

Helpdesk Research Report

Radicalisation of diaspora communities

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Question

What factors (including host and home country factors) influence the radicalisation or deradicalisation of diaspora communities?

Contents

1. Overview
2. Individual and community influences (micro level)
3. Host country influences (macro level)
4. Home country influences (macro level)
5. Dynamics/enabling environment (mesa level)
6. Deradicalisation
7. References

1. Overview

This report looks at factors that can help to explain why diasporas may become radicalised and explores briefly efforts at deradicalisation.¹ Diaspora identities are inherently hybrid, reflecting continued attachment or connection to the country of origin alongside adoption of elements from the host country. There can be a high level of diversity within the diaspora and within specific diaspora communities (see Haider, 2014).

¹ Diaspora refers to a community or group. The two principle ways in which diasporas emerge are through border-crossing processes and/or through social construction and mobilisation (see Haider, 2014). Radicalisation involves 'the social processes by which people are brought to condone, legitimize, support, or carry out violence for political or religious objectives' (see Ladbury, 2009). Deradicalisation is the process of altering an individual's belief system such that they reject extremist ideology and adopt mainstream values (Rabasa et al., 2010; cited in Parent & Ellis, 2011)

The majority of research on radicalisation of diasporas to date has focused narrowly on Muslim radicals and extremists, despite the presence of other radical groups (Parent & Ellis, 2011). As such, this report reflects this focus. Most studies also centre on radicalisation and recruitment processes, while studies on deradicalisation and counter-radicalisation are fewer and of more recent origin (Schmid, 2013). In addition, there is little empirical evidence on the actual processes of radicalisation (Bigo et al., 2014). Much of the literature emphasises that radicalisation cannot be attributed to any one factor, but is rather the outcome of a multiplicity of factors. Schmid (2013) outlines that causes of radicalisation should be examined on three levels: the micro-level (individual level); the meso-level (enabling environment); and the macro-level (host and home country actions and influences). The factors that can influence radicalisation of diasporas discussed in this report are:

Individual and community influences (micro level)

- *Identity crisis – cultural marginalisation*: second and third generation immigrant and diaspora communities may experience ‘cultural marginalisation’ in terms of alienation and lack of belonging to either home or host society, which can render them vulnerable to radicalisation. The separation of religion from culture of origin has led some Muslim diasporas to identify with the global Islamic community and show solidarity to Islamic war victims worldwide. This could lead to radicalisation when combined with anti-Imperialistic phraseology (Sirseldoudi, 2012).
- *Community factors*: the nature of community-level groups and networks can influence identity formation and contribute to vulnerability for radicalisation (Al Raffie, 2013).
- *Discrimination (real or perceived)*: discrimination can be a source of frustration that can contribute to identity crises (Al Raffie, 2013). Some victims of perceived discrimination may react with aggression, including political violence (Victoroff et al., 2012).

Host country influences (macro level)

- *Failed integration and marginalisation*: ‘multiculturalism’ in Europe has often resulted in the establishment of homogenous, parallel societies (Schmid, 2014; Parent & Ellis, 2011; Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009). Failure of integration and marginalisation can make diaspora communities vulnerable to radicalisation (Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009; Menkhaus, 2009).
- *History of colonisation*: colonisation and a history of cultural and political domination (or lack thereof) influence the relationship between the host society and diaspora groups, and the political views held by diasporas (Cesari, 2009).
- *Status of religion*: a firm belief in secularization in host societies can also contribute to a sense of alienation among religious diaspora groups (Cesari, 2009).

Home country influences (macro level)

- *Events in the homeland*: independence can become the focal point for mobilisation of diasporas. Once mobilised, the perpetration of grave violations of human rights in the homeland are likely to have a strong radicalising impact on diaspora politics (Koinova, 2011).
- *Home country linkages*: engagement by state and non-state organisations in the home country can play a role in the position of diaspora groups (Sirseldoudi, 2012).
- *Composition of migrants*: migrants that experienced social exclusion in their home country may be more susceptible to radicalisation in the host country (Tokić, 2009).

Dynamics/enabling environment (meso level)

- *Social media – propaganda*: social media can play an important role in the dissemination of radical messages and radicalisation of vulnerable individuals (Schmid, 2013; Parent & Ellis, 2011). One of the most common means of spreading radical messages has been through videos posted on YouTube (Parent & Ellis, 2011).
- *International geopolitics*: the negative effects of global events have the potential to attract young people to extremist organisations (Abbas & Siddique, 2012).
- *Vilification*: actions of a radical minority can create the conditions for widespread negative sentiment and discriminatory responses toward the moderate majority. This in turn, may facilitate alienation of diaspora groups and radicalisation (Victoroff et al., 2012; Cesari, 2009).
- *Trauma*: the psychological scars that many conflict-generated diaspora have may render them vulnerable to radicalisation (Taarnby & Hallundbaek, 2010).
- *Resources*: radical groups can be strengthened by effective money collection systems targeting the diaspora (Bell, 2009).

Deradicalisation

This report does not look at detailed counter-terrorism measures, such as legislation, pre-emptive judicial powers and administrative measures. Rather, it focuses on broader measures aimed at deradicalisation. These include:

- *Promoting integration*: some countries (e.g. the U.S. and Canada) have sought to devise interconnected integration and security measures in order to counter radicalisation and terrorism (Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009). Bigo et al. (2014) argue that community cohesion programmes should not be underpinned by counter-terrorism concerns and should not aim particularly at Muslim communities in order to prevent alienation of such communities.
- *Community outreach*: the primary focus of many counter-radicalisation efforts is strengthening and empowering the communities from which radicals and terrorists might emerge (Schmid 2013). Key challenges are deciding which partners to approach for collaboration and who initiatives should target (Schmid, 2014). Framing outreach more holistically can be effective, rather than directing it at specific communities as terrorist threats (see Curtis & Jaine, 2012). Ranstorp & Hyllengren (2013) emphasise that women should be seen as influential advocates of anti-extremist measures.
- *Counter-narratives*: the aim is to expose the shortcomings of radicals' and extremists' narratives and to effectively counter their ideas (Schmid, 2013; Parent & Ellis, 2013).

2. Individual and community influences (micro level)

Identity crisis – cultural marginalisation

Studies on radicalisation find that the search for identity is a key influence in radicalisation processes (Al Raffie, 2013; Vidino, 2011). This is particularly in the case of **second and third generation immigrants/refugees**, who have fewer ties to their country of origin than their parents or grandparents. Events in the homeland, while more important to first generation immigrants, are less likely to be an important influence in radicalisation processes of later generations (Vidino, 2011). Instead, much of the literature on second and third generation immigrant and diaspora communities focuses on **cultural**

marginalisation in terms of not belonging to either society (alienated from the culture of origin and not integrated into the culture of the host country) (see for e.g. Abbas & Siddique, 2012; Parent & Ellis, 2011; Sirseldoudi, 2012; Taarnby & Hallundbaek, 2010). Such 'disembeddedness' from society can influence vulnerability to radicalisation (Cesari, 2009 -zimm).

In the case of Somali youth in the West, Taarnby & Hallundbaek (2010) find that identified foreign fighters often experienced an identity crisis and alienation, whereby they tried to fit into their host society but were told to return to Africa. Radical groups were seen as providing them with status and redemption. In the case of Turkish diaspora in Germany, Sirseldoudi (2012) emphasises that practicing Islam was uncomplicated in Turkey (and in other countries with a Muslim majority) and more easily re-established by the first generation of immigrants in Germany, who practice a de-localised religion. Instead, the second and third generation of German Muslims of Turkish descent, with greater ties to the host country, are aiming to establish their religion as a minority religion. This has come alongside greater contact with the majority society in schools and elsewhere and experiences of discrimination and rejection as foreigners – all of which contribute to identity crises (Sirseldoudi, 2012) (see sub-section on 'Discrimination' below). Religiosity of the second and third generation has offered a lifestyle to help cope with the challenges of living in a foreign country (Sirseldoudi, 2012).

Adhering to religion among second and third generations of immigrant and diaspora groups is seen more as an individual decision, rather than shaped by loyalty to the home country, as has been the case for the first generation (Sirseldoudi, 2012). Such developments have resulted in **a separation of religion from the cultures of origin**. Conversi (2012) cautions that the lack of cultural continuity from one generation to the next and the challenges faced by diaspora groups to gain access to the culture of their host societies can result in a dangerous cultural void. He argues that eventually, **ethnicity without cultural content** can provide the foundation for radicalisation as culture is 'replaced' by violence.

In the case of the Muslim diaspora, the separation of religion from the culture of origin has led to **identification with the culturally independent global Islamic community** (Roy, cited in Sirseldoudi, 2012). This is evident in demonstrations of solidarity with Islamic war victims worldwide – and can lead to radicalisation when combined with anti-Imperialistic phraseology (Sirseldoudi, 2012). Sirseldoudi (2012) emphasises, however, that in the case of Turkish Muslims in Germany, such perspectives have largely been expressed through non-violent political channels. The danger of radical violence stems from apolitical forms of Islamism.

Community factors

There is theoretical and empirical support for the notion that community attitudes and/or support contribute to the risk of political violence (Victoroff et al., 2012). Drawing on social identity theory, Al Raffie (2013) suggests that **identities** are driven not only by social categories (i.e. religion or nationality), but are also **negotiated and redefined at the community level**. This is supported by Sirseldoudi (2012)'s study (discussed above) which finds that (religious) identity among younger generations grows more out of individual choice, rather than pre-determined affiliation with a culture of origin. As such, the nature of **community-level groups and networks (whether religious or not) can contribute to identity 'readiness' for radicalisation** (Al Raffie, 2013). In the case of the Muslim diaspora, the nature of Islamist NGOs can have important implications of identity formation. They aim to serve the social needs of Muslims and also seek to be official representatives of religion in the host country (Al Raffie, 2013; Sirseldoudi, 2012). Vidino (2010, cited in Schmid, 2014) notes, however, that the vast majority of Western Muslims are not connected with any organisation.

Cesari (2009) finds that the temporary lack of ‘embeddedness’ in either home or host society among certain young people who comprise second or third generation immigrant or diaspora groups may render them susceptible to fundamentalist groups that offer social affiliation, a sense of belonging, networks and social ties. The decision to become an active participant in radical movements often depends on familiarity with other participants/members of the ‘clique’, who play the role of friends.

Discrimination (actual and perceived)

Actual discrimination refers to behaviours of one group that restricts the rights of another. Perceived discrimination or prejudice is, instead, a cognitive or emotional phenomenon experienced by members of an out-group (Victoroff et al., 2012). Al Raffie (2013) argues that **discrimination (whether real or perceived) can be a source of frustration that can contribute to identity crises**. Victoroff et al. (2012) suggest that while Muslims worldwide may feel disrespected or threatened by non-Muslims, Muslims living in the diaspora are more likely to be affected by perceived day-to-day prejudice. Abbas & Siddique (2012) find that British Muslim respondents felt they did not fully belong to Britain because of their South Asian origin and commitments to Islam, which they believed was talked about in explicitly xenophobic terms. Such sentiments could influence the political attitudes of diaspora groups (Victoroff et al., 2012). Relying on social psychology literature, Victoroff et al. (2012) suggest that some **victims of perceived discrimination (particularly religious minorities) may react with aggression, including political violence**. Such discrimination can serve as a rallying point for collective action. Relying on 2006 Pew Surveys of Muslim residents in Europe and the United States, they find that younger age and perceived discrimination toward Muslims living in the West are significantly associated with the view that suicide bombing is justified. However, the evidence was not strong enough to conclude that perceived discrimination is the major explanation for this attitude. While other factors are also important, it may be the case that perceived discrimination among diaspora and threats to group identity increase vulnerability to radicalisation (Victoroff et al., 2012).

Ranstorp & Hyllengren (2013) caution that regular discriminatory treatment of ethnic Somalis in Kenya could become a factor for radicalisation. They cite a study by the Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation which identifies drivers of violent Islamic extremism in Kenya as including repression by security forces and marginalisation of the Muslim community.

3. Host country influences (macro level)

Failed integration and marginalisation

Assimilation and multiculturalism are the two most common models of integration. The former aims at forging a national identity that minimises cultural or religious differences; and the latter aims to allow for diaspora groups to maintain distinct identities (see Parent & Ellis, 2011). Fried (2006, cited in Parent & Ellis, 2011) finds that both models have been challenging to implement in Europe, resulting in problems with integration of diaspora groups. In Western Europe and the United Kingdom, ‘multiculturalism’ has resulted in the **establishment of homogenous, parallel societies** (Schmid, 2014; Parent & Ellis, 2011; Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009). In the case of Britain, Whine (2009) finds that Muslim communities have led segregated lives not only from the mainstream, but also from each other – resulting in an **absence of social cohesion**. At the same time, he finds that many Muslims want to make a contribution to British society.

Such parallel societies have developed alongside marginalisation of immigrant groups in host countries, resulting in the endurance and growth of **ghettoized diaspora communities** (Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009). Much of the literature emphasises that a lack of integration is more a function of **political, economic and social marginalisation** rather than identity, culture or religion alone (see Abbas & Siddique, 2012). Sirseloudi (2012) finds that Turkish diaspora in Germany often live in the poorest areas with various social problems such as high unemployment, poor social services, delinquency and violence. Abbas & Siddique (2012) emphasise that Muslim diasporas are often underrepresented in politics and feel let down by key political parties.

In contrast, diasporas in North America are considered to have had greater success at integration (Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009; Cesari, 2009). For example, second-generation African immigrants (including both Muslims and non-Muslims) have better prospects for economic and social integration in the US (experiencing high levels of social and economic mobility) than in Europe (Menkhaus, 2009). First and second generation Muslims in the US, generally, are a relatively affluent and well-educated group. In contrast, Muslim immigrants in Europe tend to comprise lower classes (Menkhaus, 2009).

The isolation of diaspora communities makes it possible for structured and well-organised recruitment efforts by radicals to go undetected for long periods. This occurred in the case of the Somali diaspora, which is considered less integrated than other diaspora Muslim groups (Taarnby & Hallundbaek, 2010). In the UK, recruitment took place among Somali youth who were experiencing unemployment and poor living conditions. Both first generation refugees and second generation UK-born Somalis expressed support for radical groups in interviews (Taarnby & Hallundbaek, 2010).

The failure of integration and enduring marginalisation in Europe can make diaspora communities vulnerable to radicalisation (see Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009). Theorists have argued that low levels of social and economic mobility can produce frustration, politicisation and political violence (see Menkhaus, 2009). Sirseloudi (2012) suggests that increased Islamisation in Germany, for example, can be seen as a reaction to legal inequality, social limitations and growing rhetoric in the country against immigration. In addition, Whine (2009) finds that British Muslims have become politicised by local social issues such as high unemployment rates. Although, in general, she finds that external issues have played a greater role in politicisation. Cesari (2009) also emphasises that socio-economic marginalisation cannot alone fully explain the degree of receptivity of diaspora groups to radicalisation; there has been little evidence for a direct correlation between social deprivation and political violence.

History of colonisation

Cesari (2009) states that colonial history (or lack thereof) influences the relationship between the host society and diaspora groups. Muslims in Europe, for example, do not necessarily represent standard immigrants. Rather, their presence often results from colonial relationships between European societies and parts of the Muslim world. This history of cultural and political domination shapes the perceptions and discourses of contemporary Muslim groups. In contrast, Muslim immigration to the US follows the process of standard immigration rather than colonisation. As such, Muslim groups tend to adopt similar views to that of other immigrants, generally (Cesari, 2009).

Similarly, in the case of country of origin, Sirseloudi (2012) suggests that since Turkey did not experience the humiliation of colonialism, diaspora groups of Turkish descent are considered to be less open to religious extremism. This is because their personal experiences of discrimination are not filtered through a culturally and historically determined pattern of colonial domination.

Status of religion

The status of religion in host societies can also contribute to a sense of alienation among religious diaspora groups. In Europe, more so than in the US, there is a firm belief in secularisation (Cesari, 2009). This has resulted in various manifestations of Islam often being seen as unacceptable by the mainstream culture, demonstrated for example by the hijab controversy. In contrast, although conflicts also occur in the U.S., American Muslims have not experienced such intense controversial crises (Cesari, 2009).

4. Home country influences (macro level)

Events in the homeland

Koinova (2011) explores the processes through which diasporas become a radicalised group. Focusing on events in the homeland, she finds that independence can become a focal point for diaspora mobilisation. It triggers an emotional response among conflict-generated diasporas who view it as a solution to address past injustices. Local secessionists then develop coalitions between key diaspora organisations and influential individuals. Once diasporas are mobilised, the perpetration of grave violations of human rights in the homeland are likely to have a strong radicalising impact on diaspora politics. The identity of conflict-generated diasporas is often tied to collective trauma – and grave violations can trigger fear, anger and threat to their collective identity. The Israeli bombing of Gaza, for example, triggered a large-scale mobilisation of the Palestinian diaspora. The moderate Palestinian Authority lost support in diaspora circles, while its radical Islamic competitor, gained support. If diaspora groups have yet to mobilise, however, it is less likely that such violations will lead to radicalisation (Koinova, 2011).

Home country linkages

Engagement by state and non-state organisations in the home country can play a role in the position of diaspora groups. In the case of Turkey, political Islam has tended to operate through non-violent political channels and to veer away from intolerant extremism (Sirseldudi, 2012). Islamic organisations in Turkey have relationships with Islamist communities in Germany and these communities have tended to follow the non-violent political path as pursued in Turkey. The state has also set up a Department of Religious Affairs, which maintains mosques in Germany. Although this department was established very late in reaction to the development of independent Muslim communities in the European diaspora critical of the regime, it has significant funds to finance these mosques (Sirseldudi, 2012).

Composition of migrants

Migrants that experienced social exclusion in their home country may be more susceptible to radicalisation in the host country. In the case of the radical Croatian separatist movement among émigrés during the 1950s and 1960s, a large influx of recruits were drawn from Croatian workers migrating to West Germany to fill a labour shortage in the 1960s (Tokić, 2009). They came from underdeveloped areas that were a hotbed of Croatian nationalism – and were young, poor, uneducated and disaffected. These factors made them vulnerable to recruitment. Competing factions of separatists established networks to help migrants to secure papers, housing and jobs (Tokić, 2009).

5. Dynamics/enabling environment (mesa level)

Social media/propaganda

Various experts note that the Internet is rarely the sole instrument of radicalisation and is not considered a cause of radicalisation (Bigo et al., 2014; Schmid, 2013; Conversi, 2012). It has, however, played an **important role in the dissemination of radical messages**; the creation of a virtual ideological community; the raising of funds; the communication between radicals and members of terrorist organisations; and the radicalisation of vulnerable individuals (Schmid, 2013; Parent & Ellis, 2011). Conversi (2012) finds that the Internet has increasingly been used as a locus of radicalisation, with websites promulgating hate towards outgroups. There has been a rise in the use of social media sites, such as Facebook, by radical groups and individuals (Osman, 2010; cited in Parent & Ellis, 2011). Social media networking between individuals with shared ethno-political goals has led to the emergence of virtual ethnic communities and the organisation of extremist networks pushing homeland politics and host country's foreign policy towards confrontation and conflict (Conversi, 2012). If individuals become absorbed in webs of information, their susceptibility to recruitment increases (CSIS, cited in Whine, 2009).

One of the most common means of spreading radical messages has been through videos posted on YouTube. In some rare cases, videos alone have been deemed sufficient to produce attacks (Parent & Ellis, 2011). Taarnby & Hallundbaek (2010) outline the effective recruitment strategies of the extremist group, Al-Shabaab in targeting Somali diaspora living in the West. It has developed propaganda videos that appeal to youth living in the West, featuring fluent English speakers and hip-hop music. In general, however, Bigo et al. (2014) emphasise that violent action is unlikely to occur based purely on virtual ties; rather a series of in person interactions and social mediations are necessary to maintain commitment.

Schmid (2013) suggests that one of the major gaps in current policies on counter-terrorism is willingness to look more critically at the role of the Internet and its usage by extremists and terrorist groups due to respect for freedom of speech and fear of censorship.

International geopolitics

The **negative effects of global events have the potential to attract young people to extremist organisations** (Abbas & Siddique, 2012). Whine (2009) finds, for example, that political and foreign events (e.g. events in Kashmir and Palestine, the Iraq War, genocide of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina) have been a driving force in activating Muslim political engagement and recruitment by Islamist groups. Abbas & Siddique (2012) highlight that the frustrations of those perpetrating violent acts can be exacerbated when blame is placed solely on religion, neglecting these political issues.

Menkhaus (2009) notes that while issues and events in the Middle East have been critical in radicalising Muslim diasporas of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent, they may not resonate as much with African Muslim diaspora groups. Instead, these groups are more likely to share grievances related to treatment of Muslims in the West generally post 9/11.

Vidino (2011) engages in a preliminary exploration of the effects of the Arab Spring on North African diaspora communities in Europe. He suggests that the events may serve to decrease violent radicalisation as they have demonstrated that authoritarian regimes can be overthrown without violence, providing a counter-narrative to al-Qaeda's message. In addition, the West's role during these initial developments has been viewed relatively positively, unlike invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and lack of intervention in Bosnia

and Herzegovina in the early 1990s. Vidino (2011) emphasises, however, that while geopolitical dynamics are relevant and important to radicalisation processes, individual factors (e.g. search of identity; sense of disenfranchisement) play a bigger role (see section 2). Abbas (2007; cited in Abbas & Siddique, 2012) also suggests that while the ‘war on terror’ and other international issues in the Muslim world have the potential to radicalise certain Muslim diaspora in Britain, this cannot be isolated from other influences such as exclusion and discrimination.

Vilification

Much of the literature notes that the actions of a radical minority can create the conditions for widespread negative sentiment and discriminatory responses toward the moderate majority. This in turn, may facilitate alienation and radicalisation (Victoroff et al., 2012; Cesari, 2009).

Despite the lack of rigorous evaluation studies, there is a growing body of literature which cautions that over-reaction to terrorism can cause more terrorism (Schmid, 2013). Schmid (2013) suggests that many acts of terrorism appear to be motivated by revenge for acts of repression, injustice and humiliation. He also emphasises that **while radicalisation is considered to occur on the one side, responses to terrorism can also become radicalised.**

Counter-terrorism legislation that disproportionately affects Muslims and wide-spread anti-Muslim sentiments can contribute to a sense of social exclusion, discrimination and vilification, which can strengthen defensive identification with Islam (Cesari, 2009). Abbas & Siddique (2012) find that some young Muslims adopt outward physical manifestation of religiosity (e.g. hijab for women and beards and caps for men) as a sign of defiance and resistance to persistent negative media and political vilification. This is considered to be a ‘soft’ form of radicalism (Abbas & Siddique, 2012).

Trauma

Taarnby & Hallundbaek (2010) stress in their study on Somali diaspora that a commonly neglected issue in discussions of radicalisation is the psychological scars that many conflict-generated diaspora have. In Denmark, many Somalis seem to struggle with untreated traumas from the war, with few seeking treatment. They describe this collective Somali state of mind as a ‘bomb waiting to go off’.

Resources

Bell (2009) finds that the radical World Tamil Movement was strengthened by sophisticated money collection systems. In Canada, pre-authorised payment schemes targeting Tamil Canadians allowed for regular injections of funds.

6. Deradicalisation

There is little research on what works and does not work in relation to deradicalisation and counter-radicalisation efforts, in part because results are hard to measure (Schmid, 2013). It is difficult to attribute the absence of a terrorist attack, for example, to a particular initiative (Schmid, 2013). Deradicalisation initiatives discussed in the literature include:

Promoting integration

The United States and to some extent Canada have, post-9/11, aimed to devise interconnected integration and security measures in order to counter radicalisation and terrorism (Zimmermann and Rosenau, 2009). This includes, for example, the Citizen Academy in Canada, a course which brought together people of varying backgrounds to educate them about the role of the Canadian justice system – including the police, to counter misinformation, and to listen to community concerns. As discussed earlier, integration is considered to have been more successful in North America (see ‘host influences’ section). Zimmerman and Rosenau (2009) highlight that despite terrorist attacks in Europe having originated from Europe’s Muslim diaspora communities, there has been little push to alter cohesion, integration and internal security policies.

In the United Kingdom, counter-terrorism strategies have comprised four key strands: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare. The Prevent strand is concerned with the radicalisation process and aims to tackle disadvantage, inequality and discrimination, in order to alter the environment in which recruiters operate and to challenge extremist ideologies (Whine, 2009; Parent & Ellis, 2011). Critics have argued that the initiative has limited impact in the absence of genuine social and economic integration of diaspora communities (Change Institute, 2008; cited in Parent & Ellis, 2011). Bigo et al. (2014) find that the implementation of economic and social projects with the purpose of ‘counter-terrorism’ in designated target areas with a specific percentage of Muslim population has had adverse effects. They have generated suspicion and contributed to frustration and alienation among Muslims. This, in turn, could increase the potential of individuals to be vulnerable to radicalisation. Thus, Bigo et al. (2014) **recommend that community cohesion programmes should not be underpinned by counter-terrorism** concerns and should not aim particularly at Muslim communities.

Cesari (2009) also recommends that policy makers should stop treating Islam and Muslims as separate to other religions and diaspora groups, in order to counter the alienation of Muslim communities. She advocates for non-religious, historical and cultural education of Islam in public schools, in addition to other efforts to include Islam in mainstream public space and collective memory, as has been done for other religions. In California, efforts have been made to rework descriptions of Islam found in history textbooks (Cesari, 2009).

Community outreach

Schmid (2013) outlines that the primary focus of many counter-radicalisation efforts is not the terrorists themselves but strengthening and empowering the communities from which they might emerge. The premise is that local diaspora communities in the West should be as interested as the host government in keeping their neighbourhoods free of violent extremists. Community outreach is thus a key component of many deradicalisation and counter-radicalisation initiatives. In Canada, for example, agencies involved in these processes have met with community groups to discuss radicalisation, with the aim of **encouraging community and religious leaders to take steps to monitor and counter radicalisation processes within their communities** (Whine, 2009). There are indications that communities have begun to tackle radicalisation on their own. Some mosques in Toronto, Canada, for example, have initiated deradicalisation intervention programmes, that include treatment and counselling to young Muslims who support radical ideologies (Whine, 2009). American Muslim communities have also spoken out against intolerant and extremist ideas and have worked with authorities to counter terrorism and violence, often as translators and cultural experts (Cesari, 2009).

A key challenge when engaging in community outreach is deciding which partners to approach for collaboration. Some government agencies (e.g. in the UK and in Germany) have selected local partners that seem to have the strongest organisation and voice. In the case of countering violent Islamism, however, some Western governments have selected and empowered partners that not actually been representative of moderate, mainstream Muslims in the diaspora (Schmid, 2013). The term 'moderate Muslim' itself is also controversial, vague and subjective (Vidino, cited in Schmid, 2014). Such leaders often become part of the problem, rather than the solution (Schmid, 2013). In some cases, mosque elders have been unable to connect with young people, failing to value their needs and interests (Abbas & Siddique, 2012). Another challenge is deciding who initiatives should target, in particular whether to focus on those who advocate violence or non-violent radicals or extremists (Schmid, 2014).

Holistic outreach

Curtis & Jaine (2012) highlight arguments that diasporas should be viewed not solely in terms of potential social problems but rather as important resources and ideal subjects for initiatives in relationship building. They explore the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office's domestic outreach initiatives that have sought to address extremism, without stigmatising a particular community (which has been a critique of the Prevent initiative, discussed above). The FCO's Pakistan Communications and Outreach Team, for example, adopted a **territorial rather than thematic or issue-based focus**. This allowed for movement away from the predominant narrative of terrorism in relation to Pakistan, which had alienated members of the Pakistani diaspora community and rendered them more vulnerable to radicalisation. Instead it focused on a multi-dimensional UK-Pakistan partnership, which included combating terror alongside other policy objectives, such as poverty reduction, trade and development. A key challenge, however, was coordinating and balancing different messages and priorities across government departments (Curtis & Jaine, 2012).

Women's involvement

Ranstorp & Hyllengren (2013) emphasise that women can play an important role in preventing extremism. They argue that Muslim women should not be seen as silent victims, but rather as potential influential advocates of anti-extremist measures. In many contexts, for example, in Somalia, their closeness to their children can allow them to detect problematic changes in behaviour at early stages. In addition, since they often suffer from the adverse effects of radicalisation and extremism, they are well placed to speak to these issues. In Pakistan, women are often the target of extremist violence. Women's civil society organisations have important opportunities to influence issues related to counter-extremism and have mobilised to draw attention to particular gender issues (Ranstorp & Hyllengren, 2013).

Counter-narratives

Some experts emphasise the importance of developing credible counter-narratives to those of radical and extremist groups (Schmid, 2013; Parent & Ellis, 2013). The aim is to expose the shortcomings of radicals' and extremists' narratives and to counter their ideas (Schmid, 2013; Parent & Ellis, 2013). Schmid (2013) claims that a key policy weakness has been failure to formulate effective counter-narratives to the single narrative of al-Qaeda and its affiliates that claim Islam is under attack and that defensive *jihad* is required. He stresses that a counter-narrative should not, however, dismiss the charges made by the group as this fails to address the actual and perceived grievances of many Muslims, particularly in the Arab world.

As discussed earlier, Vidino (2011) suggests that the Arab spring and successes in bringing down authoritarian regimes without violence could contribute to deradicalisation by providing a counter-narrative (see 'international geopolitics' section).

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