As one of its websites states, "the major in-puts are in the field of education, development of sports, re-establishing and strengthening the blurred cultural links and weaning the tribals away from the evil influence of foreign missionaries, anti-social, and anti-national forces, etc.". (RSS Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh 2008). The RVKP positions Christian missionaries and Muslims as anti-nationals who aim to destroy the secular structure and threaten the peace and communal harmony of the local community.

#### TRIBAL VICTIMHOOD AND POLARIZATION OF IDENTITY

This section shows how the RVKP has polarized tribal identity into "us" versus "them" and portrayed non-Hindus as "threatening others". Specifically, the RVKP and the Hindu nationalist narrative has presented Muslims as "agents who violently interrupted the sublime rule of Hindu kings in medieval India" and "Christian missionaries and British colonialism [as the ones who] prolonged the denial of a return to Hindu rule in the subcontinent" (Valini 2010: 73–76). Muslims and Christian missionaries are considered foreign aggressors or "culturally alien" people, while Hindu nationalists are presented as "united by the common desire to purge all 'foreign' (i.e. Muslim and Christian) influences and to establish India as a Hindu nation" (Menon 2003: 44).

Who then belongs to this Hindu Indian nation? Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, "the father of Hindu nationalism", provided an exclusive and extremely radical notion of nationhood and citizenship that maintained that India (Hindustan) is the land of Hindus and its identity is embodied in Hindu culture and civilization. And who is a Hindu? Savarkar, influenced by European writers such as the English evolutionist sociologist Herbert Spencer, the German Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schlegel, the French race theorist Arthur Comte de Gobineau, and the Italian revolutionary nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini, provided definitions of Hinduness based on three essential characteristics: territory (*rashtra*), race (*jaati*), and culture/civilization (*sanskriti*) (see Ghassem-Fachandi 2012:

4–5). Savarkar argued that to genuinely belong to the nation one must consider India both the fatherland (*pitribhu*) and the holy land (*punyabhū*). “Although Muslims and Christians relate to India as their country of birth as well as their country of descent, they could never understand it as their ‘Holyland’, the country of origin of their religious traditions” (Ghassem-Fachandi 2012: 5). This argument holds that Christians look to the Vatican and Muslims to Mecca as their holy lands. Hindu nationalists, therefore, suspect that Christian and Muslim love and loyalties will always be divided and depict these communities as enemies of the Hindu Indian nation. This enmity is reproduced at the local level, where the RVKP constantly reminds tribal people of their victimization at the hands of these non-Hindu “others”.

The construction of “the other” and the portrayal of tribal victimization rely on the careful selection and presentation of local stories depicting Christian missionaries and Muslims in an ugly light. For example, in Kolyari village, although upper-caste Hindus and Jain Baniyas have dominated the economic and political spheres together with the Muslims, only Muslims are portrayed as oppressors of the tribal populations. In the words of one RVKP activist,

In Kolyari there was a Muslim *sarapanch* (village councillor) who remained in power for seventeen years. Kotra and Kolyari were politically dominated by Muslims. There was a time when all panchayats of Kotra Block had Muslim village councillors. ... The relationship between Muslims and the other communities was of domination and subordination, oppression, and submission to the authority. No one was either willing or had the guts to defy the “Muslim Raj” in the region. The situation was the worst; it had gone to the extent of rape, murder, and [forced] occupation of tribal land. This created a sense of terror among the local population. Considering this existing imbalance of power among the communities, the RVKP decided to establish its local branch here in Kolyari to balance the socio-political relationship among the communities and to make the tribals self-reliant and patriotic. (Interview 3, 25 October 2006)

Although Muslims agree that they dominated the local political structure for almost 20 years, they deny the RVKP’s accusation that their rule was marked by oppression and exploitation. The RVKP, however, argues that Muslim exploitation of tribal people in the region has a long history, going back to British colonialism. Muslims first came to the region as colonial soldiers in the Mewar Bhil Corps to contain the unrest and insurgency of

the Bhils (classified as criminal tribes, and hence, a threat to the colonial state) using violent and oppressive means. In the RVKP narrative, Muslims who stayed in the region after independence became involved in business activities, especially trade and money lending, and collected exorbitantly high interest on loans to tribal people. By presenting Muslims as the only oppressors, the RVKP has ignored the long history of feudal exploitation by upper-caste Rajputs in the region and induced the tribal people to fight a proxy war against Muslim “moneylenders on behalf of the upper-caste Hindus and Jain Baniyas” (see Sahoo 2014: 487).

The RVKP has also accused Christian missionaries of converting innocent tribal people through their education and healthcare facilities. They claim that tribal people “convert to Christianity either because they have been tricked by missionaries or because they have been seduced by offers of material remuneration” (Menon 2003: 43). Although a pastor in Baghpura agreed that welfare activities have been accompanied by gospel teachings, which often lead to conversions, he denied that missionaries carried out any conversions by force or bribery as alleged by the supporters of Hindutva. A teacher at the Modern School in Kotra (affiliated to the Native Missionary Movement) noted that

the objective of establishing this school is societal development .... The tribal people are not aware of the value of education. They do not want to join our institutions because we are Christians and they simply want to stay away from us. It is a social effect. If they study in our school, they have a fear of being converted into Christianity. However, this fear is not much. If they fear they cannot come to study and get educated.... It is our duty to propagate our religion. But this propagation is not done in an organized manner; it is done on the personal level. It is not also an institutional effort, it is a personal matter. As a citizen, I have the right, freedom, and duty to propagate my religion. As a result of our personal effort, some people have been influenced and those who were influenced have accepted Christianity as their religion. The Christian population is so small as to be nearly non-existent. There are no Christians living in Kotra proper. The Christians, those who have been influenced and adopted Christianity, live in the remote villages. (Interview 2, 23 September 2006)

RSS data show an increase in the Christian population in India of 17% from 1981 to 1991 and an increase of 79.73% in Udaipur over the same time (Sridhar 1999). Christians constitute only 0.1% of Rajasthan’s 56.5 million people, yet religious conversion is taken seriously by the RVKP as



a challenge to the idea of nationhood propounded by the RSS (Mallampalli 2004) and as a threat to “the construction of India as a nation for Hindus. Hindu nationalists regard Christianity as a foreign religion that is seducing people away from their original faith, Hinduism” (Menon 2003: 50). In response, the RVKP has “manufactured a constant fear—more imaginary than real—of being ‘swamped’ demographically, swayed away culturally and subjugated economically by other communities/nations and hence the need for protection, preservation, promotion, and development of the Hindus” (Kanungo 2010: 87). The RVKP has established itself as a counterforce to Muslims (for economic exploitation) and Christian missionaries (for proselytization), portraying these two communities as enemies of the Indian (Hindu) nation who conspire to divide Hindus and destabilize India both culturally and politically. Thus, to contain the activities of these two communities, the RVKP has mobilized tribal people against Muslims and Christian missionaries, often resulting in communal conflict and violence.

How has the RVKP managed to mobilize tribal people against Muslims and Christian missionaries? In the next section, I argue that the RVKP has used development activities to enter tribal villages, gain people’s trust, and spread its ideology to influence their beliefs and mobilize them against the purportedly divisive agendas of the Muslims and Christians.

### THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT

Tribal peoples are economically among the most backward and marginalized groups in India, and the benefits of the post-colonial welfare state have yet to reach them. Hindu nationalists have thus emerged to improve tribal economic conditions while working to stop the missionaries who they believe have manipulated their tribal kin into converting to Christianity. In this tug-of-war, Christian missionaries emphasize the tribal peoples’ indigenous identity and refer to them as *adivasis* or “original inhabitants of India” as opposed to Hindus who they claim came later. The missionary conception of indigeneity broadly connotes “pre-modern life ways” and “primitivity”, justifying the missionaries’ “civilizing” interventions (see Wolf and Heidemann 2014: 3). The RVKP vehemently oppose the “indigenous” status of tribal peoples, and instead use the term *vanvasi* [forest dwellers] “to assert that tribals [are] authentically Hindu, thereby denying them an indigenous identity, which, in the Indian context, assumes pre-Hindu beliefs and forms of worship” (Bordia 2015: 53).

The RVKP have continued to insist on the term *vannvasi* for tribal people in India who live mainly in the forests and are separated from the *gaonvasi* (villagers) and *saharvasi* (city dwellers), attributing the differences between the groups to local geography and settlement patterns, rather than to any difference in their presumed “Hindu” heritage. The RVKP argue that this geographic isolation from “mainstream” society is why tribal people have been deprived of the benefits of the development. As Weisgrau (2013: 253) writes:

Rajasthani Bhils are citizens of the world’s largest democracy, but illiteracy coupled with grinding poverty result in their disenfranchisement and social marginalization. State organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are attempting to elevate the standard of living of Bhils and other groups of the rural poor by, among other strategies, literacy training; political organization and activism; social and ritual reform; and the protection of natural resources.

Thus, the RVKP currently works with all six major tribal communities<sup>8</sup> across 3000 villages in 32 administrative blocks and all 10 tribal districts of Rajasthan (RVKP 2006: 1–3) to improve their socio-economic status. Like the Christian missionaries’ “civilizing mission”, the RVKP’s work with tribal people is developmental and aims to bring them into (Hindu) mainstream society, culture, and development through assigning volunteers and activists to “become participants in the care and management of [the] everyday lives of people” (Chaturvedi 2011: 342). As Devika Bordia (2015: 67) writes:

The [R]VKP expanded its development, health, environment and livelihood work. This included establishing schools (in collaboration with the government Shiksha Karmi Board in the 1990s and until 2001); running health centres and health camps; and from 1997 to 2003, the [R]VKP received government funding to enhance villagers’ livelihood by improving watershed work for better agricultural output, providing livelihood training that was alternative to agriculture and setting up *bidi* (cigarette) rolling centres.

Recent data show that the RVKP runs 1257 developmental projects, 1218 village committees, 18 urban committees, and 288 rural women’s committees in Rajasthan (see Table 7.1; RVKP 2011: 14). Each of these projects is meant not just to dissociate the tribal population from the Christian missionaries and the Muslim business communities but also to bring them

**Table 7.1** Development projects of the RVKP

<b><i>Shiksha Prakalp</i> (Education)</b>	<b><i>Gram Vikash and Arthik Unnayan</i> (Economic development)</b>
Hostels—13	Self-help groups—23
Primary schools—43	Gram Vikash centres—11
Upper primary schools—2	Sewing centres—03
Secondary schools—2	
Ekal Vidyalaya schools—39	
Coaching centres—5	
Village libraries—4	
<b><i>Sanskara Prakalp</i> (Child care)</b>	<b><i>Khel Prakalp</i> (Sports)</b>
Bal Sanskara centres—282	Sports centres for youth—108
<b><i>Chikischha Prakalp</i> (Health)</b>	<b><i>Shradha Jagaran Prakalp</i> (Faith and culture)</b>
Arogya Rakshak centres—78	Bhajan Mandali and Satsang centres—639
Hospital—1	<b>Total projects—1257</b>
Medical camps—27	<b>Total projects in places—1162</b>
Ambulance—1 (Chal Chikischha)	

Source: (RVKP, *Bappa Rawal* April 2011: 14)

closer to the organization and ideology of the Sangh Parivar. For example, the RVKP's education programme has served to socialize not only students, through its specifically designed curriculum, but also their parents. Schools and hostels ensure the firm presence of Hindutva in the tribal region and act as agencies for the RVKP to spread its education, culture, and ideology to the younger generations. The parents of the students and other villagers are connected to the RVKP through the children and related institutions. Once the children are attached to the school, the teachers and activists visit their families, discuss their problems, develop informal relationships, and gradually include them in the organization and its ideology.

The most famous project, which made the RVKP very popular among the tribals, was its tuberculosis (TB) control programme. Nearly 4% of the region's population was affected by TB when the RVKP organized a TB detection camp in Makadadev village in Jhadol Block on April 13, 1992, and sputum smear tests and X-rays confirmed initial diagnoses of contagious TB in 18 patients. These patients were enrolled for 9 to 10 months in multi-drug treatment and were provided with all medicines and a nutritional diet. To ensure that patients followed the treatment properly, RVKP fieldworkers visited their homes periodically and educated their families about health and hygiene. The field staff also ensured that patients did not

consume tobacco or alcohol. As a journalist in Kotra put it, “in this region, especially among the tribals, it is not the responsibility of the patients to take medicines; it is rather the responsibility of the doctors to feed them, and in this sense the RVKP has done very well” (Interview 5, 29 January 2007). All 18 patients completely recovered, which was a record success for the RVKP.

Considering this success of the RVKP, an industrialist from Bombay, Khemchandji Kothari, offered to pay for the medicines for three years. He also donated a vehicle to the programme to transport medicine and workers to the interior areas. Another industrialist, Ramlalji Jain, provided funds for other expenses, and the RVKP provided the infrastructure and volunteer support. There was further support from the BJP-led government of Rajasthan in 1995, which helped the expansion of the programme into other villages. The RVKP opened 17 TB control centres in Jhadol and Kotra Block (covering 256 villages) where it distributed medicines and nutritional diets to the patients. The RVKP achieved a world record by curing 3892 patients at a rate of 89.64%, recognized by the UN as a major success (RVKP 2006: 24).

These successful education and health programmes helped the RVKP connect with tribal people and gain their trust. Besides schools and hospitals, the RVKP also created several committees in the villages, such as *gram shiksha samiti* (village education committees), *vidyalaya samiti* (school committees), *chhatravas sanchalan samiti* (hostel management committees), and *gram samiti* (village committees) through which it continues to interact with villagers and engage with their problems. Once trust is established, these committees eventually act to mobilize the RVKP’s ideology. As Bordia (2015: 53) rightly notes, “during everyday development, health and education programmes, and at the time of religious festivals, rallies, school assemblies, village meetings and other gatherings, the [R]VKP leaders sought to impart religious awakening and a distinct Hindu identity among the Bhils and Girassias”.

## POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND VIOLENCE

With the help of education, health services, seed distribution, and the deepening of wells and building of small check-dams, the RVKP maintained a very strong informal social (capital) relationship with the tribals. It utilized these developmental and welfare service activities not just to enter the tribal region, gain legitimacy, and spread its ideology but also for

what Ruchi Chaturvedi called a “Maussian mode of mobilization: namely, giving gifts and services to incite the obligation to reciprocate with loyalty and support” (Chaturvedi 2011: 346). Thachil (2011: 443), in his study in Chattisgarh, showed that education and other service activities provide fitting opportunities for Hindu nationalist activists to “embed themselves within communities”, influence people’s political choices, and eventually mobilize them to work for the Hindu nationalist ideology.

Writing on the work of RSS *shakhas* in Kerala, Chaturvedi (2011: 346) argued that “service activities are integral to the programme of forging close-knit communities and generating love, affection, and familial feeling among others”. The RSS has referred to it as the “psychological approach”. Explaining this, one of Chaturvedi’s respondents, Sadanand Master, pointed out that “we don’t seek to make them [future supporters] understand the Sangh ideology directly. Instead, [we] seek to gain their trust. That is what it is!” The RVKP activists and volunteers in Rajasthan similarly believe that the best way to connect tribal people with Sangh Parivar is to build long-term personal relationships with them and gain their trust. As one RVKP activist in Kotra pointed out, “if you go and stand with the tribals in their bad times or times of need, they become yours; they like you and support you” (Interview 1, 20 September 2006). To strengthen their relationship with the villagers and build informal networks of brotherhood and trust, the RVKP recruits volunteers and activists from the villages who make themselves available to meet the needs of the villagers. Sadanand Master, who has comprehensively explained how the RSS *shakhas* mobilize people at the grassroots, explains:

Three or four of us go over to a house, engage with their [family members’] day-to-day concerns, such as the education of their kids. If there is anyone unwell in the house and there is a problem getting medicines, we do whatever we can. They are ordinary people; our “line” is to gain their trust and not just propagate ideology. When we win over their confidence, it becomes possible for us to draw them in. That is the *Sangh*’s strategy. In *shakhas*, the *swayamsewaks* sing of the principle of rising [gaining popular support] by offering personal *sneha bandham* [bonds of love]. To convert personal relations into ideological relations ... the *Sangh* adapts this mode of working in every village. (see Chaturvedi 2011: 346–47)

Not only the *shakhas*, but all other institutions of the RSS, including the RVKP, have adopted similar mediums of grassroots political mobilization that often get translated into electoral support for the BJP. For example,

Mudgal (2004) argued that the work of the RVKP and other Hindu nationalist organizations greatly helped the BJP gain votes in the 2003 state election. Of Rajasthan's 57 constituencies reserved for scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) candidates, the Congress won 45 seats in 1998 and the BJP won only 4. But in 2003, the BJP won 42 of these seats and its gains in SC and ST constituencies were over 23% and 13%, respectively.

Lodha (2004: 5461) argued that “the ‘hyper-activism’ of saffron<sup>9</sup> [Hindu nationalist] outfits in the tribal hinterland [...] accounts for the expansion of BJP's influence in villages”. He further noted that the Congress grossly underestimated the help Vasundhara Raje (BJP's chief ministerial candidate) got from the RSS front organizations, such as the RVKP and Hindu Jagaran Manch that have been running schools, hostels, and clinics in tribal areas. For its support, the BJP government has, in return, provided financial support to the RVKP and funded many of its schools, hostels, and other development projects. As A.A. Khan, a Muslim leader in Kotra mentioned,

the [R]VKP was actively promoted during the eight-year-long BJP rule [1990–1998—when B.S. Shekhawat was the Chief Minister] in Rajasthan. In a bid to provide legitimacy to the Sangh Parivar outfit, the previous BJP government had allocated a number of projects under the tuberculosis control programme, Shiksha Karmi Yojana [an education scheme], and Vidyalaya Viheen Ikaai [units outside schools] to the [R]VKP for popularizing among the tribals. (Anonymous 2002)

When the BJP was in power in Rajasthan (under the chief ministership of B.S. Shekhawat, 1990–1998), it approved the RVKP to run *Shiksha Karmi* and *Lok Jumbis* schools (names of new education programmes started by the government to improve literacy in Rajasthan) in the tribal regions. In fact, the RVKP began its work in Jhadol Block through *Shiksha Karmi* and *Lok Jumbis* projects, for which it is generally known among the people as an educational institution of the government. The RVKP eventually ran 168 *Shiksha Karmi* schools in Rajasthan, but funding for such schools was stopped when the Congress Party (who identified them a source of support for the BJP) came to power in 1998. With the return of the BJP to power in Rajasthan in 2003, state support to the RVKP was reinstated and increased, and various institutions of law and governance (courts, police, legal system, etc.) were allowed to facilitate, rather than prevent, violence against minorities (Kaur 2005: 19).

Wilkinson (2007: 6) wrote that “states have often provided clear institutional advantages to those who mobilize on the basis of religion compared to those who mobilize on the basis of economic, agricultural or other identities”. The BJP government led by Ms. Vasundhara Raje (2003–2008) allocated up to 5 million rupees per annum to the RVKP to run hostels (Singh 2004) and took a belligerent stand on conversions. It passed the anti-conversion bill, ironically called the Religious Freedom Bill, on 20 March 2008, ostensibly aimed to stop “conversions by force or allurement and promote ‘freedom of conscience’” (Anonymous 2008).<sup>10</sup> This bill has been severely criticized by the Opposition parties, who argued that its aim is to serve the “majoritarian saffron agenda” of the RSS. In response, the BJP has argued that a law restricting forcible conversions was the need of the hour as such activities had adversely affected communal harmony. Jogeshwar Garg, a BJP MLA, noted that “problems of fanaticism, terrorism and secessionism have always arisen in the areas where Hindus have [been] reduced to [a]minority by large-scale conversions” (Anonymous 2008). The bill allows stricter punishment, up to 2 to 5 years, if the convert is under the age of maturity (18 years), a woman, a tribal person, or a person of the lowest Dalit class. It also makes it mandatory for anyone intending to convert another to send notice to the District Magistrate at least 30 days in advance or face a fine of up to 1000 rupees. However, the same requirement and penalty would not be applied to a person who wished to “reconvert”<sup>11</sup> people to their “original religion” or to the “religion of one’s forefathers” (Coleman 2008: 264), which can be understood as (re)conversion to Hinduism.

By providing them special legal protection, the BJP government has actively encouraged Hindu nationalists to reconvert Christian tribal people into the Hindu fold—a process referred to as *Gharwapsi*, meaning bringing back those who have “strayed” from their native religion. This shows that while Hindu nationalists are against conversion to other religions, they are at the same time “the agents and promoters of reconversion. They stress that conversion and reconversion are two different things, in contrast to Christians and secularists who blame Hindu nationalists for counteracting what they are inspired by, and are actually doing, themselves” (Vandeveldt 2011: 33).

Tribal people are also often instigated to use violence against Muslims (depicted as exploiters) and Christian missionaries (depicted as proselytizers). A survey of the Home Ministry’s National Crime Record Bureau shows that Rajasthan has experienced the highest number of riot cases

continuously between 1990 and 2001 (Sahoo 2016: 177). Attacks against religious minorities, specifically Muslims, Christian missionaries, and converted tribal people, have also increased greatly in recent years, and Rajasthan has been categorized as a “communally sensitive” (*sambedansil*) state.

These attacks and atrocities against religious minorities suggest an alarming pattern of violence. “The intimidation and physical attack on priests, burning of the Bible, ban on missionary schools, false allegations for forced conversion, destruction of Christian institutions such as schools, hospitals and orphanages, rape of nuns and attack on Christian meetings and congregations have become regular events in Rajasthan” (Sahoo 2016: 177). For example, in April 2007, some RSS activists attacked a Christian preacher in his house in the official neighbourhood of Rajasthan’s chief minister in Jaipur (Anonymous, 30 April 2007). In another instance, the upper castes and Hindutva activists chased New Jerusalem Church missionaries and converts away from a village in Jhadol Block. There has also been an increase in Muslim shops in the region being looted by tribal populations. The inculcation of the divisive politics of Hindutva has also resulted in the killing of several Muslim men in Juda village in Kotra.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that the RVKP views Muslims and Christian missionaries as enemies of the Indian (Hindu) nation conspiring to divide the nation by dividing Hindus. The RVKP has aimed to be a counterforce to these projected conspiracies by containing the activities of these two communities in the tribal areas. Utilizing development projects and service activities such as education, health, and economic development activities to enter the tribal villages, the RVKP gained the trust of the people, spread its ideology among them, and eventually mobilized them against Muslims and Christian missionaries. Since its inception, the RVKP has acted as an *uncivil* or “alternative civil society” (Hansen 1999: 117) and, on the pretext of several of these developmental activities, has actively manufactured and fomented distrust and conflict between tribal people and non-Hindu “others”.

The RVKP has utilized decades of community-based social work and development programmes not only to support the vote-bank politics of the BJP but also to mobilize tribal people against the so-called divisive politics of the Muslims and the Christian missionaries, often leading to



conflict and violence. As Beteille (1999), Gupta (2000), and Kaviraj (2001) rightly noted, organizations such as the RVKP produce a political order that is not only hierarchical and repressive, but also opposed to autonomy, citizenship, and the principles of choice. Moreover, the legitimacy of the RVKP has further been strengthened by active financial and political support from the BJP-led government in Rajasthan. This shows that the *illiberal* politics of the developmental state in Rajasthan was also partly responsible for the rise of the non-secular and politically exclusive RVKP, which has not only spread political radicalism but also presented religious minorities as “the intimate enemy” of the (Hindu) nation and threatened the core cultural and democratic values of Indian society.

## NOTES

1. According to the 2001 census, there are about 573 tribes with a population of 84.3 million constituting 8.2% of the country’s population. It is the second largest tribal population in the world, next only to Africa.
2. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.
3. The RSS was founded in 1925 by K.B. Hedegewar in Nagpur with two major objectives: first, to counter Muslim separatism and British colonialism, and second, to unite the Hindu community to form a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). It drew inspiration from European right-wing groups during the Second World War.
4. The membership in RSS is much larger than mentioned by Jayal because as Deo (2007: 145) states, even in a small state like Orissa, the Sangh Parivar boasts a reach of over a million members.
5. According to Sangh organizational principles, “a shakha is meant to be the place where, led by the shakha instructor, swayamsewaks (volunteers or local-level workers) gather daily in the early hours of the morning and evening for their ideological and political education. They follow a regimen of physical and ideological training consisting of drills, games, and debates about national and local sociopolitical questions” (Chaturvedi 2011: 345–346).
6. According to Freedom House (2015: 8), since 1974 the number of democratic political systems has more than tripled from 39 to 125 as of 2015.
7. The Criminal Tribes Act enacted by the British in 1871 “placed restrictions on wandering, nomadic groups, many of whom were either newly landless tribals or former pastoralists and traders (such as the Bhanjaras), the indigent poor of the colonial system, some of whom had participated in the uprising of 1857...The oldest males in families of the specified ‘criminal

- tribes and castes' were required under this law to report on a weekly basis to the local police, to inform them of their whereabouts. The purpose was to dissuade them from vagrancy and criminal activities, to which they were regarded as being inherently inclined, as some quite probably were, although the reasons were practical rather than genetic" (Bates 2007: 81).
8. Bhil, Mina, Damor, Kathodi, Garasia, and Sahriya.
  9. Hindu nationalism, represented predominantly through the RSS, uses a saffron-coloured flag as their quintessential symbol. Therefore, in academic literature "saffron" refers to the radical ideology of the Hindu nationalism.
  10. Previously, the BJP government had introduced the Rajasthan Dharma Swatantraya (Religious Freedom) Bill in the State Assembly. The governor refused to approve it, however, and returned the bill to the state government in May 2006 because it violated the fundamental rights to religion of the individual.
  11. According to Vandeveld (2011: 35), "the first well-organized and widely-known attempt at reconversion to Hinduism was made roughly between 1880 and 1930 by the Hindu nationalist movement the Arya Samaj (Society of Nobles), founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 and centred in Punjab".

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## INTERVIEWS

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- Interview 2. Teacher at the Modern School in Kotra, 23 September 2006.
- Interview 3. RVKP activist in Kolyari, 25 October 2006.
- Interview 4. Pastor in Jhadol, 26 November 2006.
- Interview 5. Journalist in Kotra Interview, 29 January 2007.

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# Contexts of Radicalization: An Inductive Meta-Analysis of 41 Case Studies of Contentious Elections

*Megan Reif Dyfvermark*

## INTRODUCTION

During the US 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump and other Republican candidates criticized the Obama administration and Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton for their reluctance to describe jihadist terrorists as “radical” and to declare war on “radical Islam” as the main threat to global security.<sup>1</sup> The same competitors across the ideological spectrum also used the term to disparage each other. Trump described fellow Republican Ted Cruz as a “radical Wall Street globalist”,<sup>2</sup> while the *Wall Street Journal* warned against the radical economic proposals of both Trump and leftist Bernie Sanders.<sup>3</sup> Republican Marco Rubio alleged that radical leftists had hijacked the Democratic Party.<sup>4</sup> Clinton said the same of the radical right and Republicans.<sup>5</sup> Both parties expressed doubts about the integrity of the electoral process and fears that their opponents’ radical supporters might use violence to influence or protest the result.<sup>6</sup> Hate crimes against Muslims and other minorities rose during the campaign, Trump supporters were assaulted, and open membership and threats of violence from neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups increased.<sup>7</sup>

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Is the term radical just a hollow pejorative in this context, or does it meaningfully capture some essence shared by these varied and often opposing actors that makes them comparable? Much of the literature on the topic tends to equate radicalism with violence and thus excludes most of these types of actors as irrelevant. The US election was characterized by exceptionally high levels of protest and aggression, connected, possibly, to rhetoric invoking fear of radical threats, but in this context, violence was not what most people had in mind when they used the term. What can we learn by studying elections like this one—rather than individuals or groups—about the meaning of radicalism and its relationship to violence in different contexts? This study uses exploratory meta-analysis to examine how radicalism comes up in a random sample of 41 qualitative case studies of elections written by scholars whose research was motivated by questions unrelated to radicalism. The aim of this inductive process is to (a) derive a more encompassing definition of the term radical that could apply and inform research in a wider range of temporal and geographic contexts and (b) generate potentially generalizable theoretical propositions about relationships between the political and socio-economic environment, ideology, and violence that emerge across multiple studies.

The primary units of analysis in this study are contentious elections—*contests involving major challenges to the legitimacy of electoral actors, procedures, or outcomes*, in which both non-violent protest and violence are likely (Norris et al. 2015). They represent a rich, yet still comparable and methodologically tractable, context in which to observe the non-violent and violent behavior of mainstream and radical actors representing varied ideologies across different historical and geographic circumstances. To avoid bias that can come with selecting cases based on preconceived definitions of radicalism, I identified eligible studies without knowing a priori whether they would characterize any of the actors as radical. Specifically, without using “radical” and related words as search terms, I selected studies of elections that occurred between the years 1437 and 2011 on almost every continent. After discussing my motivation and methodology, I organize the narrative around four tables summarizing the first two stages of the coding process, followed by a synthesis of the (tentative) findings and a more in-depth analysis of a subset of studies, through which I derive a definition and hypotheses that can inform future research.

Threats or use of violence occurred in nearly all of the studies. In over half of them, the author(s) or the actors use radical and/or extreme as labels. Only in five case studies were the main perpetrators of violence

described with such terms, while radicals were peripherally involved in violence in nine additional cases. Radicals were rarely the predominant and almost never the only perpetrators of violence. They used non-lethal and lethal violence no more nor less than those with mainstream or otherwise conventional ideologies. In contrast to much of the literature dedicated to the topic, the use of the term did not depend on a willingness to use force. If violence is, in fact, the criterion that makes an ideology radical, most of the actors in the 41 case studies would be classified as such and the term would lose its analytical utility. These elections occurred in very different times and places but similar political and socio-economic conditions: (a) an increase in competitiveness compared to past elections based on improvements in electoral integrity, entry of new parties or factions, and/or expansion of suffrage to include new groups; (b) institutional instability created by recent demographic change, economic shocks, independence, civil conflict, and/or constitutional reform; and (c) the presence of partisan security forces, supplies of weapons, and independent armed groups. Based on these patterns and a closer reading of the cases in which one or more radical actors used violence, I propose a definition of radicalism that encompasses the wider range of actors observed in the case studies and present potentially generalizable hypotheses about the possible relationships between these aspects of the socio-economic and political environment and the interactions between radical and non-radical groups that may produce violence.

## BACKGROUND

The foregoing example of the 2016 US presidential race, in which radical was used to describe diverse and competing ideologies and styles and types of actors, illustrates how subjective and context-dependent the term can be. As Steiner and Önnerrfors note in the introduction, alternative definitions of radicalization present different theoretical and empirical challenges. Conceiving and studying radicalization as a “cognitive” (Neumann 2013) or “ideological” (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013) process, whereby visions for society become more revolutionary than reformist, requires thorough knowledge of the context, the actors, and their positions relative to one another. Because violent rhetoric and actions are observed more easily than changes in relative ideological differences, public and scholarly discourses tend to conceptualize radicalization as a “behavioral” (Neumann 2013) or “tactical” (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013) process by which actors



openly advocate or use increasingly frequent and/or brutal violence to achieve their goals. The resulting focus on violent groups or individuals as the primary unit of analysis makes research more tractable, but may limit the generalizability of theory and findings across time and space and introduce selection bias in observing and drawing causal inferences between variables (Geddes 1990). Studies that begin with a behavioral conceptualization of radicalism are likely to exclude radical actors *who do not use or have stopped using violence*, as well as *conventional or “mainstream” actors who do use violence*.

Current theoretical and methodological approaches exclude the diverse groups and individuals described as radical in the 2016 US election, for example, as well as the political actors first described by their contemporaries as radical: late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century movements for expanded male suffrage, constitutions, and parliaments (McLaughlin 2012). Public and scholarly discourses thus associate violent behavior with ideas that are inconsistent with democracy, such as advocacy of a state religion, restrictions on free speech, exclusion of certain groups from economic and political participation, or seizure of property. Danish law, for example, defines as radical any view inconsistent with a democratic, open, and pluralistic society (Sedgwick 2010). Studying contexts in which pro-democracy and other kinds of actors resorted to violence to achieve their goals, however, might help us better understand causes of violence. The narrow focus of the public discourse on the theocratic, racist, and other anti-democratic ideas unique to a particular set of actors, such as Islamists or white supremacists, who have used violence most recently may obscure observation of more general circumstances under which all kinds of actors might use violence. Steiner and Önnerrfors highlight the need for new ways to study a broader range of state and non-state actors and their dynamics in the contextual “marketplace of ideologies” or “radical milieu” (Schmid 2013: iv and 4). Studying contexts in which multiple actors with different ideologies interact may provide insight into the reasons why they choose to use violence—or not—and the factors beyond ideology and other actor-level characteristics that shape that choice, such as strategic responses to changes in the socio-economic and political environment and other actors’ behavior and ideas.

I argue that contentious elections are a fertile yet still tractable unit of analysis above the individual and group levels, in which we can examine both radical and non-radical actors and the opportunities they have to use a range of violent and non-violent tactics. As candidates and parties seek

to influence public sentiment by positioning themselves, their challengers, and, perhaps, domestic and foreign foes on an ideological spectrum, elections are moments when what is radical or extreme, and, consequently, what is not radical—liberal, conservative, left, center—are redefined, renegotiated, and temporarily crystallized. Some are particularly important junctures, or “critical elections” (Key 1955: 16–17), during which realignment and de-alignment of cleavages and coalitions occur. Such elections are the subject of several classic and related studies in the American and comparative political science literature (c.f. Bartolini and Mair 1990; Key 1955; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Contentious elections in which electoral institutions are questioned stand out in particular because they increase the risk of both violence and backsliding toward authoritarianism (Norris et al. 2015).

## METHODOLOGY

### *Approach*

Quantitative election datasets include only the largest parties and omit small parties and non-state actors, while data on election violence provides insufficient detail about the identities and ideologies of perpetrators. Qualitative case studies of elections, however, represent an overlooked source of material. Standard, descriptive studies of elections published in journals like *Electoral Studies*, *The Journal of Democracy*, and area studies journals like the *Middle East Journal* or *West European Politics* include unbiased, factual information about (a) the regime type, electoral system, and integrity of electoral procedures and dispute resolution mechanisms; (b) campaign strategies and any vote-buying or other illegal activity, including fraud or violence, that occurred; (c) all relevant state and non-state actors involved and their positions on an ideological spectrum and level of public support (e.g., in polls, marches, and the final result) for those positions; and (d) comparison to previous elections describing changes in these factors. I argue that elections are therefore contexts in which we can observe and compare how a wider range of actors—some of whom may be defined labeled as radical—behave and interact, including their choice of tactics.

Systematic methods for aggregating insights from qualitative studies, or meta-analysis, are growing in variety, rigor, and popularity. Inductive case study synthesis methods are particularly well suited to answering questions

in fields where conceptual definitions and theory are still underdeveloped. Deductive methods that aggregate case evidence to test hypotheses about causal relationships between variables, on the other hand, require that the case studies share a common approach to measurement and operationalization of concepts (Campbell et al. 2011; Dixon-Woods et al. 2005). Elsewhere in this volume, Dalgaard-Neilsen aggregates insights inductively from over 20 studies based on 245 qualitative interviews of disengagers from violent groups. She notes that inconsistency in questions and sampling criteria limit definitive theory-testing in the field of comparative radicalization.

I use the method of thematic synthesis, an extension of Noblit and Hare's seminal *Meta-ethnography: Synthesizing qualitative studies* (1988), which is useful when the primary studies do not directly address the research question that motivates the systematic review (Lee et al. 2015; Thomas and Harden 2008). Thematic synthesis proceeds in three stages, often using specialized software such as EPPI-Reviewer or NVivo, or a spreadsheet program such as Excel (my choice).<sup>8</sup> The first stage involves a line-by-line, open-coding of authors' explicit choices of words, presentations of fact, and recurrent interpretations of categories, contexts, and concepts. Examples of first-order themes that emerged across the studies are frequent labeling of actors as radical or extreme and reports of the perpetrators, targets, number of people, and types of weapons involved in violence or threats. In the second stage, I return to the studies again, coding each for the presence or absence of second-order themes, which are concepts and categories shared across two more studies but that were not central to the questions originally asked by the authors. For example, many authors indicate that an election was closer than previous contests with language like "narrower margins", "closeness", or "narrow win", but only in the review and aggregation of multiple case studies does a theme of competition emerge as a meaningful and unifying concept. In identifying second-order themes, the reviewer uses new terminology to classify these similar codes under a concept, such as "increasing competitiveness", that applies across multiple cases.

In the third, synthesizing stage, I look for relationships in the matrix of terms and themes generated during the first two stages. Such relationships are expressed in the form of definitions, metaphors, or causal hypotheses (Lee et al. 2015). These third-order themes are the ultimate result of thematic synthesis and go beyond the corpus of studies to introduce "conceptual innovations" generated in light of the synthesis, remaining tentative

and subject to dispute (Lee et al. 2015; Thomas and Harden 2008). These are similar to the interpretive, explanatory propositions that grounded theory approaches produce—new theory about how social processes are constrained by the physical and social contexts in which they take place (Starks and Brown Trinidad 2007). An example here is the hypothesis that an increase in competitiveness since the last election is associated with a higher probability that the main competitors will use violence. While none of the individual case studies makes this proposition explicitly, this (illustrative) hypothesis emerges from my own interpretation of common patterns. Such theory-generating themes can only be tested with data outside the initial sample of case through which they were derived, and thus form the conclusion of the process.

### *Case Selection*

To narrow the universe of studies to those focusing on contentious elections, as defined by Norris et al. (2015), in which both peaceful protest and violence may have occurred, I used keywords associated with elections (e.g., vote, ballot, election, plebiscite) and either peace (e.g., peaceful, calm, normal, smooth) or conflict (e.g., protest, demonstration, violent, bomb, attack, coercion, intimidation, conflict) in Boolean searches of Google Scholar and scholarly electronic databases. The result is a set of cases in which there was potential for violence, but for which there was no information before the analysis began about whether radical ideas or groups were present and whether they were involved in violence. Eligible studies were limited to article-length social science journal articles, book chapters, conference/working papers, and reports from government or academic institutes with online full-text availability in English published between 1940 and 2015.<sup>9</sup> Like most scholarly case studies of elections, the articles are largely descriptive, rather than explanatory. Theoretically motivated studies were eligible for the sample as long as the author did not set out to explain radicalism as a cause of violence and provided sufficient detail.

The process generated 566 studies, 467 of which were eliminated after reading the title and/or abstract if they were irrelevant (e.g., book reviews, studies of unrelated topics with a footnote containing keywords) (65), lacked sufficient information about at least one election (e.g., quantitative or regional studies comparing more than two countries) and/or sources and methods) (320)<sup>10</sup>; or duplicated another study's analysis of the same

election (retaining the highest quality, most in-depth piece) (15). To avoid bias in coding that could be introduced by outside knowledge, I eliminated studies of Algeria and Pakistan, where I have conducted field research (13), and Kenya's infamous 2008 election (54). From a remaining pool of 99 articles, I selected a random sample of 41 case studies based on practical considerations and in accordance with the maximum recommended in the meta-ethnography literature.<sup>11</sup> Published between 1965 and 2013, the studies encompass elections for different levels of government in authoritarian, transitional, and democratic settings on almost every continent between 1437 and 2011. Nine elections were held in the midst of suffrage expansion in Europe, the Americas, and colonial Kenya, while the rest were held under universal suffrage.

### *Limitations*

The sample size is too small for multivariate analysis, yet the space required for the tables typically used in thematic analysis makes it impossible to share the rich material contained in the studies. The tables and the narrative reference the case studies by the country and year of the election, rather than by author and publication date. The synthesis cites study authors where their narratives contributed substantively to the argument. Should readers wish to read more about any of the elections, sources for the meta-analysis are provided in a separate bibliography that can be found after the References Cited.

Relatively few established democracies are included in the sample (Jamaica 1980; Spain 2005; Sri Lanka 2001), largely precluding analysis of radical actors during elections in advanced industrialized democracies in which they are more likely to be able to compete as parties and are less likely to have access to the means of violence. It also excludes the behavior of radical actors such as the Al-Qaeda and Daesh (or the Islamic State) that operate in contexts in which elections do not occur at all and/or focus their strategies on influencing foreign governments. Although most authors discuss some temporal change, the case studies are primarily snap-shots in the histories of different polities. Only within-country analysis over time could shed light on how repeated exposure to and participation in elections might influence radical actors' ideologies and choice of tactics. The focus on single elections in multiple settings also risks biased inferences about the relative use of violence by radical and mainstream groups if radical groups generally use more frequent and

extreme forms of violence but refrain from violence during election campaigns.

Finally, the methodology does not address sources of bias and self-censorship common in most violence research, which include (a) underreporting of peaceful actions and ordinary behavior that is not newsworthy and (b) underreporting of incidents and/or incident details about target, location, or perpetrator details due to media bias, weak or biased security institutions, direct intimidation of the media and/or academic researchers, and limited access to especially dangerous areas. Since the sampled studies focus on elections and not radicals or terrorists, it is also possible that the authors omitted important actors and incidents of violence or non-violence in which electoral competitors were not involved.

## DISCUSSION

In thematic synthesis, the reviewer does not approach the text with a set of hypotheses or questions. However, to aid the reader's understanding of the results, I present the first two stages of the coding process in four tables that can be framed, retrospectively, as answers to the following questions:

- (a) Did the study authors or actors themselves use radical, extreme, or similar terms (e.g., “fringe”, “marginal”, “severe”, “fanatic”, “militant”) to describe individual candidates, parties or party factions, or non-state groups that were engaged in political activity during the election?
- (b) What role (none, peripheral, or main) did these radical actors play in any violence, if it occurred?
- (c) Which types of actors were the main combatants in violence (mainstream incumbent, opposition party, or radical actor)? (Questions a-c are answered in Table 8.1)
- (d) What were all the types of ideologies and armed actors present during the election and were they involved in any non-lethal or lethal violence? (Table 8.2)
- (e) Was there any association between the intensity or severity of violence (by all parties) and the presence of radical actors? (Table 8.3)
- (f) What socio-economic and political-institutional conditions were common across cases and when did they correspond to the presence of radical and armed actors? (Table 8.4)

Table 8.1 Classification of radical actors, their role in violence, and primary combatants

A	B	C	D	E	F		
Year	Country-Election Type	Radical	Extreme	Other/ inferred	Group Name or Description	Radicals' Role in Violence	Primary combatants in violence
	<i>E = National Executive</i>						
	<i>L = National Legislative</i>						<i>I = Incumbent party</i>
	<i>S = Subnational</i>						<i>O = Main opposition party</i>
	<i>R = Referendum</i>						<i>R = Radical group/faction</i>
2010	Bangladesh—L(by)		✓		Communists	Peripheral perp	I
1998	Cambodia—L						I
2002	Cameroon—L		✓		Faction, Communists	Main perp (faction)	I
1875	Colombia—E	✓			Communists	None	R (I's extreme faction)
1962	Colombia—L/ref	✓			Muslim	Victim	I
2005	Egypt—E/L			✓	Brothers	(primary)	I
1820	England—E/S	✓			Pro-democracy	None	NA (no violence)
1437	England—S	✓			Pro-democracy	None	Individual candidate (I)
2005	Ethiopia—L			✓	Ruling party "hardliners"	Unclear	I
2000	Ghana—E/L						Both I and O
2008	Ghana—E/L						Both I and O
1978	Ghana—R	✓	✓		Communists	None	I
2006	Guyana—L	✓			Socialists	None	I and O ethnic parties

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

A	B	C	D	E	F	
Year	Country-Election Type	Radical	Other/ inferred	Group Name or Description	Radicals' Role in Violence	Primary combatants in violence
	<i>E = National Executive</i>					
	<i>L = National Legislative</i>					<i>I = Incumbent party</i>
	<i>S = Subnational</i>					<i>O = Main opposition party</i>
	<i>R = Referendum</i>					<i>R = Radical group/faction</i>
2010	Ivory Coast—E(run—Off)	✓		Incumbent party faction	None	I and O ethnic parties
1835	Jamaica—L	✓				O (ethnic white planters)
1980	Jamaica—L					Both I and O
2002	Kenya—E		✓	Mungiki Former Mau-Mau	Peripheral	I
1958	Kenya—L	✓			None	I
1997	Liberia—E/L					I
2006	Macedonia—L					Ethnic, former rebel parties
1828	Mexico—E/S	✓		Class-based	Main perp (factions)	R (I and O factions)
2009	Moldova—E/L	✓		Romanian nationalists	None	Both I and O
1994	Mozambique—E/L			Frelimo (ex-Marxist)	No longer extreme	O
2010	Myanmar—L/S		✓	Buddhist rebel DKBA	Peripheral perp	Both I and O

(continued)



Table 8.1 (continued)

A	B	C	D	E	F	
Year	Country-Election Type	Radical	Other/ inferred	Group Name or Description	Radicals' Role in Violence	Primary combatants in violence
	<i>E = National Executive</i>					
	<i>L = National Legislative</i>					<i>I = Incumbent party</i>
	<i>S = Subnational</i>					<i>O = Main opposition party</i>
	<i>R = Referendum</i>					<i>R = Radical group/faction</i>
2008	Nepal—L	✓	✓	Maoist party	Main perpetrator	R (Main opposition party)
1999	Nigeria—E					Vigilante/criminal group(s)
2011	Nigeria—E/L/S	✓		Bukassi (disputed)	Peripheral perp	O
2004	Papua New Guinea—L (by)					Both I and O
1986	Philippines—E	✓	✓	Communists, Moro	Peripheral perp	I
2007	Philippines—L		✓	Moro insurgency	Peripheral perp	Both I and O
1999	South Africa—L			Factions, ETA	Main perp (faction)	I
2005	Spain—SI. (Basque)	✓	✓	Tamil insurgency	None	R (I's extreme faction)
2001	Sri Lanka—L		✓			I
2010	Sudan—E/L					Vigilante/criminal group(s)

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

A	B	C	D	E	F	
Year	Country-Election Type	Radical	Other/ inferred	Group Name or Description	Radicals' Role in Violence	Primary combatants in violence
	E = National Executive					
	L = National Legislative					I = Incumbent party
	S = Subnational					O = Main opposition party
	R = Referendum					R = Radical group/faction
1977	Taiwan—S		✓	Anti-KMT “subversives”	None	I
2000	Tanzania—E/L	✓	✓	Factions, Ethnic	Main perpetrator	R(I and O factions)
2006	Uganda—E/L					Incumbent
1870	US Georgia—L/S	✓	✓	KKK, Radical Repub	Peripheral (KKK)	O (Democrats w/KKK)
1870	US Louisiana—L/S	✓	✓	KKK, Radical Repub	Peripheral (KKK)	O
1872	USA—E/L		✓	KKK	Peripheral (KKK)	O
2008	Zimbabwe—E(run— Off)					I
Summary	15	12	8	(19-one orboth terms) (26-incl inferred)	5-Main; 9-Peripheral	19-I only; 11-0 and I; 7-O only; 5-R



**Table 8.3** Roles played by radical groups in election violence by overall severity of violence

<i>Role of Radical/Extreme Group in Violence</i>	<i>Intensity of Election Violence</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>None</i>	<i>Mild</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	
Terminology not applied or inferred for any actor	0	6	4	1	5	16
Radical/extremist group was ...						
... present during election but did not use violence	0	4	2	4	0	10
... the primary victim of violence	0	0	0	1	0	1
... a peripheral/secondary perpetrator	0	1	1	4	1	7
... a proxy perpetrator for "mainstream" party	0	1	1	0	0	2
... the main perpetrator of violence	0	1	0	1	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>41</b>

Note: MILD—threats, non-deadly weapons, intimidation; MODERATE—fights, riots, show/threat of deadly weapons; HIGH—mass violence, deadly weapons; EXTREME—mass violence with fatalities

In the third stage of thematic synthesis, I attempt to integrate the patterns that emerge from the first- and second-order coding with a closer reading of the cases in which radical actors were involved in violence. I generate a definition and hypotheses that encompass the wide range of actors and tactics contained in the sample and common circumstances under which radical actors might emerge and become involved in violence more generally, either as victims or perpetrators.

*Classification of Radical Actors, Their Role in Violence, and Primary Combatants (Table 8.1)*

In light of the fact that the case selection strategy avoided terms associated with radicalism, extremism, or the far-left or right, it is perhaps surprising that almost half (19)<sup>12</sup> of the 41 studies include language in which the author or the actors themselves describe ideologies as extreme and/or radical. About a quarter of the studies (10) use the terms interchangeably in reference to the same group, and another ten studies use only one of the

	Studies (N)	Violence increased since past election	> 1 explicitly ideological radical group (corresponds to Table 1)	> 1 ideologically/behaviorally radical (suspected) (Table 2)
<b>POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>				
<i>Institutional uncertainty - (re)definition of rules of the game</i>				
New/weak institutions (e.g. recent constitution, civil conflict, independence)	24	13/24	17/24	24/24
Lack of independent security forces, presence of party militias and armed groups	28	19/28	17/28	27/28
<i>Inclusion pressure</i>				
Competition over who competes (e.g. parties/ideologies challenge incumbent)	38	14/38	21/38	38/38
Expansion of who chooses (e.g., suffrage demands for ethno-linguistic groups, women)	19			
Redistribution of economic resources (e.g., workers, lower class suffrage, greed groups)	17			
<i>Exclusion pressure</i>				
Separatism, regionalism	5			
Restriction of who can compete (e.g., banning parties or ideologies)	7			
Restriction of who can choose (e.g., ethno-linguistic suffrage restriction)	7			
Concentration of economic resources (e.g., property-based suffrage restriction, oligarchy)	8			
<b>VIOLENCE ORIENTATION</b>				
Acceptability of violence for resolving grievances / cycles of revenge	8			
Supply of weapons and non-political armed groups (e.g., former fighters, gangs)	21			
<b>ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT</b>				
<i>Anti-competitive pressures (incumbent seeking to maintain power)</i>				
Incumbent manipulation and cheating	22			
Decreasing electoral integrity (e.g., electoral procedures, regulations, electoral institutions)	6			
<i>Competitive pressures (Incumbent less certain of winning)</i>				
Improved electoral integrity (e.g., electoral procedures and regulations)	33	29/33	22/33	24/33
Improved electoral integrity (opposition vote share or # of parties taking votes from incumbent)	21	15/33	12/33	20/33
Ideological polarization (e.g., two different ideologies have high probability of winning)	13			

NOTES: Columns denoting counts in different categories do not necessarily imply overlap across categories. Sub-themes (first-order) themes were identified explicitly by the author(s) of the case studies, not this author. Sub-themes were coded first and then organized under second-order organizing themes. All study authors compared levels of violence with prior election. The final column embraces a more comprehensive definition of radical including any identity or ideological group or a group that uses or has ever used violence (as shown in Table 2).

**Table 8.4** Social-political contexts surrounding contentious elections, violence, and radicalism

two terms. None explain why they choose one term and not the other. Actors in an additional seven studies can be classified as radical by expanding these criteria to include use of terms like “hardliner” or “subversive” or by inferring that they are radical because other actors banned them from electoral competition, excluded them as a rogue faction, or otherwise deemed them unacceptable partners.<sup>13</sup> Using these relatively narrow criteria, one or more radical groups were actors in over half (26) of these contentious elections (Table 8.1, Column C).

These actors represent a wide range of ideologies, sometimes two or more simultaneously (Table 8.1, Column D). These include (1) factions of mainstream left-right parties; (2) communist, Marxist, Maoist, socialist, and other class-based ideologies; (3) ethnic or racial supremacists who want to exclude non-members; (4) ethno-linguistic or economic groups demanding inclusion in political decision-making and economic resource allocation; (5) ethno-nationalists demanding ethnically homogenous territory; (6) regional separatists seeking autonomy; (7) religious groups favoring a stronger role for religious leaders and values in government; and (8) pro-democracy movements advocating equal representation and/or more transparent and accountable institutions.

Many actors not described as extreme or radical in the case studies also fall into one of these eight categories. Unlike terminology used for radical actors, there were no common patterns across studies in the way that authors described actors I classify by default as “mainstream”. These were usually the ruling and largest opposition parties. Although many authors made some passing reference to their positions on a left-right scale, in these contentious elections, which occurred in relatively unstable institutional environments, positions and issues rarely fall neatly on the left-right continuum that dominates scholarly analysis of political ideology. In fact, in some cases, main ruling or opposition parties had ethnic, class-based, or other ideological roots that may have been radical at one time (e.g., South Africa’s ANC, Zimbabwe’s ZANU-PF, Mexico’s nineteenth-century radical class-based movements, American abolitionists).<sup>14</sup> Mozambique’s FRELIMO, for example, took radical Marxist-Leninist positions in its fight for independence from Portuguese rule, but abandoned those positions by 1990 to become a broad-based party with a conventional economic and political platform. In the post-civil war United States, the Republican Party abandoned many of its more radical proposals for achieving racial equality and ended up compromising with former Confederates. The “Radical Republican” faction of the party opposed these “Regular

Republicans”. Such “regular”, “ordinary”, or “mainstream” actors seem to be characterized by support for the status quo. Once in power, previously radical groups often abandoned the drastic changes they proposed when faced with the realities of appealing to increasingly large constituencies in order to win elections and govern. In other cases, if a radical actor manages to achieve its goals, its objectives cease to be radical as it becomes the arbiter of the new status quo (e.g., formal end of apartheid or communism, Basque control of subnational government in Spain’s Basque region). It is not so much the specific content of any given ideology, then, that makes it radical, but how it relates to other actors in the political space and to political power. Nearly any ideology—left or right, religious or secular, geographic or ethno-religious identity—may or may not be radical depending on the larger marketplace of ideologies in which it resides. Yet if ideology cannot be a criterion for defining what is radical in these case studies, neither does the willingness or use of violence. I explore these observations further in the concluding synthesis.

Whether a radical group played a role as a main or peripheral perpetrator of violence is shown in Column E. Although violence did not occur in every election in the sample, there were threats or concerns that it might occur in nearly all (40) of them. I classified as main perpetrators those actors the study authors blamed explicitly or carried out the most frequent or most severe acts of violence. Peripheral violent actors used lethal or non-lethal tactics during the course of the election that were neither the main source of violence nor sufficiently frequent or severe to affect the electoral outcome. If the most severe act of violence in the election was a clash between mobs of supporters from two different parties who used only their fists, for example, but the incident affected the electoral process or outcome, both parties to the fight are nevertheless characterized as main perpetrators. Column F lists the nature of the actors that were primarily responsible for most of the violence that occurred.

The incumbent party was the main perpetrator of violence in 15 cases, while the opposition was responsible in four cases. Both the mainstream incumbent and opposition parties shared responsibility for violence in nine cases. A radical actor was involved as a main perpetrator in only five cases, four of which were radical factions of the incumbent and/or mainstream parties. Vigilante or criminal gangs, ethnic groups, and individual candidates were primarily responsible in the remaining four cases. In this sample, then, it is the ideology or political position—not the advocacy, threat, or use of violent tactics—that the authors associate with the term radical.

Research on terrorism often characterizes radical actors as those who justify and use violence against civilians. Although all studies in the sample described in considerable detail the types and severity of violence used and the nature of their targets (parties, military, voters, etc.), none of the radical actors used particular forms of violence or chose targets in a way that distinguishes them from other perpetrators. That is, actors from across the ideological spectrum targeted voters, parties, electoral administrators, military forces, and candidates. If the willingness to use force against civilians were the primary criterion for defining radicalism, many actors in these case studies would be radical, and the term rendered meaningless.

*Landscape of Ideologies, Armed Groups, and Lethal or  
Non-Lethal Violence*

Table 8.2 visualizes in more detail the diversity of actors that were among the players in each election, with indicators summarizing their use of violence. A solid dot (•) indicates that a particular category, such as “communist”, describes one or more actors in that election; a dot is enclosed by a square (◻) if an actor in that category was a main perpetrator of violence according to the criteria presented in Table 8.1. If that actor was also coded as radical in Table 8.1, the square is shaded in gray. The top section of Table 8.2 shows the presence and use of violence by the main incumbent and opposition. The second section lists the ideological clusters, such as religious or far-right, represented by these and other parties and non-state actors. The third section shows the types of organized armed groups that were present, which may be affiliated with an actor in one of the ideological clusters.

The incumbent party or candidate was, of course, the key player in all of these elections, competing against a main opposition party or candidate. Four of the elections occurred in single-party regimes in which opposition parties were prohibited from running (e.g., Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood in 2005, anti-KMT activists in Taiwan in 1977, both described as “subversives” by the incumbent). In an additional four cases, one or more smaller groups were barred from competing (e.g., former Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in 1998, Mau-Mau rebels in Kenya in 1958). Many of these banned actors nevertheless engaged in political activity related to the election.

A single actor may be classified under several categories. In Moldova’s 2009 election, for example, the ruling pro-Russian Communist regime



was supported, for the most part by Russian-speakers, who are a minority of the population, while the Moldovan speakers supported the capitalist, pro-European Union opposition. In this table, the incumbent is also coded as the incumbent, communist, and having roots in ethno-linguistic identity. The two main parties, but not the “extreme” Romanian language group, engaged in post-election violence.

In about half (18) cases, the main governing and opposition parties had their origins, sometimes many years earlier, in rebel groups, anti-colonial and independence movements, or ethno-linguistic minorities or majorities that had fought violently in the past. Macedonia’s (non-radical) Democratic Union for Integration party evolved from the Ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army, for example. Many groups like these maintained their armed forces as militias (11 cases) or incorporated them into the state security forces after taking control of the government (12 cases), using those forces to attempt to influence electoral outcomes in their favor (12 cases). Vigilante gangs or criminal groups did so in four elections and regional separatists in one, with more than one armed group participating in violence in some cases. If willingness to use force is the criteria for defining what is radical, then nearly all of the studies include a radical actor. The total count of these ideologically or behaviorally radical actors in each election is listed under the types of armed groups.

The fourth section of Table 8.2 shows the cases in which any violence, including threats or warnings, occurred (40), and whether an (ideologically) radical actor used only non-lethal (5) and or both lethal and non-lethal (9) tactics,<sup>15</sup> out of a total of 26 cases in which one or more radical actors was present. The synthesis section looks at this subset of 14 cases more closely.

### *Roles Played by Radical Groups in Election Violence by Overall Severity of Violence*

Table 8.3 shows the distribution of case studies according to the extent to which any radical or extreme actors (as described in Table 8.1) played a role in violence, if any (as victims, peripheral perpetrators, main perpetrators, or as allies or proxies-for-hire who acted on behalf of mainstream parties), and the overall intensity of violence that occurred in the election (none, mild, moderate, high, extreme). I classified the overall level of violence in the election as (a) mild when the most severe incidents involved threats, non-deadly weapons, and non-lethal intimidation; (b) moderate

when deadly weapons were displayed and fights and riots occurred; (c) high when deadly weapons targeting large groups caused serious injuries; and (d) extreme when targeted mass violence resulted in one or more fatalities. Of the nine case studies describing extreme violence, radical actors were the primary perpetrator in three and a peripheral perpetrator in one, while five did not name any extreme or radical actors. Four of the elections in which radical groups were peripheral perpetrators of violence had high-intensity violence. However, the number of elections in which there were no radical actors or the radicals did not use any violence have a similar distribution across mild, moderate, high, and extreme levels of violence, so it is impossible to conclude from this evidence whether groups associated with radical ideologies are more inclined to use more lethal or widespread violence.

*Social-political Contexts Surrounding Contentious Elections,  
Violence, and Radicalism (Table 8.4)*

Table 8.4 lists themes in authors' descriptions of socio-economic and political-institutional contexts shared across the largest numbers of the cases alongside the count—when sufficiently large to be meaningful—of the number of cases in which (a) violence increased since the previous election; (b) an actor described explicitly as radical was present; and (c) armed and violent or radical actors were present.

Nearly all (38 of 41) elections were characterized by an increase in competitiveness compared to past contests. At least one group with a radical ideology is mentioned in 21 of the 38 cases described as being more competitive, and 14 of those settings involved an increase in violence since the past election. In 10 case studies, incumbents sought to preempt a probable loss with violence. Six elections were so close that violent conflict erupted over the rightful winner. Ideologically radical and/or armed groups were active in all 38 of the elections characterized by greater overall competitiveness. In 33 of the 41 studies, incumbents not only faced more competition, but actually lost vote share. Violence increased since the past election in 29 of those 33 cases, and radical and/or armed groups were present in 24 of them.

Ruling parties faced more competition for a number of reasons. Demographic changes to the electorate, such as migration, population growth, change in national territory, enfranchisement of previously excluded ethnic or economic groups (19 cases), and distribution of new

resources to new social classes (17 cases) increased support for new and existing opposition parties, as well as new human and financial resources for campaigning. Improvements in electoral administration and procedures also made it more difficult for incumbents to use counting fraud, vote-buying, and other non-violent methods to manipulate elections (21 cases). In over one quarter (13) of cases, margins narrowed between two main ideologically polarized parties, posing a greater risk to incumbents than situations in which voters opposed to the incumbent distributed their support to many different parties.

Fewer elections were characterized by factors that had reduced competition since the previous election. Only in 6 cases were electoral procedures and regulations changed to make competition less fair than past elections. Ruling parties sometimes reduced competition by banning some actors (7 cases) and excluding more people from voting (7 cases). Although incumbents engaged in manipulation and cheating in 22 cases, these activities involved forms of fraud like vote-buying rather than formal legal restrictions and procedural changes to bias the result in favor of the ruling party. Eight case studies discussed aspects of the economic system that favored the wealthy or voting rules that restricted suffrage to those with education or property as sources of reduced competition compared to previous elections.

Institutional weakness and uncertainty is another theme I identified across the case studies. Many authors described politics in the midst of ongoing debates about suffrage, the electoral system, delimitation of national and electoral district boundaries, the structure and number of seats in legislatures, balance between executive and legislative power, allocation of cabinet and other political appointments, autonomy of courts, and writing and approving constitutions and amendments. Such debates had often been prompted by processes that shifted the economic power held by certain groups and increased their demands for political inclusion, such as demographic and territorial changes resulting from population growth; decolonization; migration; and international, civil, and anti-colonial wars; and economic shocks, such as global changes in prices for labor and commodities. Over half (24) of the case studies attributed young or weak institutions to one or more of these factors. In fifteenth-century England, for example, a growing merchant class made increasing demands to be included among those who could choose local government, challenging landed noble families for political influence.

Uncertainty about rules and laws is compounded by the absence of clear expectations about who should enforce them. In 28 of the cases, authors describe state security forces that were not trained, neutral, professional militaries and police but rather post-conflict remnants of partisan forces with loyalty to particular individuals or groups that evolved to become candidates and parties. Other candidates and parties subsequently retained their militias and affiliations with independent armed groups. Authors described these settings as supporting “cultures of violence”, “cycles of revenge”, and “vigilante justice”, “violence as a means to resolve grievances” (8 cases) and providing an ample supply of weapons and fighters seeking purpose after old conflicts ended (21 cases).

### *Synthesis*

How can we define radicalism and related concepts in a way that would encompass the wide range of actors described in the sample as radical without reference to whether they advocate or use violence? State and non-state actors in over half of the case studies could be characterized as ideologically radical based only on the author’s use of certain terms. Although discussion of the meaning of the terms within the studies is relatively thin, patterns across them suggest that there are (a) defining characteristics that radical actors share, and (b) causal relationships between political and socio-economic conditions and the involvement of these actors in election violence.

In 26 studies with radical or extreme actors, 19 describe their political positions as threatening the status quo. The most common are demands for substantial redistribution of land and resources away from those who possess them to those who do not (12 cases) and inclusion of large segments of previously disenfranchised people in voting and running for office (6 cases) [with the redistribution of resources that such expanded political participation implies (Downs 1957)]. Other actors in the sample also propose to alter the horizontal and vertical distribution of power across levels, branches, and/or geographic units of government and redrawing of external or internal political boundaries to include or exclude sizeable populations. In many cases, demands for dramatic changes in all of these areas overlap. I argue that the first defining feature of the radicalisms in this sample is the demand to dismantle and replace a polity’s fundamental social, political, and/or economic practices and institutions.

However, in several cases, the terms radical or extreme also describe factions or groups that aim to preserve the status quo. In polities that had recently experienced revolutionary transformation, such as the end of political exclusion of blacks in Jamaica and the United States, or the expansion of suffrage in nineteenth-century Colombia and Mexico, these so-called radicals sought to reverse recent changes and restore earlier socio-economic and political orders. In several studies, opposing radicalisms competed for power, seeking restoration of the old order, on the one hand, and further restructuring on the other. For example, radical factions were important players in left and right parties in Mexico's 1828 presidential and state elections in Oaxaca. The left demanded protectionist trade policies and further disenfranchisement—even expulsion—of the Spanish aristocracy, while the right sought to prevent further reform and restore the old aristocratic caste system. Similar dynamics occurred in the Reconstruction-era US, pre-independence Kenya, nineteenth-century Jamaica, nineteenth-century Colombia, and contemporary Moldova. The visions that these competing radicalisms have for society, if fully realized, could not coexist. I argue that the second defining feature of radicalism is a mutual exclusivity of the radical's vision for society with the status quo and/or other competing visions.

Factions within parties described as radical were important actors in seven case studies and in four of the five elections in which radical actors were primarily responsible for violence. A closer reading of these cases points to a third defining feature of radicalism that distinguishes it from reformist, mainstream positions. The radical factions of parties differed from the majority about the pace of restructuring and/or the extent to which the party should compromise or even collaborate with former opponents in modifying their demands so as to be less dramatic. This seems to have occurred after the party had won an election or had otherwise achieved some of its goals. Once the process of concretizing objectives in the form of written laws and policies, budgets, and enforcement plans began, they faced internal disagreements. For example, during the post-civil war Reconstruction era in the United States, both Radical and Regular Republicans articulated a common vision of racial equality that would be achieved with massive land redistribution and education programs. When the party started competing in elections in the South, however, the Regular faction came to believe that cooperation with members of the old Confederate order was necessary and abandoned restructuring in favor of gradual reform.

About a quarter of the studies use the terms radical and extreme interchangeably without defining them, while some use only one. Five actors in the sample are only described as extreme and focus on a single issue like denying or expanding political privileges of an out-group (e.g., the Mungiki in Kenya, Buddhist rebels in Myanmar, the KKK). They do not specify precisely how to achieve their objectives, nor do they advocate other structural changes. This lack of specificity about what changes would achieve only a singular goal might help distinguish extremists from radicals. I argue, then, that a fourth defining feature of radicalism is a higher degree of specificity or clarity in proposals, compared with extremists, and larger number of political and socio-economic objectives they propose to achieve simultaneously. Extremists tend to focus on one or two general goals with a less-defined timeline for implementation.

Together, these four features of radicalism point to a definition that would encompass the wide range of ideologies in and beyond the sample:

A radical political actor advocates a vision of society that would rapidly and simultaneously dismantle many or most aspects of the present socio-economic and political order and replace them with clearly-defined alternative policies and institutions that could not coexist with the status quo.

It may be useful to use a different term, such as reactionary, to distinguish those actors that seek to preserve the status quo or work to reverse changes in order to restore a previous political and economic order. To investigate radicalization as a dynamic process, one could begin with the proposed definition, studying conditions under which mainstream or reformist actors come to believe in more rapid and dramatic restructuring of the socio-economic and political system. Conversely, deradicalization could be studied by examining the conditions under which radical actors agree to decrease the pace and extent of restructuring their demand so that their proposals become acceptable to mainstream actors. With this reconceptualization, it is possible to see radical as a continuous, rather than either-or state, and apply it beyond the case studies, including the wide variety of players in the US 2016 election, based on their policy proposals rather than their tactics. Yet although none of the candidates were directly involved in violence, their rhetoric certainly inspired some of their supporters to commit acts of aggression.

Can the meta-analysis tell us whether radical ideologies inspire more violence or that radicals use violence for different reasons or under different

circumstances than mainstream actors? None of the authors remarks on whether any of the radical ideologies justify the use of force on principle in ways that differ from mainstream actors. Tables 8.1–8.3 also show that radical and other kinds of actors may not differ substantially in their willingness to use lethal and non-lethal force against either combatant or civilian targets, at least in the context of elections.

Radical actors otherwise known for violence became less violent compared to non-electoral periods in some of the case studies (e.g., Filipino and Cambodian communists; Buddhist rebels in Myanmar). Others ceased violence altogether (e.g., Maoists in Taiwan) while others became more violent. Those who were less violent appear to have lacked sufficiently large or geographically dispersed support to compete directly for power and were unlikely to affect the outcome through violence. Höglund and Piyarathne (2009a) note that Tamil insurgents refrain from violence during elections since Tamils easily win seats in Tamil majority areas. Violent Tamil electoral activity has little impact on its own seat share because the Tamil base of support is limited to one geographic area while two Sinhalese parties compete to govern. Radical actors that coordinate with political parties, such as the Basque ETA (Spain 2005), may also refrain from violence in elections in order to avoid discrediting or suppressing turnout for a party aligned with their interests.<sup>16</sup>

In other cases, known violent radical actors intensified their use of violence (e.g., the Mungiki gangs in Kenya, the KKK in the United States) and acted with tacit approval from, if not direct coordination by, mainstream parties and candidates. While groups like the Mungiki in Kenya and the Bakassi Boys in Nigeria were recruited and paid directly, most radicals who are peripheral to the main inter-party conflict(s) use violence to help parties or candidates whose policies align with their objectives. Mainstream parties may even make promises that would benefit radicals directly (e.g., ending foreign attacks against the group, looking the other way when it engages in illegal activity), which may incentivize them to use violence. For example, in 1986, Filipino insurgents carried out attacks that discredited Marcos and helped Aquino, who supported peace talks, amnesty, negotiations, and release of prisoners.

There are many other possible reasons for radical actors to avoid or intensify their use of violence during elections,<sup>17</sup> but these examples point to two possible general relationships that can be expressed in the form of hypotheses that could be tested with different data:

*H1: A radical actor that is unable to compete directly for elected office will change (either escalate or deescalate) its use of violence during elections compared with other periods if its interests align with a party/candidate that has a high probability of winning, especially if the party/candidate's proposed domestic or foreign policies impact directly on the operational costs, flexibility, and future success of the radical in achieving its objectives.*

*H1a: A radical will avoid violence during elections when doing so would undermine or have no effect on the preferred party/candidate's chances of winning.*

*H1b: A radical will use violence when doing so would enhance the preferred party/candidate's chances of winning.*

The meta-analysis suggests that a radical actor's decisions about the timing, tactics, and targets of violence are often, if not always, based on strategic consideration as much as on ideology. Mainstream actors, who can plausibly deny involvement with the violence of radical proxies, are also willing to tolerate, if not coordinate, with armed radicals when it serves strategic interests.

Strategic factors were also important in the five case studies in which a radical actor was not just peripherally involved in violence, but a main perpetrator. It is not clear that the violence perpetrated by the radicals had motivations that differ substantially from those of any competitor with a high probability of winning and the means and willingness to use violence to secure the desired outcome. Preliminary findings in the election violence literature, for example, suggest that parties are more likely to use violence when margins of victory are smaller (Fjelde and Höglund 2016; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015). In the meta-analysis sample, levels of violence increased in 29 of the 33 elections that were more competitive than in the past (Table 8.4), and mainstream incumbents and/or opposition parties were responsible for most of the violence in 19 elections (Table 8.2). The same seems to be the case in the studies in which a radical actor was a main perpetrator of violence. In Nepal's close 2008 election, the ultimately victorious radical Maoist party used the same kind of violent tactics that other Nepalese parties had used previously (Lawoti 2008a). In three of the cases, powerful radical factions in one or both of the incumbent and opposition parties were responsible for most incidents and may have coordinated with moderate party members. In Colombia's 1875 election, for example, mainstream and radical factions within the winning Liberal party



were the main perpetrators of violence, and Posada-Carbó (1994a) argues that their decisions to use force had more to do with personal loyalties and vendettas than with ideology. Radical and mainstream parties may thus share similar reasons for using violence to influence elections.

Yet the unusually high number of assaults and veiled threats of violence by Trump supporters in the 2016 US election and the unusually high number of multiple radical and armed actors in the case studies do point to a possible connection between violence and the number actors who demand radical change engaging in the political environment. Radicals may use violence themselves, but often it is the threat of change that their ideas represent that is used to invoke fear that drives others to violence. Table 8.4 suggests that the same conditions that are likely to make elections contentious are the same conditions that make violence a feasible and attractive option. Radical actors do not appear to be the primary perpetrators of violence in these contexts, but radical ideologies may be born and thrive under the same circumstances. These conditions, discussed in reference to Table 8.4, are (a) weak political and security institutions; (b) increasingly competitive elections in which it is more difficult to win outright or through fraud; and (c) the presence of weapons and multiple armed actors that act independently of the official military and police.

These conditions may have been overlooked in the literature as a potential marketplace, or radical milieu, in which many competing visions for society are produced. Based on the existing literature, which emphasizes Islamist and extreme-right groups, we tend to associate the term radical with anti-system or authoritarian tendencies. We also tend to expect radical groups to direct their demands to repressive, authoritarian regimes, rather than democracies. The meta-analysis suggests, however, that it is when a regime becomes relatively more open and competitive compared to the past that radical actors are likely to engage more directly in institutionalized politics from which they have been excluded in the past. When economic crises, decolonization, or other exogenous shocks weaken and call existing economic arrangements and political institutions into question, the winner of an election is more likely to have the opportunity to remake the political order than in settings with strong bureaucracies and long-standing institutional rules and routines. At the same time, the prospect of greater competitiveness and elections administered with higher quality creates expectations that any proposal—radical or mainstream—has a greater chance to persuade supporters and win the right to govern.

During elections under these conditions, all actors—mainstream, reactionary, extreme, and radical—must concretize to some extent their objectives in the form of implementation programs and timelines as they aim to both distinguish themselves from each other and to persuade voters that they have specific plans to achieve their objectives.

While any opposition represents a threat to the incumbent under these conditions, a radical party that also advocates particularly rapid and widespread change makes the idea of losing seem costlier to the incumbent than losing to an opponent whose policies would largely maintain the status quo. Radicals have less hope of both winning and being able to implement their agendas in both closed autocracies and stable democracies where it is more difficult to alter suffrage rules and established rules and procedures. In long-time democracies like those in Europe, incumbents expect that if they lose, they will have the option of competing and governing again in the future, whereas losing an election to a radical actor in a transitional setting may mean remaining out of power forever because the winning radical has a better chance of remaking weak institutions. If a radical ideology threatens another actor's economic survival or right to exist as a member of society, it is not surprising that violence would become a more attractive option, especially if campaigning becomes costlier and non-violent and illegal methods of manipulating elections, such as vote-buying, are no longer available.

Both the radicals who believe they are going to win and incumbents who fear losing are more likely to use all available strategies—legal and illegal, non-violent and violent—to ensure victory preemptively or attempt to reverse an unfavorable outcome. In both the sample and in general, this constellation of conditions—weak institutions, a close contest between an incumbent and opposition, one or both radical, who have widespread geographic support, nearly equal probabilities of winning control of government, and access to weapons and thugs or fighters—may be relatively rare and especially violent. Situations in which smaller parties have kingmaker status in determining the make-up of the governing coalition may be similar to those in which an incumbent and opposition are equally matched. This proposition, formalized below as a hypothesis, would be tested most appropriately in a larger dataset using multivariate methods:

*H2: The probability that incumbent and/or opposition parties/candidates will threaten or use violence to preemptively or retroactively influence the outcome of an election increases when:*

- (a) *they enjoy sufficient support across a minimum number of electoral districts such that they expect to win by just enough votes and/or seats the power to govern alone or cast the deciding vote to form the governing coalition;*
- (b) *one or both are radical (or reactionary);* [according to the definition I propose]
- (c) *political and economic institutions are weak or easily restructured;*
- (d) *the election is more competitive than the prior election (as a result of improvements in electoral integrity, entry of new candidates, new campaign resources, etc.); and*
- (e) *they possess access to the means of violence (weapons and people).*

While explaining the mechanisms by which these five factors combine in specific ways to produce violence is beyond the scope of the meta-analysis, the study does suggest that the presence of radical ideologies increases the stakes for all competitors. The sample suggests that it may be relatively rare for a radical ideology to gain enough support to be a viable contender for dominance, but the five cases in which radical actors were main competitors were particularly violent, even when the radicals themselves were not the main perpetrators.

Under these conditions, the competitors fear that the contest is a zero-sum game in which the winner will threaten the existence of the loser and remake the rules to ensure the loser cannot compete in the future. Incumbents do not expect that, if they lose, the winning radicals will soften their positions, as the ANC did in South Africa after apartheid or the Republicans did in the former Confederate states, to accommodate their interests. In contentious elections, incumbents and oppositions with radical ideologies are more likely to expect the sort of outcome that occurred in the aforementioned 1828 election in Mexico. Santa Anna called for a nullification of the result, occupied Oaxaca with his troops, and eventually ensured that his preferred candidate became president (Guardino 1998). A polarization between two competing, mutually exclusive visions for society in this election may be a relatively rare event, but the presence of one or more radical proposals for change with a high hope of winning is likely to heighten the risk of violence in any context. Even in advanced democracies like the United States, the entry of well-financed outsider candidates with relatively dramatic proposals for social and economic change in an election cycle without an incumbent president on the

ticket can result in a close contest in which the results are questioned and supporters fear the outcome enough to consider using violence.

## CONCLUSIONS

Radicalism, as I have defined it, is then just one factor that might increase the likelihood of violence in a contentious election, but it is potentially an important one. Although the existing literature on election violence has considered several of these conditions, it has overlooked the ideological content of the competitor's positions in explaining why some elections are more violent than others. The literature on radicalism, on the other hand, has overlooked many of the diverse ideologies represented by radical actors that have not used violence in an electoral context but may provoke the use of violence by those whose interests are threatened by the changes they propose. Strategic considerations based on the level of support each of the competitors have play a more important role in explaining violent tactics than the specific ideological content of proposals. Preventing violence means preventing the constellation of conditions that make it an attractive option, rather than trying to eliminate the actors currently demanding dramatic socio-economic and political change—others seeking radical change under the banner of new ideologies are likely to emerge repeatedly if the conditions themselves do not change.

This study makes it easier to understand how, during the 2016 US election, radical might be used meaningfully to describe Islamists, Democrats, and Republicans alike. Similarly, all the groups labeled as radical in the sample can be meaningfully compared. All propose a vision of society that is at least perceived by others as rapid, sweeping, and, therefore, threatening change, often used to justify extraordinary means to prevent it. Divorcing the definition of a radical idea from the tactics sometimes used to achieve them reveals how much the rationale for violence can be in the eye of the beholder. As scholars focusing on ideologies that threaten the relatively democratic and open systems in which most of us reside, we tend to discount, in retrospect, what we can learn about the use of violence by radicals like Santa Anna, who were fighting for worker's rights or universal suffrage. That is not to say that the ends ever justify the means, but forgetting the use of violence by some actors because we now agree with the objectives they achieved, we overlook a potential source of data. I hope that the definition and hypotheses presented here might encourage further research on contexts of radicalization as a unit of analysis in which a

wider range of ideologies can be compared and the mechanisms by which they choose violence elaborated more precisely.

## NOTES

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2. Hains, T. Trump Senior Policy Advisor: “Ted Cruz is a radical Wall Street globalist.” *Real Clear Politics*, 4 April 2016.
3. Ip, G. How Sanders, Trump threaten market confidence: Populist political outsiders bring radical policy proposals and little allegiance to economic orthodoxy. *Wall Street Journal*, 17 February 2016.
4. Kamisar, B. Rubio: Democratic Party “taken over by radical left-wing elements.” *The Hill*, 17 February 2016.
5. *Real Clear Politics*. David Brooks: The Republican Party is “radicalized,” “And this is why we shouldn’t hand Trump the nomination”, 23 January 2016.
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8. Spreadsheets with the raw codes, extracted text, and commentary are available upon request.
9. My original intention was to limit eligible studies to those published only in peer-reviewed journals in political science, history, anthropology, or other social science disciplines, but doing so systematically excluded many studies from several countries and world regions and local and by-elections, which would make the conclusions less generalizable. Papers by authors with scholarly credentials and university affiliations, proper citation of primary and secondary sources, acknowledgements that indicated that the paper was subject to review and quality control, caveats and other indicators of transparency, and discussion of methods and sources of bias, such as missing information, are a few of the criteria studies had to meet to be included in the final sample.

10. To ensure that studies met minimum standards of research quality and included sufficient information on one election, a set of pre-screening questions was applied while reading the final set of 99 eligible cases, for example: “Does the study list the main candidates and parties competing for power in the election and summarize their basic ideological positions?” “Are the rules governing elections and campaigns described in some detail?” “Are the results of and differences between previous and current elections discussed?” Two studies analyzed multiple elections but provided sufficient depth for at least one election to qualify as a case study (Sweet 1998; Wilmot 1982). Three studies focused explicitly on the role of a radical group or ideology in one or more elections (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2012; Lawoti 2008a; Sweet 1998; Wilson 1997) but were retained since the search strategy did not identify them in advance.
11. Meta-ethnography methods have been applied to samples as small as two to as many as 77, with the seminal literature recommending no more than about 40 cases. After screening references and skimming for quality and initial coding of basic information for all 99 studies, a sample of 41 cases was selected on this basis, and also because it was feasible to summarize the findings in tables that fit on one page (Toye et al. 2014).
12. Discussion of quantities in interpretation of tables is meant to aid identification of common themes, but should not be taken as statistically valid generalizations.
13. This coding decision has its origin in the concept of “coalition potential”, introduced by Sartori as a method of designating parties as extreme or irrelevant in a particular environment, which has spurred a voluminous literature on anti-system and extreme parties in Europe (Sartori 1976; c.f. Capoccia 2002).
14. Party acronyms are not defined because the specifics of any particular case are not the focus of the analysis.
15. Whether violence was lethal or not is based on the intention of lethality implied by the tactics used, not whether or not people actually died. For example, if a radical shoots a gun at someone and misses, he is still using lethal violence.
16. Reasons that violent radical groups may refrain from violence in electoral contexts not mentioned in the studies could include heightened security measures during elections, a diminished likelihood of media coverage of attacks in an environment saturated with stories of interest to journalists, or a desire to support any moves toward democratization that might increase the probability of competing directly in the future.
17. Other reasons that radicals might use more violence than usual during elections could include the desire to discredit the credibility of the governing party and/or the election process and government system as a whole and to take advantage of heightened availability of potential targets in the electoral environment.

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# The Perfect Storm: A Study of Boko Haram, Religious Extremism, and Inequality in Nigeria

*Caroline Varin*

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has a turbulent history of violent non-state actors who have challenged the state along ethno-religious and political lines. In the last few decades, these have included the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Maitatsine Sect. Nonetheless, no group has wreaked as much havoc as Boko Haram, whose nickname means “Western Education is Sin”,<sup>1</sup> an Islamist insurgent group from northeast Nigeria that has developed from a relatively obscure radical cult into a ferocious terrorist organization. Boko Haram allegedly had at its peak more than 15,000 members, mostly in the northeast of the country and has killed upwards of 20,000 people since 2009 (Sergie and Johnson 2011) and at least 6600 in 2014 alone (Institute for Economics and Peace 2015). Its extremist brand of political Islam continues to appeal to some segments of the population, despite the election in 2015 of a Muslim President, Muhammadu Buhari.

Boko Haram’s grievances are rooted in the economic disparities and political tensions that characterize this ethnically diverse country. Nigeria’s

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Fig. 9.1 Map of Nigeria

diversity is indeed both remarkable and challenging. It hosts more than 150 million people and 250 ethnic groups. The asymmetric process of integration developed by the British in the colonial era, however, emphasized the differences within the regions and lay down the foundations upon which modern Nigeria was built. Since gaining independence in 1960, the country has been divided regionally, ethnically, and religiously, not to mention politically and economically. Christians in the south fear political domination from the more populated Muslim north, whereas ethnic minorities inside the individual states are at risk of being subdued by the three largest ethnic groups: the Yoruba in the southwest, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Hausa-Fulani in the north. Competition over power and access to government funds have exacerbated the situation, with political contenders capitalizing on existing fears.

The election of opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari to the presidency has been a victory for democracy above all else. The north is perhaps celebrating its return to power, but it is important to highlight the

pitfalls of a power-sharing agreement that circumvents the democratic process. Since the independence of Nigeria, the north has dominated the politics of the country, primarily via illegitimate military regimes. On the other hand, the civilian governments elected and re-elected have until recently been Christians from the south, including Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan. The north is more populated whereas most of the country's petroleum resources are in the south. As a result, both regions have been vying for power to control the country's wealth. Whereas the north has relied on its larger population base and recurrent military coups to ensure its participation in government, southern presidents have repeatedly rigged elections and counted on nepotism to stay in power. In both cases, the democratic process has been hollowed.

Nigeria's political history has also been closely intertwined with religious rivalry, and in particular the competition between the Muslim and Christian faiths that divide the country along religious lines. Religion has a strong hold in Nigeria. Variations of Muslim and Christian groups led by charismatic and outspoken preachers have emerged throughout history and across the country. In recent years, sectarian violence in particular appears to be on the rise. Between 1999 and 2003, over 10,000 people were killed in religious clashes (Onuoha 2010: 54–67), before the advent of Boko Haram. Muslims did not have a monopoly over the use of violence. In 1987 for example, Christians in Kafanchan, Kaduna state, “wantonly destroyed the property of local Muslims” (Falola 1998: 4) and in 2014, Human Rights Watch denounced the murder of 150 Muslims killed in “Christian rampages” (Narayan 2010) in Kuru Karama, in Jos.

This chapter argues that complex dynamics of extremely poor living standards, a competitive religious marketplace, a lack of economic opportunities, huge social and political disparities between regions, and the apparent corruption and disinterest of the Nigerian government have offered perfect conditions for violent non-state actors to prosper. Many terrorist and rebel groups have indeed emerged from countries with a poor track record for human rights, governance, and commitment to the welfare of their people. The main leaders of Boko Haram—Mohammed Ali, Mohammed Yusuf, and Abu Shekau—have each capitalized on the government's perceived corruption and illegitimacy as a rallying cry to recruit their members.

The main purpose of this chapter therefore is to reveal the conditions that contributed to the rise of religious extremism and extreme levels of violence in northeast Nigeria; in particular, it focuses on the case of Boko

Haram's remarkable rise and transformation into one of the most feared Islamist terrorist groups in just half a decade. The chapter demonstrates that Boko Haram rose out of near perfect conditions in Nigeria—high levels of socio-economic inequality, poverty and illiteracy, and a history of religious violence that the Nigerian government has repeatedly failed to deal with. The chapter goes on to explain how Boko Haram's leadership has capitalized on these existing grievances to radicalize its members and gather more followers. One characteristic of the group that is unique and significant to its success is the series of opportunistic and charismatic radical preachers/leaders who have skilfully manipulated events to incite extreme levels of violence. The ensuing political failures by a series of apathetic governments has exacerbated the situation, although as this chapter shows, there have been some limited advances, including an experimental de-radicalization programme. In the conclusion, the chapter outlines some policy suggestions for the government to move forward using non-military means. Indeed, despite this “perfect storm” that led to the monster Boko Haram, these conditions can be overturned with a coordinated political and security response. Long-term preventative policies and further studies on religious extremism can help to stem the rise of extremist actors in Nigeria and abroad.

In the first section, this chapter will now explain the socio-economic and historical conditions in Nigeria that led to the rise of Boko Haram. It will then develop Boko Haram's particular strong points, including its skilled leadership that enabled it to gather and radicalize followers and incite extreme levels of violence. In the final part, the chapter turns the spotlight on the Nigerian government to assess its failures and successes at dealing with the violent radical Islamist group before offering suggestions for future policy in the concluding paragraphs.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA

The relationship between political conflict and economic inequality has been under academic scrutiny for some time. Although there is no consensus on the exact nature between violence and the poverty/inequality nexus, there is strong evidence to suggest that social unrest is stirred by perceived grievances including a feeling of injustice when faced with relative inequality. Inequality, or the distribution of “extreme poverty and wealth”, has been recognized as a catalyst for “civil disintegration” and political violence since Aristotle and Plato (Nagel 1974: 453–472), but

there is little conclusive evidence regarding the relationship from a security perspective. As Cramer explains, “sharply skewed income and wealth distribution does not always or even usually lead to rebellion” (Cramer 2005), and as a consequence, the “linkages between economic inequality and violent political conflict” are unclear.

Zimmerman’s comprehensive review of the literature for example reveals “a linear positive relationship between socio-economic inequality and political violence”, although he acknowledges the weaknesses and data reliability in many of the existing studies (Zimmerman 1980). Muller explains that high levels of income inequality “radicalize” and “polarize” a portion of the population and finds that this contributes to instability in his cross-national study of 33 countries (Muller 1997). A separate study of 71 developing countries by Alesina and Perotti found that income inequality coincided with social discontent and political instability including a rise in political assassinations (Alesina and Perotti 1996: 1203–1228). This chapter argues that the rise in religious extremism in northeast Nigeria is significantly correlated with the lack of economic opportunities and relative inequality experienced by the local population in comparison to their fellow countrymen. However, neither religious extremism nor inequality is necessarily correlated with a rise in violence.

Despite rising national income and an average GDP growth of 5.4% in 2013 (Worldbank, homepage 2015), development in Nigeria has been asymmetric and concentrated overwhelmingly in the south. Overall, the living standards in the country have dropped to levels unseen since Nigeria’s independence in 1960, and the poverty rate has continued to increase in the last decade. The renowned author Chinua Achebe once pointed out that the gap between minimum and maximum pay in Nigeria was among the highest in the world (Achebe 1983). Little appears to have changed since, as a 2013 survey by the National Population Commission (NPC) with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) revealed the inequalities between the regions (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013).

While 61% of the Nigerian population fall under the poverty line, that burden is disproportionately felt by Sokoto state in the northwest whose poverty rate includes 86.4% of residents (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013). The disparities in the north and south are further evidenced in the health and education surveys. Nigeria has an under-five mortality rate approximating 157 deaths per 1000 live births. While this number is already very high, in the northeast the mortality rate rises to 222 deaths



per 1000 births but drops to 89 deaths in the southwest of the country (Campbell 2013). The campaign for immunization of children has also had unequal results, with 25% of under two-year-olds vaccinated, but among them only 10% in the northwest and as few as 1% in Sokoto.

Access to education is a further illustration of the vast differences between the regions. Literacy rates in the north barely reach 26% for women, with as low as 10% for those in Sokoto against a national average of 53%. In Borno, the heart of Boko Haram's insurgency, the literacy rate is 15% compared to Lagos in the south, where 92% of residents are fully literate (Hoffmann 2014). An estimated 7–9 million children nationally are out of school of whom nearly half are from a nomadic background and have limited access to education. These trends are subsequently reflected in the level of youth unemployment that reached 54% among under 35-year-olds in 2012 (Akande 2014), and again the north shows the highest level of unemployment in the country.

The disparities between the north and the south are quantified by the Gini Index, which rates Nigeria among the most unequal 35 countries in the world, with a coefficient of 48.8 (with 0 being closest to perfect equality) (UNDP homepage 2015). The Gini Index measures the distribution of income within countries and shows that inequality in Nigeria has increased over the last 20 years. Indeed, the poorest half of the population receives less than 10% of national income (Yetunde 2013).

Inequality in Nigeria is deeply rooted and multi-layered. Faced with dire and increasing economic hardship, many Nigerians have turned to religion, leading to the emergence of fundamental Islamic groups and radical Pentecostal churches. In a historical context with a strong messianic tradition, these organizations have thrived in urban areas, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, and become highly influential among the political elite. Indeed, the popularity that both faiths enjoyed empowered their religious leaders to make demands on the government, such as changing the day of rest from Sunday to Friday or implementing Sharia law and courts that led to riots in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This complex religious marketplace characterizes Nigeria's social and political landscape and has led to progressively more extreme strands of preaching as religious and political leaders compete with one another for influence.

It is this political competition along religious lines that has also exacerbated economic policies and further divided the country. The recent monopoly over power that the south has enjoyed has alienated the Muslim population in the north. Under succeeding Christian presidents, poverty

in the north increased, widening the gap with the relatively wealthier south. Boko Haram's military successes in the northeast between 2013 and 2015, and the government's apparent disinterest and incompetence at restoring security, indicate that the region's wellbeing cannot be left in the hands of a southerner. Buhari's victory will go a long way towards restoring the faith of his northern citizens in the political system. But he must also live up to the expectations of his southern residents who have their own legitimate grievances, including fair access to oil resources and the degradation of the land along the Niger Delta. Failure to do so could trigger further violence and religious tensions.

### NIGERIA'S HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

According to Murray Last, "Boko Haram (...) follows a pattern that goes back at least 200 years in Northern Nigeria, and has a logic to it" (cited in Azumah 2015: 34). While this chapter does not delve into Nigeria's religious history, it is relevant to examine the recent outbursts of Islamist violence in the northeast in the context of the country's track record of religious tensions. This reveals existing religious pressures and recurrent government incompetence that sets the scene for further extremist groups to emerge. Among the worst cases of extremist violence in the country is the Maitatsine riots that took place between 1980 and 1985 and during which close to 10,000 people in Kano were killed in clashes between the fundamentalist Islamic group and government forces. Many scholars have drawn comparisons between Maitatsine and the rise of Boko Haram, which appear to match each other in "intensity, organization and spread" (Adesoji 2011: 99; c.f. Smith 2014).

Toyin Falola explains the Maitatsine riots as "a consequence of Islamic fundamentalism on the one hand, and of the political decadence and economic troubles of the 1970s on the other" (Falola 1998: 138). Adesoji understands the prevalence of fundamental Islamist groups in Nigeria "in terms of the dominance of Islam and its adherents in the region, it could imply the prevalence of factors and circumstances that made the region prone to extremism. Among such factors and circumstances are poverty and illiteracy, the existence and seeming proliferation of radical Islamic groups, and recurrent violent religious crises" (Adesoji 2011: 99–119; Smith 2014). These characteristics, this chapter argues, are the same that led to the rise of other fundamental religious groups, such as Boko Haram, in the country and the ensuing and recurrent sectarian violence.

The Maitatsine riots coincided with the oil boom in Nigeria that triggered a social revolution, which displaced a number of traditional merchants and was characterized by high unemployment, rampant corruption, and general popular discontent. A series of environmental disasters including droughts and desertification, which reduced the supply of agricultural products and increased the price of food, further squeezed the population and thus exacerbated the situation. Mass urbanization ensued, and many of the unemployed youths in the cities turned to radical preachers in a bid to maintain their traditional religious beliefs in an apparently amoral society.

The government's violent clampdown on the sect may have been successful in the short term, but it failed to address the root of the problem. Falola concludes therefore that "the Maitatsine violence revealed the depth of the country's economic crises, political instability, and the inability of the security forces to handle insurgents" (Falola 1998: 156). Although an insurgency rather than a series of riots, Boko Haram's unchecked rise and gratuitous brutality between 2010 and 2016 also reveals the government's inability to learn from the past, the continued incompetence of the armed forces, and the severity of the socio-political problems that seem to have just increased in the past 35 years.

In addition to the rise of violent extremist groups such as the Maitatsine and Boko Haram, Nigeria has also experienced difficult Christian–Muslim relations. In particular, the violence in Plateau and Kaduna states suggests an unhappy coexistence between Nigeria's diverse ethno-religious groups. Indeed, religious riots in 1999, 2001, 2008, 2010, and 2013 saw the deaths of thousands of people. A report published by IRIN (formerly Integrated Regional Information Networks) in 2004 stated, "more than 53,000 people were killed (and a further 280,000 displaced) during three years of sectarian violence that engulfed Plateau State in central Nigeria" (IRIN 2004). The cyclical nature of the violence corresponds to a large extent to environmental changes in the country. As a result of desertification, Muslim Fulani herdsmen have been moving south in search of pasture for their livestock, infringing on the land used by indigenous farmers in the region (Walker 2016). According to reports in the local press, much of the violence is triggered by accusations of cattle theft or destruction of crops; both are direct attacks to the precarious livelihoods of the mostly Christian inhabitants. Because the farmers and settlers practise different religions as a result of colonialism and migration, the ethnic violence has taken on a religious overtone.

Finally, the murder of hundreds of Muslims by Christian militias in May 2004 forced President Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency in the Middle Belt. Between May 2011 and June 2013, a further 785 people were killed, demonstrating that the government had failed to address the problems that were contributing to the ongoing conflict. Undoubtedly, unscrupulous politicians have also exploited the religious tensions to galvanize votes. But none of the above offers an explanation for the success Boko Haram has enjoyed in northeast Nigeria since 2009.

Boko Haram has been active since at least 1995, when three Islamic organizations from the University of Maiduguri merged under the leadership of the preacher Muhammad Ali. There is an oversupply of fiery preachers from all faiths in Nigeria, so when Ali—a former mujahedeen who had fought in Afghanistan (Kyari Mohammed in Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 10)—declared the state irredeemable and started to build his own community in Kanama, he did not elicit any reaction from the government. The group was locally referred to as the Nigerian “Taliban” as its members began to “terrorize the inhabitants of Damaturu (...), and Damboa, Bama, and Gwoza in neighbouring Borno State, attacking police stations and attempting prison breaks” (Cook cited in Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 12). In 2004, the security forces stepped in, besieged Ali’s mosque, and killed 200 members, including the leader. This could have been the end of Boko Haram, except that the survivors returned to Maiduguri where they reassembled under the leadership of the charismatic preacher Mohammed Yusuf, who had himself just come back from a self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia.

Mohammed Yusuf transformed the organization from a tiny cult into a popular religious community. Drawing from the tradition of “missionary Islam”, Yusuf set about providing services where the government failed to do so. This included food and shelter and facilitating marriages for members of the group. He quickly built a cohesive social group around him. Members shared a common aim to rid Nigeria of a corrupt and abusive government that had evidently failed its people, and been guided by the idea of returning the country to a state of religious purity (cited in Harnischfeger 2004: 51). This idea of reinstating an Islamist Caliphate in Nigeria has recurred in the rhetoric of a number of preachers. Abubakar Gumi also spoke of the imperatives of restoring “the golden period of the Sokoto Caliphate” that occurred under Usman dan Fodio in the nineteenth century (Abubakar in Varin and Abubakar 2017). According to Boko Haram’s spokesperson Abu Qaqa, “our objective is to place Nigeria

in a difficult position and even destabilize it and replace it with Shari'a; ... to take Nigeria back to the pre-colonial period when the Sharia law was practiced" (cited in Varin 2016). As a result of these political aspirations, Yusuf received financial support from his followers and allegedly was given funds from some Saudi Salafists and individuals in Libya and Algeria—although these claims are disputed (Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 140).

In Nigeria, Falola concludes "religion is used by the power-hungry as a stepping-stone to power and political legitimacy" (Falola 1998: 2) and has historically been a source of violence. Yusuf's religious message became increasingly political as he sought to influence the gubernatorial election and obtain the implementation of Sharia law in Borno state. Pushed by his more belligerent deputy Abubakr Shekau, Yusuf's proselytizing progressively adopted a jihadi discourse, although the preacher himself never openly encouraged jihad. Nonetheless, the members of the group became increasingly violent: they targeted police stations to kill security officials and steal their weapons, broke into prisons to release militants, and assassinated a number of political and religious figures (Comolli 2014).

The Nigerian security forces responded to the increase in violence and set up a joint military anti-crime operation to bring the group and its preacher to heel, as they had done in the Maitatsine riots. In July 2009, within 48 hours, the army had killed 800 Boko Haram members and arrested hundreds of others, including Mohammad Yusuf who subsequently was killed in police custody. The extra-judicial killing transformed Yusuf into a martyr, as he became a symbol of the excessive police and military brutality. This state of affairs united both surviving Boko Haram members and the civilians in an ideological and military campaign against Nigeria's brutal security forces and unaccountable political system. The virulent Abubakr Shekau took over the leadership of the group and turned it into a deadly nemesis. In the next six years, Boko Haram grew into a murderous organization, massacring towns and taking over a territory the size of Belgium, before declaring the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in 2014.

### BOKO HARAM'S STRATEGY OF RADICALIZATION

Due to the dangers in conducting primary research and the opaque and secretive nature of Islamist groups, there has been limited knowledge of radicalization, especially Islamic radicalization, and much academic speculation on the matter. There is also no universal definition of radicalization and therefore "the search for what exactly 'radicalization' is, what causes

it and how to ‘de-radicalize’ those who are considered radicals, violent extremists or terrorists, is a frustrating experience” (Schmid 2013). Much of the literature focuses on Islamist radicalization in the West, with very few research projects pertaining specifically to African nations or to Boko Haram in particular.

For the purpose of this chapter, radicalization is understood along the lines of the Danish intelligence services (PET) definition as the process of ideological indoctrination that leads to the support for, justification of and commitment to violence for politico-ideological ends.<sup>2</sup> Historically, radicals are not necessarily in favour of violence and may support the transformation of society through peaceful means. Manus Midlarsky in his study of political extremism defined the term as a social movement supporting a political programme at odds with the state, and willing to take extreme measures against their opponents, including but not always, “the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program” (Midlarsky 2011: 7). In the case of Boko Haram, it is interesting to evaluate how the organization moved from its relatively limited religious beliefs and ambitions to the indiscriminate killing of thousands of countrymen and fellow Muslims, targeting anyone who was not a member and supporter of “Boko Haram”.

The causes for radicalization are varied and terrorists generally come from many different socio-economic backgrounds (Stern 2003). In north-east Nigeria however, the relative poverty and high unemployment and illiteracy rates (World Bank, Homepage 2015) offers an easy and arguably homogeneous recruitment pool for Boko Haram. With few job opportunities available, there is a low opportunity cost to joining Boko Haram and the added attraction of money and guns (Varin 2016). The latter also creates a sense of empowerment for men who have felt socially or politically marginalized. Many witnesses have stated that Boko Haram pay their recruits, offering them a livelihood and social status that has nothing to do, initially, with ideological indoctrination. The process of radicalization then becomes gradual and takes place over time and within the group.

Fieldwork in Abuja and nearby refugee camps revealed the level of indoctrination that goes on within Boko Haram. Prisoners, many of whom have been kidnapped, are forced to live in squalid conditions inside Sambisa Forest, one of Boko Haram’s strongholds in northeast Nigeria. There is very little to keep them busy in the Forest, leisure activities being strictly banned. The militants pass the time harassing their victims and forcing them to chant verses of the Koran in an effort to convert the

Christians and force the Muslims to follow Boko Haram's brand of Islam. The pressure is constant and unrelenting. Little by little, the militants break down the identity of their prisoners by keeping them isolated from their communities and subjecting them to humiliating treatment, and according to many testimonies, sexual abuse (Ndhlovu 2015). Survivors have testified to being given no choice but to join the group or be killed, and carry out attacks in order to protect themselves and their families. In addition, recent media and security reports of drug use inside the camps indicate either a certain deviancy among the members, or more likely the use of mind-altering substances to control the members and possibly make them more aggressive. The use of fear and violence is an effective weapon that Boko Haram has perfected to radicalize its members, often against their will. This is typical of many rebel groups across Africa, such as the Lord's Resistance Army, the Revolutionary United Front and the Allied Democratic Forces in DR Congo.

Finally, another important mobilizing factor is the skilful capitalization on existing grievances, real or perceived, by Boko Haram's leaders (Change Institute for the European Commission 2008). Northeast Nigeria, as mentioned previously, is characterized by political isolation and socio-economic injustice. Furthermore, the violent track record of the police and security forces has exacerbated relations between the citizens and the state, showing that there is no accountability for the latter and no hope for the former. Grievances, however, are a worldwide phenomenon at different degrees and do not necessarily lead to violence. As a result, this is not sufficient to explain the success of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Veldhuis and Staun argue that the process of radicalization requires a "trigger" or "catalyst" to set off a chain of events, including the commitment of the individual to the cause and subsequently his consent and participation in acts of violence (Veldhuis and Staun 2009). To this, we would add a charismatic leader who can project credibility, or fear—someone like Mohammed Yusuf or Abubakr Shekau. The former's extra-judicial killing may also have worked as the trigger that turned Boko Haram into an indiscriminately violent movement.

### EXPLAINING EXTREME VIOLENCE IN THE NORTHEAST

It is important to analyse the radicalization of the most violent and committed members of Boko Haram in order to understand the group's capability to kill mercilessly in the name of religion. Although the group began

to use violent tactics under Muhammad Ali, the use of indiscriminate violence accelerated under Yusuf and especially after his death under the leadership of Shekau. The main difference between Yusuf's cult and Shekau's organization is the personality of the leader. Abubakr Shekau adopted a more hard-line approach after taking over Yusuf's position as the sect's spiritual leader. He encouraged indiscriminate killings, targeting police and military personnel but also churches and eventually mosques. Shekau is rumoured to have spent some time in a psychiatric hospital in Maiduguri, and his raving video statements are indicative of someone who is mentally unstable (Freeman 2015).

Shekau has boasted in his videos about "enjoy(ing) killing anyone that God commands me to kill the same way I enjoy killing chickens and rams". He has encouraged his followers to "just pick up your knife, break into homes and kill; slaughter anyone in their sleep you come across". A gaoled militant in the government's de-radicalization programme described Shekau as "very obstinate" and "impossible to reason with". According to the inmate, it is Shekau's "leadership (that) has made (Boko Haram) a violent and extremist group—they don't have any regard for human life" (Ross 2015b). And yet this display of wanton violence has not stopped the group from gaining popularity—to the contrary. With a median age of 30 among its adherents, Boko Haram has attracted an important following of young people "who are not only ready to fight, but also lay down their lives for the new cause they have been made to believe in" (Cleen Foundation 2014: 21).

A controversial hypothesis to put forward, but one that bears consideration, is the high level of tolerance for the culture of violence prevalent in Nigeria and particularly northeast Nigeria as a result of its economic situation and its historic and cultural legacy. Poverty, unemployment and grievances may contribute to violence and radicalization and a number of academics postulate that crime and social deviance are strongly related to an unequal or broken socio-economic context (Blau and Blau 1982: 114; Keen 1998). However, the level of brutality wielded by Boko Haram's members is unprecedented in the country and more reminiscent of a civil war than a crime-ridden environment.

Research suggests that when a group of people identifies with a religious community and perceives itself to be threatened by another group, its willingness to carry out acts of aggression in the name of self-defence increases (Struch and Schwartz 1989: 364–373). Indeed, northern Nigeria experienced a series of religious clashes in the late 1990s over the



implementation of Sharia law, which has exacerbated tensions between the Christian and Muslim communities. Evidence collected by the Cleen Foundation in 2014 seems to corroborate this hypothesis. There is significant acceptance among people in Yobe and Borno State surveyed by the Foundation that one's religious beliefs could be imposed on others by means of violence (Cleen Foundation 2014). This attitude is less prevalent for example in Gombe state, which has a strong Christian minority, and where a much larger proportion of those surveyed rejected the use of violence to promote religion.

Another reason for this high level of violence is the large number of uneducated and unemployed youths who are exposed to unregulated and vociferous preachers. Some, such as Yusuf and Shekau, have pushed an aggressive religious message that justifies violence in the name of Islam. The government estimates that there are around nine million children in Nigeria with no access to formal education—of whom 8.5 million are in northern Nigeria—and who are vulnerable to recruitment by extremist terrorist groups such as Boko Haram (Hannah Hoechner in Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 68). The findings highlight the difference in religious diversity, economic opportunity, and literacy between the three states and how they may influence perceptions of religion and tolerance for violence.

On the other hand, Nigeria as a whole has also experienced cycles of violence in the form of religious uprisings such as the Maitatsine in the 1980s and the Sharia riots in the 1990s. There has also been a track record of political disputes and separatist wars since independence, in particular the devastating Biafra War in 1967–1968, in which between 500,000 and 1,000,000 civilians and soldiers were killed. Finally, a well-documented culture of violence and impunity among the armed forces and police signal an endemic tolerance for brutality that the government has either ignored or failed to bring under control. Against this historic background and in view of the existing economic disparities, it is less difficult, perhaps, to justify the emergence of a violent extremist group in Nigeria.

Although radical Islamist groups have effectively become a threat to the stability and security of the country, they are neither purely motivated by religious fervour nor are they simply manipulated by ambitious politicians. The poor socio-economic conditions of the country and a lack of faith in the government, the security forces, and their fellow countrymen have created an environment propitious to violence of any kind. Religion has therefore become a convenient vehicle for mobilizing and voicing

discontent. The highly stratified religious communities and unequal development in the north and the south have facilitated this process of identification along socio-religious lines. An effective rivalry between religious communities for power and the presidency has become integrated in Nigerian politics, further entrenching the problem for the future.

### POLICY FAILURES AND POLITICAL APATHY

Until recently, there has been minimal effort on the part of the Nigerian government to understand the phenomenon of Boko Haram. For a long time, Boko Haram was portrayed as a problem of northeast Nigeria, funded and propped up by local politicians who held a personal grudge against President Goodluck Jonathan. This narrative dominated the Nigerian press, until Jonathan began to appeal for foreign support to counter the “terrorist threat”. Furthermore, the Jonathan administration responded to the growing threat in a similar manner to its predecessors—with unaccountable brutality.

The 2009 massacre in Maiduguri of 800 Boko Haram members and their leader is reminiscent of the government clampdown of the Maitatsine in the 1980s. The brutality exercised by the security forces in Nigeria has repeatedly served to alienate the local population from the government, with many joining forces with Boko Haram as a reaction to state-sponsored violence according to a number of human rights NGOs (Cleen Foundation 2014; Amnesty International 2014). The Joint Task Force (JTF), a combined unit made up of police and military forces, has repeatedly breached basic human rights entrenched in Nigerian and international law. A report published by Amnesty International at the end of 2014 stated that Nigeria’s police and military routinely torture people as “punishment, to extort money or to extract ‘confession’”, which goes “far beyond the appalling torture and killing of suspected Boko Haram members” (Amnesty International 2014).

The heavy-handed tactics by the security forces are by no means correlated to the increase in violence exercised by Boko Haram. The police and military personnel have long had a reputation for escalating the use of force in retaliation to any perceived or actual threat to the institution, particularly in the northeast where they operate with virtually no oversight and thereby in total impunity (Human Rights Watch 2010). Indeed, the storming of Muhammad Ali’s mosque and arbitrary killings of 200 followers is evidence of a lack of measure and accountability on the part of the

armed forces. No legal measures were even taken following this police-led assault (Human Rights Watch 2009).

The 2009 raid of Yusuf's mosque and the extrajudicial killing of the preacher further served to exacerbate the situation and alienate the population from a police force that was deemed ruthless and corrupt. After his capture, Yusuf was brought to the Giwa military barracks where he was questioned before being shot by the police. Although the police released a statement explaining Yusuf had been killed trying to escape, witnesses testified that he was shot in the chest and in the back of the head while tied up and sitting on the floor (Human Rights Watch 2012). The execution of the religious leader at the hands of the government's security forces turned the man into a martyr and a rallying point for anyone who had been on the receiving end of a perceived unjust system. Indeed, when Boko Haram re-emerged in 2010, they swore to avenge the crimes of the government, especially Yusuf's murder and the 800 people who had been killed in the July raids.

Between 2009 and 2014, an estimated 5000 to 10,000 people were arrested, detained indefinitely and tortured as part of the military campaign against Boko Haram (Amnesty International 2014). This surprisingly high detention rate is part of a deliberate strategy of mass arrests to deter the population from cooperating with the "terrorists". Women and children were among those detained by the security forces in an effort to intimidate their husbands and draw suspected Boko Haram members out of hiding. Soldiers have descended on entire towns, perpetuating a cycle "of attack and counter-attack (which) has been marked by unlawful violence on both sides" (Ross 2015a). Most notorious maybe is the April 2013 assault of Baga, a town on the edge of Lake Chad that was sacked by soldiers following an ambush on a patrol vehicle in the region. Human Rights Watch assessed that at least 187 people were killed in the rampage and that 2275 buildings had been destroyed, mostly by fire (Human Rights Watch 2013). The army denies the allegations and suggests that insurgents dressed in camouflage led the rampage, which is also a possibility (Smith 2014).

The impunity with which the security forces operate has created a "climate of fear in which people are too scared to report crimes and journalists do not dare report them" (Ross 2015a). As a result, the Joint Task Force has not been able to count on the cooperation of the population in the counterinsurgency operation, thereby weakening and delaying its ability to implement a proper strategy. In addition, the police abuses have pushed

some Nigerians into the recruiting arms of Boko Haram, who are perceived as the only viable option to avenge the crimes the security personnel committed against family members and friends. One resident of Maiduguri quoted in a Nigerian paper stated that “we don’t have a problem with Boko Haram; our problem is with the police and the military that harass and kill our innocent people. They call every Muslim a Boko Haram” (Kyari Mohammed in Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 28).

Despite the media and analysts’ claims that police brutality has been a driving force behind the radicalization of populations in the northeast of Nigeria, it is important to note one study led by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). Indeed, the USIP report found that “alleged excesses of security forces are among the least important drivers of youth extremism and violence” (Onuoha 2014). It concluded that “poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and weak family structures” in addition to perceived government corruption were principle factors that led to the recruitment and radicalization of young people (Onuoha 2014). Nonetheless, the lack of public confidence in the security forces of the country, and the failures of the state to guarantee security and basic living standards effectively undermine the credibility of a government and mobilize public resentment.

Finally, following a speech by Goodluck Jonathan in January 2012, and an increase in violent attacks by Boko Haram, the federal government declared a state of emergency in 15 Local Government Areas (LGAs),<sup>3</sup> giving security forces additional powers in the region. As a result, the JTF used more draconian tactics, further alienating the population and pushing Boko Haram into rural areas over which the government has little control (Interview 1). The government’s approach to Boko Haram has been principally militaristic, especially since the group has grown into a full-blown insurgency (Omeni 2015). This has not changed under the presidency of Buhari, who as a former military man himself has preferred a hard-line approach, but with arguably more success. Indeed, under the new President, the Nigerian army has benefitted from foreign advisors and military support and has consolidated its military cooperation with neighbouring countries.<sup>4</sup>

### NIGERIA’S DE-RADICALIZATION PROGRAMME

As part of their strategy to understand and counter Boko Haram, the Jonathan government did set up in 2014 a de-radicalization programme for former militants and prisoners. To a certain extent this was a reaction

to the backlash against the military “hard approach” that had the reverse effect of further radicalizing communities. De-radicalization programmes however, are relatively new and experimental. They are backed by psychological studies but there is limited precedence and evidence that these programmes are at all effective.

Known as the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program, the initiative is hosted by the Office of the National Security Advisor in Abuja. It receives funding from both the European Union and the United States. The CVE programme follows a recent trend that seeks to counter violent extremism with a variety of policies, including addressing “intolerance, government failure, and political, economic, and social marginalization” (Frazer and Nünlist 2015:183). In practice, the programme’s approach is one of research and prevention: experts study the causes that lead to violent radicalization with the objective of eventually tackling the main socio-economic, political, and psychological drivers. This includes identifying at-risk populations before individuals become radicalized. The task is enormous and daunting and requires significant community input and financial commitment, which takes time in the best of cases.

As a result, Nigeria’s de-radicalization programme has focused principally on survivors, victims, and captured Boko Haram members. The head of the programme, psychologist Dr. Fatima Akilu, directed up to 2015 the experiment through two prison programmes and includes both a research component and an educational framework. First of all, the staff engages with the inmates on their belief systems, studying their sources of inspirations, heroes, and especially the texts in the Koran that appears to drive them. A team of imams meets with the prisoners and they discuss religion and ideology, encouraging consultation and intellectual exploration. From an educational perspective, prisoners receive reading and mathematics classes, they meet with individual councillors, do art therapy and are encouraged to take part in team sports such as volleyball, football and basketball—all the things that Boko Haram prohibits. Dr. Akilu described the programme as being in its “early days”, in need of a longer period of engagement but overall “going well”. All prisoners seem to have integrated well but there is little evidence at this time that the experiment has affected or changed their fundamental belief system (Interview with Dr. Fatima Akilu in Abuja; August 2015, in Freeman 2015).

One of the important features of the new prison programme, which could equally be useful to CVE initiatives in other countries, is the separation of Boko Haram prisoners from other inmates. According to Dr. Akilu,

when they are together, the former spend all their time trying to convert other prisoners, a phenomenon that has been frequently observed elsewhere and prisons are today a significant lieu for radicalization.

Finally, despite the optimism in the Nigerian CVE programme, under President Buhari, the National Security Agency has undergone significant changes, including the removal of Dr. Akilu from her position in October 2015 and replacing her with a military officer. This risks undermining the foundations of Nigeria's "soft" approach to de-radicalization and it is unclear whether or how the new government will move forward.

## CONCLUSIONS

Boko Haram started off, like many other radical groups in Nigeria, as a small, localized sect with little power or influence. Its successful transformation into a regional and international threat is partially the result of its ability to capitalize on existing religious rivalries and socio-economic grievances. The government's failure in dealing with the Maitatsine rebellion and the track record of police brutality have also fed right into the discourse of religious victimhood that is propagated by Yusuf and Shekau.

With a large pool of impoverished youth from which to recruit and a powerful political grievance backed by legitimate religious beliefs, Boko Haram has managed to expand in the northeast of Nigeria and take advantage of the government's relative disinterest in the economically "backward" part of the country. It has proven to be opportunistic and resilient, strategically adapting to the political and security context in the region. Recently, Boko Haram established itself with international terrorist groups in Africa and the Middle East, thereby increasing its striking power and its access to weaponry and recruits. Goodluck Jonathan sought to position Boko Haram as an international threat and gain support from the West, but the successful rise of the Islamist group in Nigeria is most likely the result of severe domestic grievances, rather than part of an international Islamist agenda. Nonetheless, their alleged association with Islamic State gave Boko Haram unprecedented credibility and resources from Islamist sources, and eventually led to a formal alliance between the two groups (Oladipo 2015). It also attracted the attention of Western countries involved in a global war on Islamist terrorism and eager to paint all groups with the same brush, irrespective of the local context.

There are a number of strategies the Nigerian government can adopt in order to address the growth of violent radical groups. From a crisis

management perspective, a quicker reaction from the government to denounce acts of violence and a proactive response and reintegration for refugees and other victims of Boko Haram would signal Buhari's commitment to finding a solution to the immediate problem. The government would also need to involve civil society to promote community-based security arrangements that it could support with technical assistance, for example. There has been much criticism of the government's emergency response and in particular regarding corruption and ineptitude within the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Furthermore, poor economic opportunities and high levels of unemployment are part of the problem in northeast Nigeria and need to be addressed in the long term. Realistically, job creation is not straightforward and it alone will not solve the problem, but it should be included in an all-encompassing strategy, including a focus on economic growth to counter extremism. A step in that direction could include more investment in formal education and the regulation of preachers—particularly itinerant preachers whose access to vulnerable populations is too easy and dangerous.

The government's approach has been reactive rather than proactive. Competition and violence among and inside the police and military institutions have undermined trust in the state. In addition, systemic failures and corruption in the justice system have eroded the effectiveness of the security forces. There is little accountability for police and military personnel, but likewise prisoners may be held indefinitely without trial or on the contrary released back into the community regardless of their crimes. A reform of the police and justice sector will also need to be a part of the long-term strategy.

In December 2015, President Buhari declared the militants were "technically defeated" and no longer able to mount conventional attacks. While Boko Haram has not disappeared, it has been relegated to the typical African rebel group, limited to a small stronghold, still hurting those nearby but no longer a threat to the nation or of any concern to the West. The year 2015 was instrumental in pushing back the group, and many may wonder why it took so long to accomplish. Was it a lack of political will? Of military expertise? Of foreign assistance? Or does it simply take time to mount a successful counterinsurgency?

Despite the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria over the last few years, a proactive government response that includes a military approach but also addresses the conditions that led to the success of the group in the first

place can be effective. The Nigerian armed forces, with the help of foreign advisors and neighbouring armies have already managed to push back the insurgency. A comprehensive and informed long-term approach as detailed above could deter further extremist movements from ravaging part of the country in the future.

On a final note, Boko Haram has been in turns called a terrorist group, a rebel faction, and an insurgency. Definitions can be contested, but what is universally true is the level of radicalization and violence of its members. In a crowded religious marketplace and the rough political environment in Nigeria, Boko Haram has managed to carve itself a role that appeals to enough of the population to become a threat to the state. Understanding the origins of Boko Haram in Nigeria will go some way into preventing the rise of such groups again. A proper explanation will need to take into consideration global and historical dynamics, including the establishment of an Islamist state in Mali in 2012, the war in Libya that has been nourishing violent groups in Africa and the Middle East since at least 2011, and the on-going politico-Islamist tensions in Algeria.<sup>5</sup>

## NOTES

1. The full and original name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which in Arabic means "People of the Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad Group".
2. For more on this topic, see Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen's chapter in this volume.
3. Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Jere, Ngala, Bama, and Biu in Borno State; Damaturu, Geidam, Potiskum, Gujba, and Bade in Yobe State; Jos North, Jos South, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom in Plateau State; and Suleja in Niger State.
4. Collected from interviews in Nigeria; *for further details see* Varin (2016).
5. Further discussion of these issues can be found in Varin (2016).

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## INTERVIEW

Interview 1. Nigerian Military Scholar, in Abuja, Nigeria, August 2015.

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# Patterns of Disengagement from Violent Extremism: A Stocktaking of Current Knowledge and Implications for Counterterrorism

*Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen*

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I aim to answer the question: What do we know about why individuals voluntarily disengage from violent extremism in a Western context? I also discuss how this knowledge could help refine efforts to limit recruitment to and facilitate exit from violent extremism.

The discussion is based on a review of case studies of voluntary disengagement from violent extremism published between 1990 and 2016. I identify triggers and patterns of disengagement across different forms of extremism. This includes militant Islamism, right and left wing extremism, separatist, and nationalist terrorism. In a comprehensive overview of interview-based research, this chapter takes stock of what we do and do not know from primary sources about individual reasons for exit and disengagement from violent extremism and terrorism. I show how some factors, for example, first-hand exposure to extremist violence or being

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condemned by mainstream society can either reinforce radicalization or expedite disengagement depending on individual circumstances. Therefore, I argue, one-size-fits-all counterterrorism measures should be supplanted by a differentiated approach to violent extremists to increase their chances of voluntary disengagement and reduce the risk of unintended and negative side effects of counterterrorism measures.

This chapter begins with a review of the research on why and how people leave violent extremism behind in a Western context. Broad patterns that appear to be connected to exit from different kinds of extremism are identified, as are gaps in our current knowledge. The discussion is centred on what might set apart those who exit from those who stay and the policy implications of these differences for managing the threat of violent extremism.

### STUDIES OF DISENGAGEMENT IN A WESTERN CONTEXT

Terrorist plots and attacks against European targets in the 2000s, some of them by ‘homegrown’, spurred a significant amount of research into when, how, and why individuals radicalize into terrorism. More recently, interest in studying the other end of an extremist career—when, why, and how individuals disengage behaviourally and/or ideologically from violent extremism—has grown.<sup>1</sup>

This section provides an overview of scholarly studies of disengagement from violent extremism in a Western context published from 1990 to 2016 and based on primary data such as interviews. Several case studies have looked at voluntary disengagement from terrorism and violent extremism, but few compared these studies to seek general patterns in people’s reasons for leaving violent extremism.

The online *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* define disengagement as ‘the action or process of withdrawing from involvement in an activity, situation, or group’.<sup>2</sup> Different researchers define disengagement differently. Some focus on its psychological aspects and regard a person as disengaged when they no longer believe in or feel part of an extremist group, network, or subculture; others focus on behavioural aspects of disengagement and define it as desisting from engaging in violent activity and contact to extremist groups or networks. Some authors include both behaviour and beliefs in their definitions (Bjørge and Horgan 2009: 4; Demant et al. 2008: 13).

Here, disengagement is understood as a process with more possible end states, where behavioural desistance from violence and other criminal

activity in support of a violent extremist group is a minimum (and assessable) requirement, but where the *disengager* might go further in terms of revising his or her ideological convictions and/or publicly recanting.

Reflecting the still unconsolidated nature of the research field and the lack of definitional agreement, there are no broadly recognized models or theories of disengagement. Some researchers use a framework that distinguishes between structural, organizational, and individual levels or factors. Others use process models that subdivide disengagement into a phase of doubt, a phase of cutting ties, and a phase of reorientation (Demant et al. 2008: 5).

Most studies are exploratory in character, and none have been able to identify any patterns of socioeconomic, circumstantial, or individual characteristics to distinguish disengagers or meaningfully set them apart from other members of extremist subcultures. On the contrary, most studies emphasize the variety of profiles (Barrelle 2015: 4; Bjørgo and Carlsson 2005: 19–21; Horgan 2009: 140; Jacobson 2010: 8), and the case studies comprise individuals with a wide range of extremist engagement prior to exit, from young individuals who operated on the fringes of violent youth groups to high ranking leaders of terrorist groups and key operatives with several murders on their conscience (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2013: 102; Kassimeris 2011: 561; Reinares 2011a: 793; Rommelspacher 2006: 153). In light of the absence of apparent commonalities, studies that probe beneath the surface (using semi-structured interviews, for example) seem most useful for understanding (as a precondition for later testing, possibly in studies of larger numbers of disengagers) why individuals turn away from extremism. The review below is focused on such interview-based case studies.

Primary data such as interviews with current or former perpetrators of terrorist violence have traditionally been scarce in terrorism studies. This is primarily due to the inherent risks, practical difficulties, and ethical questions entailed in gaining access to and conducting research in violent and extremist subcultures. However, studies have been based fully or partially on interviews with former violent extremists such as militant Islamists, right wing extremists, left wing extremists, and separatist or nationalist terrorists. A literature search covering the period from January 1990 to June 2016 identified several case studies (Aho 1994; Arnstberg and Hällén 2000; Barrelle 2015; Bjørgo and Carlsson 2005; Bjørgo 2009; BRÅ, Centrum för kunskap om brott och åtgärder mot brott 2001; Bull and Cooke 2013; Christensen 1994; Demant et al. 2008; Docurama,

*The Weather Underground* 2003; Graaf and Malkki 2010; Horgan 2009; Ilardi 2013; Jacobson 2010; Kassimeris 2011; Olsen 2010/2011; 2009; Reinares 2011a; Rommelspacher 2006; Vidino 2011).<sup>3</sup>

A careful review and count indicates that these case studies are based on a total of 245 interviews/cases of individual disengagement. Table 10.1 shows the numbers and types of extremism aggregated across the case studies.

There are clear *limitations* to the data of the aggregated case studies. The interviewees are neither a random nor a representative sample of voluntary disengagers. Participants were not asked the same questions, and although all the studies concern exit and disengagement, data were processed and analysed using different criteria depending on the specific research questions of different studies. The level of detail differs between individual cases and is sometimes scarce.

The case studies generally neither attempt nor allow identified disengagement factors and triggers to be checked against a control group of 'stayers'. Thus, the interviews provide insights into individual perceptions of what happened and why that might or might not correspond to factors that a controlled, comparative study of disengagers and active terrorists might unearth. There are also no guarantees that the respondents, even if anonymous, did not try to mislead to put themselves in a more favourable light to themselves, the researchers, or a broader readership. The studies also differ in reporting methodological details and efforts to ensure data reliability. Some attempted to triangulate by comparing accounts of different individuals discussing the same events; others compared interviews with court documents. Conclusions based on this aggregation of case studies should therefore be regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

Even with those limitations, the case studies represent the best current interview-based stock of knowledge about disengagement from terrorism. Also, despite the shortcomings listed above, striking similarities emerge

**Table 10.1** Number of interviews/individual disengagers by type of extremism

	<i>Militant Islamism</i>	<i>Left wing extremism</i>	<i>Right wing extremism</i>	<i>Separatist and nationalist terrorism</i>	<i>Type of violent extremism not specified</i>
Number of cases	19	36	111	42	37



from these different studies of different forms of extremism between triggers of doubts and other factors leading disengagers away from violent extremism. The fact that the same overall patterns, as elaborated below, keep emerging should inspire a degree of confidence that these patterns are indeed connected to disengagement, even though we cannot run controlled experiments to test the relations of causality.

### WHY LEAVE VIOLENT EXTREMISM BEHIND? THREE CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Why do individuals voluntarily disengage from violent extremism in the West?<sup>4</sup> The case studies indicate a complex interplay of individual, group, and broader societal factors but also three overall cross-cutting themes: doubts related to the binary nature of the extremist world view, disappointment with peers or leaders, and changing personal priorities. These three patterns were found in every group of extremists and stand out as the most frequent patterns in the case studies.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Cluster One: Losing Faith in the Militant Ideology*

Although there are obvious differences between militant Islamism, left and right wing extremism, and separatist or nationalist terrorism in terms of political goals, enemy images, and ideas about legitimate targets and tactics, the basic structure of their narratives is similar in many ways. They are binary stories of a world divided into black and white, right and wrong, and ‘us’ and ‘them’: stories in which ‘they’ are constantly attacking, repressing, and persecuting ‘us’ and ‘our’ values, ideals, and way of life; where ‘they’ have no mercy and no human compassion, and ‘we’ have no choice but to take up arms in self-defence; where fighting for a just cause is emancipatory and transformative, bringing the individual closer to God, or in the secular ideologies, closer to a truer, stronger, and more authentic self, and in which a better future will eventually emerge from the confrontation between the forces of repression and the forces of change and justice.<sup>6</sup>

This militant worldview tends to be inculcated in potential recruits as they become radicalized and to be reinforced in small closed peer groups and/or via social media with likeminded individuals (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2013: 803). Occasionally, however, the narrative begins to crack and loses its persuasiveness. Across all types of extremism, ideological doubts seem

to emerge in a realization that the world is not quite as black and white as depicted, that progress towards the desired future is not happening as predicted, or that violence is not transformative and emancipatory, but the opposite (Arnstberg and Hällén 2000: 42; Bull and Cooke 2013: 96; Ilardi 2013: 732; Jacobson 2010: 15; Rommelspacher 2006: 188). What might trigger such doubt?

In contrast to discussions of the radicalizing potential of travelling to a foreign conflict zone, the case studies reviewed here contain several examples of how confronting the realities of a conflict zone might trigger a person's doubts. In one of the studies, Horgan interviews a would-be militant Islamist fighter who travelled to the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 2000s and relates his surprise and disgust seeing the recruitment and manipulation of weak, destitute Pakistanis by Arab militants. These recruits were apparently sent into battle without appropriate training or equipment and basically treated as expendable cannon fodder (Horgan 2009: 69–70). In another case study by Jacobsen, an individual who went to Iraq to help Iraqis fight the 'US crusader-invaders' relates how he was instead used by the Iraqi authorities as a human shield at a diesel plant to avert air strikes on the facility. In both cases, the realities on the ground proved to be more complex than the militant Islamist propaganda about an evil West attacking defenceless Muslim civilians and noble mujahidins (Jacobson 2010: 14). Western defectors from the 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' (ISIL) cite similar reasons for their disillusionment such as infighting, abuse of foot soldiers, and atrocities committed against civilian Sunni Muslims (Neumann 2015: 10).

Encountering a supposed enemy who acts contrary to negative preconceptions is another potential trigger of doubt. A person who displays human interest and acts kindly, justly, and selflessly defies the easy 'truths' of the extremist narrative. Across all forms of extremism, the case studies contain examples of extremists who were in need for various reasons and, contrary to their expectations, received help from a member of their out-group. Others, forced into the company of members of their out-group for a longer time, gradually had to admit exceptions to their stereotypes and eventually to question the images of the enemy in the militant narrative. A friendly or professional approach from representatives of the state, another presumed enemy in most extremist ideologies, can also apparently sow a seed of doubt (Aho 1994: 143; Arnstberg and Hällén 2000: 42; Bull and Cooke 2013: 96; Christensen 1994: 222; Ilardi 2013: 732; Jacobson 2010: 15; Rommelspacher 2006: 188).

For some, confrontation with the real, bloody consequences of extremist violence seems to trigger doubt. The militant propaganda tends to emphasize ‘their’ violence and the resulting human suffering. ‘Our’ violence, on the other hand, is glorified and celebrated as the only possible response to the injustices taking place. The consequences for the victims are either glossed over or the victims are depicted as sub-humans deserving of their fate. In the real world, things are not so simple; when directly confronted with the human costs of violence, some begin to doubt. Frequently, such doubt is reinforced by the thought that violence does not further the political and ideological goals of the militant movement, but instead leads to isolation and marginalization (Arnstberg and Hållén 2000: 37; Barrelle 2015: 8; Bjørge 2009: 37; Bjørge and Carlsson 2005: 26; Christensen 1994: 220; Demant et al. 2008: 125; Docurama, *The Weather Underground* 2003; Horgan 2009: 90; Jacobson 2010: 11; Kassimeris 2011: 561; Reinares 2011a: 783 and 794).

Conversely, however, propaganda depicting violence, including extreme and graphic images, can and do serve as a recruitment tool, attracting individuals in search of action, of feeling important, and perhaps of a ‘legitimate’ outlet for aggression. Performing violent acts against perceived enemies is also known to be a rite de passage for newcomers in extremist groups, testing and reinforcing their commitment (Stern and Berger 2015).

When does violence work to reinforce an extremist commitment and when does it work in the opposite direction? The evidence from the case studies is inconclusive, but several indicate that being confronted with the human consequences of extremist violence while beginning to think that violence does not further the political and ideological goals of the militant movement but instead leads to isolation and marginalization, can lead to exit from extremism (Arnstberg and Hållén 2000: 37; Barrelle 2015: 8; Bjørge 2009: 37; Bjørge and Carlsson 2005: 26; Christensen 1994: 220; Demant et al. 2008: 125; Docurama, *The Weather Underground* 2003; Horgan 2009: 90; Jacobson 2010: 11; Kassimeris 2011: 561; Reinares 2011a: 783 and 794).

Belief in the extremist ideology might begin to crack open following specific, eye-opening experiences, as in the cases above, or it might lose its hold more gradually as extremists for one reason or other—travel, a new job, a new partner, or entering an educational institution—begin to have less contact with militant peers and more exposure to the world outside. Disengagers in the case studies and from all kinds of extremism tell how time alone has allowed them deeper and more independent reflection and

exploration of other sources of information, gradually making the militant world view seem less plausible (Ilardi 2013: 732; Demant et al. 2008: 128; Olsen 2009: 52; Vidino 2011: 411).

Prisons are frequently identified as settings where people might be recruited or further radicalized (ICSR 2010: 1 and 3; Khosrokhavar 2013: 288). Incarcerating members of a terrorist network might reinforce group identity and confirm extremist narratives of persecution and mistreatment at the hands of a repressive state. However, the reviewed case studies contain examples of prison terms serving as positive turning points by providing extremist time and room to reflect on their beliefs and choices. At the intersection between ideological doubt and changing personal priorities, *exiters* recount how a prison term made them realize that they were on track to throw away their lives while changing nothing in society (Arnstberg and Hällén 2000: 36; Bull and Cooke 2013: 88; Horgan 2009: 45 and 56; Olsen 2009: 53, 2010/2011: 48; Rommelspacher 2006: 180).

Exposure to people or situations that bring the binary extremist worldview into question and gradual dissociation from extremist beliefs through reduced contact with extremist peers are cross-cutting themes in the stories of the disengagers. Yet many members who remain in extremist groups or networks are also likely to be exposed to facts, opinions, and situations that could appear contradictory to the extremist narrative. So why do some stay and some leave?

One of the case studies allows comparison between incarcerated Italian terrorists (left wing and right wing), some of whom disavowed their extremist ideology, while some did not. The former relate how a gradual process of solitary reflection, followed by a willingness to begin to be exposed to different points of view, led them to reconsider their beliefs. The unreformed, on the other hand, appear to have consciously opted to remain within their circle of co-believers (Bull and Cooke 2013: 90–94). But why would these individuals, in the same political context, serving terms for comparable offences under the same prison regime, make different choices? Unfortunately, the study does not provide many clues. It could be that differences in life trajectories had an impact that was not captured by the study. Or that individual differences in cognitive flexibility and intellectual openness might influence the likelihood of attitude change and disengagement (Digman 1990: 417–440, 424). Unfortunately, this notion is difficult to test because, for several ethical and practical reasons, it is not feasible to run controlled psychological experiments in militant groups and subcultures.

How might a direct confrontation or condemnation of extremist views by surrounding society affect the chances that ideological doubt could emerge and lead to disengagement? The current debate about travellers to Syria and Iraq, for example, is rife with direct and indirect denunciation of the beliefs and actions of those who go.

The impact could be either positive or negative, depending both on how mainstream society signals the unacceptability of violent extremism and on the circumstances and characteristics of the individual extremist. As demonstrated by radicalization studies, some individuals are attracted to extremist groups and networks because they offer an effective way of provoking mainstream society and the parental generation (Børgo 2009: 32; Hemmingsen 2015; Olsen 2009: 16). In these cases, confrontational attempts to dissuade extremism by family members, mainstream religious figures, other establishment figures, or government authorities are likely to simply make things worse. However, the disengagement studies show the importance of credible counter voices who engage in a critical dialogue, take a personal interest, and do not condemn the extremist or directly attack his or her ideology (Aho 1994: 130; Arnstberg and Hällén 2000: 39; Demant et al. 2008: 128 and 156; Ilardi 2013: 733; Olsen 2010/2011: 56, 69–70; Rommelspacher 2006: 233). Who would constitute a credible counter voice is individual and needs to be considered on a case to case basis.

The first pattern that stands out in these studies of disengagement from extremism is ideological doubt. Sanctions such as prison or social condemnation can, depending on individual circumstances, either underpin the process of ideological doubt leading to exit or prompt further radicalization.

### *Cluster Two: Group and Leadership Failure*

The second cluster emerging from the case studies is related to disappointment and disillusionment with the internal dynamics of the militant group or with the group's leadership.

We know from research into radicalization that some individuals are attracted to extremist groups because of the community and sense of belonging they offer (Bjørgo and Carlsson 2005: 21; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 800). We also see in the militant propaganda and idealized and glorified contrast between 'we' and 'they' and 'we' are depicted as a courageous, honourable, selfless, authentic, and mutually supportive group—an

avant-garde with deeper insight than the majority and a willingness to act instead of just talking.

Not surprisingly, such ideals frequently clash with reality, leading to doubt, disillusionment, and apparently, disengagement. As with ideological doubt, some exiters relate having a moment of reckoning triggered by a specific situation in which they felt let down by their peers or leaders. Others seem to go through a more gradual process of disaffection.

Two individuals in a case study by Vidino, one of whom spent time in an al-Qaida training camp, exemplify the former. One had an accident with a hand grenade during a training exercise, and none of his supposed brothers seemed to care; he was left to his own devices to get out and obtain medical assistance. The other individual relates being left behind in Italy at a time when authorities were cracking down on extremist networks as his ‘brothers’ broke their promises to help him leave the country (Vidino 2011: 410–411).

Stories of peers or leaders who seem to care more about power, money, and their own interests than their comrades or the cause are frequent in the case studies of disengagers (Horgan 2009: 69; Ilardi 2013: 725; Jacobson 2010: 14). Former right wing extremists tell of their disappointment with the internal bickering, self-seeking behaviour, mutual suspicion, competition, and backstabbing in the group. Some tell of being abruptly disabused of their illusions when presumed brothers turned them in to authorities or let them down in a moment of need (e.g., for help during a trial). Some right wing extremists received death threats from other members they felt close to (Arnstberg og Hållén 2000: 36; Bjørge 2009: 37; Bjørge and Carlsson 2005: 27; BRÅ, Centrum för kunskap om brott och åtgärder mot brott 2001: 41; Rommelspacher 2006: 151 and 155). On the extreme left, and at the intersection between ideological doubts and doubts raised by group failure, exiters related how violence against external enemies at a certain point began to infect and corrupt internal relations as it becomes tempting to settle internal disagreements with the use of force as well. Some also complained that criminal or reckless individuals were permitted to join their group or movement, undermining its coherence or its broader social support. Disengagers from separatist, left wing, and right wing militant groups also said that assassinations of peers suspected of having defected or of cooperating with authorities triggered soul searching and doubts about the group (Bull and Cooke 2013: 88; Demant et al. 2008: 131–132; Reinares 2011a: 789).

Tales of self-seeking, manipulative, cowardly, or outright incompetent leaders also figure in the narratives of ex-militants across all forms of extremism. Former right wing extremists related their disappointment at their groups' leaders unable to live up to the ideals of physical strength, courage, and intelligence touted in the propaganda. Others noted that in moments of danger or when apprehended by authorities, the leaders seemed willing to betray the others to save themselves (Demant et al. 2008: 133; Reinares 2011a: 792; Rommelspacher 2006: 158).

Former left wing extremists said that their leaders, despite an egalitarian and anti-materialistic ideology, reserved certain privileges for themselves. In a case study by Reinares, former members of the Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) complained about opaque politicking within the group and, interlocked with their loss of faith in the militant ideology's glorification of violence, the group leadership's irresponsible and excessive targeting of civilians (Reinares 2011a: 789). The specific complaints differ, but the underlying theme of bad leadership cuts across all forms of extremism.

As with exposure to situations that challenge the binary world view of the extremist ideology, it appears likely that many in extremist subcultures or groups will, at some point, feel disappointed in the conduct of their peers or leaders. What makes the difference between those who stay and those who leave?

One answer may be that exposure to bad leadership or lack of group solidarity could differ, as could the consequences. It may be that an individual who is already beginning to doubt the militant ideology, its binary depiction of the world, and its claims about the efficacy of violence will be more inclined to act on their disappointment in peers or leaders by disengaging. Indeed, several exiters in the case studies express misgivings about their group and leaders *and* the notion that violence seems to lead nowhere. This would be compatible with psychological research, which indicates that behavioural and attitudinal change is more likely, the more fundamental and plentiful the dissonant information a person is exposed to (Zimbardo and Leippe 1991: 108 and 118). Individual differences in cognitive styles and psychological traits such as intellectual openness could also help explain the difference. However, as discussed above, testing this is difficult in an extremist subculture.

Evidence from some case studies indicates that one reason not to leave immediately could be a lack of viable or attractive social or economic alternatives. Instead of breaking away completely, some individuals

appeared to scale down their involvement to, for example, supporting the network or group by committing petty crimes (Bjørge 2009: 40; Bjørge and Carlsson 2005: 31; Vidino 2011: 410). Thus, an unintended consequence of economic and social sanctions, directed at individuals connected to extremist networks, could be that some would-be disengagers remain stuck in a subculture that they would prefer to leave. Conversely, a factor that seems consistently to help disengagement is mainstream society's willingness to include ex-extremists in social, economic, and political life (Arnstberg and Hällén 2000: 38; Bjørge 2009: 36 and 47; Bull and Cooke 2013: 84 and 96; Demant et al. 2008: 185; Graaf and Malkki 2010: 634; Horgan 2009: 55; Olsen 2010/2011: 50 and 70). Though this could cause political and even ethical dilemmas (Should everyone have a second chance, or are certain crimes so serious that the perpetrators merit permanent exclusion?), an open mainstream society that permits exiters to re-enter educational institutions, obtain jobs, and otherwise engage in it is probably the best general policy; it could enhance disengagement and reduce the risk of recidivism. Sustainable disengagement, as argued by Barrelle, is about re-engaging somewhere else (Barrelle 2015: 8).

Disengagement due to disillusionment with extremist peers or leaders is the second pattern that stands out in the case studies and across different kinds of extremism. Individuals who already have ideological doubts might be more likely to leave dysfunctional groups, yet the evidence is inconclusive due to the lack of control groups in the case studies. A mainstream society that welcomes ex-extremists back, unsurprisingly, appears to help disengagers carry through with turning away from militancy.

### *Cluster Three: Changing Personal Priorities and the Costs of Extremism*

The third and final cluster of exits emerging from the case studies appear related to personal circumstances such as burnout, aging, missing loved ones, longing for a normal life, or feeling guilty about the impact of one's extremism on friends and family.

Growing older appears to be an important factor in disengagement. The case studies show that front-line activism began to feel unnatural and awkward to several individuals as they entered their thirties and began to think more seriously about getting a job, starting a career, having a family, and finding a decent place to live (Bjørge and Carlsson 2005: 29; Demant



et al. 2008: 138; Olsen 2009: 53; Olsen 2010/2011: 48; Kassimeris 2011: 526; Reinares 2011a: 796).

Across all forms of extremism, individuals also related how the quiet but plainly visible pain of family members made them reconsider or how having a family that clearly expressed disagreement with their ideology, but never judged them, made it easier to quit and reconnect with normal life (Bull and Cooke 2013: 96; Reinares 2011a: 797; Rommelspacher 2006: 179). A related impetus for exit appears to be the notion of responsibility towards a child or a new romantic partner, who the exiter feels should be protected from the potentially traumatic experiences that go with having a parent or partner engaged in extremism (Aho 1994: 135; Demant et al. 2008: 139; Olsen 2010/2011: 48; Reinares (2011b: 703; Rommelspacher 2006: 194).

The militant lifestyle of constant confrontation with real or presumed enemies, and engagement in crime apparently takes its toll on many. Several individuals in the case studies described a sense of confusion and fatigue preceding their exit. The feeling of burnout appears to be a particularly powerful push towards exit if it coincides with a notion that the extremist group is not making any progress towards its social and political goals. This would indicate, once again, that disengagement is more likely when individuals are grappling with more than just one kind of doubt (Arnstberg og Hållén 2000: 38; Barrelle 2015: 8; Bjørge 2009: 38 and 40; Docurama, *The Weather Underground* 2003; Jacobson 2010: 12; Kassimeris 2011: 562; Reinares 2011a: 796).

As discussed in the section above, a closed mainstream society and social sanctions directed at ex-extremists can probably stall individuals' attempts to leave dysfunctional extremist groups. Researchers have also pointed out that coming down hard on terrorism might cause groups to splinter and segments to radicalize further, while feeding into extremist narratives about persecuted minorities and a repressive state (Graaf and Malkki 2010: 631; Khosrokhavar 2006: 31). At the same time, however, the threat of judicial, administrative, economic, and social sanctions would seem to add to the costs and stresses connected with an extremist engagement. The case studies illustrate that the threat or application of sanctions that impose a cost do give some individuals cause to think about leaving the militant group (Arnstberg and Hållén 2000: 37 and 39; Bjørge and Carlsson 2005: 26; Demant et al. 2008: 156). In a case study by Ilardi, one former militant Islamist related that watching other militants put on trial and sentenced made him conclude that 'this is not for me' Ilardi

2013: 733. And in a case study by Olsen, a former left wing militant explains how he got out because of fear that his friends or family might come under scrutiny by police or intelligence services (Olsen 2009: 54). None of these individuals, however, appear to have been deeply involved in criminal activity. Sanctions might be considered enough of a threat to trigger exits in those who still have a relatively easy way out, but those who do not have a convenient exit might be likely to commit even more fully. Doubts related to the costs of holding on to an extremist engagement might interact with the other two forms of doubt discussed above, so that sanctions could trigger disengagement in those who already have doubts due to ideological or group failure, but not by others. In the case study by Vidino, for example, when arrested and faced with the prospect of deportation, two individuals decided to collaborate with the prosecution in a trial against the extremist network they had belonged to. According to Vidino, these two had already disengaged mentally, if not behaviourally, because of their disappointment with the lack of group solidarity (Vidino 2011: 404). Sanctions can probably support disengagement by helping to persuade those who are not yet deeply involved or who are already in doubt. But they can also have negative side effects by radicalizing some extremists further and leaving some individuals, who would otherwise have left, stranded inside extremism. The case studies seem to suggest that the most effective sanctions should raise the costs of an extremist engagement, but should not bar the way for disengagers to re-enter mainstream society.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The review and comparison of case studies of exit and disengagement from violent extremism revealed three overall patterns in terms of why individuals disengage: ideological doubt, disappointment with peers and leaders, and changing personal priorities or increasing perceived costs of maintaining an extremist engagement. These three patterns are apparent in militant Islamism, left and right wing extremism, and separatist or nationalist terrorism.<sup>7</sup> As made evident by the review, these sources of doubt frequently appear in combination and it can be difficult to tell which came first and which was most important.

What are the policy implications of these findings? Terrorist attacks and plots against Western countries and the high number of young Westerners who have joined militant Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq since 2014 have

caused policymakers to discuss or introduce a variety of judicial, administrative, and economic sanctions. Such sanctions might indeed, in addition to their potential efficacy as containment measures, trigger disengagement. However, they might also have the opposite effect and drive further radicalization. Or they might leave individuals stuck in extremist subcultures that they would otherwise have left behind. Some of the potential triggers and drivers of exit identified and discussed above, such as exposure to extremist violence and condemnation of extremism on part of mainstream society, are also potential triggers and drivers identified in studies of radicalization. This highlights the challenge of trying to handle violent extremism with policies that rely on general measures—punitive or supportive—towards potential disengagers.

An alternative approach would attempt to differentiate and individualize interventions to match the complexity of the phenomena of radicalization and disengagement. Such an approach would entail security services collaborating with local government and civil society partners to determine whether the views, capabilities, actions, social relations, personal situation, and so on, of a suspected extremist indicate an immediate threat. If so, the right approach would be to monitor, and, if possible, prosecute the alleged extremist in a court of law. But views, social relations, and personal situation might also indicate seeds of doubt, exhaustion, or disillusionment with the militant experience. In these cases, authorities might want to consider facilitating disengagement and reintegration. Mobilizing the necessary resources, competencies, and capabilities to individualize interventions would call for a break with the classical approach of leaving counterterrorism to security services, police authorities, and the judicial system in favour of a more collaborative approach based on a network of central and local governments and civil society. As explicated by the literature on governance networks, this is by no means a straightforward approach.<sup>8</sup> The solutions from such a network might be less clear-cut and communicable than policies a central government might formulate. The delegation of some responsibility for national security to a collaborative structure with voluntary participation and no clear chain of command also raises questions of democratic accountability that would need to be addressed in open debate.

An individualized approach to violent extremists might also require intra-organizational adjustments within national security bureaucracies. Police and security services would likely need to dedicate resources to building long-term trust and partnerships with local government and civil

society groups and to shield these resources from being consumed in day-to-day firefights. It might also be necessary to delegate decision-making power to those with knowledge of individual cases and the ability to discriminate between them.

This proposal poses severe challenges to organizations and leaders, no matter how enlightened, because it goes against traditional, state-centric thinking about security. Yet, it could be viable under the right circumstances; some aspects of this approach have already been implemented in counter-radicalization efforts in the Netherlands and some Scandinavian countries.<sup>9</sup> Research has begun to document the potential of civil society networks to prevent and reduce violent extremism (Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack 2016), and policy strategies in a number of countries have recently placed more emphasis on partnering with civil society to counter violent extremism (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2010: 65–67; Executive Office 2011a, b; CONTEST 2016; Gunaratna et al. 2013:vii; The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs 2014: 6).<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Violence or attempts of violence against European civilians appear reprehensible, shocking, and senseless to most people. The public and political inclination to demand strong and decisive countermeasures against violent extremists is understandable.

This chapter, based on a comprehensive review of studies of disengagement from violent extremism in the West, is an attempt to answer two closely related questions: Why do individuals voluntarily disengage from violent extremism in the Western context? And how can this knowledge inform efforts to limit recruitment into, and facilitate exit from, violent extremism?

Broad patterns emerged in an individual's reasons for disengagement, but several unanswered questions remain about what sets disengagers apart from stayers. The cases demonstrated high levels of complexity, interplay between several factors, and case-to-case variation and showed that depending on individual circumstances, attempts to influence a person to leave extremism (e.g., prison, security service scrutiny, administrative sanctions, or parental intervention) can encourage disengagement, provoke further radicalization, or trap the person in an unwanted situation.

In this light, an individualized and differentiated approach to violent extremists is required to avoid ineffective or counterproductive policy interventions.

Political leaders and top bureaucrats will probably prefer to err on the side of caution to apply harsh measures to avoid subsequent blame for the possible consequences of having done too little. Thus, it will require great political courage to allow front-line practitioners to make judgement calls on how to act in individual cases.

Exit from violent extremism is a complex phenomenon that reflects a more general point about counterterrorism: There are no silver bullets. Any government is going to have to rely on a mixed portfolio of preventing, monitoring, containing, and disrupting to reduce recruitment and support disengagement. This requires traditional state security institutions to have strong, capable, and trusting partners in local governments and civil society. The complexity of the problem simply overmatches the capacities of central governments, no matter how competent.

## NOTES

1. See Schmid and Price (2011) for a (not exhaustive) bibliography. See also the introduction to this volume.
2. Oxford Dictionaries, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/disengagement>. Accessed on September 17, 2016.
3. Two excellent articles on exit have not been included as they do not contain new primary sources: Moghadam (2012); Reinares (2011b).  
In addition, the review identified a report by P. Neumann, that tracks the narratives of defectors from the Islamic State, including nine westerners. The accounts of these defectors resonate with the broader themes identified in this review, but the 9 defectors have not been counted in the tally of exit/disengagement interviews as it is unclear whether they have actually disengaged from violent extremism and as they have not all been interviewed in person.  
Neumann (2015). The review excludes autobiographies by former extremists as they represent subjective perspectives with an inherent risk of bias. Otherwise interesting autobiographies include (Collier and Horowitz 1989: 275–365; Hussein 2007; Lindahl and Mattson 2000; O’Doherty 2008).
4. This section builds and expands on a 4-page section of a previously published article. Dalgaard-Nielsen, (2013: 102–106).
5. A coding of individual disengagers against different reasons for exit was attempted, but ultimately dropped as many case studies are not detailed

- enough to permit for accurate coding. One study in the pool of case studies, which compares the experience of 14 disengagers from across militant Islamism, right wing extremism, and separatist terrorism, does assign values and rank the, frequently multiple, exit reasons stated by the interviewees. It indicates that group and leadership failure are the most common triggers, followed by a sense of burnout, disillusionment with the radical ideology including the use of violence, pulled towards other roles etc. Barrelle (2015: 8).
6. These similar narrative structures are evident in propaganda from across different forms of extremism. See for example Inspire Magazine (2011); Pierce (alias A. Macdonald) (1978); Varon (2004). They are also evident if one compares for example the narratives that cut across the issues of the Islamic States magazine *Dabiq*, available on <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#> with the manifesto of the convicted right wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik available on <https://info.publicintelligence.net/AndersBehringBreivikManifesto.pdf>
  7. The conclusion that similar themes are at work across from ideologically different extremisms finds support in those case studies from the overall pool that comprise and compare a smaller number of disengagers from several different types of violent extremism. Barrelle (2015: 8); Bull and Cooke (2013: 90 and 94); Demant et al. (2008: 154); Horgan (2009: xxi).
  8. For one of the original text on governance networks see Koppenjan and Klijn (2004).
  9. “Forebyggelse af radikalisering og ekstremisme. Regeringens handlingssplan.” The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, 2014, <http://www.sm.dk>.; Ny evaluering af handlingsplanen, 2014, [https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/juni/ny\\_evaluering\\_af\\_handlingsplanen\\_en\\_faelles\\_og\\_tryk\\_fremtid.htm](https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/integrationsministeriet/2011/juni/ny_evaluering_af_handlingsplanen_en_faelles_og_tryk_fremtid.htm).; Vidino and Brandon (2012).
  10. For a discussion of these policy documents, see Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016: 1–2).

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## Hizb al-Tahrir: Its Ideology and Theory for Collective Radicalization

*Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf*

### INTRODUCTION

Studies on radicalization have paid much attention to individual radicalization, particularly to individuals' reception of radical ideas and participation in radical activism. In this chapter, I elaborate on the more collective pattern of radicalization by looking at how societies, rather than individuals, may be radicalized. (Collective radicalization is briefly discussed in the introduction, and by Schmid 2013: 8.) Taking the case of a global Islamist political movement, *Hizb al-Tahrir* (HT) or the Liberation Party, as an example, I examine ideas aimed to radicalize societies against their established political systems and replace them with a completely different system.

Founded in Jordan in 1953 by the Palestinian Islamic scholar and judge, Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909–1977), HT envisions a non-violent revolution towards establishing a transnational Islamic state it calls a *khilafah*. It offers an alternative strategy to the militarism of *al Qaeda*, on one side, and the democratic political activism of the Muslim Brotherhood on the other. HT is reportedly already active in 40 countries across the continents. Although it is banned in most Muslim countries including Jordan,

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Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Malaysia, and in some Western countries such as Germany, Russia, and the Netherlands, HT maintains its presence in these countries. Interestingly, HT enjoys political freedom in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Indonesia, although it has been granted official recognition only in Indonesia (Ahmed and Stuart 2009; Baran 2004a; Counter Extremism Project n.d.).

HT presents a puzzle to observers because of its odd combination of revolutionary ideals and use of non-violent political means to achieve its objective. Because revolution is rarely non-violent, many doubt the movement's faith in such a noble path (Baran 2004a; Cohen 2003; Raziq 2009). Zeyno Baran, for example, sees HT as a 'conveyor belt' towards terrorism. She believes that HT's extreme ideology will bring about radical behaviour among its members that will likely transform into violence with or without its official support (Baran 2004b: 11, 2005: 68).

Others, like Mayer (2004) and Krause (2008), dismiss these claims about the violent potential of HT. Mayer argues that such analysis, based mostly on HT's confrontational statements, is mere speculation, lacking any empirical foundation to show that statements necessarily lead to physical violence (Mayer 2004: 8). Krause suggests that the membership structure and ideological base of HT are dissimilar to terrorist groups like *al Qaeda*. She believes it unlikely that HT will resort to violence (Krause 2008: 27ff). Even in repressive environments like Central Asia, the movement continues to refrain from violence (Karagiannis and McCauley 2006).

This study goes beyond the debate about HT's potential for violence. It follows the argument that radicalism is not necessarily violent. Schmid, for example, identifies radicalization with an ideological process (c.f. Chap. 1, Introduction) leading to the rejection of tolerance and compromise, acceptance of a dichotomous worldview, ideological socialization against the mainstream or status quo, the belief that the existing system is illegitimate, and mobilization outside the existing political framework. Schmid argues that radicalization means a growing commitment to confrontational strategy, but this strategy may not necessarily require violence. Radicals may prefer to use non-violent means to mobilize, coerce, and exert pressure on the established system (Schmid 2013: 18).

The main question addressed in this chapter is, 'How does HT's theory of change and strategy imagine radicalizing societies?' HT's focus on

targeting leaders within societies to support its radical objective reflects its vision of mobilizing socially and politically before attempting to seize power. In this chapter, I elaborate on the construct of HT's radical ideology and its theory of change. Understanding this theory of change is essential not only to understanding the behaviour of the organization, but also for anticipating the ways in which societies may be mobilized towards radical activism.

Empirical data for this analysis came from books written by representatives of HT. These books, regardless of their publication dates, were selected because they are the original sources and expressions of HT's ideology. The most cited sources include *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir* (*Mafahim Hizb ut-Tahrir*), by al-Nabhani, the founder of HT, and *How Khilafah Was Destroyed*, by his successor, Abdul Adeem Zallum. Both were republished by London-based Khilafah Publications in 2000 and 2001. The other important books, anonymous but officially published by HT, include translated versions of *Hizb al-Tahrir*, *The Islamic State*, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, and *Structuring a Party*. Most of these were published in London from 1998 to 2001. The oldest versions used here are al-Nabhani's *al-Shakhsiyya al-Islamiyya* (1953) and *Hizb al-Tahrir* (1985). These books are downloadable from many HT websites.

### KHILAFAH, THE CONSTRUCT OF POLITICAL OBJECTIVE

The core of HT's radical ideology is the anti-system concept of *khilafah*. HT raises the flag of *khilafah* as both a symbolic and a political ideology to mobilize revolt against any existing system it considers un-Islamic (*kufr*). Using this term adds a sacred dimension to HT's political struggle. 'Khilafah' is a common term among Muslims, despite its exaggerated use by extremist groups like HT, *al-Qaeda*, and ISIL. General use of the term refers to the spiritual duty of Muslims to represent God on earth by following and propagating His rules. This spiritual meaning of the term was later imbued with politics after the death of Muhammad. Early Muslim rulers used the term to honour political leaders by referring to them as *khalifa*.

The goal of HT is to re-establish a *khilafah* government that adheres to no law but the *Shari'ah*. Once a legitimate *khilafah* government is instituted in one place or country, it shall seek to expand its territories to eventually create global Islamic rule. HT believes that such a transnational

Islamic government was modelled by the Islamic government that stood since the era of Prophet Muhammad until the fall of the last Ottoman government in Turkey in 1924. It believes that the establishment of the *khilafah* is the only way to continue the Islamic way of life. This idea of *khilafah* was not, however, al-Nabhani's original goal. Before establishing HT in 1953, al-Nabhani was active in various Arab nationalist movements including the Ba'ath Party in Jordan. During this period, his major concerns were Palestinian liberation and Arab unity to expel Western colonialism as demonstrated in his early (1950) books including *Inqadh al-Filastine* (*Saving Palestine*) and *Risalah al-Arab* (*The Message for the Arab*), which make no suggestion about the necessity of *khilafah* to liberate Palestine and achieve Arab unity.

Unlike al-Nabhani's later Islamic ideology, the Ba'ath Party at the time was a leftist movement espousing a secular pan-Arab ideology aimed at creating revolutionary change by replacing monarchical Arab governments with a united Arab socialist government. Inspired by the success of a 1949 coup by a Western-oriented Syrian military officer against Syria's President, Shukri al-Kuwatli, the Ba'ath attempted a similar coup in Jordan in 1968, but failed. Taji-Farouki, who has conducted the most comprehensive research on the group, reports that al-Nabhani's involvement in the Ba'ath was intense. His primary role included ensuring communications between the leader of the Ba'ath in Jordan and the leader of the Syrian Ba'ath Party during the coup attempt against the Jordanian ruler (Taji-Farouki 1994: 368–372, 1996: 3).

After his time with the Ba'ath, al-Nabhani found a weakness in the secularity of its pan-Arabist ideology. Al-Nabhani began emphasizing Islam as an ideology and preaching *khilafah* as both a religious duty and a political goal. He convinced a number of his colleagues in Palestine, including As'ad and Rajab Bayyud Tamimi dan Abdul Qadim Zallum, to establish a political party he called *Hizb al-Tahrir*. In 1952 they tried to gain official recognition from the Jordanian government, first as a political party and then as a social organization. However, they were rejected because the *khilafah* objective ran counter to the Jordanian constitution. Without legal status, al-Nabhani and his colleagues promoted HT's ideas through religious services and by secretly distributing leaflets. In March 1953, HT activists declared the establishment of the party in its weekly publication, *Al-Sarih* (*The Explainer*). It did not take long for the new movement to grow. Less than a year after its declaration, the party was successful in expanding to neighbouring countries like Palestine, Kuwait,

Lebanon, and Syria (Taji-Farouki 1996: 7; Samarah 2003: 16ff). Today, HT shows its presence across the continents under the leadership of its *amir*, Atho Abu Rustha, who lives in an unpublicized location in the Middle East. HT's country branch in the United Kingdom plays a prominent role in HT's international organization,<sup>1</sup> especially in publishing HT literature.

The founding of HT was followed by the publication of a series of books of grand narratives justifying the *khilafah* cause and describing al-Nabhani's unique strategy. HT emphasizes the disastrous fall of the Ottoman Empire as the main cause of further decline in Muslim societies and presents the re-establishment of a *khilafah* as the only way to resurrect Muslim supremacy. The appeal to Muslims to return to the glory of *khilafah* shows the revolutionary character of HT compared with other Islamist movements. Although HT shares the goal of other Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood in bringing the rule of God to earth (justified in the doctrines of *tahkimiyah* and *din wa daulah*), the international orientation of *khilafah* differs from the political objective of other Islamist movements by advocating terms like 'Shari'ah application' and 'Islamic state'. Al-Nabhani's *khilafah* ideology, writes Taji-Farouki, signifies the radical and unique character of HT.

The caliphal state theory and the political discourse of Nabhani represented a specific juncture in the radicalization of the discourse typified by Al-Banna and the 'old' MB [Muslim Brotherhood] from the 1950s. Indeed, his overall conception of Islam rests on theoretical assumptions reflecting a way station between the two distinct camps of Islamic reformism and Islamic radicalism. The reform tradition was shaped by modernist intellectuals such as Jama Al-Din Al-Nabhani and Muhammad Abduh, culminating in Al-Banna and the 'old' MB. The radicalist trend was formulated in its comprehensive ideological expression by Qutb. (Taji-Farouki 1996: 71–72)

Al-Nabhani's argument for *khilafah* was based on a historical account of the decline of Islamic civilization, beginning when the Caliphate army defeated the Crusaders and culminating in the fall of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey in 1924. He argued that when the army first gained political and military superiority and expanded the Caliphate territory as far the Balkans, the military success made the Muslim rulers forget the importance of intellectual development. This he saw as the origin of the decline of the *khilafah*, illustrated by the declining use of Arabic in science. Al-Nabhani defined the weakness of Muslims as their inability to connect Islamic

thought (*fikroh*) and method (*thariqah*), their inability to connect Islamic laws on issues like fasting, marriage, and praying with the obligation to implement and enforce them at the state level in the same way as the laws on *jihad* (limitedly understood as war), criminal law, and taxation. As the party's story continued, al-Nabhani suggested that while Muslims were suffering intellectual stagnancy, the Enlightenment began in the West. Al-Nabhani argued that the West was aware that military power would not be enough to defeat the Muslim world, so (taking advantage of the intellectual decline and the misapplication of the rule of the *khilafah*) the West invaded the Muslim world with cultural and intellectual ideas that would weaken their thinking and their beliefs. Thus, Muslims grew to understand Islamic laws according to the claims of Western scholars, or in his own words, 'Islam is understood in a way that satisfies the accuser'. Al-Nabhani believed the result of this deviation went as far as the issuance of *fatwas* (Islamic legal instructions) tolerating *riba* (usury) and replacing *hudud* (Islamic criminal laws) with Western laws (Al-Nabhani 2001a: 10).

In HT's view, the Western intellectual invasion was followed by a series of political invasions. After weakening the ideological base of Islam, the West incited separatist political tendencies in Islamic states in Turkey, Persia, and some areas of Europe, which served as gates for further Western political invasions. It supported separatist movements in states like Serbia and Malta and then exported that strategy to Arab countries. In 1798, through its agent, Muhammad Ali Pasha (also known as Mehmet Ali Pasha), governor of Egypt, France succeeded in invading Egypt and marched into Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria (Zallum 2000: 5). HT's writings suggest that in the nineteenth-century France extended its occupation to Africa and India. Britain and France divided Muslim lands in the secret Sykes–Picot agreement. The pact granted Britain control over Haifa and France gained Turkey, Northern Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. For HT, this agreement established the current borders of the Middle East (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 13 July 2007).

HT's argument about the Western intellectual invasion that destroyed the *khilafah* provides a critical footnote to the common association of Islamic fundamentalism with the Islamic puritanical movement, Wahabism. Many have suggested that Muslim extremist groups are mostly rooted in Wahabist exclusivist theology (see, e.g., Abou El Fadl 2005). In contrast, HT claims that Wahabism was a part of the Western conspiracy to sow divisiveness in the *khilafah* government. It argues that the founder of Wahabism, Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, was a British agent who

assisted the British force in its attack on *khilafah* from within. Wahabism is also seen as an aspect of Western support for tribal leaders like ibn Saud in his effort to establish a separate Islamic state within the *khilafah* (Zallum 2000: 5).

In *How Khilafah Was Destroyed* (2000), Abdul Qadhim Zallum (the successor of al-Nabhani) provides detailed accounts of the role of the West in engineering the collapse of the *khilafah*. Zallum argues that the West's success relied on the influence of missionary groups and the founding of secret organizations (such as the Committee of the Jesuit and the Committee of the 'Azariyyin', both based in Malta) to raise nationalist sentiment in the *khilafah* territories. Central to these operations were the cities of Istanbul and Beirut, which stood as the heart of the *khilafah* government. In Istanbul, France supported the founding of the nationalist 'Young Turks'. This group's success in mobilizing nationalist sentiment among the people was a major blow to the government of *khilafah*. A key leader arising from the Young Turks was Mustafa Kemal, who Zallum believes (regardless of Kemal's role in Turkey's struggle against the British) is clearly shown by history to have been a traitor to the *khilafah* (Zallum 2000: 90).

Zallum claims that Kemal was actually a Jew who served as an agent for the British.<sup>2</sup> To justify this claim, he cites stories demonstrating the relationship between Kemal and the British. For example, he wrote that when Kemal went to Syria to fight the British, he pulled his troops from Anatolia, thus betraying Syria, which fell into the hands of the British (Zallum 2000: 90). For HT, this comes as no surprise, because they claim that Kemal repeatedly stated his intention to separate Turkey from the government of the *khilafah*. The purported alliance between Kemal and Britain is also based on the following statement, frequently attributed by HT to Kemal:

Was not it because of khilafah, Islam and ulama that made Turkish farmers went to war and died for centuries? It is time for Turkey to take care of its own affairs and ignore Indians and Arabs. Turkey has to separate itself [from khilafah] to lead Muslims.

HT then asserts that Kemal assumed political power in Turkey in 1924 with the help of Britain and officially abolished the *khilafah* government (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 13 July 2007).

Based on this historical account, HT argues that the key factor in the decline of Islamic supremacy was the division of Muslim societies based on



the nation-state system planted by the West. Therefore, HT asserts that establishing a universal government of Muslims as modelled by the *khilafah* should be the main goal of the Islamic struggle. The establishment of *khilafah* is considered a matter of life and death because it is the only political institution that can uphold the implementation of Islamic laws, revive the *Ummah* (non-state nation), and establish the supremacy of Islam over all other religions. Zallum wrote, ‘Establishing the *khilafah* is conclusively a vital issue, because in addition to being a method to transform our lands from *Kufr* homeland into an Islamic homeland, its establishment is also aimed at destroying the *Kufr* systems’ (Zallum 2000: 202).

To justify this goal, HT elevates the establishment of *khilafah* from a means for implementing God’s laws to a necessity by arguing that *khilafah* is a communal duty of the Muslim Ummah. Like other Islamists, HT cites verses in the Qur’an obligating Muslims to implement God’s laws (e.g., QS. 5:48–49). However, HT interprets this command with reference to the post-Muhammad era when the executor of God’s laws was a caliph. Using the basic principle of Islamic jurisprudence that ‘what is required to implement a duty is in itself a duty’, HT argues that the establishment of *khilafah* is necessary to implement God’s laws. This argument is also supported by HT’s understanding of the doctrines of *bay’ah* (allegiance) and *imamah* (leadership), which are based on several sayings (*hadiths*). Two of the most frequently cited *hadiths* are:

Whosoever takes off his hand from allegiance to Allah will meet Him on the Day of Resurrection without having any proof for him. And those who die without any bay’ah on his neck (to a *khalifah*) they die a death of *jabiliyah* (ignorance)

and

He who pledges allegiance to an imam giving him the clasp of his hand and the fruit of his heart shall obey him as long as he can, and if another comes to dispute with him you have to strike the neck of the man. (Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain 2000: 25–26)

For HT, the obligation to have a *bay’ah* refers to the practice of *bay’ah* as a mechanism in political succession during the *khilafah* era, as practised by the Prophet’s companions after his death. The first thing that the early generation of Muslims did after the death of the Prophet was to appoint

Prophet Muhammad's closest companion, Abu Bakr, as a caliph. This story, for HT, indicates that a political *imamah*—interpreted by HT as *khilafah*—is a crucial matter. Despite the suspicion that these stories were cited to support the political establishment in the *khilafah* period, HT claims that establishing a *khilafah* government is a legal communal duty as defined by a consensus of Sunni *ulamas* (religious teachers). In support of this view, HT cites the following from Imam al-Qurtubi's interpretation of a Qur'anic verse (2:20) on the matter of *imamah*:

... this verse states that having an *imam* and *khilafah* (caliph) to be heard and obeyed and to reconcile opinions and implement it, through *khilafah*, and the laws on *khilafah*. There is no dispute on this obligation among the ummah and the imams except what was narrated by al- Ashaam... He said: if the necessity to have an imam is not a duty for the Quraysh and others, why was there discussion and debate about *imaamah*? Indeed people would say: *Imaamah* is not a duty for Quraysh and others, why did unnecessarily you debate on something that is not a duty? He then said: Therefore it has been decided that *imaamah* is a duty based on sharia'ah, not logic. And this is very clear. (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 20 June 2009)

HT further believes that the return of *khilafah* is divinely destined because it is the promise of God. HT also suggests that the Prophet Muhammad foretold the return of *khilafah* after its destruction, as suggested in the following *hadith*:

Prophethood will last with you for as long as Allah wants it to last. Then He will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be *Khilafah* according to the method of prophethood, and things will be as Allah wishes them to be. There will be a hereditary rule, and things will be as Allah wishes them to be. Then He will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be an oppressive rule, and things will be as Allah wishes them to be. Then he will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be *Khilafah* according to the method of prophethood. (Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain 2000: 116)

Citing this *hadith*, HT asserts that oppression against the *da'wah* (movements for promoting *khilafah*) is a sign of the approaching *khilafah*. HT believes that the Prophet has foretold a period of hereditary or tyrant rule before the return of the *khilafah* and cites 'messianic' prophecies that the *khilafah* will return before the end of the world as a culmination of the battle between the followers of God and the disbelievers. More specifically,

it believes that the Prophet has predicted that the *khilafah* will arise again at the Bait al-Maqdis (al-Quds) mosque in Palestine (Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain 2000: 117).<sup>3</sup>

Characterizing those who downplay the *khilafah* ideal as utopian, HT claims that the inevitable return of *khilafah* is not only recorded in prophecies, but has also been admitted by Western scholars and intelligence agencies. It repeats conspiracist theories about the endless effort of the West to prevent the return of *khilafah* as an indication of Western fear of its return and the revival of Muslim dominance. After the fall of communism, HT accuses the West of seeing the return of the *khilafah* as the most serious threat to capitalism. For HT, this is illustrated by a report of the United States National Intelligence Council, which discusses the return of a ‘new caliph’ as a scenario for a future world.<sup>4</sup>

To strengthen its cause, HT argues that Islam provides a complete political order to replace democracy and other secular systems. It therefore proposes a draft constitution for a *khilafah* state that adopts the principles outlined in al-Nabhani’s book *Nidhaam al-Islam* (The System of Islam; al-Nabhani 2002). It has also published various elaborations of the ‘glorious’ aspects of the past *khilafah* imperium.

While the *khilafah* message is the hallmark of HT, it is not HT’s only uniqueness. Another important feature of HT theory is the means through which it believes the *khilafah* may be revived. The movement offers extra-parliamentary strategy that it claims is an alternative to other, failing, Islamic movements.

## THE THEORY OF CHANGE: REVIVING ISLAM AS A POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Al-Nabhani’s theory of change underlines the profound roles Muslim intellectual stagnancy and corruption played in the fall of the *khilafah*. This intellectual problem is framed as a Muslim inability to understand true Islamic thought (*fikroh*), the method to implement Islamic thought (*thariqah*), and the interconnection between them. The *fikroh* is a comprehensive description of the relations between life, the universe, and God. Such an understanding necessitates the view that all aspects of life are controlled and directed by the laws of God. True Islamic *fikroh* is believed to show that the laws of God provide complete solutions for all human problems. The *thariqah* is the prescribed method of implementing the laws of God in managing human life. The combination of *fikroh* and

*thariqah* forms Islamic ideology (*mabda*).<sup>5</sup> Based on this argument, the task of HT is to rehabilitate Muslims' true understandings of *fikroh* and *thariqah*, of their interconnectedness, and of their combination as an ideology (al-Nabhani 2001b: 3f).

Understanding Islam as an ideology is crucial to HT's narrative because it sees the Western intellectual and cultural invasion as a 'war of ideas' that has stolen the ideological character of Islam. This 'de-ideologized' Islam takes the form of a partial understanding of Islam, which separates religion from the state. As a part of the Western world's offensive against Islam, Muslims are forced to accept the division between the Islamic *Shar'ai* court that deals only with family issues, and the civic court that administers all other aspects of life. Islam as a complete system to manage all affairs of human life is erased from the Muslim mind. The *Ummah* is taught to see Islam only as a religious or spiritual matter. The ideological perspective, seen as the *élan vital* of Islam, is buried by the corrupt ideas of anti-Islamic colonial power (al-Nabhani 2002: 58).

To deal with this intellectual invasion, the task of HT is therefore to assume the intellectual leadership of Islam (*al-qiyahad al fikriyah fi al-Islam*) by reviving the understanding of Islam as an ideology. HT works to 'ideologize' Muslim's Islamic knowledge or understanding of reality, and to teach the *Ummah* that the establishment of *khilafah* is vital. Al-Nabhani was convinced that the revival of the *Ummah* should begin from the realm of ideas; ideas form awareness—the basis of action. He argues that 'a person's elevation or decline depends on the ideas they have about life, the universe, humankind and the relationship of all this' (Tajifarouki 1996: 78).

This distinction between ideas and action in HT's doctrine is not entirely parallel to the categorization of similar aspects of radicalization presented in the introduction and other chapters of this volume. The term 'ideas' in radicalization theories may refer to an organization's doctrine or ideology. HT, however, derives the term 'ideas' from the Arabic word *fikroh*, which could be understood as the intellectual dimension of an order. The notion of *fikroh* is therefore related to the source of power and dominance. This is the most crucial aspect of any system that HT seeks to challenge. The 'ideas' aspect of radicalization is seen as an action in itself. HT therefore acts by creating a discourse to challenge *fikroh* that justifies the un-Islamic system.

Based on this view, HT defines its role as the educator of the masses, as did Lenin in his theory of change:

Al-Nabhani used the metaphor of ‘fusing in a crucible’ to describe how the party would purge the ummah’s intellectual make-up and make it one with the party ideology. The early Leninist notion of the party as the elite, vanguard, educator of the masses and an organization of professional revolutionaries echoes throughout his discussions of the character and role of Hizb al-Tahrir. (Taji-Farouki 1994: 372)

Al-Nabhani’s past experience with the Ba’ath Party was influential in shaping this vision. This is apparent in his familiarity with the vanguardist model of movement as reflected in his theory of change in his book *Takattu al-Hizb* or ‘Structuring a Party’ that centres on the idea of ‘*kutla*’ (circle; al-Nabhani 2001b). In the book, he argues that raising the awareness of the *Ummah* needs a group of committed individuals (*fi’a* or vanguard) who will work as a group or a party. The vanguard would form a first cell to assume intellectual leadership in the *Ummah* by moulding public opinion in favour of the party ideology. The primary characteristic of the vanguard is its ability to understand and present realities from an ideological perspective, maintaining understanding and commitment to the purity of the party’s ideology and sensitivity towards the potential influence of foreign thoughts that could threaten the party’s objective. Called *fi’a muhtara mumtaza* (most highly sensitive group), the vanguard needs to be able to clearly elaborate the party’s ideology. With commitment, consistency, and ideological purity, the vanguard forms the first cell (*al-khaalqah al-ula*), which will eventually develop into a party (*al-kutla al-hizbiyah*). Al-Nabhani believed that the multiplication of this process would eventually create a new awareness in society that would challenge the legitimacy of the existing order. Like a living organism, this process is thought to develop from an embryonic cell into a force that even a powerful and repressive regime cannot withstand (Al-Nabhani 2001b: 26–32).

Al-Nabhani emphasized the significance of transforming societies as opposed to the more limited goals of individual change. He believed that the former would lead to systemic change and the latter would guarantee failure bringing about only partial changes that cannot disrupt, and in fact maintains, the established secular system. HT sees the problem faced by Muslim societies as fundamental, and therefore believes that the only solution is fundamental or systemic change (*inqilab shamil*); the change towards the revival of the *Ummah* must begin by changing the present ‘unbelief’ system. As cited by Taji-Faoruki (1996: 76), al-Nabhani

proposed this revolutionary vision as a critique to the reformist movements in Muslim societies. He wrote:

‘The Islamic world today is a Domain of Unbelief, having abandoned Islamic government. Consequently most Muslims view it as corrupted, and hold that it is in need for reform. However, reform signifies eliminating corruption from prevailing situation. This is inappropriate because the Islamic world really needs a comprehensive and radical transformation (*inqilab shamil*) that will eradicate the rule of unbelief and strive to establish Islamic government: reform actually perpetuates the corruption’ (translated by Taji-Farouki from al-Nabhani 1953: 45).

Arguing that total change is indispensable, al-Nabhani saw the state and its system as an entity consisting of various elements; therefore, efforts to oppose the system should be carried out by an equal entity—a whole society. He believed that changes in society can change individuals, not the reverse. In his words, ‘*Aslih al-mujtama, yaslih al-fardi wa yastamiru isla-hiha* [Reform the society, this will lead to reform of the individual constantly]’ (al-Nabhani 2001a: 61).

To illustrate the primacy of society in his theory of change, al-Nabhani uses the metaphor of a boiling kettle:

‘Society is similar to water in a large kettle; if anything that causes the temperature to drop is placed beneath the kettle then the water freezes and transforms to ice. Similarly, if corrupted ideologies are introduced into the society then it would freeze in corruption and continue in deterioration and decline. However, if a contradictory ideology were introduced into society, then contradictions would appear in it, and the society would struggle with these contradictions and instability will prevail. However, if flaming heat was put under the kettle, the water would warm and then boil and effuse an intense stirring vapour. Similarly, if the correct ideology was introduced into the society it would be a flame whose heat would transform the society to boiling point and then to a dynamic force... [Ideology] is the fire and light which will burn and enlighten, know that society is in a state of transformation and it will definitely reach boiling point and the points of movement and dynamism’ (al-Nabhani 2001a: 62).

Although the role of the masses is important, HT is aware that it cannot move a large mass of people, because it limits its role to that of a ‘political educator’, rather than a social activist. HT, therefore, seeks to bypass the road towards mass influence by approaching elites within Muslim societies.

Once HT gains the confidence of the elite leadership, the elites are assumed to be able to draw the masses into its ideology and programmes; then, when the masses are like boiled water in a kettle ready to explode, HT will lead a revolutionary movement to establish *khilafah*.

### THE MEANS TO CHANGE: MOBILIZING POLITICAL DETACHMENT

HT's heavy emphasis on intellectual struggle is not without practical outcomes. The significance of intellectual work to educate the *Ummah* lies in the goal of creating the political instability that would justify HT's campaign for systemic change. Education of the masses is part of the goal of undermining the legitimacy of the existing political order. To achieve this goal, HT rejects violent methods and instead advocates the strategy of political detachment. This orientation is encapsulated in several key concepts on the conduct of the relationship with the state, including '*kasyf al-khuttath*', (exposing the failures [of the rulers]), '*dharb al-'alaqoh*' (attacking or breaking existing bonds in societies and between societies and the state), and '*mufarogoh*' (separation [between societies and government]). These doctrines are based on the understanding that a society consists of ideas (*mafahim*), rules (*maqayis*), and a submissive attitude towards rules (*qana'at*). The combination of these three elements forms a system that requires implementation by a ruler and submission from the people. Resembling Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, HT's belief is that the key to destroying the system lies in eliminating the consent (*thiqoh*) or submission (*wala'*) of the people to the other two elements of the state, the system and the ruler (Kurnia 2005). The following paragraph in HT's training manual, *Dukhul al-Mujtama* (Entering Society) (1953), elaborates this strategic vision:

[The activity of the party aimed at] attacking all forms of interaction in societies in order to influence their relationships is not enough; but all interactions between rulers and their people have to be shaken with a full strength... in this way it can influence all forms of relationship in societies... as long as the hand that hold power to rule societies is not beaten in full strength and in a continuous way, societies will not understand their failures and the necessity for changes.... Therefore it is imperative for party members to focus on attacking all forms of relationship between rulers and their people. (Hizb al-Tahrir 1958: 3)

More practically, this vision is elaborated in what seems to be HT's version of Lenin's *What is To Be Done*, titled *The Method of Hizb al-Tahrir for Change*.<sup>6</sup> The central themes of the book include the principles of non-cooperation and non-participation.

The strategy of non-cooperation is reflected in HT's emphasis on political activity, and its principle of refusing to undertake social activities because they are seen to strengthen the legitimacy of the existing system. HT criticizes Islamic movements that focus on social and spiritual goals (Hizb al-Tahrir 1999: 31) such as improving the status of Muslim societies in non-political areas like education, social services, morality, and spirituality. Although HT does not refer to specific Muslim groups, this characterization could be applied to Muslim social organizations that accept perceived un-Islamic systems like democracy. These include groups among the Salafis that focus strictly on reforming Muslim beliefs (*aqidah*), and Muslim social organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia that operate in spiritual, social, and educational areas. HT views the absence of political orientation in these groups as making them uncritical of the established non-Islamic system, and therefore not helpful in uprooting the existing secular system. In principle, HT 'does not accept helping them [unbelief systems] to create economic, educational, social or moral reforms. This is because to provide this type of service is a form of support to tyrants and a help to prolong the life of their corrupt and Kufur system' (Hizb al-Tahrir 1999: 31).

Parallel to this non-cooperation doctrine, HT also advocates a path of non-participation in both government and parliament. Even though HT declares itself to be a political party, its opposition to the present system leads to extra-parliamentary activism. It considers participation in a non-Islamic system as a trap that will only strengthen the status quo. Except in a few cases in its early stages when a few leaders ran for parliamentary election in Jordan, extra-parliamentary activism has been a dominant feature of HT. The book that specifically elaborates this strategy of the organization clearly sets out this principle: 'The party also does not accept participation in the ruling system of the government, because it is based on the ruling of Kufur (Disbelief), and this is a matter that is forbidden for Muslims' (Hizb al-Tahrir 1999: 23).

Likewise, participation in elections and the legislative process are considered to justify the existing infidel system. A book on the method of HT published by HT in Britain states:



it should be clear that any attempt at utilizing the democratic structures that currently exist either through holding ministerial posts in governments that ruled by *Kufr* would be prohibited.... Similarly putting forth bills that attempt to apply some aspects of the Shari'ah rules and then voting on them would definitely be prohibited as this would be making the decision of man sovereign over the *Hukm* of Allah. (Hizb al-Tahrir 1999: 23)

To implement these principles, al-Nabhani emphasized the importance of an uncompromising stance to maintain the purity of the ideology. Any slight deviation is considered dangerous to the movement. Such a stance is essential because, in HT's view, the influence of Western intellectual and cultural invasions on the Muslim world is acute. The most serious threat al-Nabhani identified to the purity of HT ideology was the argument of those who claim to work for the application of Islamic laws, but who have fallen into the trap of reformist approaches promoted by the enemies of Islam. HT sees the temptation to adopt reformism as intellectual corruption planted by the West to distract Muslim attention away from its most important goal of resurrecting the *khilafah* (al-Nabhani 2002: 74).

HT anticipates controversy about its *khilafah* propagation. In response to potential challenges, it emphasizes the importance of consistency. Like a communications strategist, it believes that a small group with a consistent message can defeat divided mainstream moderates. Al-Nabhani uses the term 'stubbornness' to describe this steadfast characteristic of party activists, especially in dealing with opposing groups. This paragraph from al-Nabhani clearly demands a non-compromising stance:

It is obligatory that the da'wah be open and challenges everything, the customs and traditions, the incorrect thoughts and the distorted concepts; challenging even the public opinion if it is wrong, even if it has to struggle against it; challenging the false creeds and the false deens [religions] regardless of the stubbornness and bigotry of their adherents. Therefore, the da'wah based on the Islamic 'aqedah, is distinguished by frankness, daring, strength, thought and the challenge to everything that disagrees with the Fikrah and the Tareekah and exposing their fallacy, irrespective of the consequences and circumstances and of whether the ideology agrees or disagrees with the masses, and whether the people accept, reject or oppose it. The carrier of the da'wah does not flatter the people, nor compromise with them. He does not praise the ruler or influential people in the society, nor does he court them, rather he adheres to the ideology and to it alone, without giving any account for anything else. (al-Nabhani 2002: 74)

More specifically, al-Nabhani warns party activists that the temptation to compromise can arise from two factors: first, the desire for security in relation to the ruler, to avoid repression and/or to satisfy worldly interests; and second, the desire to implement gradual or partial changes as an improvement. He reminds his followers that the party will only be satisfied by immediate and total transformation of the secular system into an Islamic system. Al-Nabhani's teachings state:

Delivering the da'wah requires a concern for a complete implementation for the rules of Islam without the slightest concession. The carrier does not accept any truce nor concession, negligence or postponement. Instead, he maintains the matter as a whole and definitely settles it immediately... (al-Nabhani 2002: 75-76)

He was aware that this uncompromising stance would potentially cause tension not only in relation to the state, but also in relation to society. In relation to society, he anticipated two difficult options: consistency in facing the anger of the *Ummah* or deviation to avoid the anger. Al-Nabhani argued that both options are dangerous, and he suggested dealing with the situation by holding onto the ideology of HT:

It is imperative for the hizb members to adhere to ideology alone even though the hizb will be subject to ummah's resentment. But this resentment is temporary; the hizb consistency will win the ummah. There should be no deviation, even slightly. Ideology is the life of hizb and its guarantor of survival. [The party] always make the hizb points clear, exposing the colonialist plots, and remain populist. (Al-Nabhani 2001b: 48)

### ACTIONS TOWARDS CHANGE

HT sets a framework of action that categorizes its activities into six agendas: (1) *Tathqif murokkaz* (creating cadres and leadership groups in societies), (2) *Tathqif jama'i* (raising public anger towards the existing system), (3) *Shiro al-fikr* (exposing the failures of the existing system), (4) *Kifa siyasi* (addressing fallacies in state policies), (5) *Tabanni masalih al-ummah* (presenting Islamic solutions to issues of interest to the *Ummah*), and (6) *Thalab al-nusroh* (seeking support and protection from powerful elites; Hizb al-Tahrir 1999: 29-35):

This six-fold agenda serves the double moves envisaged in al-Nabhani's notions of '*dharb al-'alaqoh*' (literally 'breaking relationship') and '*kasyf*

*al-khuttah*' (challenging the rules). *Dharb al-‘alaqoh* can be considered moves towards societies aimed at breaking their loyalty to the state, and the *kasyf al-khuttath* represents the move against the state in the form of exposing the inherent failures of the government and the political structure in general.

The relationships between these double moves and the six categories of actions are not necessarily mutually exclusive; they overlap and are interconnected. Nonetheless, this categorization gives a perspective for understanding the roles of the different types of HT activity. In this picture, the agendas of concentrated education (*tathqif murokkaz*), public education (*tathqif jama'*), and caring for the issues of the *Ummah* (*tabanni masaloh al-ummah*) primarily serve the move towards social mobilization against the state (*dharb al-‘alaqoh*), while intellectual struggle (*shiro al-fikr*) and political struggle (*kifah siyasi*) are primarily aimed at attacking the legitimacy of the state (*kasf al-khuttath*). Both of these moves are mutually interdependent. At the intersection between these double moves, lies the crucial task of seeking support (*thalab al-nusroh*) from elites in society and the leadership of the state (*ahl al-quwah*). Success in gaining support from elites in societies may foster mass mobilization, while support from elites in the state could deter state repression of opposition and eventually trigger a political crisis (Fig. 11.1).

This outcome is similar to Charles Tilly's 'revolutionary situations', which are characterized by three conditions: contenders competing to control the state, commitment to opposing claims by a significant section of the population, and the inability of the state to deal effectively with the first and second conditions (Tilly 1978: 192). HT seeks to create these situations by uprooting the legitimacy of the established political system, mobilizing non-participation, and presenting itself as a legitimate and potential contender. In the process of creating these revolutionary situations, HT seeks to secure political support or protection from powerful elites (*ahl al-quwwah*), especially in the military, to back the force of change.

Each of HT's six agendas has its own role in supporting HT's two aims. The first aim is to educate the masses through public education (*tathqif jama'i*), intellectual opposition (*shiro al-fikr*), political opposition (*kifah siyasi*), and the use of key social issues to demonstrate government failures (*tabanni masalih al-ummah*). These endeavours are hoped to bring about

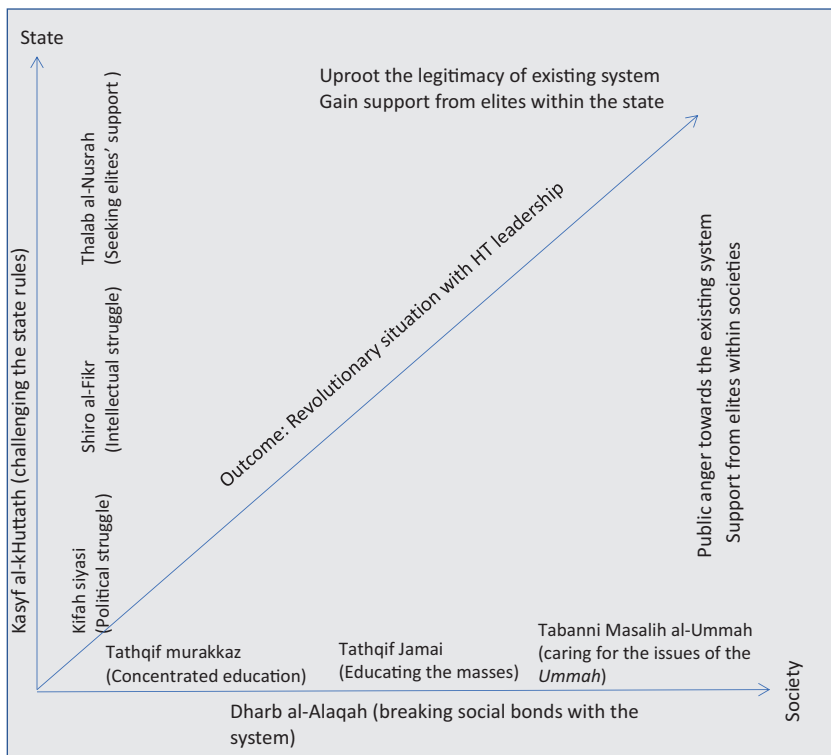


Fig. 11.1 HT’s plans of action

(a) mass opposition to the system and (b) political detachment (non-participation and non-cooperation).

The second aim is to target a specific audience through concentrated education (*tathqif murakkaz*) that can (c) increase the number of party activists and therefore strengthen HT’s role as the leader the political competition and to seek support (*thalab al-nusroh*) for the purpose of (d) mobilizing support from powerful of influential leaders. In a situation of political crisis resulting from opposition to the system, HT seeks to play a leading role in initiating a political transition from democracy to *khilafah*.

## THE FINAL STAGE: *NUSROH* AND NON-VIOLENT TRANSFER OF POWER

HT frames its activism in three stages towards change. It starts with the formative period, *tathqif*, in which it produces core activists. The main agenda at this stage is running unpublicized or clandestine study circles. After gaining sufficient activists, HT moves towards an open campaign and addresses the public, *tafa'ul ma'a al-ummah*, with its ideology. The objective in this period is to encourage the public to distrust the system, to establish an influential position in society, and to secure support or protection from powerful elites. In the final stage, HT looks to seize power. HT believes that in revolutionary situations when the established political regime has lost legitimacy and the political system is in crisis, power holders will voluntarily submit to the force of change led by a popular political leadership (HT) supported by the masses and backed by powerful elites, especially the military. In this way, a political transition towards the installation of the *khilafah*, *istilam al-hukm* could take place in an extraordinary (extra-parliamentary) process like that of the Egyptian revolution in February 2011. Fig. 11.2 illustrates the works required to create a revolutionary situation that would make possible a peaceful transition to the establishment of *khilafah*.

This idealist vision, however, lacks a historical foundation of possibility from the experience of HT. The leaders of HT did attempt to bypass this long process by inviting individual Muslim regimes to establish a *khilafah* government in their respective countries and eventually serve as a point of expansion. In 1979 the party leadership proposed a caliph position to

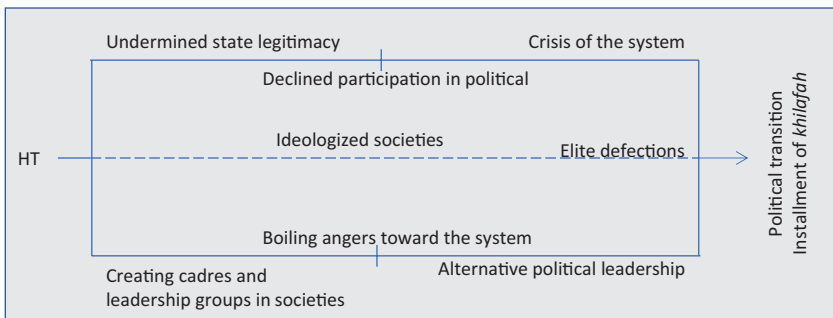


Fig. 11.2 HT's route to *Khilafah*

Iranian leader Ayatullah Khomeini (Taji-Farouki 1996: 31). Other sources mention that HT also offered caliph positions to the Taliban's Mullah Omar and Libya's Mu'ammarr Qadafi. All of these leaders rejected or ignored the offer (International Crisis Group 2003: 6).

Another possible form of political transition sought by HT is a coup.<sup>7</sup> This is reflected in HT's emphasis on *thalab al-nusrob* (seeking support from powerful elites) as an ideal step in this process for political change. Al-Nabhani himself took part in several coup attempts, including plots to overthrow the Jordanian regime in 1968, 1969, and 1971 and against the authorities in Southern Iran in 1972 (Taji-Farouki 1996: 27f). It is important to note that ideally a coup is not an option until the movement has secured sufficient support from the people. Without such support, any attempt to seize power is considered unsustainable. While the choice of which process should be used in the political transition may be postponed until the movement is ready to launch an attempt at seizing power, the focus of HT in the final stage is to create the prerequisites for the revolutionary situations discussed above.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter shows HT's theory of change as an example of a method for radicalizing societies. HT seeks to stage revolutionary change not by mobilizing a people power movement to seize power, but by transforming societies to help persuade power holders to initiate political change in favour of the re-establishment of *khilafah*.

HT's focus on radicalizing societies is at the heart of the theory of change laid out by its founder, Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani. HT believes that transforming societies, rather than individuals, is important because the system HT opposes consists of various elements that must all be challenged; therefore, an anti-system revolt should be carried out by an equal entity, that is, by the society as a whole. It assumes that if a society is reformed or radicalized, individuals will follow.

### *How Might Societies Be Radicalized?*

Al-Nabhani used the metaphor of water in a large kettle to describe political change in a society. Radicalizing a society is like raising the heat under the kettle. The heat might be created by exposing societies to the failures of the existing system, while simultaneously introducing the correct

ideology. For this purpose, HT sees its role as a group of educators, not leaders, of the masses. They work in the arena of intellectual battle to accomplish three educational goals: exposing the failures of the rulers (*kasy al-kbuttath*), breaking the bonds in societies (*dharb al-'alaqah*) that deviate from the supremacy of Islamic bond, and promoting separation between societies and government (*mufaraqah*). In this struggle, what is most important, according to al-Nabhani, is consistency or purity of ideology and stubbornness in holding fast to the movement's principles. Any slight deviation among its members, for example by tolerating partial adoption of Shari'ah law, will lead the movement into the trap of the 'disbelief' system. To maintain the purity of the ideology, HT limits its membership to a small number of vanguards it calls *fi'a muhtar* *mumtaza* (most highly sensitive groups).

In the view of HT, successful radicalization of societies could have two possible outcomes: growing distrust (loss of consent or *thiqob* and submission or *wala'*) towards the existing system and ideological reorientation among a significant segment of societies. These shifts might bring about polarization in societies based on religious or ideological grounds. In this situation of crisis HT could be in a good position to find allies (*thalab al-nusrab*) among power holders in the system who would defect to lead the change HT desires. This vision leads by implication to the coup model of political change, which may take the form of a proper coup or of an extraordinary session in parliament followed by amendment or replacement of the constitution to (re)establish *khilafah*. In both cases, a strong leader backed by HT (consider the rise of authoritarian leaders like Hitler in Germany and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela) is essential.

How effective is this strategy? Over 40 years since its founding, HT has never been close to achieving a critical mass of influence that would help them in securing *nusroh* in any country. One may find HT's dream of bringing about a *khilafah*-based government unlikely, but its effort to radicalize societies is not. HT's radical narratives have been central in polarizing societies based on religious grounds. In Western democracies, its supremacist ideology strengthens the feeling of disenfranchisement among Muslim communities and thus discourages them from integrating into Western societies. In Muslim democracies, HT propagates a sectarian politics that undermines pluralism and divides societies along strict religious lines. It facilitates alliances between conservative and hard-line Muslim communities to promote conservative policies based on Islamic norms. There is no guarantee that those radicalized by HT's narratives will

consistently follow HT's stages of non-violent approaches achieve the ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic state or government. In fact, the long and exhausting struggle for *khilafah* may create disillusionment among its members or sympathizers. These disillusioned radicals may become disengaged from the party and may either become moderate or look for an alternative radicalism that promises a more tangible outcome, possibly through the use of violence.

## NOTES

1. The location of HT's headquarter is a contentious issue. Cohen (2003) and Karagiannis and McCauley (2006) have claimed that HT Britain presently serves as HT's headquarters. During al-Nabhani era, HT headquarters moved from one country to another. In the beginning, it was based in al-Nabhani's residence in Jordan, but when he moved to Damascus he relocated the headquarters with him (Cohen 1982; Taji-Farouki 1996).
2. This argument is based on the city origin of Kemal, Thessaloniki (now part of Greece), that had a large Jewish population. However, according to historian Andrew Mango, Kemal's parents were Albanian Muslims (Mango 2002: 27).
3. Reference to Apocalyptic or messianic prophecies is not unique to HT's doctrine. For further reading about Apocalypticism among Muslims see Cook (2008).
4. The report says the rise a 'new caliph' is one of four worst scenarios in 2020, including the expansion of US-dominated world (Pax-Americana), world led by China and India, and world dominated by the proliferation of weaponry and terrorism. The report suggests that in any of these scenarios, the US will remain dominant (National Intelligence Council 2004: 83). Again, this is 12 years ago. Is it really that no fresher reports or assessments have been published?
5. HT's translation of '*mabda'*' as 'ideology' is similar to the popular concept of ideology that refers to a comprehensive set of ideas, worldview, or goals for how society should work, and it provides foundations for political and social action. By using this conception, HT draws Muslim attention to Islam's political ideology as being as important as its spiritual and social teachings.
6. This book is not written by al-Nabhani, but is originally a lecture paper of the delegate of HT for a conference of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) on 22 December 1989 in Missouri (al-Nawiy 2007: 63). The paper was published in a booklet and republished in Bahasa Indonesia by a publisher associated with HTI, Pustaka Thariqul Izzah, entitled 'Strategi Dakwah Hizbut Tahrir' (1997). The name of the author is not revealed.



7. Coup attempts were mentioned in the biography of al-Nabhani translated into Bahasa Indonesia by an HTI's leader, Shiddiq Al-Jawi, but the paragraph that contains this information was removed in the last edition of the book (Samara 2003).

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## Counter-Radicalization as Counter-Terrorism: The European Union Case

*Bruno Oliveira Martins and Monika Ziegler*

### INTRODUCTION

It is common to start analyses of contemporary terrorism in Europe with a reminder that terrorism is not new to the continent. Several Western European countries have been exposed to terrorist threats for decades, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, when successive waves of nationalist, extremist, and/or anarchist political violence caused hundreds of casualties in countries such as Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Since 2001, European countries have again been targets of several successful terrorist attacks, and many more foiled attempts, motivated by several ideologies. It is common for analysts to mention that the numbers of attacks and casualties in recent years are significantly lower than those in previous decades (Barr 2016), but after the great increase in foiled and successful attacks in 2015, 2016, and in the first months of 2017, there can be no doubt that Europe faces its biggest terrorist threat in decades. This new surge has brought terrorism back onto the political agenda and

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often, in some countries, to the top rank of citizens' concerns (European Commission 2016c).

Almost all terrorist activity in Europe in 2015 and 2016 originated within Europe and was carried out by nationals or residents of the European Union (EU). Yet, since 2014, the emergence of Daesh,<sup>1</sup> which conquered vast amounts of territory in Iraq and Syria, has exerted a strong appeal on people from all over the world. Its geostrategic achievements, its efficient propaganda tools, and its radical message has led many Europeans to radicalize (Neumann 2016 and Coolsaet 2016) and, in various ways and on different levels, to engage directly and indirectly with the group.

Consequently, the combined number of casualties of the main Daesh-inspired attacks from 2015 to early 2017 in Paris, Copenhagen, Brussels, Nice, Berlin, and Stockholm represent an enormous rise from the numbers observed in the 1990s and 2000s. In the words of Europol's director, Rob Wainwright, 'it has become clear that Europe currently faces a shifting and increasing range of threats from jihadist groups and individuals' (Europol 2016: 5).

Very few Europeans who engage with Daesh are life-long jihadists or mercenaries with experience of a multitude of conflicts. Almost always they are young and share a broad 'lack of identification with the Western societies they (or most of them) were born and grew up in' (Neumann 2016: 90). They seem to have different motivations and generally belong to one of three groups identified by Peter Neumann: the defenders, the seekers, and the hangers-on (Neumann 2016: 90–97). The defenders correspond to the first wave of European foreign fighters who travelled to Syria in 2012 and 2013 to protect the Sunni population against the atrocities of the Assad regime. The seekers are motivated neither by politics nor religion per se, but are part of a 'booming jihadist counterculture that meets their needs for identity, community, power, and a feeling of masculinity' (Neumann 2016: 93). The third group, the hangers-on, are people who are extremely loyal to a mentor or a group, and who pursue social inclusion through commitment to decisions made or inspired by their leaders.

Understanding these drivers of radicalization is fundamental for enhancing security in Europe in the years to come. Even though not all Europeans who travel to Syria and Iraq eventually return to the continent, and even though not all of them engage in terrorist activity, the recent attacks of 2015–2017 show us that many certainly do and that others

affiliate by proxy or become self-radicalized supporters. Understanding how Europeans become radicalized, whatever the ideology underlying these processes, is vital for developing strategies to counter those processes and reduce the potential terrorist threat in the continent.

Since 2004, the EU has identified counter-radicalization as an increasingly important strategy to prevent and fight terrorism. As we will show, the EU has adopted several policies and strategies and made several declarations to understand, prevent, and reverse radicalization among its citizens and residents. But the rise of Daesh and its appeal to thousands of Europeans pose new challenges and have triggered a number of responses from Brussels, national capitals, and local institutions. This multilevel system of counter-radicalization, encompassing a multitude of actors and juxtaposing interventions at various levels of decision making, provides an important input to broader debates about how counter-radicalization and de-radicalization can be supported and fostered.

In this chapter, we assess the EU's counter-radicalization policies and provide a critical overview of its most important measures. Our main purpose is to develop an understanding of how the EU deals with increasing radicalization that leads to politically motivated violence or its support. We focus on the reactions of the EU and its member states to the sharp increase of terrorist activity in Europe since the rise of Daesh in 2014. By examining official responses to radicalization, rather than radicalization processes per se, we offer a complementary dimension to the other contributions to this volume. Following a critical literature review and some conceptual clarifications, we analyse the main pillars of the EU's counter-terrorism (CT) policy and its main developments in 2015 and 2016. We then unveil the EU's contributions to countering radicalization in Europe, particularly in the last few years, and finish with a discussion and analysis of our findings.

We gathered data primarily from two main groups of sources: (1) various types of EU documents including official policies and action plans, strategic documents, and political declarations; and (2) official national documents and press communiqués about new CT and anti-radicalization measures. Our main analytical focus is on the period 2015–2017, but our analysis draws on EU policy and strategic documents from 2001 onwards. The objective is twofold: first, to illustrate the emergence of an autonomous European CT policy in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States; second, and most important, to document how anti-radicalization entered the vocabulary of European CT in 2004/2005 and how it has acquired growing importance ever since.

Our main argument is that, for several reasons, counter-radicalization *is* CT in official EU policies and documents; it constitutes a vital strategy of the broader CT effort and has gained increasing prominence. As stated in the introductory chapter to this volume, it is important to recognize that the underlying dynamics of radicalization are caused by the interplay between the mainstream and the margins, and that the process revolves around a set of beliefs we interpret as responses to global crises on multiple levels. The analytical elements of our chapter will corroborate this understanding, since counter-radicalization policies in Europe are indeed multilevel and involve actors from various points along the political spectrum.

Surprisingly, lessons from previous European experiences with groups such as the Irish Republican Army or the ETA (Basque Fatherland and Liberty) seem largely absent in the formulation of the EU's recent CT and counter-radicalization policies and strategies. We witness a clear bias towards fighting Islamist-inspired terrorism and radicalization, while a recognition of softer approaches, such as providing counter-narratives and collaborating with private and third-sector entities, have emerged more recently. Studying the evolution of key EU policy papers allows us to reconstruct this process and to identify emerging trends that clearly demonstrate the centuries-old conflict of priorities between coercive measures and civil liberties in the name of security.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

What do we know about EU anti-radicalization policies? In recent years, scholars have been examining how individual radicalization leads to political violence in Europe, and how the EU has tried to respond to these processes. Several relevant book-length monographs (Neumann 2016), edited volumes (Coolsaet 2011; Ranstorp 2010), and journal articles have focused on EU counter-radicalization policies, as have policy reports released by independent research centres (Vidino and Brandon 2012; Bakker and de Leede 2015), official governmental bodies (MRIIA 2010), and the EU's Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), among others.

Some authors have shown that many of these policies remain largely inefficient. Bossong (2014), for example, questions the general effectiveness of EU's policies to counter terrorism and radicalization. He argues that preventive CT 'relies on contentious scientific evidence and that authoritative evaluations remain tied to national policy-making' (Bossong

2014: 66), which affects the capacity of the EU to deliver on its own policies. In a comparison of EU counter-radicalization policies, strategies, and documents with theoretical ideas about radicalization and counter-radicalization, Bakker focuses on the ‘comprehensiveness, implementation, and consistency of the EU policies that aim to prevent individuals from turning to violence, while halting the emergence of the next generation of terrorists’ (Bakker 2015: 281) and also concludes that many of the measures adopted are not fully implemented at both the national and the EU level.

Other studies have focused on how the design and implementation of EU anti-radicalization strategies and policies are often misplaced and generate unintended consequences. In a critical discourse analysis of the RAN collection of approaches and practices used in education, Mattsson et al. (2016) argue that the ‘war on terror’ discourse tends to ‘individualize and decontextualize tensions in society that may ultimately cause terrorism’. They suggest that this individualized and decontextualized approach to preventing radicalization seems to prioritize controlling students over developing their ability to analyse complex conflicts in society. A final article worth highlighting is Argomaniz’s (2015) exploration of the EU’s responses to terrorist use of the Internet, including to trigger radicalization, which raises critical questions about the EU’s attempts to balance increased online security with private citizen’s rights.

In this chapter, we build on the accumulated knowledge provided by these readings and evaluate EU anti-radicalization policies in light of recent policy developments. We provide an overview of current EU policies in this area, problematize the idea of policy efficiency, and identify the main trends in EU anti-radicalization policies: the predominance of preventive strategies, the externalization of knowledge production, a focus on the crime–terror nexus, the increasingly prominent role of prisons, increasing openness to the private sector, and the almost exclusive focus on Islamist-inspired rather than other types of terrorism. We therefore contribute to the literature on European CT and counter-radicalization with an updated analysis of recent policy developments within these two closely interrelated fields. In this chapter, we map the trajectories of European CT and counter-radicalization policies, arguing that the importance of the ‘prevent’ pillar of the EU’s CT strategy requires that the fight against radicalization be central in the broader CT effort.

At this point a conceptual note is also needed. Almost all studies in terrorism and radicalization agree that there are no universally accepted



definitions of terrorism or radicalization (see Chap. 1 in this volume). In fact, Sedgwick argues that the concept of radicalization is more confusing than helpful (Sedgwick 2010). In the case of the EU, the European Commission's Justice and Home Affairs website defines radicalization as a 'complex phenomenon of people embracing radical ideology that could lead to the commitment of terrorist acts' (European Commission—Justice and Home Affairs 2017).

The Council's evolving definition of terrorism can be found in Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and the amending Decision 2008/919/JHA. These two documents advance a definition of 'terrorist offence' encompassing both objective elements (murder, bodily injuries, hostage taking, extortion, committing attacks, threat to commit any of the above, etc.) and subjective elements ('acts committed with the objective of seriously intimidating a population, destabilizing or destroying structures of a country or international organization or making a government abstain from performing actions') (EUR-Lex 2017). All policies and documents referred to below share these understandings.

### THE ROLE OF THE EU IN COUNTERING TERRORISM AND RADICALIZATION IN EUROPE, 2001–2014

The EU became an actor in CT in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terror attacks in the United States (9/11 hereafter). Although several key EU member states had had acute experiences of terrorism in the 1960s–1980s, and despite several preliminary attempts to harmonize policies with the then-European Community, there had never been a common approach to countering terrorism within the EU territory. However, this changed in 2001 for two main reasons: (1) the willingness to demonstrate support for and solidarity with the US, and (2) the sudden realization that a globalized form of terrorism also made the EU a potential target for future attacks. At the same time, these attacks caught the EU in a moment of historical transformation, in which its foundations were being discussed and the process that led to the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty of 2004 was starting. This provided the EU with additional impetus to engage in the development of a new and sensitive policy area.

Considering the EU's historically slow responsiveness in dealing with security and defence issues, its initial response to 9/11 was surprisingly comprehensive and well-focused. In about nine months (from September 2001 to June 2002), the EU adopted a series of policy documents and

action plans that set the foundations of its common CT policy. At the same time, it laid out the parameters that would articulate policies agreed at the EU level and implemented mostly at the member state level. Additionally, it also adopted its working definition of terrorism which included the actions of both individuals and groups. Although some of these policies were not fully implemented immediately, the basis of the policy was created and did indeed become operational.

However, the issue of radicalization was still basically absent from EU considerations. The main documents during this initial period (the EU Action Plan on Combating Terrorism of June 2002 and the Conclusions of the Extraordinary European Council of 21 September 2001) refer neither to the process of radicalization nor to the need to address it. This may have been because in the post 9/11 Western security environment, terrorism was mostly equated with Islamist-inspired threats coming from outside the EU. The terrorist attack of 11 March 2004 in Madrid, carried out by apparently Internet-radicalized individuals using explosives partially bought in Spain, changed this perception. With 192 people killed and more than 2000 injured, the terrorist attack shocked the continent to its foundation and remains the single deadliest attack on European soil since the late 1980s. Reacting to these events, on 24 March 2004, the EU adopted a seven-point *Declaration on Combating Terrorism*, in which Strategic Objective n.6 called for policies to address factors that contribute to support for, or recruitment into, terrorism. Although it was not explicit, this was the first mention by the EU of the need to design strategies to address the processes of radicalization. That intention was expanded in the EU CT Strategy adopted in 2005 in the aftermath of the London bombings, carried out by four Islamists who were British residents: three were British-born sons of Pakistani immigrants and the fourth individual was a convert born in Jamaica.

### *Countering Radicalization*

Before outlining the EU's counter-radicalization policy, some EU vocabulary requires clarification. First, EU documents often mention 'prevention' (see, for example, Council of the EU 2005a; European Commission 2014, 2016c). As seen in the first documents, chiefly the EU CT Strategy (Council of the EU 2005a), 'prevention' first and foremost means counter-radicalization, as the aim is 'to prevent people from turning to terrorism and to stop the next generation of terrorists from emerging' (Council of

the EU 2005a). The term ‘prevention’ in this context therefore focuses on protecting people vulnerable to radicalization, rather than on preventing terrorist attacks by already identified radicalized individuals. This understanding of prevention has prevailed until the present, but gradually, as will become apparent in the following document review, increasing attention has been paid to the security aspect of following radicalized people already known to the authorities.

Another important clarification is the distinction between the two strategies used to support people who are turning away from violent extremism. The first strategy, ‘disengagement’, helps the person to ‘renounce violence without giving up the ideology underpinning it’. The more desirable strategy, however, is ‘de-radicalization’, aimed to help the person to ‘renounce both violence and the underlying ideology’ (European Commission 2014).

The earliest document to be examined is the 2005 *EU CT Strategy* (Council of the EU 2005a), in which *prevention* was included as one of four pillars, along with *protection*, *pursuit*, and *response* (European Commission 2016a: 2). While responsibility for undertaking CT measures is understood to lie with the member states, the EU defines four ways in which it can contribute to all four pillars by assisting member states through ‘strengthening national capabilities’, ‘facilitating European cooperation’, ‘developing collective capabilities’, and ‘promoting international partnership’ beyond the EU (Council of the EU 2005a: 5). Although later documents do not always refer to these pillars, they do follow the same logic and continue to fall into these categories.

The 2005 *EU CT Strategy* underscores the need to ‘identify and counter the methods, propaganda and conditions through which people are drawn into terrorism’ (Council of the EU 2005a: 7). Efforts to protect vulnerable groups from radicalization may include shielding them from terrorist material or making radicalization less attractive by ameliorating their social conditions. The step identified as ‘limiting the activities of those playing a role in radicalization; preventing access to terrorist training; establishing a strong legal framework to prevent incitement and recruitment; and examining ways to impede terrorist recruitment through the Internet’ (Council of the EU 2005a: 8) addresses individuals already prone to, or in the process of, radicalization. It also introduces an important and recurring focus on the Internet as a platform for terrorist propaganda and a crucial entry point for counter-radicalization.

### *An EU Strategy as a Strategy*

The *EU Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism* (Council of the EU 2005b), adopted in 2005, outlines the specific challenge Islamist extremism poses and explains the range of responses the EU and its member states can pursue to combat it. In a last step, the document describes how these responses should be practically realized.

The EU's response proposed in this strategy includes four different approaches. The first approach concentrates on those endorsing Islamist views and the different areas in which they act. The EU aims to prevent face-to-face Islamist recruitment of people in venues where they might be vulnerable, for example, in prisons, schools, and religious environments. If radicalization has already taken place, the strategy would be to interrupt attempts by recruited individuals to travel to conflict zones, thereby preventing further radicalization and extremist training leading to violence. Extremists also reach out to potential recruits through the Internet, which is thus an additional target for EU policies and efforts. Finally, taking the global character of Islamist extremism into consideration, the EU also aims to support third countries in implementing similar strategies.

The second approach supports mainstream interpretations of Islam, and works to prevent extreme Islamism from entering the mainstream. To achieve that, the EU stresses the importance of involving religious organizations and groups who do not accept extremist views. They recommend making literature on moderate Islam easily available and encouraging imams to become 'European'. This approach supports undistorted representations of the West in Muslim communities and of Muslims in the EU and encourages the development of a 'non- emotive lexicon' to discuss the topic without implicitly linking Islam to terrorism (Council of the EU 2005b: 4).

In the third approach, the EU aims to ensure equal opportunities for people in societies both in and outside of the EU. It recognizes that structural factors in certain parts of certain societies might make extremism more attractive. In the EU, this equalization should be achieved through creating equal conditions, fighting against discrimination, and fostering intercultural exchange. In third countries, the EU aims to use political dialogue and assistance programmes to encourage the development of appropriate frameworks and values (Council of the EU 2005b: 4–5).

Lastly, the EU recognizes that appropriate responses to radicalization rely upon a better understanding of the phenomenon. To achieve this

understanding, it is necessary to collect input from those concerned, especially Muslims themselves, and to compare different national contexts to better assess the European situation (Council of the EU 2005a: 5). It is important to mention that point 14 of the Strategy, coming under the subtitle ‘Increasing our understanding and developing our response appropriately’, refers exclusively to the radicalization of Muslims in Europe, excluding any other types and drivers of radicalization that have led to terrorist attacks in Europe in recent years. The surprising omission of references to past engagements with terrorism arising from different motivations indicates how strongly and quickly Islamist-inspired terrorism has risen as the main concern in European CT and counter-radicalization policies. This omission also seems to indicate that Islamist-inspired terrorism is perceived as a different phenomenon from the terrorism of nationalist and independentist groups in the 1960s–1980s, thus requiring new counter-measures.

Although the EU emphasizes that member states are responsible for implementing appropriate measures, because only they have the necessary national authority, it encourages inter-state cooperation and the inclusion of both religious and non-religious non-governmental organizations. The EU would support this by providing a framework for coordination, information sharing, and determining best practices. The EU would also play the central role in interacting with third countries (Council of the EU: 5–6).

The *EU Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism* was further revised in 2008 and 2014. In the 2014 revision, the main ideas of the original version remained but were adjusted to new circumstances. This change is perceivable in the Strategy’s new description of current challenges. While the main goal is still to prevent people from turning to extremism, this document emphasizes the necessity of keeping up with quickly evolving methods of terrorist action and recruitment, and now explicitly mentions adopting a ‘security approach’. However, the EU continues to see the importance of relying not only on ‘security-related measures’, but on balancing those with efforts to combat structural factors that ‘may create an environment conducive to radicalization and recruitment to terrorism’ (Council of the EU 2014: 3–4).

In a new section, included in 2014, the EU presents the principles upon which the revised measures that follow them are based. The first principal was already in the original 2005 document: the importance of cooperating on various levels not only with governments but also with

civil society actors. However, for the first time this principle included involving the private sector. The new section is also explicit that measures taken should always be in accordance with human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, and should fulfil the criteria of ‘transparency, effectiveness, flexibility and continued national and international collaboration’ (Council of the EU 2014: 5).

The first recommendation in the new document echoes the original 2005 call to eliminate a range of (often interrelated) structural factors that make Islamism seem a valid alternative to poor or unfair conditions. The revised 2014 document also adds to the original recommendations that education should be supported to foster critical thinking, tolerance, and mutual respect among youths and emphasizes the importance of cultural and social exchange within civil society, especially in effectively communicating successful results of structural changes and mutual understanding.

To address the structural factors for radicalization in third countries, the EU’s approach remains the same, namely using political dialogue and assistance programmes to help countries develop appropriate frameworks. The objective to ‘ensure that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism’, considers involving civil society as central and using ‘non-emotive lexicon’ as fundamental (Council of the EU 2014: 7). Interestingly, the EU does not clarify what it means by ‘mainstream’.

A completely new point in the 2014 revised strategy is the improvement of government communications. These communications should be clear and consistent, and should always adopt the most appropriate language and use the best medium to reach the intended audience. The content should provide a clear picture of current policies, strategies, and objectives through clarifying norms and values and describing government efforts to uphold them. Communications should include social media and the Internet, which makes it important to enter into public–private partnerships (*idem*: 7–8). Another new measure is the deployment of counter-narratives, in which people tell ‘positive and credible stories’, within the frameworks of various projects, to delegitimize extremist narratives. One source of such narratives could be victims of terrorism, who can most credibly unmask terrorist ideologies and actions; former terrorists might also provide compelling narratives (*idem*: 8–9). Counter-narrative messaging is projected to be posted on the Internet, and therefore different actors should be encouraged to repost and respond to these positive stories. Another way to combat extremism on the Internet is to remove extremist material, but this requires not only international cooperation

but also collaboration with many different actors in the Internet industry (*idem*: 9).

While prisons, schools, and religious environments were already identified as possible sites of recruitment in 2005, the 2014 revised strategy addresses possible intervenors' capability to recognize radicalization and to step in early in the process. People such as teachers, religious leaders, prison and probation staff, and others likely to be in contact with vulnerable persons should receive training and share their experiences. Another new focus is on building capacity within civil society and individuals to appropriately address radicalization through education and training, especially in young people. Again, this measure requires the cooperation of civil society and the private sector; the involvement of the RAN could also be important in making this possible. The role of the RAN (analysed more fully later in this chapter) is considered important in the 2014 revised counter-radicalization strategy, especially for developing disengagement and exit strategies for those who wish to leave radical Islamism.

Another reoccurring point in the 2014 revised strategy is the task of developing a better understanding of radicalization. Again, one of the measures to achieve this is discussion with as many people as possible who are involved with radical groups, who are on the brink, or who have left. New measures include the RAN and the creation of a 'knowledge hub' that should allow member states to exchange insights on this topic. The EU also mentions that research into the topic should be further encouraged and funded by both the EU and member states.

Revised EU measures that affect the international dimension of terrorism and radicalization are threefold. The first two, hindering citizens from travelling abroad for terrorist purposes and supporting third countries to build necessary capacities continue from the first document. The third is a new measure that highlights the need to emphasize and explain policy purposes at the international level and to exchange expertise with other governments and actors in the field.

Many elements concerning how to implement these measures were retained from the original document; however, the current document also advises that both the EU and its member states work with international organizations to realize these measures. The document also now mentions the necessity of having 'common elements and broad agreements' as the basis for counter-radicalization strategies, even though it is still the responsibility of member states to create situation-specific measures.

### *The Radicalization Awareness Network*

The RAN, established in September 2011 plays a very important role in the broader EU counter-radicalization policy (European Commission 2017a). People in this network are those closest to persons susceptible to radicalization, and cover a wide range of professions and organizations. These include policemen and prison authorities, teachers and youth workers, as well as civil society representatives and healthcare professionals. The RAN is intended to give them the opportunity to share and pool their respective experiences with anti-radicalization work.

The RAN was expected to be a major asset in the EU's attempt to support its member states with the necessary expertise to counter-radicalization. This is apparent in the Commission's communication from January 2014 (European Commission 2014), outlining ten areas where member states and the EU could take more action to prevent radicalization. In seven of these areas, the RAN is mentioned, either as a source of expertise or as a subject of reform itself, with suggestions of how it could direct its work to better meet the actual needs of member states or act as a venue for furthering other measures. The RAN also plays a role in two large topics of counter-radicalization, countering online radicalization and contributing to research on radicalization and its prevention.

The Commission identifies online radicalization as an area where close cooperation with civil society and the private sector is needed (European Commission 2017a). The private sector is needed to prevent extremist content finding its way into the public online space, while civil society (with the help of RAN) should help to develop and spread positive counter-narratives. The Commission also states that it would support research by making funds available through Horizon 2020 (an EU research and innovation programme) and other relevant programmes (European Commission 2017b). The Commission also sees the need to keep the research targeted, which they aim to ensure by working with the different parties involved.

### THE NEW REALITY OF 2015–2016

These policies and strategies were in place when the new wave of terrorist action inspired by Daesh began to unfold starting with the 2014 attack against the Jewish Museum in Brussels. From that moment until the time of writing, a string of terrorist attacks has taken place in several EU



member states. Between 7 and 9 January 2015, attacks in Paris on the office of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, at a kosher grocery store, and in a Paris suburb caused the death of 17. One month later, on 14–15 February 2015 in Copenhagen, one person shot two people and injured five police officers during and after an event in solidarity with the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack. On 18 September 2015, a person allegedly linked to a terrorist organization stabbed and injured a policewoman in Berlin. On 13 November 2015, a group of coordinated attacks in Paris caused 133 deaths and a higher number on injured more than 2000. On 22 March 2016, coordinated suicide attacks killed 32 people and injured over 300 at the Brussels airport and a metro station in central Brussels. On 13 June 2016, a man stabbed to death two police officers in Île-de-France, and on 14 July, the same year, a truck was deliberately run into pedestrians in Nice, killing 86 people and injuring over 400. On 26 July 2016, two men with alleged links to a terrorist organization killed a priest and injured another person in a church in Normandy. On 19 December 2016, a man drove a truck through a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring over 50. Finally, on 7 April 2017, an Uzbek individual carried out a similar attack in the city centre of Stockholm, killing four people and injuring dozens. How did the EU and its member states react to this cascade of attacks?

### *Main National Responses*

Before outlining the main measures adopted by the EU, it is important to emphasize that security of their citizens remains a key responsibility of the member states. Therefore, many of the most relevant CT policies adopted in Europe during this period were taken at the national level, and not at the EU level. Although many of them do not refer explicitly to countering radicalization, they were adopted in response to terrorist attacks and provide a background for the anti-radicalization measures that were actually taken. These national CT responses are similar across many European states and include:

- *Revisions of the criminal code in several countries*—new offences were added to the body of actions that could be considered terrorism. For example, in June 2015 Germany made travelling abroad to receive terrorist training an offence, as did Belgium in July 2015 (BMI 2015; Belgian Federal Government 2015). Moreover, Belgium

decided in 2015 that convicted terrorists who had obtained Belgium citizenship prior to criminal offences could have their citizenship revoked (Belgian Federal Government 2015). In June 2016, France ruled that regularly accessing jihadist websites would now be considered a criminal offence (French Government 2016c).

- *Increased national security budgets*—Many EU countries reinforced security through additional spending on materiel and/or manpower. In January 2015, for example, France planned for the following three years to create a total of 2680 new jobs in different areas for the fight against terrorism and to spend €425 million for this purpose (French Government 2015a). In July 2015, the United Kingdom planned to spend 2% of its gross domestic product on defence, and announced in October the same year they would invest in additional equipment and technology (UK Government 2015a, c). Belgium announced in November 2015 it would amend its budget for 2016 by €400 million to reinforce security by deploying 520 additional military personnel (Belgian Federal Government 2015).
- *Anti-radicalization measures*—The focus on anti-radicalization in the post-2015 period was on three areas: prisons, the Internet, and educational institutions. De-radicalization programmes in prisons were developed in several EU countries, including France, the UK, and Belgium. The United Kingdom also introduced the policy ‘Duty to Prevent’ in educational facilities like schools and universities, and announced in October 2015 a plan to spend £5 million to counter extremist ideologies (UK Government 2015d). Belgium on the other hand announced in November 2015 a plan to target preachers of hate and to shut down places where jihadism was propagated (Belgian National Government 2015). In Germany, the Integration Bill of August 2016 constitutes a prevention and de-radicalization measure (BMI 2016).
- *Tracking terrorist movements*—Several EU countries introduced national Passenger Name Record (PNR) platforms. In January 2015, France decided to have an operational platform as of September 2015. Belgium announced in November 2015a plan to implement a PNR programme, but gave no timeframe. Special provisions on data retention were also taken. In the UK, this was part of the CT and Security Act of 2015, while in Germany similar legislation came into force in December 2015. In another measure, in 2015 France established a database for reporting radicalized people with terrorist

tendencies (French Government 2015a; German Federal Government 2015; UK Government 2015b; USDOS 2015).

- *Institutionalization of the state of emergency*—As a response to the terrorist attacks of November 2015, France declared a state of emergency. Originally passed for a three-month term, it was extended consecutively in February, May, and July of 2016, the last time for six months in response to the Nice attack. As of March 2017, the state of emergency is still in place and can no longer be considered an exception (French Government 2015b, 2016a, b). While Belgium did not declare a state of emergency, its government announced in their action plan of November 2015 that it would consider ‘adapt[ing] legislation linked to the state of emergency’ as well as the ‘[p]ossibility for temporary and exceptional measures to ensure public safety’ (Belgian National Government 2015).

### *Main EU Responses*

There have been several discussions and decisions on measures for combating and preventing terrorism on the EU level since the beginning of 2015. The following section will outline progress in different areas.

As early as February 2015, the heads of states of the EU (European Council) issued a statement, based on the Riga Joint Statement (Council of the EU 2015) of the month before, announcing their intention to enforce their powers under the Schengen Agreement, including the right to conduct ‘systematic checks of EU citizens at external borders’ (European Council 2015). This measure was to be implemented by the Justice and Home Affairs Council the following month. In December, the same year, the European Commission made a proposal to ‘manage the EU’s external borders and protect the Schengen area’, and the European Council highlighted the necessity of those measures (European Council and Council of the EU 2015b). Finally, in February 2016, the Council of the EU reached an agreement on a general approach to this matter, which would still have to be discussed with the European Parliament (EP).

The February statement also raised the issue of preventing terrorist financing. On 15 May 2015, the European Commission passed the EU Fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive, which was enacted on 25 June 2015. In December of that year, the European Council noted the importance of further action in this area and in February 2016 issued conclusions on the action plan against terrorist financing. They stated that they

expected progress in ‘avoiding the use of virtual currencies for terrorist financing’, ‘improving access to information by financial intelligence units’, ‘measures on prepaid cards’, and ‘measures against illicit cash movements’. In July 2016, the Council of the EU discussed a European Commission proposal to strengthen EU rules aimed at preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.

Information sharing and cooperation between security services is another important topic in fighting terrorism. After the European Council called for proposals from Europol and the Commission on ways to achieve better information sharing and cooperation in March 2015, they again highlighted the importance of this topic in December of the same year. In the beginning of 2016, the European Counter Terrorism Centre was launched as an ‘enhanced information hub’. The month after, the European Council suggested establishing ‘an EU platform containing information about people and organizations connected with terrorist activity whose assets are frozen by member states’. In their March 2016 statement, the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council called for enhanced use of existing international databases and better ways to collect digital evidence. Finally, the Council of the EU published a ‘roadmap’ for enhanced information exchange and information management.

To counter extremist material on the Internet, another aim of the February 2015 statement, Europol established the EU Internal Referral Unit in July 2015, following up on instruction from the European Council. During its first year, the unit ‘assessed and processed for the purpose of referral towards concerned Internet service providers over 11 000 messages across some 31 online platforms in 8 languages’. The content had been posted by ‘criminals to spread violent extremist online content materials, and 91.4% of the total content has been successfully removed from the platforms by the social media and online service providers’ (Europol 2016).

In March 2015, following the statement announcing the fight against illegal trafficking in firearms, the JHA Council called for propositions from the European Commission and Europol. In the same month, the JHA Council called for rapid completion of the proposed firearms legislation and other measures. In December 2016, the EP and Council reached a provisional political agreement on the Firearms Directive (European Commission 2016d).

The February 2015 statement also called for the adoption of an EU. After the JHA Council agreed to work with the EP to make ‘decisive

progress' on this framework in March 2015, in their Conclusion the following November they resolved to finalize that directive by the end of the year, and the Home Affairs Council approved the text of the proposed directive agreed upon with the EP in December. Finally, in April 2016, the EU PNR Directive was adopted, after the JHA Council had urged the EP to do so the month before. As a last measure, the Justice Ministers and the EU council proposed a directive on combating terrorism in March 2016. The directive is intended to strengthen the EU's legal framework in preventing terrorist attacks, for example, through making training and travelling abroad for terrorist purposes criminal offences, and to strengthen the rights of victims of terrorism.

The areas of action for preventing radicalization identified in the communication of 2014 are also part of the European Agenda on Security, adopted in April 2015 (European Commission 2015). To identify and remove extremist material from the Internet, the agenda foresees the establishment of the above-mentioned Internal Referral Unit in Europol. Drawing on the previous communication, information technology companies would be included in an EU-level forum from 2015 onwards, in which they would be expected to contact legal authorities and civil society institutions both to take action against online terrorist propaganda and to deal with the technical aspects of new encryption technology.

Another recurrent feature is the development and communication of a positive counter-narrative, supplemented by a factual representation of the conflicts. According to the European Agenda on Security, '[s]trengthening the EU's own strategic communication with common narratives and factual representation of conflicts is an important aspect of the EU's response' (European Commission 2015: 14–15). Hate crimes and hate speech are specifically identified as issues requiring monitoring and reporting.

The European Agenda on Security recommends that measures to protect youth against radicalization, including '[e]ducation, youth participation, interfaith and intercultural dialogue as well as employment and social inclusion' (European Commission 2015: 15) should be priorities in EU policymaking. The agenda also concurs with the EU's 2005 counter-radicalization strategy of cooperating with third countries to effectively fight the roots and causes of radicalization, which should be made possible through, among other bodies, the RAN.

Even before its establishment, the RAN Centre of Excellence (CoE) was mentioned in the European Agenda on Security as an important step in

countering radicalization through adding a new practical dimension to the cooperation between stakeholders on anti-radicalization' (European Commission 2016c). Since its launch in October 2015, it guides RAN working groups, supports the EU and individual countries upon request, and shares the knowledge pooled in RAN. The role of the RAN CoE is supportive, rather than executive, and thus fits into the EU's main stance that anti-radicalization measures are the responsibility of the member states.

The importance of developing a positive counter-narrative promoting European values over extremist propaganda was expressed in Paris declaration on promoting citizenship and common values. This document was signed by the European Commission and EU education ministers on 17 March 2015, in the aftermath of the Paris and Copenhagen attacks, and was aimed to reinforce the centrality of the EU's fundamental values: 'respect for human dignity, freedom (including freedom of expression), democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights' (European Commission and EU Ministers of Education 2015: 1).

The policy areas mentioned above, in which the EU plans to support member states, were also taken up in the Council Conclusions of November 2015, which were informed by a high-level meeting the previous month. The meeting, in which justice ministers also participated, focused on 'criminal justice responses to radicalization' (European Council and Council of the EU 2015a).

The European Council picked up on the topic of criminal justice responses in their Conclusions, calling for the exchange of best practices in de-radicalization and disengagement in prisons, rehabilitation programmes, training, funding, and reintegrating those who return from conflict zones or are prevented from travelling to such areas (European Council and Council of the EU 2015a). Reiterating the importance of de-radicalizing terrorists, this conclusion points again to the RAN's vital role in assisting member states to achieve this exchange of best practices.

The 2015 conclusions add no new measures to counter the possible role of the Internet as a platform of radicalization through hate speech. Instead, they repeat the need for clear counter-messaging, the inclusion of the private sector, and the establishment and use of Internet referral units.

Actions taken on this topic are mentioned in a more recent communication from April 2016, which 'deliver[s] on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union' (European Commission 2016b). While recapping the efforts made on counter-radicalization, and thereby making

explicit the Commission's engagement in 'supporting actions to promote effective alternative counter-narratives', the communication also mentions two ongoing projects, which together are financed with €10 million (European Commission 2016b).

The first project is the development 'by the Internet industry with full Europol involvement' of a joint referral platform (European Commission 2016b). This measure is an example of the EU's intent to engage the private sector in practical ways in the fight against radicalization. This joint referral platform is intended to prevent material prohibited on one site on the Internet from appearing in another place. The second project, the EU-wide Civil Society Empowerment Programme, is intended to make positive counter-narrative strategies more effective (European Commission 2016b). Other funds are dedicated to addressing radicalization in prisons (€8 million in 2015 and 2016) and supporting education and youth outreach counter-radicalization measures by offering, for example, up to €400 million under the Erasmus+ programme. This communication also stressed that the most effective outcomes are to be expected from engagement on the local level; however, it also recommends a 'more security-oriented approach' focusing on convicts released from prison and other radicals already known to authorities (European Commission 2016b).

The last document we consider in this overview is the communication on 'supporting the prevention of radicalization leading to violent extremism' released in June 2016 (European Commission 2016a). This communication outlines actions in seven specific areas where cooperation at the EU level can bring added value. This communication discusses and recaps the areas and measures mentioned above, but also introduces new foci and specific measures.

For 'countering terrorist propaganda and hate speech online', the communication announces a 'toolbox of targeted actions' to be made public 'in the coming months'. (European Commission 2016a: 6). This toolbox will be the result of the cooperation anticipated in the previous documents between actors on the EU and national levels, including civil society, the private sector, and Europol. To better control online hate speech, the Commission has further developed a code of conduct in cooperation with the private Internet sector.

On the EU level, progress in promoting the fight against discrimination is hoped to deepen the integration of marginalized groups within European society. In addition to initiatives and a directive focused on providing equal opportunities in the labour market, the EU will also provide funding

that ‘will go directly towards fostering the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups’ (European Commission 2016a: 12).

Finally, the Commission has announced the development of a ‘specific toolkit of best practices’ to foster young people’s ‘democratic resilience’, their media literacy and critical thinking, their abilities to resolve conflicts, and their respect for others (European Commission 2016a: 12) (Table 12.1).

**Table 12.1** Main documents establishing an EU counter-radicalization policy

<i>Year</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>Main ideas</i>
2004	Declaration on terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time the idea of radicalization was mentioned in a counter-terrorism-related document</li> </ul>
2005	EU Counter-terrorism strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four pillars: ‘protect’, ‘prevent’, ‘pursue’, ‘respond’</li> <li>• ‘Prevent’ pillar focuses on countering radicalization</li> <li>• Four strategies: Strengthening national capabilities, facilitating European cooperation, developing collective capabilities, promoting international partnership</li> </ul>
2005	EU strategy for combating radicalization and recruitment to terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four responses to radicalization</li> <li>• Focus on perpetrators of radicalization, strengthening mainstream Islam, eradicating structural disadvantages, improved understanding of radicalization</li> </ul>
2008	First revision of the EU strategy for combating radicalization and recruitment to terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates the Strategy in the context of policy developments observed in 2005–2008</li> </ul>
2014	European commission’s communication on preventing radicalization to terrorism and violent extremism: Strengthening the EU’s response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 areas which could be part of EU and national counter-radicalization efforts</li> <li>• Cooperation with civil society and the private sector, research, exit strategies, combating online propaganda</li> </ul>
2014	Second revision of the EU strategy for combating radicalization and recruitment to terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing measures to combat structural factors and security-related measures</li> <li>• Messaging counter-narratives</li> <li>• Enabling local actors and civil society</li> </ul>

(continued)



**Table 12.1** (continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>Main ideas</i>
2015	European agenda on security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A common EU framework for strengthening security in the member states</li> <li>• Tackling terrorism and preventing radicalization as part of the security agenda</li> </ul>
2015	Paris declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizing common EU values</li> </ul>
2015	Council conclusions on enhancing the criminal justice response to radicalization leading to terrorism and violent extremism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various aspects of prevention, investigation, prosecution, conviction, rehabilitation and reintegration</li> </ul>
2016	Communication on delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing the actual processes required to fulfil the EU Agenda on Security</li> <li>• Identifying further necessary actions</li> </ul>
2016	Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalization leading to violent extremism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining 7 areas where EU policies and measures can support member states</li> <li>• Recommendations about education, de-radicalization in prisons, research, online radicalization, and security, among other aspects</li> </ul>

## ANALYSIS: THE COUNTER-RADICALIZATION/ COUNTER-TERRORISM NEXUS AND OTHER TRENDS

In the general review of EU policy outlined above, several trends can be identified that correspond to issues relevant to broader anti-radicalization efforts in Europe. However, we argue that, despite their centrality to the general functioning of EU anti-radicalization endeavours, these issues are often neglected in the literature in favour of more traditional aspects such as efficiency, consistency, or the tension between security and freedom. The EU's anti-radicalization and CT policies must also be understood in the context of a multitude of different national policies that not always are compatible or completely in tune with the EU guidelines.

### *The Predominance of Preventive Strategies*

The development of EU policies aimed to counter radicalization grew out of the realization that the most pressing contemporary terrorist threat to

Europe (Islamism) is in fact a homegrown, not external, problem. The Islamist terrorist threat to Europe is often the result of radicalization processes unfolding within Europe, but is also arguably a result of the EU's structural inertia in countering security threats. The EU's focus on counter-radicalization may be explained not only by a reasonable assumption that preventing terrorism is better than dealing with the consequences of an attack, but may also be because countering radicalization does not infringe member states' sovereignty on security matters. The 'prevent' pillar also emerged in the broader CT strategy because it is less politically sensitive than other strategies. This explains why counter-radicalization is such an important dimension of the wider EU's CT policy.

### *EU's Externalization of Knowledge Production*

A fundamental aspect of the EU counter-radicalization policy described above is its externalization of knowledge production. While the RAN involves national and local experts and practitioners sharing their experiences and providing input to EU policy formulation, the EU (through its Framework Programmes (FPs)) has also channelled research funds to sponsor and stimulate research on topics related to radicalization, which will eventually inform its policies. Bakker (2015) shows that the sixth and seventh FPs provided funding to several multi-year research projects, including 'Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law', 'Cultural Approach to Radical Islamism in the Context of European Pluralism: Radical versus Moderate Muslims' (CARP) and 'Scientific Approach to Fighting Radical Extremism'. Other examples are 'PRIME: Preventing, Interdicting and Mitigating Extremist Events: Defending against Lone Actor Extremism' and 'VOX-POL: Virtual Centre of Excellence for Research in Violent Online Political Extremism'. Keppel and Rougier (2016), in their analysis of European terror and security research, provide an overview of the most important research projects funded by the EU under FP 7 in the area of terrorism and radicalization. They show the precise intellectual contributions that these projects bring and which research trends are most promising and should therefore receive the European Commission's attention.

Under Horizon 2020, the trend continues. In 2015, for example, calls were made for projects on 'Developing a comprehensive approach to violent radicalization in the EU from early understanding to improving protection' (Topic: SEC-07-FCT-2016-2017), and 'Human factor for the

prevention, investigation, and mitigation of criminal and terrorist acts' (Topic: SEC-07-FCT-2016-2017). As the number of terrorist incidents in Europe grows, it is expected that research on radicalization will continue to receive EU funds.

Although there is nothing inherently wrong with these dynamics, they do confirm that EU policymaking is largely based on external knowledge. In sensitive areas, such as security and CT, this may prove to be a problematic approach.

### *The Crime–Terror Nexus and the Role of Prisons*

Several documents referred to above mention the fundamental role of prisons in processes of radicalization. According to a study published by the King's College's International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, prisons are

places of vulnerability in which extremists can find plenty of 'angry young men' who are 'ripe' for radicalization; they bring together criminals and terrorists, and therefore create opportunities for networking and 'skills transfers'; and they often leave inmates with few opportunities to re-integrate into society. (ICSR 2016: 4)

In this report, the authors highlight the crime–terror nexus—the fact that many current terrorists are past criminals. There is consensus among policy-makers and academics in this respect: in the words of Gilles de Kerchove, EU's CT Coordinator, 'jail is a major incubator of radicalization' (European Parliament 2015). Future EU strategies should pay close attention to the dynamics of recruitment, conversion, and group identification in prisons across Europe.

### *Increased Openness to the Private Sector*

In a movement, similar to trends in many other policy fields, the revised EU counter-radicalization strategy of 2014 invites the private sector to participate in security-related practices. In addition to enlisting the private telecommunications sector to prevent extremist content from spreading freely online, there is a drive to allow law enforcement authorities to access data collected by online communication systems and social networking companies. It is also common for communications companies, either on

their own initiative or at the request of law enforcement authorities, to prevent specific radical content to be circulated online. While these private-sector contributions are important, contending rights between security and privacy cannot be ignored; as Argomaniz (2015) has demonstrated, the EU faces significant challenges in this domain.

Daesh has shown how successful a well-planned and brilliantly executed online propaganda strategy can be in achieving the desired outcome. Through their well-produced, high-resolution videos and their massive use of social media, the message of the Caliphate spread quickly and efficiently all over the world and, according to a report from the Soufan Group, attracted foreign fighters from at least 86 countries (Soufan Group 2015), many of whom were radicalized either exclusively or mostly online. As the use of technology spreads and our lives unfold more and more online, this case reveals that the challenges facing the EU are unlikely to diminish.

### *Over-representation of Islamism*

No matter how much academics and decision makers disagree about the efficiency and adequacy of the EU's CT and counter-radicalization measures, the most controversial—yet too often overlooked—aspect of them is their disproportionate focus on Islamism as the ideological trigger for radicalization. Even though until recently the annual Europol Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports consistently showed that most terrorist activity in Europe has not been Islamist-inspired, the vast majority of policies adopted in Brussels were designed to address Islamist radicalization. An example of this tendency is the action plan 'Stronger EU action to better tackle violent radicalisation leading to terrorism', adopted by the European Commission on 14 June 2016, in which the sole justification for the new adopted measures is the fact that some 4000 EU nationals had joined terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.

This is unfortunate for several reasons, not least because it is an ill-conceived strategy. Although Islamist-inspired terrorism is an obvious reality in contemporary Western Europe, policy-makers and bureaucrats should not neglect other terrorist threats. These include para-military groups on the far right, radical nationalists, environmental extremists, and lone wolves such as Anders Breivik, the Norwegian far-right anti-Islamist who in July 2013 killed 77 people, mostly teenagers from his own country, without showing any regret or remorse. Studies have shown how

ill-designed preventive anti-radicalization programmes, such as the UK's 'Prevent', perpetuate racial stereotypes and increase the risk of human rights violations were. A report from the Open Society Foundations has argued that the UK's 'Prevent' is 'flawed in both its design and application, rendering it not only unjust but also counterproductive' (Open Society Foundations 2016: 15).<sup>2</sup> Similar conclusions were reached by Mattsson et al. (2016) in their study of the RAN collection of approaches and practices used in education.

## CONCLUSIONS

Over the last decade, the EU has developed a counter-radicalization policy that runs hand-in-hand with its broader CT policy. This chapter has provided an overview of the processes by which both policies developed, with a particular focus on the way the EU reacted to the sharp increase in terrorist activity in Europe since 2015. Our analysis of the current state of the EU's counter-radicalization strategy reveals new trends that are relevant in this context and constitute a part of broader tendencies in contemporary international security: the predominance of preventive strategies, the outsourcing of knowledge production, the crime—terror nexus, the opening up to the private sector, and an over-representation of Islamist-inspired terrorism in EU policy documents and strategies, while other forms of terrorism are mostly absent. Despite their centrality in EU counter-radicalization policymaking, these trends are often neglected in the literature.

Understanding that these trends are not exclusive to the EU is important to contextualizing them and to better understanding the rationale that leads to them. This understanding also facilitates the de-mystification of the EU as a *sui generis* actor whose actions are solely explained by its peculiar form of political organization. Indeed, as we tried to demonstrate in our analytical section, many of the measures adopted by the EU are in fact better explained by broader trends in international politics and security.

It is not unlikely that the rise of nationalist rhetoric and policies sweeping over Europe will lead to tensions that may result in even more politically motivated violence, as illustrated in Önnersfors' chapter on PEGIDA in this volume, which mentions recent German neo-Nazi terrorist attacks. Despite the multitude of documents approved in recent years, the EU still struggles to efficiently implement many of them, as noted in previous

studies (e.g., Bossong 2014). This is most likely explained by the multiple layers of policy-making institutions working towards CT and anti-radicalization on EU, national, and regional levels.

## NOTES

1. In this chapter we use the term Daesh to designate the group also known as Islamic State, Islamic State in Iraq and in the Levant (ISIL) or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Daesh corresponds to the acronym of *al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham* (Arabic for *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*) and is the expression adopted by the EU.
2. *Prevent* is the part of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST. The aim of the Prevent strategy is to prevent people from becoming radicalized and eventually commit to violent extremism. This strategy addresses the issue through three different approaches. First, it considers the ideological underpinning of extremism and its perpetrators; second, it offers practical support; and third, it cooperates with different sectors in which radicalization is likely to happen. CONTEST contains four pillars similar to the EU's counter-terrorism strategy of 2005, namely protect, prevent, pursue, and respond. As Bossong (2014: 69) points out, this reflects the UK's influence on EU policy discussions on counter-terrorism during its presidency, with the result that the United Kingdom managed to 'upload [its] strategy to the EU level'. Bossong describes another incident of the United Kingdom, together with the Netherlands, shaping EU measures in the discussions of the 'Policy Planners Network' which 'clearly run in parallel to the EU's efforts'. (idem, 71).

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## Conclusions

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### EXPANDED REFERENCES TO RADICALIZATION RESEARCH

While we were working on this volume, the issue of radicalization did not fall off the radar of politics and public discourse. On the contrary, Western societies (as much as hot conflict zones around the world) continued to be exposed to a seemingly ceaseless series of terrorist attacks, not least through repatriated and self-affiliated supporters of radical Islamism. Increasing in-group radicalization in right-wing extremist groups also shook the foundations of open societies throughout the world. Meanwhile, lethal violence in the Middle East and North Africa MENA region did not slow, refugees continue to die on the Mediterranean and war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed by both state and non-state actors on the charged playing field of global power politics, continue daily. Indiscriminate violence now appears as an entrenched and intrinsic feature of political conflicts for years—if not decades—to come, and post-conflict development emerges only as a remote future goal.

Our principal aim in this volume was to show how radicalization is embedded in fundamental conflicts in the multipolar post-Cold War era

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that resonate in radicalization processes and practices across the globe through including chapters that explore data from multiple countries on the levels of policy, political culture, and psychology.

## HEURISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

In the introduction to this volume, we made the case for more interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches to studying radicalization. Our intent is to help free the study of radicalization from deterministic assumptions about security, social sustainability, or ideology by opening the research area to a greater variety of methods and cases. This is a new challenge that we hope will inspire future research. To summarize our findings, we would therefore like to conclude with some heuristic questions: What methods did our authors use? What informed their research? What or who were their sources?

Chapter 1, based on an extensive survey of contemporary literature, highlighted the conceptual ambiguities of the term ‘radicalization’, extracted the main trends in research and public discourse and contrasted them to each other, identifying gaps and proposing ways forward. In Chap. 2, Feldman drew upon his experience working for the UK Crown Prosecution Service, inside knowledge, and sources from criminal trials of two prolific right-wing ‘lone-wolf’ terrorists to challenge conventional theories about self-radicalization and to distinguish between two types of radicalizing networks, real and imagined, online or offline. Šlerka and Šisler (Chap. 3), with their proposed innovative method of measuring normalized social distance, demonstrated that radicalization as a phenomenon in virtual space (in the Czech Republic) can be studied through an analysis of big data. Önnerrfors (Chap. 4) engaged with the language within the right-wing ‘movement of indignation’ PEGIDA, through a qualitative analysis of an informed insider account. Through a close reading of debates in the Knesset and official political statements (published in traditional and online media), Filc (Chap. 5) traced political radicalization in contemporary Israel, moving from a populist habitus into official government positions. Steiner and Lundberg (Chap. 6) gathered material through field studies and qualitative semi-structured interviews with Israeli Messianic leaders. These interviews provided a unique understanding of how these actors frame the Arab–Israeli conflict in terms of religiously infused conceptualizations. Sahoo (Chap. 7), in studying the activities of the RVKP, illuminated how social movements and (un)civil society

agencies can become tools of radicalization and be abused for purposes contrary to the normative expectations they frequently evoke. Reif Dyfvermark (Chap. 8) approached the potential nexus between radicalization and contested elections through a meta-analysis of 41 case studies that demonstrated how big data allows for diachronic studies from which valuable hypotheses can be deduced about the contexts of radicalization. By combining analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data, Varin (Chap. 9) explored the link between religious extremism and inequality in Nigeria. In a comparative meta-analysis, Dalgaard-Nielsen (Chap. 10) examined patterns of disengagement from violent extremism. In Chap. 11, Ahnaf employed a qualitative analysis to the writings of the Hizb al-Tahrir movement to map its radicalization towards a non-violent revolution of the Muslim world. Finally, Oliveira Martins and Ziegler (Chap. 12) diachronically analysed EU counter-radicalization policies using documents and statements that allowed them to demonstrate their substantial identity with CT.

Throughout this volume we have explored radicalization and de-radicalization in terms of policies, ideas, and practices, allowing comparisons between various types of radicalizing networks, both online and offline, and specific social movements and groups such as the plethora of groups in the Czech Republic, PEGIDA, political parties across the globe, the Messianic movement, RVKP, Boko Haram, Hizb al-Tahrir, and other ethno-nationalist, religious, or political terrorist organizations. The chapters also switched focus between different spheres, including local, regional, national, transnational, and global actions and reactions allowing radicalization to also be understood against various geo-political backgrounds such as the city of Dresden, the Indian state of Rajasthan, the divided nation state of Nigeria, the religiously charged territory of Israel and Palestine, the transnational arena of policy formation that is Europe, or an imagined global community such as the *Ummah*.

### ADDRESSING METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The lack of high-quality data is frequently highlighted in the literature on radicalization. Small samples and/or the absence of control or reference groups, for example, negatively impact the external validity and reliability of studies and result in research outcomes with limited general applicability (see Schmid 2013: 38). Della Porta and LaFree point out specific challenges in this area, arguing that the field is characterized by methodological

fragmentation that leads to ‘idiosyncratic explanations’ of the phenomenon (Della Porta and LaFree 2012: 5). This volume is an effort to address these issues.

The authors have either carefully selected individual cases and qualitative data, or have researched larger, sometimes quantitative, data sets. In several chapters, qualitative data were strategically selected so that the authors could not only draw substantiated conclusions about their respective cases, but also generate external validity beyond those. In his discussion of two qualitative case studies of British right-wing terrorism (the case of Lewington in 2008 and the case of Davison in 2010), Feldman (in Chap. 2) used data deriving from his own experience as a practitioner in the UK Crown Prosecution Service. Feldman’s aim was to gain a better general understanding of the individual actions of self-directed terrorists and how these are supported by extremist communities. Önnerrfors (Chap. 4) conducted a systematic analysis of PEGIDA’s language and perception of reality as portrayed in Sebastian Hennig’s insider account. Filc (Chap. 5) explored Israel’s Likud party’s public discourse in a study of its transformation from an inclusive populist party to a radical right-wing and exclusive populist party. Steiner and Lundberg (Chap. 6) interviewed a representative selection of 15 leaders of the Messianic movement about their beliefs and values. Sahoo (Chap. 7) undertook a classic case study of Hindu nationalist radicalization strategies in a rural area in Rajasthan, India, using both primary and secondary sources. Ahnaf (Chap. 11) conducted a qualitative analysis of data from sources produced by Hizb al-Tahrir, a significant international Islamist organization, reflecting its ‘grand narrative’ and intention to, non-violently, reintroduce the *khilafah* (the Caliphate, a worldwide leadership that Muslims would follow before any other government).

Three chapters in this volume are methodologically innovative, perhaps ground-breaking, in their achievement of generalizable conclusions with sufficient reliability despite the scarcity of empirical sources. Reif Dyfvermark (Chap. 8) undertook a meta-analysis of 41 peer-reviewed and academically published empirical studies of contentious elections using an ‘inductive case study synthesis method’ to compare a relatively large amount of data. Dalgaard-Nielsen (Chap. 10) extracted data from 245 interviews or cases of individual voluntary disengagement from violent extremism published in academic articles between 1990 and 2016. Although the ‘interviewees [were] neither a random nor a representative sample of voluntary disengagers’, nor were they asked the same questions,

by merging data from different studies Dalgaard-Nielsen obtained a more solid empirical ground than most researchers. In their study on the function of Czech social network sites, Šlerka and Šisler (Chap. 3) also used a large amount of quantitative user-generated and big social data to explore the formation of ideological clusters on social media.

We believe that the 11 studies included in this volume can provide us with new or refined knowledge in seven important and relevant fields:

1. measuring (approximating) radicalism in relation to the societal mainstream
2. individual radicalization and de-radicalization processes
3. strategic and organized attempts at collective radicalization
4. violence during contested elections as a context of radicalization
5. semantics of radical language, rhetoric, and ideology
6. formation of ‘echo chambers’ in social media
7. counter-radicalization policies of the European Union

## OUTLOOKS

One way to further explain the contemporary crisis of liberal democracy as a role model of governance fuelling radicalization, particularly post-Brexit and during the Trump presidency, is to turn to a deeper understanding of values. Many of the people, movements, and ideas studied in this volume resort to sacred, fixed, and absolute values with explanatory powers beyond the negotiated, fluid, and relative values of (post-, late, or liquid) modernity. Sacred values and the re-sacralization of politics promise an escape from feelings of alienation, (masculine) dispossession and displacement, and disorientation arising from the effects of globalization and the failure, for some, of the liberal concepts of self-fulfilment and freedom. Radicalization seems to be prompted when this sense of exposure to a forced and imposed uprooting is inverted in favour of a voluntary re-rooting in fundamental values (Bauman’s notion of a ‘Retrotopia’) that promise regeneration and stability. In this process, individuals and groups develop a devoted activism fuelled by cognitive processes in which people who feel threatened align and fuse their identities with support communities (true or imagined). These communities in turn serve as bases for action and for mediating radical ideas. Integrating more approaches from social movement theories to highlight these mechanisms and pathways and to show how transformative events can trigger participation and the



sense of belonging in various collectives would be a particularly rewarding approach in future research (Wiktorowicz 2004).

This volume contributes to enlarging our approaches towards research on radicalization, but we believe that it also, and just as importantly, outlines trajectories for further research in the field. The concept of legitimacy seems to run through several chapters, as either as a main theme or a subordinate thread (see Powers 2014). The breakdown of the legitimacy of public institutions and political power is probably important in radicalization processes in countries such as Nigeria and in violence during hotly contested elections. Movements like PEGIDA, right-wing groups in the Czech Republic, or Hizb al-Tahrir target and challenge the legitimacy of established institutions. The Messianic movement, on the contrary, supports the legitimacy of the state of Israel, thus endorsing *state* violence but precluding violent extremism in the Messianic movement itself.

A further theme, which is a not main research topic in any chapter but still emerges in a few, is the image of the enemy, portrayed in black and white perceptions of the world. Feldman, Sahoo, Dalgaard-Nielsen, Önnersfors, and Steiner and Lundberg report a discourse of ‘us’ (the contemporary and historically superior and righteous people) versus ‘them’ (the threatening ‘other’ people). Such a dualistic worldview makes ‘our’ political goals and measures appear legitimate and moral and is an important driver of radicalization. The ‘enemy’ image merits further study not only as a constitutive feature of radicalized private, semi-public, or public discourse but also insofar as it can be effectively challenged. The question remains as to whether this can be done most effectively through publicly sanctioned counter-narratives or through addressing the sense of community and belonging that drives individuals to align with radical movements promising reintegration and regeneration. Further collaboration with civil society actors and practical peace work (creating encounters and lasting relationships between antagonized groups) might generate important insights into how this may be most effectively achieved.

We believe that radicalization studies are generally undertheorized, probably because of the difficulty of collecting big and representative data. We propose fusing approaches from various academic fields in a holistic model of radicalization and are optimistic that the research into the interplay between various cognitive and behavioural processes on the micro, meso, and macro levels can further our understanding of radicalization in a large variety of settings and cases.

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