



# CONFERENCE REPORT

BANGKOK, THAILAND – JULY 24–27, 2017

DR VIRGINIE ANDRE



ADDRESSING THE NEW LANDSCAPE OF TERRORISM:  
TOWARDS FORMULATING ACTIONABLE RESPONSE

# + PREFACE

This report presents the key findings from the second international conference “Addressing the New Landscape of Terrorism: Towards Formulating Actionable Response” which was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 24-28 July 2017. Sixty-five delegates presented at the conference. Uniquely, for such a conference, the speakers were academics, front line practitioners, social and community actors, government officials and youth drawn from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Germany, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sweden, Thailand, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Other attendees included representatives from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission of Thailand, the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council of Thailand, the Royal Thai Police, the Thai Ministry of Defense and various security agencies in Thailand, the UNODC, the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand, the Australian Embassy in Thailand, the United States of America Embassy in Thailand, the French Embassy in Thailand and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium.

This report provides summaries of each of the presentations that were delivered at the conference, before drawing out the key themes, which emerged and policy recommendations.

# **+ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our speakers and particularly our partners, the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission of Thailand, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Belgian Bureau for International Youth, the French Embassy in Thailand, the United States of America Embassy in Thailand, the Deakin University Middle East Studies Forum, the Rabat International University, and the Research Institute for Contemporary Southeast Asian (IRASEC) for supporting this innovative conference.

Special thanks go to Commissioner Lt. Gen. Dr. Perapong Manakit, James Nachipo and Frank Arnauts for their untiring support, the conference scientific committee, in particular Prof. Rik Coolsaet and Prof. Martha Crenshaw, conference co-convenors Prof. Shahram Akbarzadeh and Prof. Greg Barton, conference administrators Elena Pinot and Manaphan Vongpivat, and workshop coordinator Onni Sarvela. Finally, we are particularly grateful to Khaled Boutaffala, Florence Brion, Bernard Devos, Seyfi Kumlu and Myriem Buifrahi for bringing Belgian youth voices to the conference.

## + PARTNERS



Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

MIDDLE EAST  
STUDIES FORUM



ADI  
ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR  
CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION



NBTC  
National Broadcasting and  
Telecommunications Commission



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM  
[www.diplomatie.belgium.be](http://www.diplomatie.belgium.be)



IRASEC



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité  
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE  
AMBASSADE DE FRANCE  
EN THAÏLANDE



Government of the United States



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

08

## INTRODUCTION

10

## KEYPOINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding (New) Radicalisation	12
ISIS Appeal in Southeast Asia and Pakistan	14
Media, Terrorism and CVE	17
Violent Extremism in the Online Environment	21
Youth Mental Health and CVE	23
Gender and Terrorism	25
Prison and Disengagement	27
Preventing Radicalisation in Schools	29
Interfaith Dialogue and PVE-CVE	30

32

## DAY ONE – GENESIS OF ISIS, TRANSFORMATION AND IMPACT

SESSION 1 : Philosophy and Ideology	42
SESSION 2 : Societal Impact of ISIS: Sectarianism; Polarisation and Populism	46
SESSION 3 : Understanding Radicalisation	54
SESSION 4 : Gender and Terrorism	59

# 67

## DAY TWO – PRACTICAL ACTION

SESSION 1 : A Tale of Two Cities : Impact of Media Reporting on Terrorism (Molenbeek and Islington)	71
SESSION 2 : Media Broadcasting and Countering Violent Extremism	79
SESSION 3 : ISIS and Social Media	90
SESSION 4 : Community Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism and Building Resilience	95

# 104

## DAY THREE – PRACTICAL ACTION

SESSION 1 : Youth and ISIS	107
SESSION 2 : Preventing Radicalisation in Schools	114
SESSION 3 : Countering Violent Extremism and Interfaith Dialogue	121

# 132

## DAY FOUR – PRACTICAL ACTION

SESSION 1 : Leaving ISIS	138
SESSION 2 : Foreign Terrorism Fighters and Prison	148
SESSION 3 : Pathways Out of Extremism and Working With Former Extremists	159
SESSION 4 : Countering Violent Extremism and Soft Approaches	164

# INTRODUCTION

When we gathered in Melbourne in 2016, we were far from imagining how rapidly the terrorism threat would evolve and bring to our lands more deadly and barbaric violence. While ISIS sees its forces weakening in the Middle East, it has called for its supporters to carry out deadly assaults globally. In 2016 and 2017, we witnessed either directed or inspired attacks by ISIS supporters in Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

As in other parts of the world, the ISIS threat now looms over Southeast Asia, particularly with many foreign fighters returning from the theatres of war. The region is not immune to ISIS' growing influence in the region. We hope that lessons can be learned from international experiences and best practices in countering violent extremism in facing at home and regionally the challenges of this new landscape of terrorism.

As academics and practitioners, we inform the policy making process. Unfortunately, we have seen in the last few years the burgeoning of so called experts and of an industry, which too often has endangered if not harmed the work of so many front line practitioners in the prevention and countering of violent extremism. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the vital importance of our duty of care towards our societies, our communities and our young people.

Today, a large number of young people around the world live with darkness and despair. Our societies are failing to adequately provide many with the foundations for hope and confidence to live for a positive future. Terrorist organisations such as ISIS and far right extremists organisations prey upon young lives, exploiting vulnerabilities and seducing thousands with false promises of friendship, purpose, and affirmation. They rely heavily on youth culture to mobilise and recruit young people and make them feel they can become heroes acting for a greater good. The significant responses witnessed among young people to ISIS messaging and recruitment means that it has succeeded in plugging into something very primal.

In a world threatened by terrorism and violent extremism, our democratic societies seem to be weakened by uncertainty and aggravated tensions. They are seriously endangered by the rise of populism, polarization, misplaced nationalism, far right extremism, and hatred; a dangerous concoction that fuels violent extremist narratives.

Many young people fail to see a future beyond the walls of their suburbs. The sense of being out of place, of not quite belonging, of being different, of being reminded constantly of this difference as if it was somewhat alien, of being discriminated against, verbally and physically abused, of wanting to be somebody, of wanting to do something that matters, to contribute to society, often characterises the journey of too many young



persons of colour, of mixed heritage, different ethnicity, different faith in a Western society with which they very often have difficulties negotiating their differences.

One can wonder why one youth radicalises and another does not. The beginning of an answer can probably be found in family, encounters and life opportunities – it is our family support system, the people we meet in life and opportunities that may shape the direction one can take in life.

The world of youth and their sense of belonging and responsibility no longer ends at our sovereign borders. Their hearts are torn by suffering of others, including in Syria and Iraq in ways that often more immediate and profound than those experienced by their parents and grand-parents. At the same time, too often young people find themselves at the margins of a debate and of policies that concern and affect them directly whilst having little or no say in what is done or what they should do. We all collectively have a responsibility to assist young people to find positive hope in their future again and promote their active participation as agents of positive change.

While this conference helped bridge the gap between grassroots and front line practitioners, policy-makers and academics, it also amplified young peoples' voices and brought to the forefront the need for special promotion for young people's active participation as agents of change.

Importantly, the conference also highlighted that conducive environments continue to play a significant role in the radicalisation process by producing certain subcultures vulnerable to extremist narratives. Violent extremism prospers where there are feelings of dependency, abandonment, distrust, disenchantment, social exclusion and stigmatisation. The importance of early intervention prevention programs to reduce the impact these conducive environments may have on vulnerable individuals, communities and minorities should remain a key priority area, particularly in the area of social inclusion. Significant reforms need to be undertaken to address the structural causes of susceptibility to the appeal of (violent) extremism, and diminish the resonance extremist narratives may have with certain individuals by offering a positive, complex and inclusive vision of diversity.

As academics, practitioners, social actors and policy-makers, we are strongly committed to building meaningful partnerships between communities, agencies and analysts in tackling the challenges posed by violent extremism to our societies. It is only by working together that we can truly protect and keep our people and communities safe, particularly our youth.

As we look to the future, the challenges will only become bigger. To effectively counter violent extremism and radicalisation, there are important social and political changes that will have to take place, as security policies alone will not suffice.

**JULY 24-28, 2017**

# **CONFERENCE REPORT**

**KEYPOINTS  
AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**



# UNDERSTANDING (NEW) RADICALISATION

- »» Terrorism and pre-terrorism radicalisation can be viewed as the interplay between a conducive environment, opportunities, networks or hubs, and ideology.
- »» No consensus, however, has been reached on the key drivers that explain how individuals turn into terrorists. Many drivers have been identified, from ideology and religion, to socio-economic deprivation to personal and cultural characteristics, but their exact sequencing and relative importance has failed to achieve a consensus.
- »» The turn to violence often involves group interactions as much as individual choices, and it is a gradual process rather than a sudden conversion. There is no uniform personality or terrorist profile.
- »» One change, however, in radicalisation processes is that individuals often seem to be acting without the emotional and moral support of a group. Now individuals appear to move directly to terrorist violence rather than going through stages of commitment and mobilisation and experience. The process of radicalisation appears to be very quick in some instances.
- »» These individuals appear to be answering appeals received impersonally, virtually, via the internet and especially through social media platforms.
- »» They seemingly volunteer themselves without preparation or extensive indoctrination into a system of belief. They seem particularly responsive to the power of images.
- »» The nature of the violence that individuals are radicalised into also matters to our interpretation of events and may also have causal significance.



- »» In some cases, ideology and ideas have not much to do with contemporary terrorist violence at all. Material considerations and socio-economic frustration as well as the normal rebelliousness of youth are to blame.
- »» Conducive environments and country specific contexts continue to play a significant role in the radicalisation process by producing certain subcultures vulnerable to extremist narratives.
- »» Extremists groups can prosper where there are feelings of dependency, of being abandoned by the authorities and society and of being treated as second-class citizens.
- »» Extremist groups target vulnerable individuals by building trust and fulfilling their needs through control and isolation. Provided with a sense of belonging, they are then exploited and abused through a whirlwind of violence, control and fear of loss. Manipulated, groomed, young people are led to believe that violence is the only way to protect their identity.
- »» Violent extremists groups offer an overarching narrative that wraps the variety of individual motivations into a collective storyline that heavily emphasises surpassing oneself, heroism, victory, and revenge.
- »» The belonging aspect of radicalisation should be taken seriously. The less individuals feel like they belong to mainstream society and to a mainstream political community, the more vulnerable they are to national and transnational groups that provide alternative and positive belongings.
- »» It is also crucial to take into account the cultural and national backgrounds of radicalised actors, particularly how Islam has been included into the public cultures of the countries they come from.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- »» The conference has demonstrated how conducive environments and country specific contexts remain significant components of the radicalisation process.
- »» Therefore, the importance of early intervention prevention programs to reduce the impact these conducive environments may have on vulnerable individuals, communities and minorities should remain a key operational and funding priority area in PVE and CVE efforts, particularly in the area of social inclusion.
- »» To address the structural socio-economic causes of susceptibility to the appeal of extremist ideology, reforms need to be undertaken involving integration of minorities, community-building, trust in government authorities, and societal tolerance.
- »» Now that ISIS is fading, there is a window of opportunity. Much of the conducive environment that permitted ISIS to blossom and to be successful widely in different locations around the world is still very much in place. If we fail to seize the window of opportunity that is now offered, at some point in future it might again prove difficult to timely address the emergence of a new wave of jihadism.

## ISIS APPEAL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND PAKISTAN

- »» The Syrian conflict revived jihadist fervour, especially at a point in time where the tide of armed jihad in Southeast Asia appeared to have been receding.
- »» By creating a physical Islamic state, ISIS is seen to have succeeded where other groups have failed. In this sense, ISIS out radicalised Al Qaeda, and in the context of Southeast Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah. This infused a new sense of purpose in Southeast Asian jihadism.





- »» The ISIS narrative finds resonance with the already existing eschatology and prophecy in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia where local extremist narratives evolve around the end of time.
- »» ISIS has to be considered in the larger Southeast Asian context of the ongoing efforts to debate, define, redefine and problematise the notion of a true Muslim identity. The rise in exclusivism in a very polarising social and political discourse has created susceptibility for more extremist interpretations of religion that informs social and political action.
- »» In Myanmar, while Rohingya extremist groups are not engaging at this point in time with transnational violent groups, there is a real risk that they may take an interest in ascribing to a broader movement as an increasing numbers of moderate voices are being extinguished.
- »» In Thailand, ISIS narratives are exerting a fascination among Muslim youth and are influencing militant narratives of mobilisation in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.
- »» In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA), the emergence of the Islamic State is changing the landscape of militancy in a region that was already home to a number of local and foreign militant groups.
- »» Young FATA men and women have little, to no control over their education, choice of a partner for marriage, decision to initiate or end enmity or conflict with their enemies. Control over youth bodies is overwhelming, and decision-making on their own is seen as offensive and often considered as a rebellion against their elders and traditional norms.

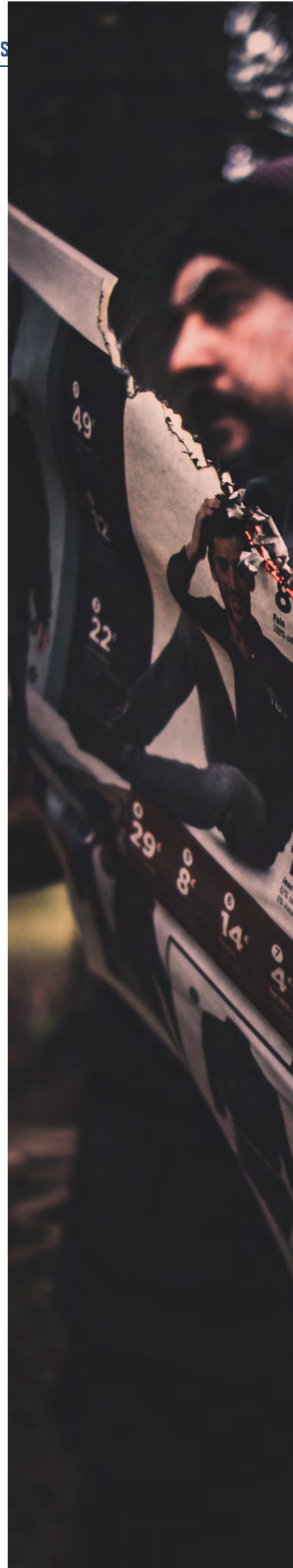
- »» As a rebellious act, FATA youth are attracted to extremist groups' radical ideologies because they offer opportunities to absorb their frustrations against what they see as an unjust and morally corrupt state, and equally corrupt and unfair traditional institutions. The strength of the militants' narrative is based on emotions of 'being the victims' and is hidden in their religious arguments.
- »» Anger at the injustices of communal conflict and sectarian oppression is artfully combined with individual alienation in a deeply effective us-and-them narrative of exclusion, belonging, virtuous struggle and redemption through violence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- »» The appeal that ISIS exerts on individuals in different specific countries and cultural settings suggest that these are important in understanding the radicalisation process of individuals and groups in these settings but also in developing effective disengagement programmes.

But the individual's context or circumstances, psychological framework,

- »» group dynamics, structural conditions are central to whether or not the narrative resonates with the individual on a personal level. Narratives resonate only when they intersect with individual agency and individual contexts.
- »» The extremist narrative is almost irrelevant unless it finds fertile ground to take root. Extremist narratives resonate not only with personal contexts but also when they intersect with real world issues.
- »» Consequently, CVE campaigns cannot only focus on content or the medium of the message and neglect real world issues, which allows the message to resonate.
- »» This requires policy and political action work that needs to be undertaken as a matter of urgency by national authorities, otherwise it will be almost impossible to fight the ideology that offers so much.





A photograph showing a newspaper being set on fire. A lit candle is placed on the newspaper, and flames are visible. The newspaper has various headlines and images, including one that says '50% de réduction' and another that says '12€'. The background is dark and out of focus.

# MEDIA, TERRORISM AND CVE

- » Negative and sensational media terrorism reporting impacts on how mainstream society perceive Muslims and Islam.
- » The unbalanced and negative media representation of Islam and Muslims reinforces the negative image people already have of Islam and Muslims.
- » Hyper mediatisation of terrorism and certain communities is increasing mistrust towards mainstream media and mainstream society, leading in some instances to withdrawal and isolation of individuals, communities and minorities.
- » Media terrorism reporting can be stigmatising for certain communities and individuals, impacting on their self-esteem, their self-confidence, their reputation and their own sense of safety.
- » Media terrorism reporting can create divisions and tensions that feed a climate of fear and distrust, leading ultimately to polarisation and populism.
- » In addition to the lack of trust towards traditional media, media terrorism reporting has enabled the appeal and deepening of various conspiracy and plot theories, especially among young people.
- » Extremist and radical ideologies offer simple solutions to complex problems – a black and white, binary worldview absent of the uncomfortable shades of grey that one must deal with in the real world.

- »» The media uses different words to qualify violent acts committed by Muslims and non-Muslims, focusing on a violence subset of the Muslim community, associating the criminal minority to the majority of the community.
- »» The negative portrayals of individuals, groups and communities have translated for many into real life experiences of stigmatisation, discrimination, offences based on identity and in some instances experience symbolic and physical violence.
- »» Media terrorism reporting contributes to a growing day-to-day Islamophobia.
- »» Media terrorism reporting affects how communities as well as mainstream societies understand, interpret and react to particular terrorist events. It shapes communities' perceptions of mainstream society and governments but also their own communities as well as their place within that particular society.
- »» The concerned individuals often experience these lived experiences as a parallel world between a benevolent public discourse and actual day-to-day experiences. This fuels into the conducive environment to radicalisation that is exploited by violent extremists groups.
- »» When the primary tactic of violent extremist groups is terrorism – which requires the contribution of media to give it any meaning, it is clear the media actions, however well-intentioned, can fuel the agenda of the very group it wants to undermine.
- »» The reaction to terrorist groups is conditioned by the publicity that is given to them and the value we ascribe to their cause and narrative in our responses. Terrorist groups are wholly dependent upon the media for that as a multiplier to their acts of terror.







- » Violent extremists are fully intentional in usurping Islamic lexicon in order to showcase authority, credibility and agency by stealing language. Therefore posing as the new normative, and this is precisely what needs to be counteracted. So far and quite to the contrary, the media and many politicians have served their agenda, and helped them in that pursuit. While mainstream normative Muslims are locked out.
- » There is not enough coverage or knowledge of every day Islam and its concepts and how they are used peacefully. So when the usage is exclusively to the abuse of Islam and its concepts, that abuse becomes the sole story of Islam and its concepts.
- » Considerable work needs to be undertaken in order for Muslims and Islam to have a space in the various media landscapes, other than fast reporting about terrorist issues.
- » The issues of terrorism and populist politics have become inextricably linked - both exploiting the same vulnerabilities of fear and anxiety; and reliant on media - complicit or not - to play its part in reminding us of our own vulnerability to dangerous forces beyond our control.
- » Western media faces a paradox, recognising the risks associated with providing the oxygen of publicity to terrorists while having to weigh up the responsibility of reporting the news, and what people are concerned about. It is not a new problem, but it does face new challenges in today's media

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- »» Media narratives and political discourse should not utilise fear, or stoke anxiety around terrorist threats and groups. It should not provide those groups with anything to push back on or feed into their narratives or agenda.
- »» Excessive, emotional and detailed media coverage of terrorism can lead to the glorification of terrorism - terrorism and violent extremist acts should be reported in a non-extraordinary way, with careful attention paid to terminology and labels used, as well as offering a contextual balanced reporting.
- »» The Muslim community has an important responsibility on its shoulders; it has to reach out to the wider society and to engage in a positive way with the media and the community.
- »» There is an urgent need to provide a platform for the middle part of society, which often has a different and less polarising narrative to offer and of which media reporting would benefit wider society and lessen the effect of polarisation. Promoting and building community trust through active partnerships will allow to debunk conspiracy theories and paranoia.
- »» It is about the re-appropriation of identity and language not only from the media but also from extremist groups, which use it to their advantage.
- »» The media should offer a positive and complex vision of diversity, unlike the binary vision of most terrorist groups. The media should aim to be more diverse and inclusive and to represent the reality of the population.





## VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

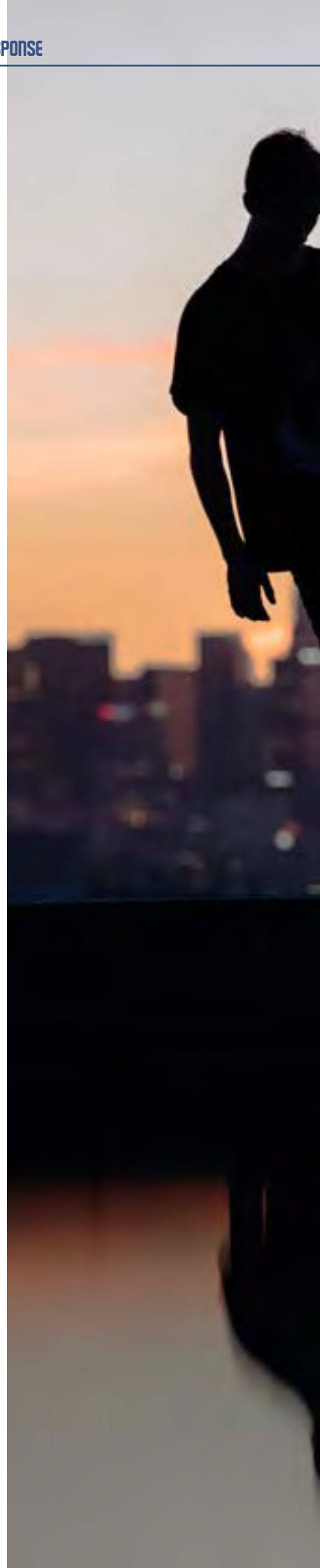
- »» The promotion of more positive stories about concerned communities are needed and will allow to empower communities and connect them to the wider public to curb the effect that terrorism reporting may have on these communities.
  - »» By shedding a different light on people and issues that are depicted unfavourably in mainstream media, only can we build a more inclusive society and counter exclusive extremist narratives.
  - »» Rebuilding trust in the media is becoming a pressing issue in order to fill the information vacuum, resulting from the public decline in confidence in media and governments, which has made it easier for violent extremists to manipulate the narrative for their own end.
- 
- »» The platforms used by violent extremists can be dynamic in nature and often change to suit their agenda, messaging requirements and security needs.
  - »» To understand youth online radicalisation, it is important comprehend that there is no notion of online or offline for digital natives; the two are conflated together. Online social media is part of their psyche and their identity.
  - »» In the last five years, the age group of participants to violent extremism in the online space has dramatically dropped with participants as young as 13 or 14 years old, interacting in the online space for the purpose of carrying out violent extremist acts, either domestically or abroad.




- »» To cater to a new kind of audience, extremist groups such as ISIS are mirroring the code of mainstream media to attract western teenagers. ISIS has capitalised on Western sub-cultures (online gaming, memes, polished media production) and disenfranchised youth to motivate and mobilise large cohorts of sympathizers to their cause.
- »» The need for extreme violence in ISIS propaganda is a manifestation of the pornification of violence, ie. “the increasing occurrence and acceptance of sexual themes and explicit imagery in popular or mainstream culture”.
- »» ISIS has potentially used western media as a vehicle to conflate traditional media reporting and the promotion of their own ideology agenda.
- »» Social media providers have made a concerted effort to filter out, suspend and ban accounts social media accounts that have pushed ISIS sympathizers onto alternative non-traditional platforms.
- »» The strong emotionally supportive close ideological community that was in existence in 2014 and in 2015 and those associated sub-communities are now gone from Twitter. The ISIS community has relocated from Twitter to Telegram.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- »» Analysis of extremist social media activity needs to be continual and in-depth and has to include extremists’ counter-surveillance strategies.
- »» Other jihadist groups need to be looked at more closely on Twitter and across other platforms.
- »» The roles of more obscure and smaller social media platforms need to be better understood.

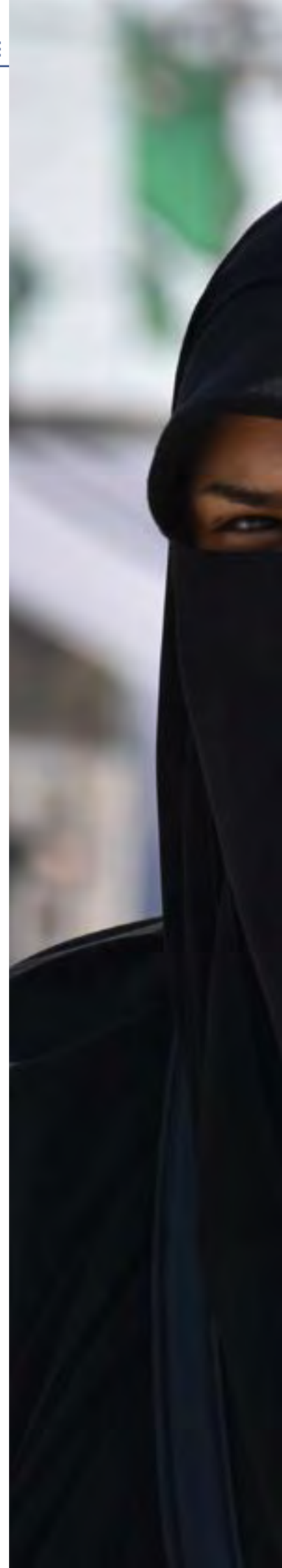


- 
- » Critical thinking initiatives need to be focused at primary/secondary education to cover all aspects of online crime and anti-social behavior.
  - » There needs to be a continued pressure on social media platforms to proactively self-regulate and disrupt online violent extremist content.
  - » Significant takedowns have been undertaken by social media companies directly, but also by activists (e.g. Anonymous) and others via social media companies. Our understanding of this needs to be broadened.
  - » Further work is required to educate the media and journalist reporting to negate any indirect support violent to extremist entities

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND CVE

- » There needs to be an understanding of the lived reality of young people, which is one that is dynamic and fluid and changes rapidly.
- » While youth violence in the counter-terrorism context is seen at the same time a security and criminal justice issue, it should be framed as a public health issue and a social and emotional development issue.
- » Adolescence is a period of delicate transition between childhood and adulthood that sets in motion individuation, empowerment, emancipation, distancing, breaking with the first agents of socialisation that are parents which supposes new affiliations to peers whether real or virtual.
- » Social repression and social exclusion are one of the drivers of radicalisation and delinquency.

- »» There is an urgent need to listen to youth, to understand what is their perception of social injustice and to recognise the multiplicity of their identities.
- »» Young people who experience rejection often have to ask themselves who they are. As a young person, whose brain is still developing, this experienced shame becomes part of his or her identity beliefs system, with a perpetual belief to be « less-than ».
- »» In search of identity, feeling rejected and left helpless, the void they experience then is susceptible to be filled by violent extremist organisations that will prey on and exploit their struggles.
- »» The notion of conspiracy theory is an important one as it enables the youth to better understand the world in an intellectual manner and to appropriate themselves of a particular version of history. It also allows emotional channelling.
- »» Radicalisation leads to the young person's social isolation, as there is little to no acceptance from his or her social surrounding. Two significant factors supports and reinforces the radicalisation cycle: 1/ ISIS Propaganda that tells the youngster that Muslims are discriminated and he or she needs to fight back; 2/ society and media appear to be against the Muslim community, which reinforces that the ISIS propaganda.
- »» The triggering crises, however, are mostly adolescence-based problems as bullying in school or major problems with parents and personal.
- »» Therefore, presence at the critical juncture in a young person's life is essential so that she or he can be supported in their decision-making and on continue to move in the right direction.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

- » To counter violent extremism and foster community resilience, programmes should focus on the youth to build their political consciousness and promote critical thinking and broad-mindedness among them, encouraging them to hear the opinion of others, respect plurality, promote social cohesion and peaceful co-existence, and take notice of inequality and discrimination in all contexts.
- » Young people should be provided with safe spaces where they can raise their concerns and react to events related to violent extremism and terrorism.
- » If we are going to be pro-active in stopping youth violence in early intervention, resources need to be developed to engage at these critical junctures.
- » Inoculate the youth against extremist messaging by educating them in practicing critical thinking skills.
- » There is a need to pursue basic broad prevention work directed at vulnerable youths, with the goal of helping them to find a place in society instead of focusing on an ill-defined radicalisation. Shifting the discourse from 'security first' to 'inclusion-first' is part of this. This implies taking a hard look at the reasons why so many young people feel like second-rate citizens and without horizon.

## GENDER AND TERRORISM

- » While extremist groups place men and women in gender-specific roles, there are also crucial gender-specific reasons for the entry into violent extremism.
- » Masculinity is a new emerging powerful internalised form of resistance with the capacity to quite literally, explode in rage against figures of authority and hegemonic identity.

- »» While women have been perceived mostly as passive agents within terrorism, they are increasingly playing an active role and agency in the processes of radicalisation. The number of women participating and involved in violent extremism has spiked since the emergence of ISIS.
- »» Women as direct actors and as both ideological and relational enablers are active agents of violent extremism, promoting its causes, encouraging others to act, creating and disseminating narratives of influence and contributing to its material as well as ideological successes through roles including the facilitation of financing, information exchange, travel and the social reproduction of new generations of violent extremists in classrooms and in homes.
- »» These new roles give women the freedom to explore, to experiment and to subvert their everyday gendered identities, through creating and activating voices and identities that provide them with freedom from these restrictions and creates a sense of empowerment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- »» A gender perspective is a very important aspect of a specific and systematic prevention and distancing methodology for all types of extremism motivated by prejudice and prone to violence.
- »» Gender-reflective and gender-specific approaches and outlined recommendations should be developed for different sectors of prevention and intervention.
- »» To disengage women from violent extremism, or prevent women to disengage from society and engage in violent behaviour and terrorism, the maintenance of a social bond without stigmatising them is essential, with the view of making them good citizens rather than to criminalise them.





## PRISON AND DISENGAGEMENT

- » Many successful deradicalisation programs have not de-radicalised but simply disengaged from violence at home in most cases. In other words, they modified behaviour using a range of incentives rather than fundamentally altering beliefs and attitude.
- » Because one single case is not similar to another, the de-radicalisation process must be humanised, specialised and individualised. Deradicalisation programs and support plans from violent extremism should be customised and adapted to the specific circumstances and catering to each person specific needs.
- » Each individual has taken a different and specific individual path towards radicalisation. Building an understanding of the events that have precipitated the young person's radicalisation is important in order to develop an individualised support plan in disengaging from extremist violence.
- » One can find common elements in some cases such as the vulnerability of youth, or difficult family situations, but even the slight differences in life paths involves a different kind of program.
- » The core of the work is to identify certain key life moments, which enabled the individual to adopt violence so to better assist with their disengagement process. In addition to the psychological work, another important part of the work is to give the individual reasons to want to remain in their birth country, showing her or him that he or she is an asset to society and give her or him hope in her or his future.



- »» The approach to be adopted is one of compassion without trying to change people's minds right away, as ideology and identity become intertwined. When attacking the ideology, the identity is attacked; it triggers a defence shield meant to protect the identity. Compassion has an incredible power in disengaging individuals from violent extremism.
- »» Young returnees need to be reintegrated as rapidly as possible upon their release from prison within their families and society.
- »» To do so, it is important to recognise their skills and asset to society in order to facilitate their reinsertion. Giving them a professional identity helps to build up his or her self-esteem so that she or he can move forward and it also makes them visible in society.
- »» Building relationships, bridges and trust are a key part of the exit strategy. Having rejected society and adhered to a binary vision of the world, radicalised individuals have to be reconnected with society and rebuild their trust in society.
- »» When the individual decides to leave, he or she will have to build new relations to others and a new social identity. From the binary extremist world, the individual moves to a more complex world in which he or she has to make new decisions everyday.
- »» Within the prison environment, educational programs can assist in challenging extremist ideology and jihadist influencers, and in some instances disrupt radicalisation processes in jail. These programs allow inmates to develop more complex views of the world and critical thinking as well as methodical doubt through educational programs.
- »» To be successful, these programs have to offer an alternative structured framework (eg. teacher-student relationship) to the strong hierarchical prison society.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

- » The question arises of whether those agencies trying to deradicalise the susceptible or dissuade the committed should try to convince potential or actual violent extremists that their ideas are wrong and should be abandoned, or alternatively that they can maintain their goals and purposes but not use violence to accomplish them.
- » It is important to not embolden the extremist narrative by giving it more significance and importance. Like media terrorism reporting may bring oxygen to terrorism propaganda, heavy prison convictions of radicalised youth may be perceived as a victory for ISIS as it shows a failure to educate, to inspire and to change young people.
- » There needs to be a careful balance between the punitive sanction, the effects and the benefits that the sentence may have for the individual concerned and society as a whole.

## PREVENTING RADICALISATION IN SCHOOLS

- » In the aftermath of terrorist attacks, many teachers did not know how to react at certain expressions and conversations of their students.
- » Before having experienced terrorism in their own countries, students were dismissing terrorism threats as western conspiracies against Muslims.
- » In the aftermath of the attacks, students fear for their own lives and their loved ones. There is also the realisation that they are not themselves immune to radicalisation.



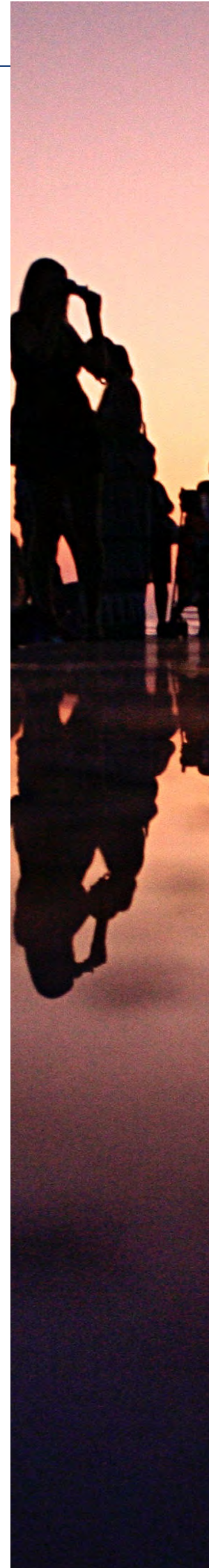
- » With radicalisation being at the forefront of news, teachers are being asked to report certain student behaviours and to avoid certain topics. Teachers are not well equipped to deal with this and experience high levels of stress when having to deal with what may be considered signs of radicalisation.
- » As a result, teachers are losing the trust of their students with many withdrawing from open conversations in class out of fear; and, teachers are no longer able to work on certain topics in class.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Intervention in schools should promote a better understanding of what terrorism is and to provide teachers with tools in order to address this issue.
- » It is important to support schools and teachers in the aftermath of a terrorist attack with the necessary expertise to improve the resilience of their students and to enlarge the scope of the knowledge of the teachers.
- » Communication and training should be developed in schools for teachers in order to increase and assist teachers action readiness when faced with cases of radicalisation.

## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND PVE-CVE

- » Any strategy aimed at countering violent extremism and terrorism has to be in respect to identifying, and addressing, the ideological rhetoric and elements within communities from which potential terrorists are likely to come, and by which they are likely to be nourished.
- » The critical issue of religious extremism is the matter of perceptions of, and responses to, religious diversity and plurality that are held and advanced by religious communities themselves.





- »» Given the anti-Muslim extremisms driving Islamophobia and the evidence of reactive or mutual extremisms in response to negative perceptions of and reactions to Islam, similar strategies should be applied to other religious extremists and their communities.
- »» The capacity for peaceful co-existence in a context of mutual acceptance and respect is premised on the capacity to assert some form of pluralism: to affirm diversity.
- »» Hence the possibility that religions may counter religious extremism via the route of affirming religious diversity is something that needs to be explored further and actively promoted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- »» It is important to foster an environment in which Islam can be anchored and rooted naturally in local environments, a common endeavour for Muslims and society as a whole.

JULY 24, 2017

DAY 1

**GENESIS OF ISIS,  
TRANSFORMATION  
AND IMPACT**



## KEYNOTE: WHAT IS NEW ABOUT RADICALISATION?

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROFESSOR MARTHA CRENSHAW**

Stanford University, USA

Crenshaw began with an overview of the existing literature on violent extremism, discussed how violent extremism was studied and understood, and how it changed in the recent years.

There has been interest in the psychology of terrorism since scholarly research began to gain momentum in the early 1970s. In general, the focus of research was on the attitudes, beliefs, and circumstances that might lead individuals to violence; the phenomenon was not called “radicalisation” then. Over time consensus emerged that there is no uniform personality or “terrorist profile,” that the turn to violence often involves group interactions as much as individual choices, and that it is a gradual process rather than a sudden conversion. It was largely agreed that terrorists are not usually suffering from psychological aberrations. Researchers discussed identity, pressures toward group conformity and cohesion, especially when groups moved or were forced underground, and the “risky shift” in decision-making that occurs through group discussions. They agreed that not all motives for violence were political or ideological and referred to a search for adventure, meaning, and belonging and the role of coincidence and life chances. Irving Janis emphasized how moral obstacles to violence are overcome by processes such as justification by disadvantageous comparison. McCauley came to develop the idea of two “pyramids,” one of belief and one of action. That is, an individual might hold radical beliefs and not turn to the commission of acts of violence, or on the other hand terrorists might not hold extreme political beliefs at all. Researchers argued that the individuals who turned to terrorism were not necessarily the most disadvantaged or frustrated in society – indeed, they were often members of a privileged minority. There was also a notable preponderance of men, with women the exception, especially in leadership positions. Scholars also noted that many different ideologies could inspire violence; no single ideology was associated with what is now called “radicalisation.” There were also studies of transnational contagion effects as well as of prison “radicalisation.” Scholars compared terrorist organisations to criminal youth gangs and to religious cults.

Are these ideas outdated? Are new theories and concepts required in order to understand a new challenge? Has the puzzle changed – that is, does the current “radicalisation” of jihadists that concerns us constitute a problem that our older theories cannot explain? Is a new “paradigm” required? Is countering violent extremism a different game now, post 9/11, in a world dominated by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State and their likeminded allies and affiliates?

So what developments appear to be new in the phenomenon we now call radicalisation?

An important preliminary observation is that our concern extends to individuals leaving home to fight in civil wars abroad as well as committing acts of terrorism – foreign fighters as well as terrorists. The foreign fighter phenomenon is of course not new, but it has taken on extraordinary momentum since the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s. We are also concerned about the likelihood that experienced and lethal foreign fighters will return home or that those aspiring to fight in civil wars abroad will turn to local terrorism if their efforts to travel are frustrated (or if the opportunity is removed with the defeat of ISIS). These concerns were not prominent in the earlier decades, although West Germans, Japanese and other leftists did go to join Palestinians to train and to fight in the Middle East.

Other aspects of the new that affect our understanding of radicalisation are linked to the nature of the violence that individuals are radicalised into, such as the reliance on and prevalence of suicide attacks. Another is mass casualty attacks against civilian targets. Are both types of terrorism more prevalent now than in the past? Most importantly, how are forms of violence related to radicalisation processes? For example, what sorts of terrorist violence are useful as recruiting strategies? Is it the case that ISIS atrocities in Syria appealed to individuals elsewhere who then “radicalised”?

One change in radicalisation processes per se is that individuals often seem to be acting without the emotional and moral support of a group. There is extensive media coverage of what are called “lone wolves.” Such individuals have not joined a conspiratorial group that is isolated from society and who have developed a strong common identity through intense personal interactions and shared risk and danger. Many earlier groups were spin-offs from social movements, an extremist fringe of protest movements. Now individuals appear to move directly to terrorist violence rather than going through stages of commitment and mobilisation and experience.

There also seem to be more reports of individuals with a history of mental illness.

The process of “radicalisation” appears to be very quick in some instances. Some individuals are described as changing rapidly, almost overnight – their turn to jihadist Islamism and to violence seems sudden and often unexpected, not the result of a gradual process at all. Their friends and family are often surprised and shocked.

These individuals appear to be answering appeals received impersonally, virtually, via the internet and especially through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Their decision (if there is a conscious decision) is not based on interpersonal interactions or deep and long-held affiliations. They seemingly volunteer themselves without preparation or extensive indoctrination into a system of belief. They seem particularly responsive to the power of images.

It may be more common that “radicalisation” occurs not among the privileged such as university students during the period of left-wing terrorism in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, but among the relatively deprived and poorly integrated members of society, especially in prosperous settings. Violent extremism, as we now call it, is linked to the assimilation of minorities, immigration, and community marginalisation.

But some, perhaps many, of the facts here are elusive, and we should use care in examining our assumptions about what is new. Researchers are struggling to understand how typical “lone wolf” and individual “homegrown” terrorists actually are. For example, Prof. Crenshaw research on jihadist attacks and plots in the United States since 1993 suggests that “lone wolves” are actually rare. It is possible that there is more organised direction as well as personal contact than is often thought, as attention is focused on the internet and social media. Some attacks or plots that appeared to be individually directed were actually instigated, monitored, or facilitated by outside organisers. Group and face-to-face contact still matter, not just virtual communication. We do not want to jump to conclusions. Note that the attention paid to radicalisation tends to stress the foot soldiers, the inexperienced recruits, not so much the hard-core fighters and ideological leaders. The focus is on followers. And researchers and other experts as well as the public and the news media are most interested in the “radicalisation” of citizens of societies that are not torn apart by civil war. Attention is focused on how change occurs in peaceful settings, such as Belgium or France or Australia or Thailand. Radicalisation of youth in Syria and Iraq, for example, may be neglected because of the location and lack of knowledge.

The nature of the violence that individuals are radicalised into also matters to our interpretation of events and may also have causal significance. One aspect of contemporary terrorism is the reliance on and prevalence of suicide attacks. Another is mass casualty attacks against civilian targets. Are both types of terrorism more prevalent now than in the past and do they increase public alarm? More importantly, perhaps, is the question of how forms of violence are related to radicalisation processes. For example, what sorts of terrorist violence are useful as recruiting strategies? Is it the case that ISIS atrocities in Syria appealed to individuals elsewhere who were then “radicalised”?

## IF THERE ARE INDEED CHANGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY ERA, WHAT COULD BE THE DETERMINANTS OR DRIVERS OF THESE CHANGES?


Most discussion focuses on two shifts as determinants of change: the specific ideology of Salafi jihadism that motivates Al Qa'ida and ISIS and the impact of social media. Is there something about the set of beliefs and values and ideas that is at the heart of jihadism? Does it represent an aggressive and new form of Islam?

Is it the way in which information is transmitted both widely and intimately via social media in a globalised world? The role of images, the visual, emotional resonance? Also the ease with which communications can be concealed? That is, recruitment can be disguised or hidden, so that it appears sudden but is not? Is it both ideology and the method by which it is communicated?

On the other hand, the debate over the role of ideology and religion raises questions that bring us back to the idea of what is “new.” What if there really is no “new” behaviour to explain?

Are we dealing with familiar socio-economic and political dissatisfaction? Perhaps this isn't new, and we don't need new explanations for violent extremism. Some scholars do not think that ideology and ideas have much to do with contemporary terrorist violence at all. They blame material considerations and socio-economic frustration as well as the normal rebelliousness of youth, their search for adventure. Sometimes they point to greed in the case of joining the caliphate – the attraction of living in a villa in Syria rather than in a tiny apartment in Brussels. Others think that there is not much difference between jihadism and earlier ideologies such as socialism or revolutionary nationalism. Jihadism is simply a modern variant of the rejection of traditional society by young rebels. After all, earlier scholars asked how leftists who were presumably democratic could use violence against democratic governments. The puzzle was that violence could be used against governments that allowed alternatives, the free expression of ideas – just as now. These views stand in contrast to those who think that there is something new and particularly virulent about Islamism as a religious doctrine.





In conclusion, reaching an accurate diagnosis is essential to prescribing an effective remedy. It follows logically from this analysis and these explanations and theories that the policies that are needed could be countering and controlling the ideological narrative of jihadism, restricting social media content and access to it, and/or socio-economic-political reform. If ideology is the problem, the question arises of whether those agencies trying to “deradicalise” the susceptible or dissuade the committed should try to convince potential or actual violent jihadists that their ideas are wrong and should be abandoned, or alternatively that they can maintain their goals and purposes but not use violence to accomplish them. If the issue is socio-economic discrimination and marginalisation more than political or religious beliefs, that is, if we think that there are structural socio-economic causes of susceptibility to the appeal of extremist ideology, then the answer is reform through involving assimilation and integration of minorities, community-building, trust in government authorities, and societal tolerance. This is typically what the Obama Administration thought of as “CVE,” countering violent extremism. It is a matter of good governance. If the problem is social media, then public-private cooperation is required, and such control raises serious issues of free speech. If the problem is simply the rebelliousness of youth, then we should not take “radicalisation” too seriously. And we might be encouraged to think that the defeat of the ISIS caliphate project would undermine the appeal, and that perhaps another cause toward which youthful energy could be channelled would emerge. The answers to such a complex problem surely involve a combination of such measures. We need to establish ways to estimating the effectiveness of our responses.

## SPECIAL LECTURE: WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF ISIS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA?

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROF. JOSEPH CHINYONG LIOW**

Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore

Not too long ago one could see in the regional newspapers pictures of triumphant militants at the back of trucks waving their automatic riffles and brandishing the black flag of ISIS. This, however, was not taking place in Mosul in 2014; these were photos taken in 2017 in Marawi, in the southern Philippines. These pictures brought home the severity of the ISIS threat to Southeast Asia.

Terrorism, however, is not a particularly new phenomenon in Southeast Asia. The region has a long history of political violence starting with anticolonial movements that ensued the Pacific war and even earlier in some instances.

So, what explains the ISIS' appeal in Southeast Asia? It is a fascinating question, especially in light of the success ISIS met in Europe and in other parts of the world. One can sense there are some similarities but they are also significant differences.

As far as policy relevance is concerned, an important question to consider is to what extent an ISIS province could be established in Southeast Asia.

### AT THE END OF 2012 AND EARLY 2013

News of Southeast Asians traveling to Syria emerged. In those early days, they mostly travelled for humanitarian reasons and in some instances also joined militants groups in Syria. They did not join ISIS then as it was unclear what ISIS was at the time.

### 2013

In 2013, Southeast Asian extremist groups, particularly in Indonesia, started making references to ISIS and discussing ISIS publications and propaganda. Meanwhile, Southeast Asian politicians downplayed the ISIS phenomenon.

**2014**

With the proclamation of the caliphate in Mosul, Southeast Asian extremists groups as well as individuals took their oath of allegiance to ISIS. This translated in increasing references to Southeast Asia on ISIS propaganda platforms and in ISIS publications such as Dabiq. Later followed a call for ISIS leadership in Southeast Asia, emerging from Southeast Asian extremist themselves and Southeast Asian fighters in Syria.

**2016**

With the Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur attacks committed by local groups with links to ISIS, the discussions over an ISIS province in Southeast Asia rapidly intensified.

So what is the lure of ISIS for Southeast Asia? There are a number of reasons why the idea of ISIS managed to garner support across Southeast Asia.

**DERIVED FROM HUMANITARIAN REASONS.**

The first wave of Southeast Asians, who made their way to Syria, left for humanitarian reasons and their later exposure to the conflict itself had a radicalisation effect drawing some into the conflict.

**THE CONCEPT OF A TRUE MUSLIM IDENTITY**

ISIS has to be considered in the larger Southeast Asian context of ongoing efforts to debate, define, redefine and problematize the notion of a true Muslim identity. These are countries in which very vibrant debates of what constitutes a true Muslim are taking place. Who is a true Muslim? What constitutes the obligations of true Muslims? What is Islamic or un-Islamic in the context of an Islamic society? This has been expressed in many ways and many forms, such as fatwas but also physical intimidation. It defines political allegiances; it explains to some extent electoral patterns. This dynamic of what it means to be a true Muslim is very much alive in Southeast Asia and it also finds unfortunately its expression in the marginalisation of minorities. States have been very much implicated in this dynamic with for instance the use of social moral policing. There is today a rise in exclusivism in very polarising social and political discourses in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. This has created vulnerabilities towards more extremist interpretations of religion, which inform social and political action.

## ESCHATOLOGY AND PROPHECY

This emerged as a theme in Indonesian language literature, which quotes Middle East literature about the end of times. The ulama in Indonesia also had discussions around the increase of natural disasters and whether these were to be considered signs of the end time as well. Southeast Asians wanted to be part of this great titanic struggle between good and evil that they believed was unfolding. While there is a tendency of dismissing this type of fantastic motivations, Prof. Liow explained that we do need to try to appreciate how important and how real this type of discourse can be for some.

## THE LEGACY OF ARMED JIHAD IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In Indonesia, there has been a long and extensive debate since the 1940s around the following questions: “Is armed jihad counter productive? Is armed jihad necessary to achieve an Islamic state?”. Or, “What is the right time for armed jihad to be reached? Are Muslims working for the state guilty of “apostasy by association?”” These debates could be also found earlier on in Southern Thailand. They are in fact an integral part of the southeast Asian jihadist landscape. According to Prof. Liow, the Syrian conflict revived jihadist fervour, especially at a point in time where the tide of armed jihad in Southeast Asia appeared to have receded. It captured the imagination of extremists again.

## THE REALITY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

By creating a physical Islamic state, ISIS was seen to have succeeded where other groups had failed. In this sense, ISIS out radicalised Al Qaeda, and in the context of Southeast Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah. Along with the creation of the Islamic state came reinvigorated discussions on the implementation of Islamic law, which ISIS had made a requirement in order to be bestowed the status of an ISIS province. An ISIS province not only has to have a physical territory; it also needs to be able to govern effectively with the implementation of the Islamic law. This infused a new sense of purpose in Southeast Asian jihadism.

## OPPORTUNISM

Some groups saw this as an opportunity for hijrah, an opportunity to emigrate to an authentic Islamic state. This is why entire Southeast Asian families relocated to Syria. To some degree, there were financial incentives involved. For instance, when joining the Katibah Nusantara, individuals and families were provided with allowances, education, and housing.



## ON THE QUESTION OF RECRUITMENT

The role of social media is a significant factor in Southeast Asian recruitment. ISIS daily news bulletin and recruitment videos, as well as its social media platforms have been important in terms of establishing and maintaining communications between extremists, individuals and groups. In Singapore and Malaysia, the role of social media is particularly pronounced whereas in Indonesia and the Philippines, recruitment revolves around kinship, clan, and word of mouth recruitment. Sermons and study groups prevalent in tertiary education institutions are used extensively and recruiters are on the lookout for potential recruits.

## THE CASCADING EFFECT OF THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

generated some momentum with a high visibility and publicity in some Southeast Asian countries. Key leaders of extremist groups were recruited as part of this oath of allegiance to ISIS. It emboldened militants and became almost cool amongst young people for them to pledge allegiance too.

## A MERGENCE OF PRO-ISIS NETWORKS OF SYMPATHISERS ACROSS THE REGION

primarily in Indonesia and the Philippines, funded and identified through an elaborate process potential recruits to travel to the conflict zones via Turkey. With ISIS being on the back foot, much of this process and networks have been disrupted.

## FINALLY, THE DRAW OF THE KATIBAH NUSANTARA IN SYRIA.

In late 2014, the Southeast Asia Malay speaking combat unit claimed to have 100 fighters, which excluded the fighters' family members. The unit provided education, welfare and ideological indoctrination to Southeast Asians. However, the unit later became victim of a leadership struggle and split into two factions.

In the current context of the Islamic state's downfall, Southeast Asian extremist groups have been happy to refer to themselves as an ISIS province, although they have not been conferred the title. There lies the problem – ISIS acknowledgement. For a time, there were two candidates for the status of ISIS province. The first candidate was the region of Poso in central Sulawesi, which has a fairly long jihadist legacy. The second candidate was Sulu or more broadly the southern Philippines (Mindanao).

While it is unlikely either regions will be conferred the status of an ISIS province, they remain a place where Southeast Asian militants, and returnees can regroup and consolidate. Unless there is collaboration among Southeast Asian states to deal with this problem, these regions will be very problematic as far as the security of the region is concerned.

JULY 24, 2017

# SESSION 1

## PHILOSOPHY AND IDEOLOGY

CHAired BY PROF. RIK COOLSAET  
GHENT UNIVERSITY, BELGIUM

## JIHADIST ACTORS AND THE URBAN QUESTION

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROF. FARHAD KHOSROKHAVAR**

Observatory of Radicalisation, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, France

Professor Farhad Khosrokhavar explained the importance of the urban question in understanding jihadism in Europe. According to him, most French foreign fighters come from low-income suburbs, which had a direct impact on jihadism in Europe and Syria. "They experience a certain identity malaise, feel that they are not fully recognised as citizens, and are mostly regarded as second grade citizens. They feel stigmatized; they feel society is unjust to them", explained Prof. Khosrokhavar.

Their paths to violent extremism can be summarised in 5 to 6 stages. Most are men belonging to the lowest economic classes with a history of exclusion and low employment. Women who get involved in jihadism belong mostly to low and middle classes.

The first stage is characterised by a provenance from low-income suburbs, where a feeling of no future is predominant. These individuals often become school dropouts, due to poor quality education and a lack of family support. In the next stage, they engage in criminal activity, often in gangs. At this stage, these individuals feel that there is no future ahead of them, except in taking part in delinquency and violence. A high proportion of these youth will end-up in prison. This path of criminal behaviour is one of the most prominent factors of youth radicalisation.

Another very important factor in the transition to radicalisation is the re-discovering of Islam in radical terms. The Islam of the parents is considered either as fake or insufficient. Therefore, from the youths' perspective, they have to return to a more « genuine » Islam, which often pushes them to violence towards society. Prison can also be a breathing ground for radicalisation.

A common ground between the youths is the willingness and desire to travel to a country where there is violence and war such as in Afghanistan. These conflict areas provide them with certain legitimacy in their radicalisation process. Another category are those who come from neighbourhoods where migrants are over represented, which also constitutes a breathing ground for radicalisation - the urban question is of highest significance in these neighbourhoods.

Finally, Khosrokhavar concluded that jihadism is a combination of many factors and one cannot reduce it to one single aspect. The urban setting is very important, as well as the presence of recruiters. Sometimes, the situation can also be paradoxical, as the city of Marseille for instance which has some of the largest low-income suburbs of France has had no major jihadist groups going to Syria. Jihadists can prosper where there are feelings of dependency, of state and societal abandonment and of being treated as second-class citizens. This dimension, in Europe at least, is of high significance in understanding the roots of the violence.

## CHANGE AND CONTINUITY: DYNAMICS OF YOUTH IDENTITY AMONGST PASHTUNS OF PAKISTAN'S FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS (FATA)

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**NAVEED AHMAD SHINWARI**

CEO, Community Appraisal & Motivation Programme,  
Pakistan

Historically, Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has remained a space of rebellion—family feuds, inter and intra-tribal clashes, and battles (lashkarkashi) against British colonial power. The recent emergence of the Islamic State is changing the landscape of militancy in a region that was already home to a number of local and foreign militant groups.

The local Pashtun structure is fundamentally equalitarian despite a patriarchal and conservative social outlook. It possesses a relatively united and cohesive social system heavily revolving around customs and traditions. Social structures of Pashtun tribal society revolve around the concept of honour, which is highly protected and respected, through retaliation, by individuals, as well as family or clan, under the code of pashtunwali. Losing it is recognised as a shameful act that lives on.

Elders hold control over economic resources, and decide family relationships. Young men and women have little to no control over their education, choice of a partner for marriage, decision to initiate or end enmity or conflict with their enemies. Control over youth bodies is overwhelming, and decision-making on their own is seen as offensive and often considered as a rebellion against their elders and traditional norms.

Love affairs, homosexuality and adultery are viewed as non-Islamic acts and behaviours, and thus are unacceptable to traditional norms; however, some young men are still engaged in such 'immoral' acts and often are killed for 'honour' by the local society.

As a rebellious act, the young are attracted to extremist groups' radical ideologies because they of-



fer opportunities to absorb their frustrations against what they see as an unjust and morally corrupt state, and equally corrupt and unfair traditional institutions. The strength of the militants' narrative is based on emotions of 'being the victims' and is hidden in their religious arguments. More recently, the Islamic State (IS) has become more appealing to the youth in Pakistan, especially FATA.

Unfortunately, the political leadership has so far failed to develop a counter-narrative in helping reduce terrorism in the country.

What should be done? Today, FATA is viewed as a lawless space historically inhabited by 'freedom loving Pashtuns tribes' that are perceived by the 'others' as unwilling to conform with modern state rules. To address the issue of extremism on a long-term basis, it is time for FATA to be politically mainstreamed and be given an equal status within the federation. Moreover, in order to counteract terrorist groups narratives, an immediate actionable response is needed at various levels—government, the international community and civil society. To counter violent extremism and foster community resilience in FATA, programmes should focus on the youth—male and female—to build their political consciousness and promote critical thinking and broad-mindedness among them, encouraging them to hear the opinion of others, respect plurality, promote social cohesion and peaceful co-existence, and take notice of inequality and discrimination in all contexts. Young men should be provided with safe spaces where they can raise their concerns and react to events related to violent extremism and terrorism. Such efforts should further engage various community groups - religious leaders, community elders, women and youth—in an open dialogue to keep communication channels open.

## EVERYDAY ISLAMIC RELIGIOSITY AND INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS IN MULTICULTURAL CITIES

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROF. FETHI MANSOURI**

Deakin University, Australia

There is increasing debate and contestation regarding the role of religiosity in the public sphere, particularly related to Muslims living in the West. Central to this debate is the question of whether Western Muslims have the individual capacity and the societal support to be fully active citizens while upholding their religious values and practices. Addressing this important but empirically under-investigated question, Mansouri examined the role of Islamic beliefs, rituals, and faith-based community practices in shaping experiences of active citizenship, belonging, and political engagement in culturally diverse urban sites.

JULY 24, 2017

## SESSION 2

### **SOCIETAL IMPACT OF ISIS: SECTARIANISM, POLARISA- TION AND POPULISM**

**CHAIRERD BY PROF. JOSEPH CHINYONG LIOW  
RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, SINGAPORE**

## THE FATAL SPIRAL: HOW ISIS FEEDS ON SECTARIANISM AND HARNESSES THE FORCES THAT SEEK TO DESTROY IT

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROF. GREG BARTON**

Deakin University, Australia

The question before us is what will happen with ISIS in the future. Are they going to remain strong? Or are they about to disappear? According to Prof. Barton, they are not about to disappear but rather at the very least they intend to address the situation they find themselves in a post-caliphate. It does seem that sectarian circumstances do play into what they want.

ISIS made a very strong brand when they proclaimed the caliphate. They spoke of it in very positive terms; their message is a mix of positive rhetoric as well as deliberately sectarian and divisive rhetoric. At the same time they have been very provocative with their ultra-violent sectarianism. They were plugging into communal sectarian issues to getting popular support and getting foreign fighters to come from abroad.

With the protracted, immensely costly, liberation of Mosul comes the realisation that ISIS cannot be defeated by military force alone. Prof. Barton explained that until the sectarian character of Iraqi politics and military action is purposefully reshaped to provide Sunni communities with a convincing assurance of lasting security, justice and respect, a pernicious ISIS/IS insurgency would continue to find opportunity, support and fresh recruits. From the very beginning, sectarianism has shaped the tactics and strategy of the Islamic State (IS) and featured prominently in its propaganda and recruitment narratives. From its origins as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under Musab Al-Zaqarwi, in the wake of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, through to its entry into the civil war in Syria as ISIS, ISIS has exploited sectarian tensions and bitter grievances.

Media reporting of the conflict often speaks of 'centuries-old' sectarian divisions as being a key underlying cause of the conflict. Prof. Barton argued that whilst hostility between Shia and Sunni communities has been exacerbated and exploited by ISIS and many of the other actors, it is not the prime cause of the conflict nor does it have the deep roots in history that are commonly assumed. To conclude, the more pernicious sectarianism guiding and enabling ISIS is not Sunni-Shia sectarianism, or even Saudi-Iranian rivalry, but rather a particular form of exclusivist Salafism that is engaged in a global insurgency against mainstream Sunni Islam whilst presenting itself as defending Sunni interests

against Shia error and aggression. The same forces that sustain the ISIS regional insurgency on the ground in the Middle East and Northern Africa also feed the global virtual insurgency that continues to manifest in acts of terrorism and radicalisation. Anger at the injustices of communal conflict and sectarian oppression is artfully combined with individual alienation in a deeply effective us-and-them narrative of exclusion, belonging, virtuous struggle and redemption through violence.

## ROHINGYAS MUSLIMS: A RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITY PRIMARILY FROM THE WESTERN PART OF MYANMAR

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**RONAN LEE**

Deakin University, Australia

The Rohingyas are a religious and ethnic minority in Myanmar who claim centuries of connection with the western part of the country. The Rohingya's origins trace from various different groups including residents converted to Islam, and others arriving through various migrations and forced migrations including the slave trade. Their heritage is contested as well as their right to Myanmar citizenship because they are not considered to be an indigenous ethnic group in Myanmar. They are considered to be illegal immigrants in Myanmar and are treated as temporary residents with severe restrictions placed on their rights. The Rohingya's ability to work, move, and marry has been restricted throughout recent decades. Following violent conflict between the Buddhist majority and Rohingya Muslim minority in 2012, the government decided to separate these communities and place many Rohingyas in camps within western Myanmar where 120,000 remain today.

Despite decades of rights abuses, Mainstream Rohingya leaders have, until 2016, actively rejected a strategy of political violence. This is unusual in Myanmar where there are dozens of armed ethnic groups. Significant changes have occurred in the country since its post-2010 political opening. Less restricted political space has allowed extremist views to be widely expressed and promoted. Extreme Buddhist nationalists argue for the restriction of Muslim rights and this has had dramatic results. Rohingyas have benefited little from Myanmar's political opening and have seen any policy changes in their favour impeded by conservative Buddhist groups.

How long would it be until the Rohingyas react? According to Lee, some militant groups have emerged, known as the Faith Movement (Harakah al-Yaqin) or Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). Their stated goal is to protect their people but they are described by Myanmar's authorities as a terrorist group.





While they are not engaging at this point in time with transnational violent groups, they began attacks against security posts during 2016. However, while moderate voices are being extinguished, there exists a real risk that this group may take an interest in ascribing to a broader movement.

What should be done? Giving Rohingya access to their human rights and a clear pathway to citizenship rights would ease the tensions, but it is unlikely to happen in the current political climate. Should Myanmar's National League for Democracy (NLD) government led by Aung San Suu Kyi be blamed for creating this situation? No, the mistreatment of the Rohingya precedes the NLD government, but they should be held accountable for their role in prolonging it and encouraging a situation where 1.1 million people believe they can either die in poverty or become a militant, which is not much of a choice.

## SECTARIANISM IN IRAN

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. JAMES BARRY**

Deakin University, Australia

While the issue of sectarianism has risen to prominence in recent years, Dr. James Barry explained that the phenomenon is little understood. This is largely because research on this topic has lacked empirical examples, relying instead on media reports. He illustrated the issue by using perspectives on sectaria-

nism by Iranians, and explained how and why the term «sectarianism» is applied to circumstances that have little to do with the theological differences between Shi'a and Sunni.

There is an increasing frustration around the use by media and academics of the word sectarianism and for taking it for granted. Having worked and lived in Iran, Dr. Barry explained how people there reject the term completely. To examine this further, he engaged with public officials in Iran to debunk the term sectarianism within the Iranian context.

Dr. Barry pointed out that when we refer to sectarianism, we are not really speaking of sectarianism per se but more about the sectarianisation of specific conflicts, and sectarianisation of people. So this means that suddenly everything can be explained on a 7th century break between Sunnis and Shias. Consequently, certain groups, which have very little in common on a religious base, such as the Twelver Shia in Iran, the Zaydi Shia in Yemen, and groups such the Alawites in Syria, are now being called Shia as one coherent group.

How is sectarianism talked about in Iran? In the Middle East it is a highly interesting discussion. For instance in Lebanon, which is a country much more affiliated to sectarianism due to the sense of communal form of governance, they use the term feudalism to describe it. It is a form of patronage system that has very little to do with sectarianism other than the fact that the 1923 census outlined specific groups and gave them specific representation in power.

The consequences of talking about sectarianism in a broader sense or explaining things with sectarianism have an impact on the people themselves. Iran is an interesting case because it is considered to be a Shia power but in Iran itself, if one looks at Iranian identity – Islam and Shiism are spoken about as two separate things. One would think “Shiism is Islam” but in Iran it is not spoken of in that way or in identity terms; both in the state sense and also amongst people themselves. Certain section of Iranian society will state that they never wanted to become Muslims and this is why they became Shia. Most of the people would accept Shiism as part of Islam. The government in itself puts Islam forward as an international universalist religion to connect with other countries; it does not promote Shiism in its discourse when it is talking internationally. Domestically, it talks about Shiism as something that is special about Iran or Iranian people. This comes down to Iranian identity – three main part of Iranian identity, which are Islamiyah (identity based on Islam), Shiism, and Iranianism.

On the question of Shiism and radical Islam, there is an interesting observation made by several people Dr. Barry interviewed. They quite openly stated that there is no specific sectarian nature to radical Islam. While officially people might say radical Islam is a Sunni issue, there are also people in Iran

in the regime who would acknowledge that they were radical 30 years ago and now the tide has turned.

Dr. Barry explained that the Iranians participants he interviewed did not believe that extremism came from a religious or theological basis. According to them, it comes from two sources: Saudia Arabia and globalisation. For Iranians, sectarianism is a tactic used by its enemies such as Saudi Arabia to discredit Iran. Both countries have had geopolitical and communal issues that already existed for a while but have only recently been defined as sectarian. On the point of globalisation, it has affected the narcissism of small differences. People can be affected by an issue occurring in another country and act upon it.

In conclusion, the use of the word sectarianism has an effect on people themselves as people start talking about other people and are starting to see themselves within the boundaries of sectarianism.

## A (NEW) METHOD OF STUDYING HERITAGE DESTRUCTION

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. ANTONIO GONZALEZ ZARANDONA**

Deakin University, Australia

Heritage destructions are read differently by actors and stakeholders and no two readings are alike. The problematic that scholars face is that acts of destruction are interpreted differently, based on a myriad of approaches that has not provided a cohesive method so far. Previous studies that have focused on heritage destruction have relied on methods borrowed from visual culture, art history, and religion studies, but as some scholars have demonstrated (Gamboni 1997; Latour and Weibel 2002; Noyes 2013), the issues concerning the destruction of heritage are more complicated than that, because there is also destruction that has been motivated by economic reasons, not only religious sectarianism or political polarisation. Most recently, we have witnessed one of the largest destructions of heritage in the Middle East perpetrated by ISIS, and scholars are still trying to situate this destruction within historical, cultural and social contexts.

One avenue of research has in fact suggested that the recent heritage destruction by ISIS should be read as an act of terrorism because ISIS used heritage strategically as part of their terror campaign.

Cultural destruction for the first time was used as a tool to spread terror. It is, however, not a new phenomenon, as it has been used in the past to build new states, erase history and destroy cultures. The case of cultural destruction by ISIS provides a starting point to develop new ways to study these unfortunate destructions for three main reasons: there is no defined methodology; ISIS destructions were documented and recorded through digital devices that mediate the destruction through social media; and, the destruction were used as a justification for military intervention by third countries.

Dr Zarandona proposed a method to frame heritage destruction with 5 levels of reading or analysis:



**Media** - What is it being said on media about destructions? How are they framed? Are the acts defined as vandalism or strategic?

**Governments** - Which governments pronounce themselves about the destructions? Why some governments do and others do not? How do they react towards the destructions?

**International bodies and organisations (UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM)** - What is at stake regarding the destruction of heritage for these inter and non-governmental organisations? How do they each frame the destructions? Which words are employed to describe the feelings towards the destructions? In the case of the Islamic State, destruction of heritage is a direct provocation to these organisations not only because the destruction implicitly demonstrates the inability of these organisations to stop the destruction, but it is also a provocation to the values that these organisations held up high, most particularly the so-called universal value of heritage.

**Perpetrators** - Which media do they use to transmit the destruction? What do they say about the destruction? Are they quite vocal about the destruction? What type of media they use? Visual? Oral? In the case of ISIS we are informed through their propaganda and in the videos they record as to their motivations and their actions. They use the destruction of cultural heritage as a weapon to threaten local populations and global audiences and create more tension.

**Communities affected** - What do the people say or do not say about the destruction? How is the destruction of heritage negotiated within the community? Does the community take part in the destruction or does the community reject it?



Dr. Zarandona outlined a new methodology with a holistic view of heritage destructions, which yields significant insights that may be applied in future discussions about heritage destructions.



JULY 24, 2017

# SESSION 3

## UNDERSTANDING RADICALISATION

CHAired BY PROF. MAURA CONWAY  
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY, IRELAND

## SOCIAL INFLUENCE MODEL OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. DEBRA SMITH / DR STEVEN TALBOT**

Victoria University, Australia / Defence Science  
Technology Group

Dr. Debra Smith presented the Social Influence Model of Violent Extremism (SIM-VE) developed in collaboration with Dr Stephen Talbot of Defence Science Technology Group, Australia.

SIM-VE is an explanatory model of social influence that emphasizes the processes taking place when someone is radicalising towards violent extremism. It focuses attention towards the processes of the influenced as opposed to the strategic tactics of the influencer as a way overcoming some of the challenges of identification of risk.

Drawing together complementary theoretical and conceptual threads derived from psychology and sociology and applying them to the problem of violent extremism, Drs. Smith and Talbot's research advances knowledge of the epistemological and methodological problems related to integrating social scientific knowledge into risk assessment processes for national security purposes.

The focus of SIM-VE is on helping practitioners to sort and analyse disparate pieces of information that may be collected through a variety of different operating modes across online and offline environments. Independently, each piece of data may not necessarily reveal much about a person's progression or intent towards committing a violent act. However, ways of organising this data that connect it to changes that are taking place with an individual's identity, aligning it more closely with that of a violent extremist group, as well as changes in their beliefs to align more closely with a violent extremist ideology, and to the reconstruction of a moral position that allows for violent action to be justified, allows for insight into the more complex social influence processes that contribute to violent outcomes.

SIM-VE conceptualises identity, beliefs and lowered moral thresholds to violence as mutually reinforcing realms that, when viewed collectively, provide a clearer picture of whether a person may be evolving toward violent extremism. The insights gained are applicable to informing the development of observable indicators that bridge various relevant aspects of a person's life that, together, provide more nuanced evidence of social influence taking place.

## THE NORMAL PERSONALITIES OF EXTREMISTS - ON VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT DEFENSE OF MUSLIMS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. MILAN OBAIDI**

Uppsala University, Sweden

Dr. Obaidi presented the results of 5 studies he conducted with his colleagues in Denmark, Sweden, Turkey and Afghanistan. In these studies, they examined the relation between basic personality traits (e.g., non-pathological personality traits), and violent and non-violent behavioural intentions. These are the first studies to look at basic personality traits and endorsement of violence on defense of one's group.

In light of the recent Manchester and London terrorist attacks, it is reasonable to ask who would perpetrate these types of acts. This question within the psychological literature has received mainly two responses: 1/ someone who is mentally ill; 2/ mostly anyone, at least if a person's social surroundings are set in a particular way. In the studies that Dr. Obaidi presented, they proposed a third overlooked possibility – ie. those people who endorse violence on behalf of their group may be normal clinically, but they may not be random people.

This third possibility is often overlooked as explanation of terrorism in the field of psychology of terrorism, which is often divided between personal and situational explanations. Personal factors often refer to psychopathologies, and situational factors always refer to social, organisational and group-based dynamics. For example, previous studies of terrorism in the field of psychology mainly focused on individual factors and proposed that people who endorse terrorism are mentally ill. Many scholars argued that terrorism was mainly a manifestation of psychopathy but later this was diverted towards personality disorder such as narcissism and paranoia. Although initially very appealing to describe people as mentally ill, in light of very limited empirical evidence the models of psychopathology were discarded. When it became more common knowledge that mental health models could not explain terrorism, the scientific focus was directed towards the idea of normality. According to this approach, individuals who committed acts of terrorism were described as normal people. So the scientific focus shifted to group based and organisational factors. According to this very influential approach, violent behaviour has been explained as the product of social influence. This emphasis on external factors resulted in downplaying individual variables such as non-pathological personality traits. Scholars gradually rejected personality as a potential factor in explaining terrorism.



Dr. Obaidi pointed out that in other areas of psychology and other areas of social sciences, personality traits predict a variety of behaviours, emotions, and attitudes. But when it comes to the psychology of terrorism, scholars agree that personality has no merit to explain violent extremism. Dr. Obaidi and his colleagues suggested that perhaps we have failed to detect personality effects because of methodological problems. They, therefore, argue that it is premature to reject personality as a potential factor in explaining extremism and tested this idea empirically in five studies across different populations and contexts.

The first study was conducted online in Denmark with 213 participants from 32 Muslim websites. To measure personality, they focused on the core personality traits and used the Danish-translation of HEXACO model of personality inventory. This model measures personality with 6 different dimensions, which are agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotionality, extraversion, honesty-humility, and openness to experience. These dimensions are measured on a continuum. One can be either high or low, or be in the middle. The HEXACO personality model also includes a measure of empathy and altruism. They considered these dimensions in understanding whether they could predict violent or non-violent behaviour intentions. In this study, they created 3 dependent variables.

The first one is the variable of non-violent behaviour intentions. While terrorism studies' main focus are on violent means, it is equally important to look at which personality traits leads people to endorse non-violent intentions. The second variable is violent behaviour intentions. Finally, the third variable measures intentions to assist other Muslims to carry acts of violence. The study considers that individuals who are willing to commit acts of violence by themselves may have different personality traits than those who are willing to help or assist other Muslims in committing acts of violence. For instance, in an organisation there are foot soldiers and recruiters. They may have different personality traits that will predict different outcomes.

Looking at personality effects, both violent and non-violent intentions were predicted by personality traits but in different ways. People who scored high on altruism are more likely to support helping Muslims by non-violent intentions. When it comes to violent intentions, two factors predicted violent intentions – low emotionality and low openness. People who endorse violence express less fear and stress, which means they are more stable psychologically. But also means they are more rigid and they express less imagination. This means they have a very dogmatic mentality and they perceive the world in black and white, and they dichotomise the world between “us” and “them”.

The second study was conducted among Swedish Muslims in Sweden and was a replication of the first study. Study 2 replicated the main findings from Study 1. Altruism predicted non-violent intentions. Low emotionality and openness predicted violent intentions. However, individuals who were high on openness also endorsed non-violent intentions.

The next two studies were conducted in Muslim majority countries – Turkey and Afghanistan. The personality effects were very similar to the previous studies.

All four studies were conducted among normal Muslim populations, ie. People who do not have any ties to extremist groups. These studies demonstrate that certain personality traits are associated with violent intentions. However, we do not know whether the individuals with these dispositions would also turn this willingness into actual terrorist behaviour. It would be interesting to see whether the same effects would be found among people who are known to have been part of an extremist group.

The final study collected data among former member of militant groups living in Kabul. All the effects from the general population was replicated among previous member of militant groups in Afghanistan.

Much remains unknown in understanding why some people and not other people are attracted to violent extremism. But taken together, these findings have clear and potentially fundamental implications for terrorism prevention. First of all, they could provide information about “risk factors” for becoming an extremist. The use of violence seems more appealing to people who are more dogmatic, less fearful and more tolerant of stress. Cues to such dispositions could be things to look for in prevention efforts. Overall, the personality model explained 11-43% of the individual differences in violent intentions, which may provide us with additional insight into why some individuals, but not others in the same situations, become involved in extremist violence. In the guessing game of who might become a terrorist, our findings suggest that knowledge about an individual's personality is indeed valuable.

JULY 24, 2017

# SESSION 4

## GENDER AND TERRORISM

CHAIRER BY PROF. ANNE SPECKHARD  
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, USA

## GENDER MIGHT BE THE KEY. GENDER-REFLECTIVE APPROACHES AND GUIDELINES IN PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION OF RIGHT-WING AND RELIGIOUSLY BASED EXTREMISM

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**SILKE BAER**

Cultures Interactive, Germany

Although often underestimated, a gender perspective is a very important aspect of a specific and systematic prevention and distancing methodology for all types of extremism motivated by prejudice and prone to violence. In its European project “WomEx - Women in Extremism and Prevention”, Silke Bauer has been collecting and assessing practical experience and research findings in this field since 2012. The situation of especially young women in various violence-prone and “inhumane” social milieus was discussed with experts and practitioners. These discussions covered aspects to be taken into account in the methodology of outreach and open youth work, prisons, parent counselling and exit interventions.

Bauer explained that there are crucial gender-specific reasons for the entry into right-wing extremist scenes. Traditional images of masculinity and femininity as well as sexism and homophobia are deeply emotional key elements in this process. Furthermore, extremist groups place men and women in gender-specific roles. For instance, women take strategic leadership positions to make right-wing extremist groups seem harmless or more acceptable in the sense that they are based on women and mothers just being worried about the community or engage in voluntary community work to cover their inhumane ideology under the guise of social activism. Finally, knowing that it is important to carry out prevention and distancing processes in a gender aware way, Silke recommended gender-reflective and gender-specific approaches and outlined recommendations for different sectors of prevention and intervention.

## WOMEN IN RADICALISATION PROCESS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. AGNÈS DE FEO**  
EHESS, France

More and more women are engaged in violent action, as we have witnessed with the emergence of ISIS. While women have been perceived mostly as passive agents within terrorism, they are increasingly playing an active role and agency in the processes of radicalisation. Dr. De Feo described the trajectories of 5 French and Belgian women who went from wearing the niqab in a context of prohibition to their engagement in Syria, in order to understand the influence of their environment.

Dr. De Feo chose Belgium and France for her field research sites as these two countries count some of the largest numbers of women who left for Syria and which have been the most affected European countries by Islamic terrorism. Furthermore, both countries are the first European countries having passed a law banning the full veil in public.

Dr. De Feo filmed the portrait of 5 women, of different ages, marital status and national origins and citizenships. Through these portraits, Dr. De Feo found that these women had used the policy banning the wearing of the niqab in public places as a justification precisely to wear the niqab in rebellion against their respective governments. In societies, which ostracizes and marginalises Muslims, these women felt the need to leave and settle under ISIS Islamic law in Syria, where they believed their religious practices would be accepted if not celebrated. Their experiences of rejection is at the heart of their violent behaviour, which resulted in their hatred of the very people they believed rejected them.

For Dr. De Feo, the solution to disengage these women, or prevent these women to disengage from society and engage in violent behaviour and terrorism, is to maintain a social bond without stigmatising these women, and thus make them good citizens rather than to criminalise them.





## WOMEN FACING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE CASES OF MOROCCO AND TUNISIA

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**ASSOC. PROF. FARID EL ASRI**

Rabat International University, Morocco

Tragically, in today's world, violent excesses and extreme expressions linked to Islam are intrinsically part of everyday social reality and analysing these and understanding them retain a sense of urgency. On a worldwide scale and more specifically within the Muslim world, these epiphenomena involving resorting to violence give some indication of the breadth of the scientific field to be covered. Spin-off actions resulting from such radicalisation phenomena are hypermodern and cut across social strata and generations, sparing neither wealthy families nor younger individuals or even women. These life paths characterised by breaking away ideologies and extreme practices give rise to various forms and require a grasp of the spectrum of ideals and manifestations that underlay them. Analysts have noted an upsurge of women within their ranks in various capacities. The number of women participating and involved in violent extremism has spiked since the emergence of ISIS.

Why has this occurred in these environments? According to Prof. El Asri, the issue of women engagement in jihadism needs to be looked at more broadly and in a more inclusive manner – ie. to consider the path and life experience that led to the women's radicalisation and the recruiting organisation. What is the organisation doing to the individual? Why and how the individual themselves will manage their physical environment, their relationship to their spouse? It needs to be placed in a socio-economic context and country specific.

To what extent feminine jihad is a result of political realities? Can the notion of feminism in the jihad movement be understood as a form of feminism of jihad and the emancipation of women through violent extremism? Prof. El Asri argues that jihad is not solely masculine.

Finally, Prof. El Asri recommended a holistic approach towards these phenomena as they occur in Morocco and Tunisia so as to better grasp and even possibly suggest relevant fields of research around the dynamics of the violent excesses committed by women.

## WESTERN FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND THE ISLAMIC STATE: THE ROLE OF MASCULINITIES IN RECRUITMENT

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. JOSHUA ROOSE**

Australian Catholic University, Australia

Very little work has yet been undertaken that explore the role of masculinities in shaping recruitment. Dr. Roose focused on the Australian context as Australia has produced the highest per capita contribution of foreign fighters to the Islamic State Movement. His research focuses particularly on the intersection of masculinity, emotion and violence, and reveals how Islamic State narratives have been skilfully tailored to exploit key fault lines in the formation of masculinity amongst Australian (and Western) Muslim men and considers potential policy responses to address this challenge. He posed the following questions: why young (primarily) men were leaving to fight with the Islamic State movement in Iraq and Syria and to conduct suicide attacks in its name? What is to be a man in Australia? In Islam? And how do these expectations and self-perceptions shape social behaviour? What is the role of women?

In Australia, and the western world, Muslim men are viewed by political activists from both the left and right as the vanguard of patriarchal and homophobic repression and as representing 'pre-modern' values in contrast to an 'enlightened' West. Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities as it embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, and it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. In the Australian context, 'hegemonic masculinity' is commonly regarded to be a white, Australian male. A subordinated masculinity, particularly among the most disempowered young Muslim men, is viewed as performative, emphasising a 'hyper' masculinity through displays of 'physicality' and 'toughness'. These displays are the result of a lack of 'honourable recognition' and a lack of respect from wider society.

It is important to consider why young men might be so alienated from their own country that they would take up arms either against it, or elsewhere. They have shifted to asymmetric warfare, seeking a global insurrection by Muslims. Australian born Muslims constitute the largest group at 37.6% of the Muslim population. Unemployment and poverty are the most significant social issues. It is very important to consider other factors, including the sheer multitude of times that Islam has come into question and Muslims condemned on the basis of their faith.

The Islamic State narrative provides an alternate 'source of meaning', honourable recognition, empowerment, redemption and belonging. For young Westerners, joining the Islamic State offers them the opportunity to overcome one or more of past humiliation, shame, guilt, grief and injury.

Eulogies are a key mechanism by which to both venerate Islamic State fighters in the eyes of potential supports and to emphasise their masculinity and virility in the face of impotence and powerlessness.

Eulogies celebrate the dead as 'brothers', 'lions', 'mountains', 'true men', 'honourable', racing towards heaven', 'knights', 'heroes' and even a 'commando knight'.

This same narrative offers the chance for revenge, an essential element of suicide bombing and atrocity, that is arguably, more important than altruism.

Masculinity is central. Dr. Roose argued that a new form of resistance – masculinity – is emerging; a powerful, yet internalised anger and capacity to quite literally, explode in rage against figures of authority and hegemonic identity. The Islamic State narrative of strength, empowerment and meaning seemed irresistible for a young man at the margins.

Government efforts to shape Islam in Australia are irrelevant – these men were marginalised by their own communities in the first instance. Citizenship education and responsibilities moving beyond identity based claim making on the states though are key elements.

Dr. Roose concluded by forming proposition to counteract the appeal of the Islamic state suggesting more work is needed to help young men manage emotions including grief, despair, anger, humiliation, powerlessness and more effort to incorporate success stories. Hope, belief and an upward social trajectory are vital, as is the development of social resilience. Finally, understanding the central role of masculinity in facing these challenges will allow to calibrate an effective approach across different social and jurisdictional fault lines.

## 'DIRECT' VERSUS 'VIOLENT' ACTORS: WOMEN AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROF. MICHELE GROSSMAN**  
Deakin University, Australia

Prof. Michele Grossman presentation centred around the question of how the relational dimensions of gender influence the contemporary dynamics of terrorism – that is, how specific, contextualized socio-cultural structures, frameworks, meanings and values surrounding what it means to be a 'woman' or a 'man' can overlap, converge, reinforce or challenge each other within violent extremist ideologies, networks and messaging?

Based on a study she conducted with her colleagues in 2015 and 2016, she stated that while the numbers of Australian women who have visibly radicalised to violence remains small their visibility, activity and influence is disproportionate relative to these small numbers. Her research identified four main clusters of role definition for Australian women actively involved in violent extremism: direct actors, ideological enablers, relational enablers, and violent actors.

Direct actors - the meaning of 'direct actors' in the study includes not only the activities described above, but also those women who engage primarily in social influence that encourages or exhorts others to become involved in violent extremism. Those women are highly active, effective and strategic agents in the field, advancing recruitment, propaganda and both tactical and strategic terror operations in online and offline contexts. Their action often involves using social media to glorify or normalise life in foreign conflict zones, and also to promote efforts to damage social cohesion by intensifying grievances using conspiracy theory, targeting non-radical community members and so on. They use social media's capacity to destabilise traditional concepts of authority and expertise and to award status and recognition to self-proclaimed experts and spokespeople.

What emerged as especially crucial for women in these roles was the freedom to explore, to experiment and to subvert their 'everyday' gendered identities, through creating and activating voices and identities that provided them with freedom from these restrictions and created a sense of empowerment. It also correlated to the ability to reinvent, renegotiate or simply ignore one's 'real' gender identity through the anonymity and performativity afforded by online environments.

Ideological enablers and relational enablers - Women who are ideological enablers provide belief in and reinforcement for the cause. The primary motivation of women as ideological enablers is to serve as part of a team advancing the ideological and political agenda with which they are aligned.

Regarding relational enablers, their primary motivation is to perform these functions based on loyalty or commitment to a person/family/relationship, but they may not share the same ideological conviction or beliefs.

In conclusion, women as direct actors and as both ideological and relational enablers are active agents of violent extremism, promoting its causes, encouraging others to act, creating and disseminating narratives of influence and contributing to its material as well as ideological successes through roles including the facilitation of financing, information exchange, travel and the social reproduction of new generations of violent extremists in classrooms and in homes. Far from being 'jihadi brides' or 'IS fan-girls', as media outlets so often characterise them, these women are finding or enhancing their agency and effectiveness through renegotiated social identities and forms of social action that reflect profound anxieties or dissatisfactions that must be understood if they are to be addressed. The key issue is how women can be supported to realise these goals in ways that invite exploration of constructive and peaceful possibilities, rather than risky encounters with the wrong outcomes for everyone. The question of why women are not yet presenting in significant numbers as violent actors in Australia remains an open question.



JULY 25, 2017

DAY 2

PRACTICAL ACTION

## POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE NAME OF GOD: IS IT REALLY ABOUT RELIGION?

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

### PROFESSOR JOCELYNE CESARI

Australian Catholic University/Birmingham University/  
Harvard University, Australia/UK/USA

When it comes to political extremism and its intersection with religion, two different approaches can be identified that do not intersect.

According to the first one, which is quite dominant in the media, religion is an independent variable, which means that religion per se in its doctrines and values is the major cause of international conflicts. It is the most known and dominant perception as expressed in the Clash of Civilizations.

The problem is that paying attention only to belief or religious texts does not help us understand the vision and strategy of Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. Additionally there are double standards since we do not go to the Bible to understand some forms of political violence related to Christian religious groups. Most academics have moved away from this first approach and have developed a second one in which religion is a proxy for dependent variables which are the real reasons for political violence: such as social or economic grievances, failed states, or external political interferences.

French scholars Gilles Kepel and Olivier Roy's contradictory interpretations of radicalisation of European Muslims exemplify these two opposite positions. On one hand, Gilles Kepel adopts the independent variable approach, and argues that the major cause of radicalisation is Islam; whereas for Olivier Roy on the other hand radicalisation is the result of social anomies.

While these two approaches have some relevance, they should not be seen as exclusive. Prof. Cesari proposed to avoid this polarisation by taking an entire different route, and looking at the nation state as a framework to understand politicisation of religions in general and Islam in particular.

It means that modern collective identities have been shaped within the national framework. In simple words, how do we say "WE"?; today is the result of different layers of education and socialisation within this particular space called the nation, which has changed all identities including the religious ones. The nation state is by definition a secular political project that has transformed all religious

debates and values for individuals and for society. There is a tendency among western scholars to see religion as a private personal affair because of the specific history of religion in Western Europe. But this has not always been the case. Furthermore data show that even in Europe it is not accurate to limit religion to personal belief in the light for example of existing tensions about the legitimacy of the hijab and burqa in the public space.

The primary role of the state is to regulate social behaviours within the national community. Such regulation may interfere with alternative collective identities and the fact that people are not only citizens, but also part of cultural, ethnic, and religious groups. As a result, conflicts can rise when their “other” collective identities challenge or do not fit within the acceptable social behaviours sanctioned by the state in the national community.

In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that religion is not only belief, but also belonging and behaving. That is why deradicalisation programs that focus on changing beliefs are usually not successful. The main reason is that most radical groups do not focus on belief but rather tend to accentuate the belonging (how do you belong? To what do you belong?) and behaving (what does this mean in the way you behave?) dimensions of religion.

This is particularly striking in the case of ISIS. The Islamic state has the ambition to regulate people’s behaviours like any totalitarian state. It does not care what people believe. What is important is that citizens/believers should behave in a certain way in the public space. For instance, the young men and women who join radical groups in the West are not acting based on belief; in fact, most of them do not have any religious background or experience. They are acting because the narrative and the vision of ISIS or Al Qaeda touch on the questions of “how do I behave” and to “who do I belong?”, often opposing belonging to the nation state and belonging to the Ummah. (see resources at [euro-islam.info](http://euro-islam.info) for more information on these trajectories).

What is the Ummah? As a modern concept, it is defined as the global community of Muslim believers. However, in the Muslim Empires and until the Imperial encounters with the West, the Ummah was the totality of territories under the authority of the Caliphate, which entailed multiple languages, cultures and religions (unlike what ISIS proclaims).

The secular nationalists within Muslim lands were a very small elite who knew that most of the mobilisation on the ground against the colonial powers came from people for whom Islam, more than culture or language, was the defining feature of their political community. So, although these westernised elites from Turkey to Iraq or Tunisia to mention a few, were not really religious believers, they understood that they could not build a nation without including the belonging to Islam. Therefore,

the postcolonial nation-states were established as what Prof. Cesari called hegemonic Muslim states.

Hegemonic Islam occurred in three major ways:

- 1) the nationalisation of institutions, clerics and places of worship of one particular trend of Islam (for example Sunni over Shia);
- 2) the redefinition and adjustment of Sharia to the modern legal system, as well as inclusion of Islamic references into civil law (marriage/divorce), criminal law and as restriction of freedom of speech (blasphemy/apostasy), based on the prescriptions of that particular brand of Islam;
- 3) the insertion of the doctrine of that religion into the public school curriculum beyond religious instruction, that is in national history textbooks and civic education.

All hegemonic Muslim states have put some elements of Islamic law in the secular state and have adopted Islam as the main regulator of national identity (except Indonesia, Senegal and Tunisia post Jasmine Revolution).

In conclusion, when formulating programs against radicalisation, it is important to consider context, action and reaction. Prof. Cesari's major take away was that it is crucial to take into account the cultural and national backgrounds of radicalised actors, particularly how Islam has been included into the public cultures of the countries they come from. Additionally, when looking at processes of radicalisation, the belonging aspect should be taken seriously. The less individuals feel like they belong to the main stream political community, the more vulnerable they are to transnational groups that provide alternative and positive belongings.

JULY 25, 2017

# SESSION 1

## **A TALE OF TWO CITIES: IMPACT OF MEDIA REPORTING ON TERRORISM (MOLENBEEK AND ISLINGTON)**

CHAIRER BY DR. VIRGINIE ANDRE  
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA



## MOLENBEEK: THE CONSEQUENCES OF A HYPER MEDIATISATION

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**SARAH TURINE**

Molenbeek Council, Belgium

Molenbeek is a commune of Brussels with 100,000 residents and is part of what is called the poor crescent of Brussels. Around the small, wealthy, historically rich and touristy heart of Brussels, there is the poor crescent – the crescent is made up of all the suburbs that have always welcomed immigrants as well as working classes which came to work in the factories dotted around the fringes of the city. Little by little, the city increased in size so that around this poor crescent wealthy areas developed. So unlike in other parts of the world, the poor areas are located in the heart of the city. Molenbeek is one of these cities. Like most poor neighbourhoods it has such problem as high unemployment, high school drop out rate and criminality. Historically, these areas welcomed wave after wave of immigrants. It is one of Brussels' suburbs where most of the Moroccan population has settled, following an agreement signed with Morocco in 1964. Even though the population is very diverse, most of the population is from the North African community in general and from Morocco in particular.

Following the attacks in Paris in November 2015, the Molenbeek community has found itself at the heart of the media storm. This media hype has had a whole series of serious negative impacts on the local community and the workings of the municipality. Turine identified 5 impacts.

Disruption of social work - Significant numbers of journalists invaded the public space, monopolised the attention of municipality workers, forcing them to answer their questions. Naturally this disrupted the municipality's other work - not only their work as elected council members and spokespersons but also their work in participating in various local projects.

The second unfortunate consequence was that this media hype gave a distorted impression of Molenbeek municipality, a highly simplistic snapshot for the mass media. Molenbeek had become a hot bed of « jihadists ». It had a negative impact on young people's self-esteem and reputation. Turine explained: "if you're young, your name is Mohamed, you come from Molenbeek and you include all of this in your CV; it is very unlikely that you will find work". Discrimination naturally tends to follow.

But beyond all this, the third negative consequence is the media looking for controversial issues rather than positive ones in order to improve their ratings. What the media are looking for is hype, and what generates hype, unfortunately, is not positive news but rather issues that are controversial. So when the reporters or politicians are searching for a catch phrase, they are deliberately feeding the controversy. Every little local news stories were brought to the attention of the media and thus reinforced the negative image of the municipality, as well as divisions and tensions between residents and the media, feeding a climate of fear and lack of trust.

What is needed now is to forge this links anew, recreate trust between residents and the media. There is a massive shared responsibility. How do we make positive news 'sexy' for the media? The media and the reporters realised the effect the hyper mediatisation had on the municipality, and reporters came to film some positive stories. But this type of reporting does not pass the hype test. In the end, these stories were ignored.

The fourth highly negative effect comes from the disparity between the news reported and the actual content of the interviews, many people in Molenbeek answered honestly to journalists' questions and later found out about how the matter had been reported. They felt that what they had said had been taken out of context, or it had provided a highly simplistic view of their municipality. They felt betrayed by some of the journalists involved. This had the effect of reinforcing their mistrust towards traditional media and strengthening the appeal of various conspiracy and plot theories. All these elements can be used to foster doubt because young people themselves realised there was a such a big divide between what they were saying to the media and what the media were putting in their news stories. At the end of the day, the media hype has really contributed to increasing mistrust towards the media and therefore towards society mainstream views.

Finally, the fifth negative consequence of this media hype was the tension and violence created by the massive journalist presence which were reinforced by fictional reportings. In some instances, some journalists ended up being the event and creating the news themselves.

In conclusion, today we live in an information society. Along with the mass media, there are also highly prevalent social media that operate like a magnifying glass amplifying any events that do occur. Hence, the media have a strong responsibility to ensure towards this amplifying effect to ensure this amplifying effect does not cause any harm.

## MOLENBEEK, A JIHADIST HOTBED? BELGIAN YOUTH FACING THE HYPER MEDIATISATION OF A CITY

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

#### NABIL FALLAH

Youth Volunteer and Founder of Molenbeek Youth  
Talent Contest Street, Belgium

Particularly active in his community in Molenbeek and in Brussels, Nabil Fallah wanted to give back to the community and particularly assist the new generation and perhaps feed their ambition and their talent. Through his work and commitment, Fallah also wanted to change the poor image of Molenbeek depicted by the media as a high crime area. In his experience, Molenbeek is a friendly and helpful community where everybody knows their neighbours and where the young help the elderly.

This is in complete contradiction with the stigmatising media depiction of Molenbeek youth, which presents them as rebellious or as delinquents. In fact, the youth are often left out of the equation, and are never interviewed. It is unfair to give such a bad image of young people in general. From then on, the relationship between youth and journalists became more and more difficult, as they know that anything they may have to say will be twisted.

So, what are the consequences on the Molenbeek youth? The stigmatising images were a heavy burden for many. They became less confident in themselves. They were often unable to find a job or housing. Therefore, they feel safer in their own community and prefer to stay among themselves. For Fallah, this is when the youth become more vulnerable to radicalisation, particularly from a psychological point of view, as they feel excluded or useless. The recruiters offer an alternative to these negative experiences. The rhetoric is very efficient: "Come and join us, we are a family. We can gain a place in paradise". Unfortunately, after several years of exposure to this rhetoric, some youth became indoctrinated and some committed atrocious acts and others went to Syria to fight in order to be forgiven or all else to gain financial benefit. This was perceived as some sort of heroism.

Fallah explained that unlike some of these youth he has had a different life journey: he had some education, his parents' care and attention, and several sport activities. He had a wide range of interests, which he had to nurture and he began to be very active in his community, particularly with young people.

A person wearing a grey beanie, a denim jacket, and dark pants is captured in mid-air, performing a parkour move. They are in a large, brightly lit tunnel with white structural beams. The person's arms are outstretched, and their legs are in a dynamic pose. A small orange graphic element, consisting of two vertical bars, is positioned above the text.

## "SO, WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES ON THE MOLENBEEK YOUTH?"

Working with Molenbeek youth, he realised there was significant basic talents in his municipality. This realisation led him to create in 2013 an organisation called "Street Talent" which enables young people to feel accomplished through a unique experience. This initiative had two impacts on the youth: firstly, the opportunity to develop their own talent and fulfil themselves, and secondly, the opportunity to do something together on a voluntary basis. For Fallah, this is very important as it can be a calling for them given their difficult background and motivate them to become actors in society, tell them they can contribute within their own small world of Molenbeek.

Finally, this is what Fallah hopes for Molenbeek, is to show to media positive actions. If the media are not interested, Fallah with the young people of Molenbeek will continue on his path to helping his community.

## HOW THE MEDIA FUELS THE RISE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE UK: THE CASE OF FINSBURY PARK MOSQUE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**MOHAMMED KOZBAR**

Finsbury Park Mosque, UK

Recent research by the University of Cambridge has shown that mainstream media reporting about Muslim communities is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility toward Muslims in Britain. Claiming that the media has played no role in the growth of Islamophobia and the stigmatisation of Muslims is no longer a tenable position.

Recent studies showed that more than half of Britons see Islam as a threat to western liberal democracy, and while over 30% of young children believe Muslims are taking over England, hate crimes against Muslims continue to rise. Anti-Muslim crimes and Islamophobia are up by 70% in the last year according to the Metropolitan Police, and it is clear that these are mainly caused by the media negative coverage of stories about Muslim communities in the UK.

Finsbury Park Mosque, which is located in Islington in North London, has been a target for sectors of the British media in the past few years. This comes despite the comprehensive changes that were carried out to the mosque more than 12 years ago, hence transforming it from being a hostile platform, to becoming an open, welcoming and harmonious centre for the entire local area. Presently, it is not just a mosque where one can pray, but it is also a community centre, which opens its doors to everyone regardless of their faith, background or gender. Yet, the mosque continues to be referred to by the media, according to its image pre-2005 when it was occupied by Abu Hamza and his supporters who went on to spread hatred and division among the local and nationwide communities.

The media uses different words to qualify violent acts committed by Muslims and non-Muslims, focusing on a violence subset of the Muslim community, associating the criminal minority to the majority of the community. The media representation of Islam and Muslims is mainly about conflicts, fuelling the negative image people already have of Islam and Muslims in the UK.

Kozbar suggested that we should learn from what communities and faith groups such as blacks, Jews, Irish and French Protestants have experienced in the past. Those people were labeled as extremists, outsiders and worse, and today Muslims are stigmatised in the same way. Some sections of the media



promote inaccurate stories about Muslims, which make some among the general public think that Muslims are somehow taking over the country, and therefore deserve to be the target for hate, bigotry and vitriol. How would people respond to this sentiment?

Media outlets such as the Independent and the Guardian highlighted the community's concern about the fact that some British newspapers are regularly accused of publishing consistent streams of inaccurate stories about Muslims. This is a positive start to tackle the issue at hand, but some of the damage cannot be undone.

The fact that the majority of media outlets cover terrorist attacks committed by Muslims far more extensively and intensely than those committed by others, is in itself a question that the media must address.

As the Muslim community have assumed a solemn responsibility to engage positively with the media and recognise that not all media outlets are hostile toward Muslims, the media should also be held to account when they report inaccurate and damaging stories about Muslims and others with irreparable consequences. In the circumstances, editors of all media organisations also need to own up to this problem within their industry and take meaningful steps to resolve it.

## ISLAMOPHOBIA: INSTITUTIONAL DENIAL VERSUS GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**ROKHAYA DIALLO**

Journalist, France

Rokhaya Diallo addressed the way French media speak about Islam and the way it is used in France to frame national identity. She showed how Islamophobia is negated by institutions and the gap between what is relayed in the news and what is happening on the street.

French newspapers always depict the violent aspects of Islam, presenting images of Muslims at war, all this done by well-viewed press (Le Point, L'Express, L'Observateur, Valeurs Actuelles). These have a wide coverage on the streets of Paris. Even if the numbers of Muslims in France is low (only 8%), the French population perception is of that France is becoming a Muslim country compared to other European countries. This is an overreach that is fed by this kind of image propagated by the media. The media are spreading the idea that Muslims are invading violently the country. Also, this view is

reinforced by some intellectuals.

Diallo presented two news reporting events examples, which presented sharp contrasts in the news coverage of the event. The first example was taken from the newspaper the Figaro, which described the attack in Oslo, resulting in 78 casualties. The article described the perpetrator of the attack as the “killer of Oslo”, did not give out his name, and described his action as having no logic, and blaming his action on mental illness. In the case of the attacks committed by Mohamed Merah, the same newspaper also reported on the attack and gave out his name and branded him immediately as an Islamist terrorist.

Following the 2015 Charlie Hebdo and the kosher supermarket attacks, French President François Hollande declared the year 2015 as the year against racism and anti-Semitism at the national level and this process continued in the following years. The problem is that the first concerned by this process were people of a Muslim background who were not in the least associated to this process. This led to the set up of a Foundation of Islam for France, the appointed director was a former Minister, an eminent politician but a non-Muslim who had made a series of controversial statements. This appointment was perceived as a provocative act and to showed a lack of acknowledgement of the competency of French Muslims and who could have been appointed.

Looking at Islam and French Identity, President Sarkozy was the first and only one to create a ministry of “Immigration & National Identity” and launched a national debate on “national identity”. The debate was focused only on Islam. Under President Hollande, Prime Minister Manuel Valls continued the debate and put the question of Islam at the centre of his preoccupations saying, “the most important thing is not unemployment but the identity battle, the cultural battle”. This led to many controversies such as the presence of halal meat in prisons or schools. All these minor controversies were put to the fore of the debate in France. This meant there were two parallel worlds in France - the one reporting the vision of the state where there is no Islamophobia, and on another one experienced in the streets where Islamophobia is a day-to-day practice.

Diallo concluded with a positive note on the role of social media and how this has allowed at the same time in France to bring a different kind of response to these controversies and to promote a certain kind of activism. It brings a new voice to the mainstream media and may compel the media to treat other questions of islamophobia.

JULY 25, 2017

# SESSION 2

## MEDIA BROADCASTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTRE- MISM

CHAIRER BY DR. DEBRA SMITH  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

## MOLEMZAP: A COUNTER INITIATIVE TO MAINSTREAM MEDIA REPORTING

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**JOUNAID HAYANI**  
MolemZap, Belgium

When doing a Google search with the keyword Molenbeek, the returning news search results are all centred around topics of counter radicalisation, Brussels' terrorist attacks, the challenges of living in Molenbeek and criminality. These headlines are generating stigmatisation. Hayani noted a news search results had the headline "Once ISIS is defeated, you will still have Molenbeek".

Hayani has studied journalism and worked briefly as a journalist and as such, he is very well aware of the journalism code of conduct, which should be respected while reporting. When he analysed the news reports on Molenbeek, it was clear that few reports followed this code of conduct. The first element of the code is to inform while respecting the truth, information must be verified as true, accurate and should be working towards common public interest. Unfortunately, this code of conduct has been put aside and violated whenever journalists have been reporting about Molenbeek - information is often inaccurate or partial. The second element is independence and interviews should not be bought off. In the case of Molenbeek, Hayani explained how journalists had been disrespectful towards families, and paid people off for footages and interviews.

In his 2004 book, Laurent Gervereau spoke about media terrorism, which he described as the exclusion by media of certain information, dictated by certain images, which created in turn some scenario which feeds the imaginary of people and create terror in the mind of people; and, ultimately forces people to think in a particular way. According to Gervereau, media can itself exercise a power, which is very similar to terrorism. Media can invent events and news; they look for results that can be the outcome of what they wish in terms of their agenda. The speed of the information has increased and media are constantly trying to anticipate events. Hayani observed that the state of play in 2017 has not changed from what Gervereaux described in 2004, if anything it has intensified.

In response to this phenomenon, the initiative MolemZap was created in Brussels with the aim to counter false information reported by the media around the Molenbeek youth. It is independently funded through private donation and self-funding. There are currently 8 young people who participate in the project aged 18 years old to 23 years old. The youth involved in the project are trained and

generate positive news about their municipality. Hayani explained that the project not only counteracted mainstream media but it injected new confidence in the youth. Through the project, the youth have the opportunity to exchange, to meet new people, and to travel.

Finally, Molempap is now followed by the local Brussels television station, and stories were published in Belgian newspapers about the initiative.

## THE LACK OF DIVERSITY ON FRENCH TELEVISION

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**KEIRA MAAMERI**

Film Director, France

Keira Maameri produced and directed documentaries to give a voice to those that are not heard, to those who change frontiers in their field, but who remain invisible. In 2001, she released her first documentary, titled “To Our Missings”, about six rapper musicians, their mourning, their song-writing process, about their emotion, about giving a voice to the pain and healing through it. At the time, rap music was given a bad reputation, so Maameri decided to change that image through her work. Through this first film, she found she could shed a different light, on people and issues that were depicted unfavourably in the mainstream media.

In 2005, she produced another film called “Keep Hanging On To Our Dreams”, which gave a voice to female hip-hop artists, their femininity, their strength, and their lack of visibility in a world dominated by men. In 2011, « Don't Panik » was released. This third documentary still takes place in the world of hip-hop but looked at links between rap and Islam, and reached out to artists from all over the world. The main question of this documentary was “ How can you be Muslim and make music? How to reconcile your passion and your faith?”.

In 2016, she completed her latest film called «Street Literature» which talks about French authors of migrant background. In France, being a writer is very prestigious. In this film, Maameri wanted to bring forward new faces. They are Arabic, black, Muslim - they are from working classes. They are popular and are published in important publishing houses, but despite this popularity, they are still not considered like French authors.

In other words, Maameri explained that her work is about French diversity as she has experienced it, as she has not seen it expressed in mainstream media. In 2017, the French Audiovisual Council (CSA) published statistics. In French fiction programs, 17% of people are people of colour and among those 17%, only 10% have leading roles. The rest of them are only secondary roles. In 10% of the main roles, 25% of those play negative roles such as robbers, murderers, rapists, homeless people or even polygamous people. In many ways, Maameri explained how it was frustrating to see how when this diversity is shown on television she does not recognise herself or the reality of the ground in television programs. In the light of a complete lack of diversity in French media, Maameri wanted to offer a different vision of diversity, a positive vision, and a complex vision. She encourages media to become more diverse and inclusive and to represent the reality of the French population.

## MEDIATED JIHADISM AMONGST THAI MUSLIM YOUTH AND THE MEDIA RADICALISING EFFECT

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. VIRGINIE ANDRE**

Deakin University, Australia

Dr. Virginie Andre first presented a video titled “What is My Jihad?” which was developed as part of the project she is conducting for the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission of Thailand. This video aimed at giving a voice to the diverse Muslim communities in Thailand and redefining what their jihad actually is. Andre argued that this was an important positive alternative counter discourse, especially in light of the increasing interest in violent extremism and propaganda among young Muslims and the absence of any alternative or counter narratives.

Dr. Andre ran a series of focus groups and workshops across the country with Muslims communities and more particularly with young people and found that ISIS propaganda exerted some kind of fascination and questioning amongst many young Muslims in Thailand (inside and outside the conflict area of the 3 southern border provinces of Thailand). Dr. Andre cautioned however that questioning did not mean support but rather fascination and questions about the propaganda itself. Problematically, these questions are left unanswered, as Muslim religious leaders in Thailand are very much absent from this conversation.

To address this, in 2017, Dr. Andre provided a platform through workshops for young Muslims to meet with religious leaders across the country, and have open and frank discussions. The dialogue evolved around topics of religion, extremism and ISIS, governance, media and social media, identity



and sense of belonging. Dr. Andre only addressed the questions of religion and extremism, and more specifically the notion of jihad; and how this notion is being mediated by media.

On the question of religion, the participants indicated how religion played an important role in their lives. It is perceived as a positive structural force in life and it is also providing a way of life and a moral code of conduct to young Muslims in Thailand. Religion is also perceived as a way of practising good citizenship.

On the question of extremism, violent extremism in Thailand is often mentioned in the relation to and in the context of the conflict in southern Thailand. There is a very small minority of violent extremists in Thailand. Dr. Andre pointed out that the influence of ISIS across the country also needed now to be considered, as indication of willingness to leave and join ISIS if opportunities arose were observed. The Muslim communities have an increasing concern of growing influence of extremism in Thailand. However, in understanding how violent extremism may be affecting young Muslims in the country, there is a generational gap in that understanding. Religious leaders have either ignored or denied the fascination that violent extremist propaganda such as ISIS is exerting on young Muslims.

There is a vulnerability of young people around the exposure to extremist material such as ISIS and Patani propaganda. Dr. Andre who has studied the southern conflict for over a decade has observed the evolution of the militant narrative in southern Thailand and outside the region. In 2004 through to 2006, the militant narrative was influenced by jihadism in line with some of the concepts of Al Qaeda and globalised in the context of the southern conflict. What started to emerge in 2016 and 2017, was the increasing use and injection of ISIS symbolism in the Patani militant narrative and, this, argued Andre is impacting also on Muslims outside that area.



On the question of jihad, young people emphasised primarily in their definition and articulation of jihad on conflict, violence and war. There was very little reference to the greater jihad. Most of the information they had about jihad did not come from religious school or in the religious text but from traditional media.

Dr. Andre explained that significant attention has been focused on social media and the rise of social media; and how social media is generating particular propaganda and narratives. In the context of jihad in Thailand, the understanding of young Muslims of the term has been shaped by traditional media. “The first time they hear about jihad is through local traditional media in Thailand, but also in international media”, stated Dr. Andre. So this indicates that the particular violent representation of jihad that is propagated by traditional media is producing this mediated notion of jihad, which at the same time is also reinforcing that violent jihad propagated by violent extremist groups such as ISIS. This is problematic as there are no alternative narratives for young people to refer to, other than the media and extremist representations of jihad, ie. violence, war and conflict.

Finally, Dr. Andre concluded that traditional media have a potential radicalising effect. Therefore, while reclaiming jihad from violent extremists is important, it is equally important to reclaim jihad from mainstream media, and building a positive alternative narrative in partnership with communities.

## WELL INTENTIONED COMMUNICATIONS GONE WRONG? A PRACTITIONER’S PERSPECTIVE”

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**UMMIT SETHI**

Lapis Communication, UAE

The landscape of terrorism is a dynamic one. There is no room for stagnant thinking and the challenge is to continually assess and understand how terrorists are exploiting their environment – whether that be a physical space or a virtual media one.

Ummit Sethi works in an organisation that uses communications to bring about positive change in some very challenging environments. In a field as potentially fraught as addressing violent extremism, he is acutely aware of what the stakes are. One clear objective has always remained: “that you do not make the situation worse”. And “worse” could be a litany of things – from feeding into the narrative of the extremists, to stoking recruitment for them, to putting in jeopardy the lives of your team.



Orlando Sentinel

OrlandoSentinel.com

FINAL EDITION WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 12, 2001

FOUNDED 1876

50 CENTS

AMERICA: DAY OF TERROR

# 'Today, our nation saw evil'

Worst-ever attack on U.S. will not break nation's resolve

## WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

It is an open-ended question but it goes to the heart of a paradox that many fail to appreciate.



The primary tactic of violent extremist groups is terrorism – and this requires the contribution of media to give it any meaning. As a communications practitioner, Sethi also utilises the media to achieve his goals. It is clear that the media actions he takes, however well-intentioned, could easily fuel the agenda of the very group he is seeking to undermine. Thus, it is critically important we understand how these groups leverage the media to illicit a desired response.

We must remember that terrorists have very little ability to affect change on their own. Their insurgencies cannot overthrow governments or monarchies; they cannot invade Western states or affect our values and democracies – unless we let them.

Terrorism is a tactic, it is a mechanism used by the terrorists to capture attention, to recruit, to motivate a base, to attract support and financing.

Our reaction to terrorists is conditioned by the publicity that is given to them and the value we ascribe to their cause and narratives in our own responses. The reaction they are invariably seeking is to incite fear; after all, the institution of terrorism is all about fear.

There have been numerous studies into the state of fear. But from Sethi's perspective, what is interesting to note is the differentiation between fear itself and the state of anxiety. Fear is actually experienced in the conscious mind, it is where one labels an experience as an emotion, or at least categorizes it with other experiences that feel similar. Where fear is a response to a present threat, anxiety is a response to something one anticipates might be a threat in the future - it is a worry about something that has not happened and may never happen.

Sethi argued that this is a key point: it is the experience of uncertainty. Unquestionably, there are plenty of media-fuelled anxieties: that one's country is under attack, that refugees are coming to rape our women or take our jobs. Anxiety is absolutely prone to being manipulated. The exploitation of it for gain comes in the form of the solution that is then provided. That solution is to offer psychological relief for the anxiety created by uncertainty.

Extremist, radical ideologies offer simple solutions to complex problems – a black and white, binary worldview absent of the uncomfortable shades of grey that one must deal with in the real world. Similarly, in the world of populist politics, for the pursuit of political gain, the issue of migration is being conflated with terrorism to fuel anxieties over security. The proposed solutions are extreme, absolute non-ambiguous: closed borders, the creation of walls, withdrawal from multi-lateral unions and pacts, and the vilification of a civilization as a single enemy.

The issues of terrorism and populist politics have become inextricably linked - both exploiting the same vulnerabilities of fear and anxiety; and reliant on media - complicit or not - to play its part in reminding us of our own vulnerability to dangerous forces beyond our control.

Western media faces a paradox, recognising the risks associated with providing the oxygen of publicity to terrorists while having to weigh up the responsibility of reporting the news, and what people are concerned about. It is not a new problem, but it does face new challenges in a media landscape today that feeds off strong emotive narratives and competes fiercely for audience attention - and advertising dollars.

However, what differs between journalists and communications practitioners is that communications practitioners have control over what form their approaches can take. Unlike journalists, they are not confined to reporting the news. Their focus is on the end effect, not the message. Given that, it is important to recognise where efforts might make the problem worse, and where it might bring about unintended consequences.

In the past four years, Sethi has witnessed, first-hand, governments seeking to confront the radical ideology espoused by groups like Daesh through counter argument and logical, rational reasoning. He believes they are missing the point entirely. By holding up our side of a moral argument, or placing pressure on Muslim communities to condemn un-Islamic acts by groups like Daesh, for example, government somehow believe that this will garner the support of the disgusted majority of Muslims and turn-off potential recruits. It is not only unnecessary, but entirely provocative and motivational. In reality, it is precisely this kind of flattering and glamorous affirmation that inspires and reassures recruits and home-grown jihadists that they are engaged in something important, a historical struggle to protect Islam from apostates, regimes, establishments and Western-styled democracies. And it isolates Muslim communities further. Of course these communities condemn the acts, not because the acts are un-Islamic, but because they are inhumane, barbaric and immoral. Success against these groups is not the triumph of reason and common sense.

In conclusion, counter narratives should not utilise fear, or stoke anxiety around terrorist threats and groups. They should not provide those groups with anything to push back on or feed into their narratives or agenda - and, given this, we are forced to consider that perhaps alternative and not counter narratives are the wiser strategy.

In the high stakes world of unintended consequences from well-intentioned communications, it is crucial to be as judicious as possible.

## SPECIAL LECTURE: BREAKING THE ISIS BRAND: TRAJECTORIES INTO AND BACK OUT OF TERRORISM AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITING OF ISIS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

### PROFESSOR ANNE SPECKHARD

International Centre for the Study of Violent Extremism/ Georgetown University, USA

Over the last 15 years, Prof. Anne Speckhard interviewed about 600 terrorists and if they are dead she has interviewed their family members. Her interest has always been to understand what puts a person on the terrorist trajectory. What are those factors? Could we have prevented it? When the person is on this terrorist trajectory, can we turn him or her out of it? Can we reintegrate them into society?

What are the lessons learned from talking to this many terrorists? According to Prof. Speckhard, there are four important elements that are usually necessary and sufficient to make a terrorist:

- » There is always a group because it is very rare that an individual becomes a terrorist without the help and inspiration of a group; it is about the belonging and acting on the belonging and the organisation that a group provides in terms of targeting, equipping, motivating, ideology, etc.
- » The ideology - what allows one to activate into violence against civilians?
- » There is social support – one needs other people to reflect to you that it is appropriate for you to join. In the realm of social support, when people belong to a terrorist group, how do they join? In the past, one had to join a cell such as Al Qaeda, less so with ISIS. What is new with ISIS, is that social support does not come through a series of training and travel, social support comes from the Internet. Cells can be brought together from different places at a time. They can come together virtually and they do not need to vet each other anymore. Consequently, we see more and more mentally ill and unstable people joining and being used by terrorist groups who can do so virtually without compromising their own security.
- » On the individual level - what is resonating with the group? What is resonating with this ideology? In other words, what is hurting inside that makes one to take this leap into terrorism. While in the past it was a slow and gradual process, today we see quicker activation and quicker leaps. In a conflict zone, revenge and resilience are easy to activate. In a non-conflict zone,



revenge and resilience are easy to activate. In a non-conflict zone, the variables are very complex. It all comes together differently for different people but it has a lot to do with discrimination, relationships, how news is being reported, geopolitics, frustration and anger, etc.

Importantly, Prof. Speckhard explained that all these variables eventually come together and put an individual on the terrorist track but an individual would not get anywhere if these variables were not active and there was no group, no ideology and no social support to activate the individual. The four elements work together.

Looking at ISIS, what is new today? ISIS is a group with a global reach and outlook. In the past, groups were nationalistic whereas now there are groups, which try to send out a message that they are global and acting for the good of the whole Muslim world. They have managed to have mass mobilisation like never seen in the past. It is also the first time a group has successfully assembled itself into something that looks like a state. Furthermore, Prof. Speckhard argued that people could very rapidly mobilise into a terror group if they had already accepted a lot of tenets of the group (such as the practice of martyrdom).

Finally, Prof. Speckhard started in 2016 the ISIS Defectors Interviews Project-Breaking the ISIS Brand. In that project she and her colleagues interviewed 106 ISIS defectors from Syria, Iraq, Western Europe, Central Asia and the Balkans and 21 parents of those who went to ISIS, most captured on video. Her team has been editing the videos into short video clips to load on the Internet to fight ISIS's online recruiting. The videos are subtitled in the 21 languages ISIS recruits in 24/7 and being focus tested and placed in ISIS Telegram chat rooms. The project is dedicated to breaking the ISIS brand and flooding the Internet with counter narratives to fight with what ISIS is saying about the "Caliphate" being the utopian panacea for all problems. They are currently being used by police, intelligence, prison workers, counselors and teachers on five continents.

JULY 25, 2017

# SESSION 3

## ISIS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

CHAIRIED BY PROF. MICHELE GROSSMAN  
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

## THE VIRTUAL RISE AND RISE OF ISIS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**BRUCE MCFARLANE**

Law Enforcement Practitioner, Australia

The drivers of violent extremism are far from new concepts. However, new theories should be explored within the online environment and the nature of violence in terrorism.

What is the difference between digital migrants and the digital natives? According to McFarlane, digital migrants knew life before the Internet and there was the belief that the online space was going to solve all our problems. Unfortunately, it has not quite eventuated in that way. Digital natives such as teenagers, on the other hand, do not know life before the internet and it is important for law enforcement, policy-makers and academics to understand this. For digital natives, there is no notion of online or offline; the two are conflated together. In his conversations with teenagers, McFarlane observed that teenagers do not have this concept of offline. Online social media is part of their psyche and their identity.

In the online space, there has been a dramatic shift in the age of violent extremists participants. In the past decade within the Australian context and the Western context, participants were in their late to mid twenties or early thirties; either traveling overseas or committing violent acts locally. In the last five years, with the advent of ISIS, the age group dramatically dropped with participants being as young as 13 or 14 years old interacting in the online space for the purpose of carrying out violent extremist acts, either domestically or abroad. It is not a new phenomenon only to Australia but also for the rest of the world. It can also be argued that these teenagers are desensitised to violent extremist acts; as a matter of fact terrorism has been part of their lives since post 9/11. Terrorist groups are using these new factors to target teenagers more effectively, using online propaganda.

The online production of ISIS mirrors the geographical trend of ISIS being at its peak in late 2014 and early 2015 and then losing territories in 2017. There is a lag time with the diminishing output with the diminishing geographical space. Looking at online production, Aaron Zelin has identified that the quantity and quality of online propaganda released by violent extremist jihadi groups, may be a good indication of the health of the organisation itself. A steady decline in online production (in terms of content and number of output) from 2016 onward has been observed, and Zelin proposed two

explanations for it - the targeting and killing of media operatives and the loss of ISIS physical territory.

The output is only one factor. What is significant are the content and the messaging of that output. McFarlane argued that by studying the content and the messaging, we can gather a good understanding of the direction of the organisational strategy, but more importantly on the change or the shift of that strategy. In 2017, Charlie Winter produced a report focusing on the significant thematical shift over time in the online content that ISIS produced. Winter found that in the summer of 2015, when online propaganda was at its peak, the main thematic message was to promote its caliphate utopia. By 2017, the trend had changed; the largest proportion of ISIS propaganda focused on warfare themes, both local and abroad. In terms of propaganda content messaging, it shifted in 2017 from a call to join and fight with ISIS locally to fight in other regions.

McFarlane also discussed the notion of extreme reality. Based on his own observations in the last few years, nowadays everything has to be extreme. He gave examples of TV programs such as Extreme Fishing, Extreme Chef or the video game Call of Duty. He argued that we have become an audience that is no longer satisfied with simple games such as Wheel of Fortunes. An utopian lifestyle promoted by ISIS probably does not resonate with teenagers so much; and this is why we also find extreme violence in their propaganda to cater to a different kind of audience.

Extremist groups use the internet the same way we do; they use it for communicating as well as for entertainment and to do research. Extremist groups are mirroring the code of mainstream media to attract western teenagers. ISIS have capitalised on violent narratives used in western movies and video games.

McFarlane argued that this need for extreme violence in ISIS propaganda is a manifestation of the pornification of violence. Pornification can be defined as the increasing occurrence and acceptance of sexual themes and explicit imagery in popular or mainstream culture. Pornography is about power over someone else. Therefore, the pornification of violence is the power of violence over some other person.

So what has changed from Jihad 2.0 to Jihad 3.0? Online social media has amplified the 'collective behaviour' phenomena where young disenfranchised men and women can seek out and interact with like-minded individuals online to further their cause either locally or abroad. ISIS has positioned itself as one of the most successful brands in a decade to satisfy that desire.

Finally, what should be done? There is a need to inoculate the youth against extremist messaging by educating children in practicing critical thinking skills.

## DISRUPTING DAESH: MEASURING TAKE-DOWN OF ONLINE TERRORIST MATERIAL AND ITS IMPACTS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROFESSOR MAURA CONWAY**

Dublin City University/VOX-Pol, Ireland

In 2017, a large number of Prime Ministers have said that they would put additional pressure on major social media platforms to respond to the violent extremist and terrorist content that is being hosted on these. This comes a little late as all major social media platforms have already begun to make efforts in this regard over the last number of years, and even champion online counter narratives. Twitter, in particular, has taken additional steps.

Twitter was the beloved platform of ISIS and their supporters, from approximately 2013-2014 right up to 2017. In her recent research, Prof. Conway aimed to measure the visibility of ISIS supporter accounts on the platform at the present time. She noted that it was really difficult as they were very hard to find. Why look at Twitter? 1/ This is the platform the most used and which is pointed to by policy-makers and others as being the real facilitator of IS and their supporters. 2/ It was the preferred platform of ISIS and their supporters. 3/ Twitter offers publicness. It is easier to conduct academic research on Twitter than it is on other social media platforms.

ISIS then, and ISIS now

In ISIS golden age in 2014 and to mid 2015, it had significant presence on Twitter. It had between 46,000 and 70,000 accounts existing on the platform between September and December 2015. This content was easy to locate; it could be searched and located with very well known keywords. Pro IS users were also very easily locatable via their avatar images which were very explicit in terms of their supporting IS. Over time it was also possible to find very specific hashtags that would direct to ISIS Twitter space. Once one became part of that Twitter scene, it was then possible to not only consume ISIS content but also to interact with ISIS supporters and their actual fighters on the platform. What ISIS had in 2014 and 2015 was a strong and supportive ideological community, the core of which was Twitter but also on a whole other range of social media platforms to which they linked. There was also a series of specialist sub-communities, such as female ISIS supporters or the Chechen subgrouping. There were sub-networks in various languages.

The disruption by Twitter began in mid 2015 to mid 2016. What happened over this time was a change from what had been sporadic waves of take down of accounts by Twitter by a really significant increase in account suspensions and take downs. They then began to disrupt the hashtags by taking down accounts that used particular hashtags. They also deleted the hashtags themselves. The cost of participation began to decrease at this time for ISIS supporters on Twitter. There was some resistance to this disruption because ISIS supporters had the realisation that Twitter was working very well for them precisely because of its publicness and it is a very heavily trafficked website as well as being preferred by young people. ISIS did resist this activity by establishing large numbers of accounts. Individual users would establish large numbers of accounts, as other accounts would be taken down. In this way, the community could be reconstituted. As result of the disruption, there was some relocation from ISIS supporters from the Twitter platform to Telegram from September 2015.

Prof. Conway argued that in 2017 a tipping point had been reached. The cost of ISIS supporters of continuing to engage on Twitter was simply too high. Accounts can be established and taken down within minutes. The strong emotionally supportive close ideological community that was in existence in 2014 and in 2015 and those associated sub-communities are now gone from Twitter. The ISIS community has relocated from Twitter to Telegram.

A common mistake that many researchers made is that they focused exclusively on Twitter, ignoring other platforms. Twitter is in fact a gateway to other social media platforms and to other online space. The top ten others spaces to which ISIS Twitter accounts were linking to in early 2017 to name a few were YouTube, Justpaste.it, Google Drive, Google Photo, SendVid, Archive.org, and Archive.is. There is a wider social media ecology within which the accounts are operating. Interestingly, Prof. Conway pointed out that were no links from Twitter to Telegram.



JULY 25, 2017

# SESSION 4

## COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTRE- MISM AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

CHAIRER BY PROF. GREG BARTON  
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

## SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE ON A PATH TO DE-RADICALISATION IN SECURING EMPLOYMENT

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**ABDELKADER RAILANE**  
COPEC, France

Abdelkader Railane talked about the work that he is doing with young people in supporting them at the local level, specifically in the process of caring and supporting young people who are deradicalising.

What is a local mission? It is structure at the local level that supports young people and try to take them towards employment and training. It also helps young persons in a holistic way whether they have health problems, family problems, mobility problems. They enable young people to be the agency of their own journey.

With the phenomenon of radicalisation, the local mission are now confronted to a new series of attitudes and behaviours of young people that challenges the work of the support team of the organisation. For instance, when a young person does not agree to shake the hand of someone of different gender such as the counsellor or refuses to take on a job in a restaurant that serves alcohol it creates new challenges in supporting these young people. The staff were not trained nor equipped to deal with these particular issues. Therefore, the team had to be trained and understand that these attitudes and behaviours are not personal attacks towards the practitioners but rather it is a product of their environment.

On the question of deradicalisation, Railane explained that when they have young people who come to their organisation for support and are in the process of deradicalising, they try to identify their stages of deradicalisation. This is important as a customised support plan will be developed for each young person. Following the conclusion of the clinical stage, the resocialisation stage will involve family support for the young person. This support needs to be provided in a customised way. Each young person has taken a different and specific individual path towards radicalisation. Building an understanding of the events that have precipitated the young person's radicalisation is important in order to develop an individualised support plan in disengaging from extremist violence.

In order to support the young person in its resocialisation, Railane explained that she or he will be

provided with training in order to obtain a qualification. What is interesting with young people who have been through a radicalisation process is that they have to be reminded that they have an ability to undergo training. Some learned a new language through their radicalisation such as Arabic, or developed a good knowledge of history and religion. In supporting the young person, the organisation tries to recover the level of competence that the young person has been able to develop during the radicalisation process (such as learning a new language) to build up his or her self-esteem so that she or he can move towards obtaining a qualification through training. Training is important in order to find employment. The young person needs to feel it is in a dynamic support approach in order to avoid that she or he ends up feeling isolated again. It is based on trust and constant follow up. Railane explained that one of their young clients said to him that it was easier for him to go to Syria than finding employment.

Unfortunately, this observation is true. In certain areas of France, the unemployment rate may be of 40% or more. It is a real scourge in some areas. Finding employment is extremely difficult, including training. Therefore it is important that when these young people are in this process they are provided with training that will lead them to real employment.

For Railane, it is important to fight exclusion. Finally, he argued that the most important is to give these youths a professional identity because very often they do not have any sort of identity. For some of them, this was the cause of their radicalisation. If we can give them a professional identity it means that they become visible in society; this is not unimportant because they then have a place in society.

## **STREET UK: SUCCESSFUL FRONTLINE AND COMMUNITY BASED PREVENTION; EARLY INTERVENTION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

### **CONFERENCE SPEAKER**

**ALYAS KARMANI**

Co-Director of STREET, UK

Whenever an incident takes place, wherever it is in the world, analysts come out and produce brilliant analysis post-event. But why do we not intervene earlier and break this cycle?

Karmani wants to prevent youth violence and called for more pro-activity. For him, there is a fundamental reason why there is no or little pro-activity; it is because we operate in safe parameters and recruiters do not. They understand vulnerability better than we do. They understand how to exploit



better than we do. They know how to target individuals who are vulnerable, who are susceptible better than we do.

There needs to be an understanding of the lived reality of young people, which is one that is dynamic and fluid and changes by the minute and by the hour. Things change very rapidly for young people. Karmani explained how difficult it is to do prevention work when the set up for the work within safe spaces does not take into account the lived realities of these young vulnerable people. For instance, with their current set up, he may be following one young person once a week for one hour and within that hour he has to counteract one hundred hours of indoctrination – “one hundred hours of immersion when they binge watch jihadi videos”.

The resources are not available to make good and holistic prevention work. The majority of the funding in CT and CVE is for reactive solution post event. Youth violence in the counter-terrorism context is a security issue and a criminal justice issue, and it is not seen as a public health or a social and emotional development issue. It needs to shift from a securitised issue and framed as a social and emotional development issue. The young people who are indoctrinated and exploited have profound trauma and well being issues. Karmani argued that until we understand this and put pro-activity in place, we will not be solving the issue.

ISIS is so successful among young people because of its ability to connect better. It is all about connection, and being present. Young people look for purpose, direction and belonging. Being present also

means that when a critical juncture in a young person's life we need to be present so that we can put her or him on the right direction. If we are going to be pro-active in stopping youth violence in early intervention, resources need to be developed to engage at these critical junctures. If young people can be inspired to do evil, they can also be inspired to do good. For Karmani, we have the narratives, the tools, the resources, the role models and the ability to inspire to actually make a difference.

Karmani warned against emboldening the extremist narrative by giving it more significance and importance. He gave the example of the case of a 19-year-old boy who was sentenced in the UK to 17 years of imprisonment for his involvement with ISIS, and how this case was cause for celebration for ISIS. It is a victory for ISIS as it shows our failure to be able to educate, to inspire and to change.

Finally, when speaking of early intervention, Karmini recommended that there is a need to operate in the areas where those young people are hard to reach right at the juncture where violence is going to take place, which he described the red no go zones. Most of the initiatives in youth violence early intervention are in the green space, which is the government sector. Unless, we are operating in the red space we are not doing prevention work. Unless, we know what the red space looks like and we are in the red space, actively pushing people a way, we will not push change.

## MYJIHAD: TAKING BACK ISLAM FROM MUSLIM AND ANTI-MUSLIM EXTREMISM ALIKE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**AHMED REHAB**

CAIR - Chicago, USA

Ahmed Rehab explained that the Muslim community needed to do more itself in terms of reclaiming what the normative meaning of jihad and other Islamic concepts mean and disseminating that understanding to the Muslim community and to the general public.

Imagine a person who has never heard of jihad and opens up their morning paper and reads "jihad strikes again". There will naturally be a strong association in the minds of the reader between the concept of "jihad" they otherwise know nothing about, and the wanton violence that wayward and deviant militants wreak on innocents. If the person has absolutely no knowledge of the normative use of jihad, the person will have an exclusive association of jihad and its misuse rather than contextualising what it really means and how it is being abused. Religion is like anything else. If it can be used; it can

used; it can be abused. One cannot really begin, as an academician, as a media personnel, as a politician, or even as the public to understand the abuse of something if one first does not understand its regular normative normal usage. There is not enough coverage or knowledge of every day Islam and its concepts and how they are used peacefully. So when the usage is exclusively to the abuse of Islam and its concepts, that abuse becomes the sole story of Islam and its concepts.

This is where the context of jihad is today. There is no denial of misuse and the abuse of jihad or religious ideology as pretence to terrorise. There is a need to explain and reclaim the normative understanding of jihad. If the terms, Islam and jihad, are exclusively defined to these aberrational acts than one fails to understand the fuller and bigger picture.

In terms of language, language is important because ideas are important. Language is the only mechanism through which we not only communicate ideas but really formulate them in the first place. It is the building block of ideas. If we speak of communication as the transference of ideas, then we speak of language as the vehicle. All this is to say that language matters, meanings of words matter. If language is not used correctly; it will be much harder moving forward as a collective to understand ourselves, each other, and our world.

In America and in Europe, the terms “moderate,” “radical,” “extremist” and “fundamentalist” are used. On one hand, there is the moderate. On the other hand, there are the radical, the extremist and the fundamentalist. This is problematic. What does moderate Muslim really mean? The terms extremist and radical are not bad words per se, but their contextual use in the media leaves one with no other conclusion. But in fact, if something is good, then extremely something is extremely good. Let’s say someone is kind, is extremely kind a bad thing? No, it’s a good thing. Because kindness is good. So, here we as Muslims believe Islam is a good thing, so technically an Islamic extremist is extremely good. The same can be said about the word fundamentalist. Fundamental means the very basics of things. That’s good. It’s good to grasp the basics. So a fundamentalist Muslim is technically someone who does good things and understands the basic tenets of charity, forgiveness, good neighbourliness, etc. Contrary to what the world has been made to evoke, there is nothing fundamental about terrorism. As for radical, Gandhi, Martin Luther King jr, and even Jesus and Muhammad were radicals. As was everyone who ever made a real difference against the tides. Again, not a bad thing, but a good thing.

Instead, Rehab considered the words normative and deviant as the proper linguistic binary, as opposed to moderate and radical/extremist/fundamental. For him, normative is something that is objective. When speaking of a group of people, if the great majority of them are doing something in one way that is the normative way; and, when a smaller group deviate from what that normative group



does, it is deviant. These groups should be understood as deviating from the norm.

Rehab gave the example of the Islamic state and explained that by calling them as such, it serves their purpose – “it is a gift to Daesh to call them that”. Instead he used the term Daesh as it is demeaning in Arabic. Again, language matters. They understand that too. They are fully intentional in usurping Islamic lexicon in order to showcase authority, credibility and agency by stealing language. Therefore posing as the new normative, and this is precisely what needs to be counteracted. So far and quite to the contrary, the media and many politicians have served their agenda, and helped them in that pursuit. While mainstream normative Muslims are locked out. And so the need to reclaim our language and pushback.

Jihad needs to be understood in its normative mainstream definition and understanding versus the deviant fringe.

Growing up in the United States, Rehab was exposed to two different perspectives. Both agreed on the definition of jihad and Islam and where it stands vis-à-vis the West. On one hand, there was this dominant view that jihad was a holy war, a bloody affair and Islam was in an eternal inherent ideological warfare with the West. On the other hand, there was the anti-Muslim extreme.

So the «My Jihad Campaign» was meant to give a voice to that normative mainstream, without denying the existence of the deviant notion, but showing what the mainstream Muslims believe in. It was made to give a voice to the Muslim community to fight against those within its own community who claimed a deviant notion of jihad, and those who are against the community in the outside who did the same, both agreed ironically pushing together in the same direction simultaneously. The campaign brought young and old people, anybody who wished to volunteer, to join and come for a photo shoots, to express what their Jihad is.

Jihad simply means a struggle to get to a better place. Jihad means effort, which challenges fatalism. It is an extremely empowering concept that is central to the Islamic belief, belonging and behaviour. Jihad is a day-to-day struggle to life, to overcome difficulties, whatever these may be - intellectual, social, financial, and physical. There is of course physical jihad and armed jihad that, but even then, jihad is not an invitation to war or a license to war, but a limit on war, a sort of code of combat. Islam does not ban sex, but it codifies it within marriage. Likewise, it does not ban armed struggle, but codifies it in self-defence and struggles against tyranny where all other options have failed and certain demise is at hand. Islam deals with the human condition as it is, and tries to get it to a better place. So Jihad is not holy war, but it can make a war less unholy. Meaning if you are at war, jihad is the doctrine

that pushes you to ensure your armed struggle is not unjust, wanton, and self-glorifying. It places limitations like banning the harm of the unarmed, of civilians, of the elderly and children, of the environment. And dictates that when the aggressor stops, then you stop. Then and only then does a war become Jihad. It is then a sort of rules of engagement.

Rehab concluded: “the everyday Jihad with which Muslims deal with all around the world in reality matters and those who are deviant in our community need to be pulled back into the normative rather than being kidnapped into the recruiters and hijackers of the religion”.

## A PLACE FOR FRENCH ISLAM IN TELEVISION DIVERSITY

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**FOUAD SANAADI**

Regional Council of the Muslim Cult, France

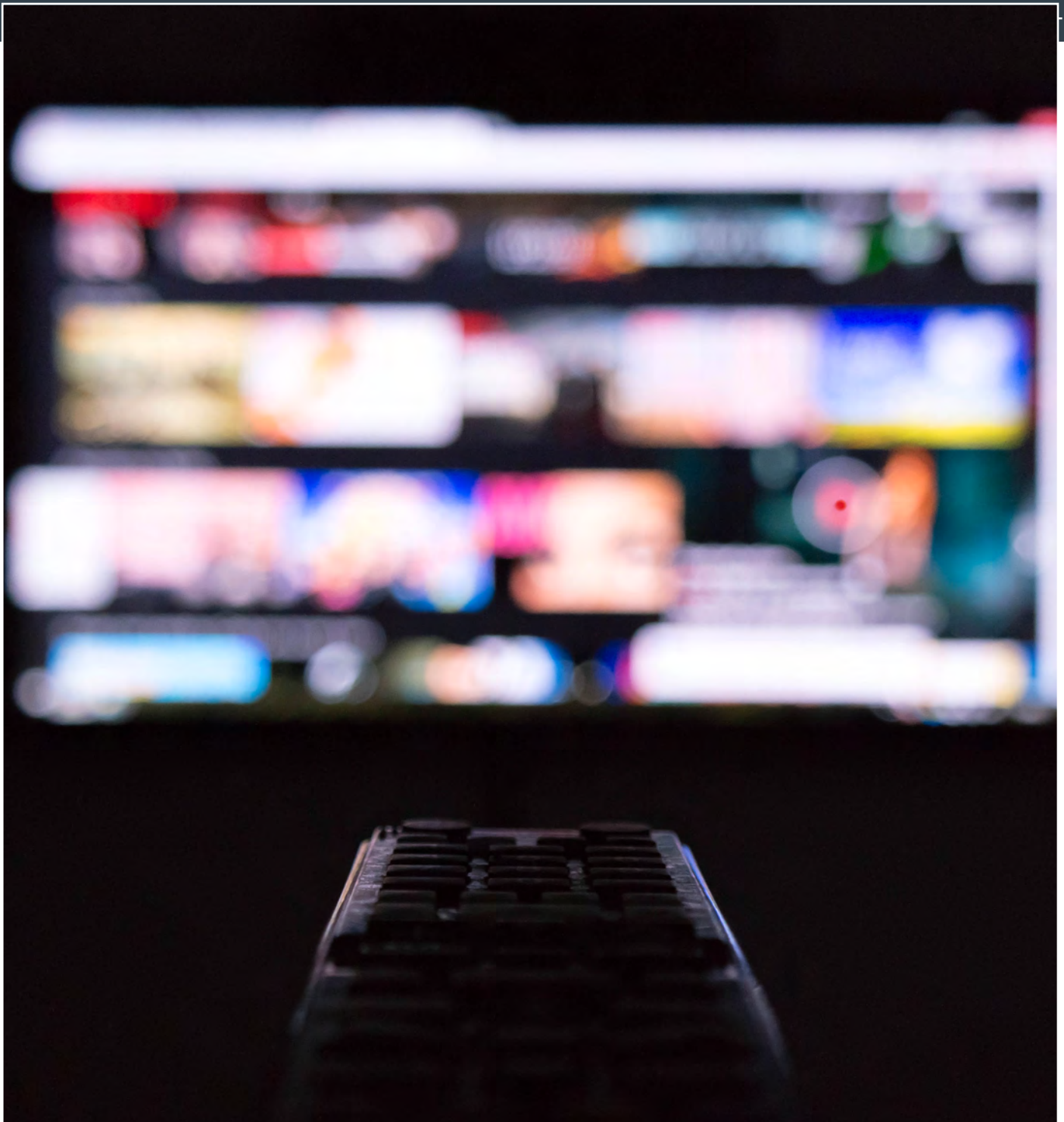
Fouad Sanaadi spoke about the visibility of Islam (or not) in the French media landscape. In the French context, it is very particular. France has a specific history and a particular state model that is fully secular or follows a catholic secular tradition. Despite this intensive secularisation, the cultural code remains a Judaeo-Christian one. In France, there is a cultural issue when it comes to Islam. From the early stages at school to the training of journalists at the highest level, there is very little knowledge of Islam as a religion or its multiple histories. Furthermore, there is a lack of reference in terms of any religious framework, which would enable people to understand what place should be given to Islam in the French audio-visual landscape.

This leads to a situation today where there is an audio-visual product that speaks constantly about Islam at the general public level, which is not normal. Why not? Is it because France is secular or is it because of individual journalists who are not competent, who do not recognise themselves as legitimately able to talk about Islam, or sometimes is fearful to speak too much or too little? When we find somebody who is willing to talk about Islam as a cultural product, then walls are erected between different communities.

To be able to talk about their Islam, French youth decided to create in 2008 an organisation called « à part ça tout va bien » (everything is going well, except for), which Saanadi joined in 2010. At the time, he identified their vulnerabilities in terms of salafist discourse. It gives meaning and identity to the youth. The identity question is at the heart of this question of radicalisation. From the very beginning,

they started to work on this notion of identity. What does it mean to be a French Muslim? How does it differ from Muslims in other countries? It is about the re-appropriation of identity from extremist groups, which uses the teenager's identity crisis to their advantage.

A mini series was produced, using comedy to talk about Islam, homophobia, misunderstanding of the religion and radicalisation. It was broadcasted on public French TV but at a low-rating time, while also broadcasted on their official website.



JULY 26, 2017

DAY 3

PRACTICAL ACTION

## KEYNOTE: CULTURE THE MUSCLE FOR PEACE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**MÉDINE ZAOUICHE**

Don't Panik Youth Sport Association, France

The conversation between French rapper and community activist, Médine Zaouiche and conference convenor Dr. Virginie Andre, was not typically how keynote addresses are presented at a conference on countering violent extremism. Nevertheless, the conversation between Médine, as he is known across France, and Dr. Andre elegantly reflected the central intent of the conference, that is, to bring together community workers, academics, and frontline practitioners and policymakers in discussion.

The keynote address started with the screening of the testimonials of two detained Belgian radicalised minors convicted on terrorism charges, which focused on their individual journey into violent extremism.

Médine began his keynote by explaining how the testimonials of these two young men resonated with his experience with young people living in his neighbourhood and those he meets across France when he travels for his concerts. These are the voices of people with whom he grew up and with whom he still lives with today; ie. working class people in suburbs shaded by poverty and social deprivation. However, Médine pointed out that radical young people do not come necessarily from this sort of working-class background.

As a rapper, Médine tries to listen to what happens on the ground, and for the last ten years he has spoken, through his music, about the challenges young people face in these neighbourhoods, such as radicalisation and the increasing religiosity of young people. In his album Jihad, for instance, he tried to shed light and demystify the theories of violence that are floating around in the banlieues. But talking about jihad in France, particularly after the 2015 Paris attacks, is impossible; even more so if one's name is Médine, comes from a low-income area and is Muslim.

Médine highlighted the responsibility of French national authorities in the radicalisation problem. According to him, they have abandoned these neighbourhoods where there are close to no social infrastructures, no libraries, no culture, and teachers have very little means to teach. The state bears responsibility for the poor state of education of young people in low-income neighbourhoods.



So, what is the importance of culture in areas where violent extremism occurs? How does culture or rappers play a role in its prevention?

By educating and bringing awareness about the lived experiences of the people and communities who live in these low-income neighbourhoods. Médine explained that he believes culture can change someone's path, the same way it has changed his. Culture has the ability to develop one's critical faculties and to reveal oneself. "We need to fight with the force of culture against the culture of force", he concluded.





JULY 26, 2017

# SESSION 1

## YOUTH AND ISIS

CHAIRD BY AHMED REHAB  
CAIR CHICAGO, USA

## MY STORY – A LESSON TO LEARN FROM: TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE REALITIES OF JIHAD”

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**MOURAD BENCHELLALI**

Former French Guantanamo Prisoner, France

Benchellali's testimony is the story of a former Guantanamo prisoner. He first gave a brief history of how he ended up in Afghanistan, training with al-Qaeda before the 9/11 attacks. Benchellali's father was an imam who did humanitarian work in Bosnia. On his last trip to Bosnia, the Serbian military arrested and accused his father of aiding the rebellion, and later imprisoned him. His father's imprisonment greatly affected Benchellali's life as well as those of his siblings. This was particularly the case for his older brother who, in response to the arbitrary arrest of their father, travelled to Africa and Russia. Upon his return to France, he would recount to Benchellali his adventures encouraging him to go to Afghanistan. While he initially resisted the idea of travelling to Afghanistan, it was his brother's stories, he said, that made him "want to travel". He was simply attracted to the idea of travelling itself and also the excitement of discovering an exotic destination. However, Benchellali pointed out that he was also naïve at the time and knew very little about the reality of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, he finally committed to travel to Afghanistan when his brother convinced another boy in the neighbourhood to join him on his 'adventure'. Upon his arrival to Afghanistan, Benchellali was shocked by what he saw, as it did not correspond to his brother's tales, nor what he had imagined and did not expect to be later enrolled in an al-Qaeda youth training camp. He immediately wanted to go home. While trying to make his way back to France with his friend, the 9/11 attacks occurred and both were arrested by Pakistani officials as they were attempting to cross the border from Afghanistan into Pakistan. The officials handed them over to American officials who then transferred them to Guantanamo Bay where they were imprisoned for two years. Benchellali described the prison as a "cage of orange jumpsuits" where interrogations occurred in a 'lawless zone'. Benchellali's elder brother learnt of his imprisonment on television, it inspired him to go to Chechnya to perform jihad.

The trauma experienced during his imprisonment persuaded Benchellali to write a book to help him deal with the injustices he was subjected to in Guantanamo and more importantly, highlight the realities of jihad and that he "didn't leave to do jihad". He wanted young people to learn from his own personal story and help prevent them from repeating the same mistake – he felt he had a duty to explain to them that it was not a good idea. Since the book release in 2007, he has been invited to schools in Belgium and France to tell his story. He was only recently invited to talk in France after the

Charlie Hebdo attacks and in light of the increasing number of departures to Syria. Previously, the French government viewed him as a 'sympathiser'.

Nowadays, Benchellali lectures in schools, prisons, youth detention centres, neighbourhood associations, where he says, he focuses on simply "telling his story." Benchellali explained that he does not give them a particular point of view nor does he expresses any value judgment of 'good' or 'bad'. He simply portrays the reality of his experiences in Afghanistan and in the training camps, where he saw bin Laden, and how he was radicalised. His personal journey and experience is more relevant than ever with what is currently happening in Syria and the departure of thousands of European youth to join ISIS.

The young people Benchellali interacts with are very curious to learn about his experiences, which, he says, compels him to speak frankly about what happened to him in Guantanamo and the way his family was treated, to highlight the consequences of his decision to go to Afghanistan. His lectures are aimed at giving young people critical tools to understand the reality of what is happening and allow them to draw comparisons between his experience and the current situation in Europe with the influx of European youth departing to join ISIS. In sum, he aims to show how easily they can be manipulated.

Despite not knowing exactly why youth leave for Syria or Iraq, Benchellali explained that from his experience he believes that each one leaves for reasons that are particular to them – social, political or ideological. Nevertheless, whatever the factors that motivate them, they will only make the trip to join ISIS if they are able to relate to the ideas of ISIS. ISIS offers them a solution to escape their current uncomfortable situation by presenting them with an alternative future that involves joining their cause.

## IN THE HOPE OF FINDING GOD

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**NAOMIE BITSHILUALUA**

Former Member of Religious Evangelical Movement,  
DRC/Belgium

When Naomie was 15, she met a group of friendly, positive charming young people. They spoke for a while and they invited her to join them to a party where young people get together in a place that they described as a place of culture, art and dance. She accepted the invitation. Naomie was surprised

when she realised it took place in an evangelical church. She felt warmly welcomed: everyone seemed to care about her and truly pleased she came. She explained how she felt joyous in this place. During the event, the preacher talked about the hardships of being young, and explained to them through paranormal events, that those were the actions of the devil. He then convinced them that the only way to live through this hardship was to go to church and live through the « practice » of God.

The more time she spent at church, the more aggressive the preacher became. Then began the radicalisation through regimentation:

- » Friends of the church were more important than family.
- » Terrible things would happen if one decided to leave the church.
- » Daily church attendance was mandatory.
- » Bringing back a maximum of new recruits for the church was expected.
- » Mandatory fund seeking on the street was a daily struggle, whatever the time or the weather.
- » Giving to the church was mandatory. Naomie gave all her belongings, her shoes, her jewellery, her savings, without telling her mother.
- » Life was to be devoted to God, and the outside world was considered a distraction.
- » Contradicting or simply doubting the preacher was highly frowned upon. They had to follow his every word without question.
- » The preacher was to know every part of their life, and through private session, would set out their goal for the future.
- » Having romantic relationship outside of church was forbidden.

Consequently, she lost her friends but more importantly she lost herself, her personality, her identity, the link to her culture, and the education her parents gave her. Naomie explained how she lost 5 years of her life because she was not to ever think of herself. Every hour of the day was devoted to God and the church community.

The critical point for Naomie came when her mother had a road accident. The preacher forbade her to leave the church and to leave her mother's fate in the hands of God. Then, she realised something was wrong. When she decided to leave the church, they made her life miserable, lost all the friends she made and felt really isolated. She had a hard time re-entering the outside world and to seek help. It took her 6 months to bring herself to seek help from her school and her parents to finally get out.

After months of harassment, the preacher finally understood she would not return and left her alone at last.

Upon leaving the organisation, she had to learn to live again, to reconnect with people, to make new friends, and above all, to think for herself. She posed the question:

Why would the Belgian authorities allow such an organisation to exist when they prey on young people who are looking for answers, searching themselves, and therefore vulnerable?

Naomie concluded by reminding us that even though nowadays the focus is on Islam, radicalisation comes from all sorts of beliefs.

## MOLENBEEK'S YOUTH AND THE ATTRACTION OF DAESH

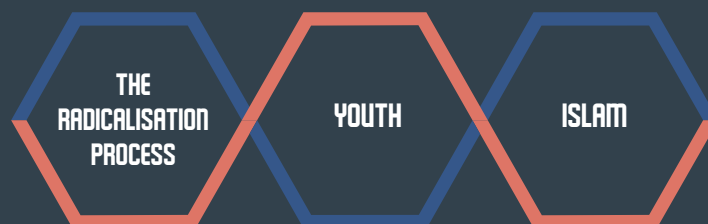
### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**OLIVIER VANDERHAEGEN**

Molenbeek Prevention Unit, Belgium

Olivier Vanderhaegen discussed the situation in Molenbeek and more specifically within the context of radicalisation. He posed the question: What local conditions can generate radicalisation in a particular area, at a particular time?

When we speak of local radicalisation, we are dealing with a semantic issue, which involves 3 particular concepts:



**Radicalisation** is often referred to as violent radicalisation, ie. the conjunction of a violent ideology with the legitimisation of action.

**The concept of youth** is very broad and not specific enough as there are a multitude of realities, with different youths and their own specific cultures and sub-cultures. When referring to the notion of youth, we do need to be very precise.

**Islam** is also being problematically homogenised in this discourse. There is no homogeneity in Islam. In Brussels, there are linguistic, ethnic and religious divides. Not all Muslims speak the same language, come from the same ethnic background or even practice their religion in the same way.

Violent radicalisation counts a number of factors in terms of sociological issues. At the sociological level, Vanderhaegen identified three predominant levels of factors – macro-sociological factors, micro-sociological factors and meso-sociological factors.

The micro-sociological factors are individual factors such as identity issues.

The macro-sociological factors are national factors such as the role of government, relations between minority and minority groups, and the radicalisation of party politics.

At the local level, there is another type of factors – how do they combine at the local level? How do they materialise at the very concrete level? How do they become palpable? The meso-sociological factors focus on the social or the environmental context. What leads to the socialisation behind the radicalisation, particularly in Molenbeek?

In the context of Molenbeek, Vanderhaegen distinguished four meso-sociological factors: 1/ social polarisation (us against them dynamics); 2/ youth and police relations (war for territory); 3/ the “street” as a space of socialisation and emancipation for young people; 4/ conspiracy theory (new world understanding and emotional transfer). The notion of conspiracy theory is an important one as it enables the youth to better understand the world in an intellectual manner and to appropriate themselves of a particular version of history. It also allows emotional channelling.

So what did ISIS offer these youth, beyond a religious argumentation? It offered a territory, which was not only physical but also symbolic and mental. Beyond the destruction of ISIS, will there be a virtual caliphate? According to Verhaegen, ISIS may disappear but the conditions that have enabled its creation will continue.

In conclusion, there is an urgent need to listen to youth, to understand what is their perception of social injustice and to recognise the multiplicity of their identities.





## HOW TO RECREATE OR REINFORCE COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL OUTREACH AGAINST SOCIAL VACUUM IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS?

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**ALMAMY KANOUE**

Attitude Association and 83eme Avenue, France

Almamy Kanoute spoke about the question of identity in the context of France. He explained how France continues to have difficulties in accepting the various identities that make up France today. In France, when one speaks of diversity it is in fact an exclusion discourse in terms of belonging at the national level.

When speaking of radicalisation, there are various forms of radicalisation and of extremism. This can be seen in working class neighbourhoods. It is not just about religious extremism, but also about ideological extremism. They are individuals who spent time putting down young people from the neighbourhoods, or suggesting that they are second class citizens. Kanoute explained how this is very confrontational and violent. It is easy to understand how some individuals would use this vulnerability to recruit young people.

Young people who experience rejection, often have to ask themselves who they are; they search for their identity. Many young people from these neighbourhoods find themselves in a vacuum. Being young is a crucial time in a person's development and if the youth are left helpless, this void will be filled by violent extremist organisations that will prey and exploit their struggles. So, perhaps we should ask ourselves why is it that people who were born in France or Belgium are able to turn around and work against their country of birth? This is an important question.

Are our government willing to fight radicalisation at its root, by giving youth hope and faith in the future, by putting an end to their marginalisation and their exclusion from society? Kanoute argued that social repression is one of the causes for radicalisation and delinquency. A young person who grows up with a feeling of disdain and of being excluded will grab the first branch that she or he can grab onto – which often are the “fanatics of God” or drug trafficking. Therefore, it is primordial that “we offer our youth the future they deserve and help them blossom into their full potential”, said Kanoute.

To do so, Kanoute strongly recommended that more links be created and for bridges to be consolidated between front line practitioners, policy-makers and academics.

JULY 26, 2017

## SESSION 2

### PREVENTING **RADICALISATION** IN **SCHOOLS**

CHAIRER BY PROF. FARID EL ASRI  
RABAT INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, MOROCCO

## AN ACTION PLAN ON THE PREVENTION OF RADICALISATION AND POLARISATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS IN BELGIUM

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**EMILIE LE ROI**

Department of Education, Flemish Government, Belgium

Emilie Le Roi presented the Flemish Government's action plan. In 2015, after the first attacks in Paris, the Flemish government of Belgium approved an action plan to prevent the process of radicalisation that can lead to extremism and terrorism.

The action plan contains 40 concrete measures and efforts for various ministries such as welfare, youth, employment and integration policy.

Following the many developments in 2017, the action plan was updated and extended to include not only radicalisation but also polarisation.

Prior to the action plan, there were a significant number of existing initiatives that were updated in order to support front line practitioners. For instance since 2006, the Minister of Domestic Affairs created a circular called PLP41. The purpose of this circular was to improve the cooperation between schools and the police in their specific approach to juvenile delinquency and truancy, in other words, to create a real relationship between schools and police. It is written in the circular that there has to be one fixed contact point for schools within each local police zone. Every party is encouraged to create a platform of collaboration where cases can be discussed. A manual for schools is also available to inform them of how important it is to have formal or informal contact with the police.

The manual and the police contact point are very important because Le Roi explained they had noticed that many schools over reacted. They would contact the police when a Muslim pupil would want to pray; this is mostly because the schools are afraid. Or, there are schools that under react and wait until youngsters are already sitting on the plane flying to Syria. Hence, the contact information of the local police contact point was communicated to all school principals.

Every school in Flanders is obliged to have an emergency plan. To create such a plan, the Ministry developed a canvas called emergency scenarios (Canvas Noodplanning), which includes all different information sheets on different emergency situations. For instance, "what do you have to do in case

of gas leak?”. New sheets were created such as “what do you have to do in case of emergency threat level 3 or 4 (level 3 means risk of terrorist attack; level 4 means a clear indication of a terrorist attack)?”. Other new sheets also included the following scenarios: “What do you need to do as a school in case of a terrorist attack?”; “When must a school be closed or suspend classes?”

Another existing initiative since 2006 are the special program for young persons in danger of dropping out of school. They are called “Time-out programs”. During these programs, young persons in danger of dropping out of school are temporally removed from schools for a couple of weeks during which they receive guidance and counselling with the aim of reintegration to the school. There is no specific program for radicalisation within this program. However, in affected cities and in some schools in some cases, it was a solution for them to send a young person who is radicalising or in danger of radicalising. For them, the goal is to reinforce the connection to the school or society either isolation from other students.

Le Roi then presented the project Connect founded in January 2016. After the attacks in Paris, many schools called the department of education indicating that their capacities were severely challenged. They did not know how to react at certain expressions and certain conversations of their pupils and asked for quickly establishing the necessary expertise to improve the resilience of their youngsters and to enlarge the scope of the knowledge of the teachers.

### Tools and Information

Several tools were developed to support primary workers and teachers who are confronted with the reality of radicalisation.

In response, the Department of Education developed an online dossier on radicalisation (<https://www.klasse.be/reeks/radicalisering/>) in consultation with experts. It includes tips and information on the concept of radicalisation, signal recognition, prevention, remediation and auxiliary channels.

The Department also launched a “Life-stream” session on radicalisation with two experts where teachers could anonymously call and asked through Life-stream their questions. An online platform was also created, Klascement, which is for teachers to exchange their learning materials on radicalisation and inspire all the other teachers.

Additional content through the Department’s newsletter was created for teachers and principals on radicalisation; and it was communicated right after every terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. It includes the information on communication tips, contact information, and tips for extra vigilance.

Together with the Department of Welfare, the Department of Education created an expert group with fieldworkers and academics to stay informed about all the gaps, the needs in the field and the evolution. This group is consulted every two months.

Following the high number of questions the Department received from teachers and school principals, the Department developed “Guidelines for the prevention, tackling and handling of radicalisation in education”. It addresses questions such as:

Which preventive actions are possible to avert radicalisation in my schools?

Which actions are possible if signals of radicalisation are observed with pupils with/without immediate threat for school and/or society?

What actions are possible if we are confronted with disturbing information on a third party?

In 2015, the Islam Expert Network was created to offer an alternative to radical Islam. Upon school request, theological experts (Islamic teachers or imams) who are experienced and familiar with the living environment and lingo of young people go to the school and meet with the pupils and also the teachers. They guide class conversations on religion and Islam; and, they provide information on why and how young people radicalise. Individual sessions are offered to youngsters in case there is a concern about possible radicalisation. They also give sessions to classes to teachers and front line practitioners. Since its creation, the network made more than 500 interventions. Most of the interventions were targeted at teachers and meant to help them also overcome their fear of overacting badly and to increase their action readiness.

The impact of terrorism on Belgian society has been immense and created polarisation and fear. On the bright side, more teachers have become more willing to learn and to understand about the Muslim culture.

## HOW TO ENCOURAGE THE EXPRESSION OF CHILDREN ABOUT TERRORISM AT SCHOOL

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**LYES BOUABDALLAH**

Paris Assistance to Victims (PAV), France

Lyes Bouabdallah came to bring forward the voices of victims of terrorism. At PAV, they believe the only response victims can make to terrorism is their own resilience, their willingness to live differently

but fully. PAV is a non-profit organisation, which has a double purpose. Firstly, it informs and supports the victims. By informing the victims, the PAV facilitates the access to the judicial system, which can be, especially in France, complex and discouraging for the victims. By supporting the victims, they try to prevent and to alleviate the post traumatic and long-term psychological effects. Secondly, in terms of assistance to victims of terrorism, the PAV has developed over the past twenty years an important expertise in supporting victims of terrorism. Their first intervention was in 1995 when Paris were affected by the Algerian Islamic Group. In the last 3 years, they have intervened after the Paris and Nice attacks, and had more than 10,000 consultations, both re-educational and psychological for wounded victims and relatives of deceased victims.

As an organisation that aims to play a major role to the support of the victims, the PAV strongly believes its duty is not only to supporting the victims on a daily basis but also to defending their voices.

For this reason, the PAV initiated along with the support of the French Foundation the project «Promoting Children Expressions about Terrorism at School». The aim of this project is to promote a better understanding of what terrorism is and to provide tools for teachers in order to address this issue.

Bouabdallah introduced a short film, expressing the point of view of children, victims, a psychiatrist and a prosecutor on the consequences of violent extremism on the society as a whole and on individuals.

Bouabdallah concluded, by challenging his own approach to CVE, stating it is a good one, but not the most efficient of approaches.

## REDUCING THE POSSIBLE RISK OF RADICALISATION BY GIVING STUDENTS TOOLS TO DISCOVER AND UNDERSTAND THE DIVERSITY OF ISLAM

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DAVID D'HONDT**

Religious Teacher, Belgium

David D'Hondt presented the two different systems of religious education in Belgium. The first being religious education in secondary schools belonging to the state, which has the choice of teaching the six religions that the state of Belgium recognises which are Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity and Buddhism, as a two hour-a-week class. The second religious educa-



tion system are the confessional schools which are 90% Catholic. All these schools are free. In the case of the Catholic schools, all students, be they are Muslim or others, follow the Catholic religion course.

There are two problems. Each system has its own problem. In the first case, the programs are not clear. Regarding Islam, the program was never finalised properly; students are separated depending on which religious course they have chosen for the two-hour course they have per week. If a student is a Sunni, there is no Shiite course. D'Hondt explained that this could be problematic at the pragmatic level, as he had cases of students coming to him saying they pretended to be Sunnis when they are Shiites. It also depends very often the teacher's personal beliefs. For instance, if the teacher has liberal views of the religion, he or she will teach a liberal view of the religion. This issue has never been thought through and this is the reality in the schools. For D'Hondt, this is part of the problem in the context of radicalisation.

On the other hand, in the classes that D'Hondt delivers, the classes are based on the Catholic faith, whether the students are of Catholic faith or not. The teachers are not trained to any other religion other than Catholicism. However, those who follow the Catholic religious teacher curriculum, there is a 6 hour course on Islam that is incorporated. Students of other faiths are either ignored or teachers ask the students not to bring the Quran into class, or they are asked to present their own faith. D'Hondt explained that in this type of class, the teacher presents his course on Catholicism and the student presents his religion Islam. He describes this as the "Coca-Cola effect", which is a situation where a student gives his version of Islam and this becomes what is Islam.

Secondly, D'Hondt believes classes should be adapted to the students. He teaches in a technical professional school in Molenbeek. Most of his students come from low-income families and are aged between 18 and 22. They have gone through many schools and experienced significant discrimination. Many have failed at school several times, and their level of French is quite low. When D'Hondt prepared his classes he often considers who his students are. Most of them are born in Belgium of Moroccan parents and raised on a mix of occidental culture and 1960's Moroccan traditions. They are usually French speakers and unable to read or speak Arabic. They are searching for a new way of living their faith, often stuck between their parents' and their country's culture. They reject the Islam of their parents, which they consider an Islam of ignorance; it mixes religion and culture. It does not respect the Quran and the sunnah. The imams the students can find in the mosques are often of the same age and culture as their parents, and they are not interested in listening or discussing with the imams (most often the imams themselves do not speak French). The imams are disconnected from their reality. The students are in search of an Islam of knowledge, which they consider to be a true Islam that goes back to the origins (even if they do not know when this starts). This Islam is pure; it

does not mix culture with religion. However, if one observes how they reflect their religion, it is very local. It is not world connected; they only listen to people locally situated or on the French border – essentially to individuals who speak French and whose vocabulary they can understand (street lingo). This is their way of negotiating living in Brussels and being Muslim.

D'Hondt noticed a shift in their way of thinking about violent extremism, before and after the Brussels attacks. Before the attacks, they used to dismiss the realness of terrorists, thinking of them as western conspiracy to put the blame on Muslims. After the attacks, they now fear for their lives and the lives of their close ones. They talk more openly about the risks of radicalisation in their neighbourhood. They also came to realise that they can themselves become victims of radicalisation. They are more and more interested into learning how Islam can enable them to live a life of peace in the city that they live.

With radicalisation being at the forefront of news, teachers are being asked to report certain student behaviours. Teachers are not well equipped to deal with this and they experience high levels of stress when having to deal with what may be considered as signs of radicalisation (eg. beard or military trousers). As a result, teachers are losing the trust of their students. They are being muzzled and asked to avoid certain topics. Because of this, the students are withdrawing and D'Hondt is no longer able to work on certain topics (eg. the veil) with him as they are considered by the students as too dangerous, out of the fear that they may be considered as radicalising.

In his classroom, D'Hondt gives his students tools to discover and understand the diversity of Islam, and enables students to become actors of their own religion. His teaching method is concrete, related to the actuality and the society his students are living in.

Finally, he advocated for a one course for all, called “religious studies”, taught by an independent religion teacher, which would be anchored in the reality of the students. It is also important to show the diversity of religions and to work on diversity of thinking within each religion, using all branches of science of religion.

JULY 26, 2017

SESSION 3

COUNTERING **VIOLENT  
EXTREMISM AND INTERFAITH**  
DIALOGUE

CHAIRER BY PROF. JOCELYNE CESARI

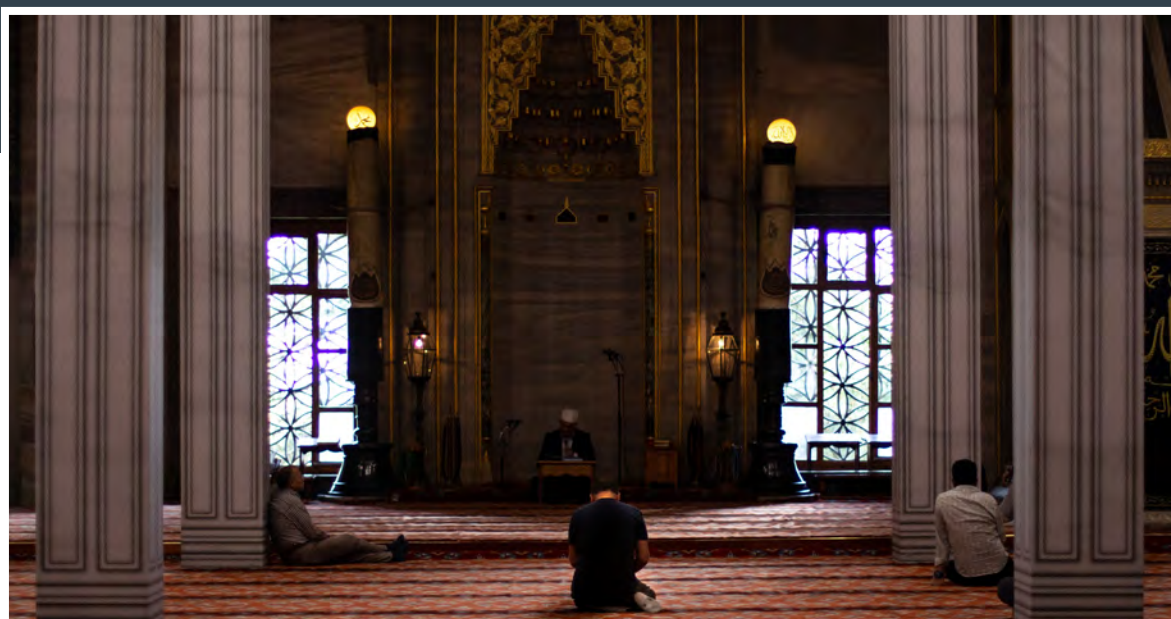
BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY HARVARD UNIVERSITY, UK USA

## ARCHEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**TAREQ OUBROU**

Imam of Bordeaux, France



Tareq Oubrou presentation focused on the archaeology of violence, which is perpetrated in the name of religion. What is interest to the imam as a theologian is the responsibility, which is relevant for whenever mental violence becomes translated and manifests into physical violence.

Oubrou posed the question of how is it that religion can produce crime? Radicalisation is the means to move from a situation of religious belief to a criminal action. This, of course, has to be differentiated from radical beliefs without any criminal acting and physical violence.

To bring a first element of response to this, a look at history would be helpful in terms of understanding how religion became a civilisation. Islam was a religion, which became, throughout the centuries, a civilisation. It became a political regime in many instances. With the logic of the nation state, Islam became victorious in a number of settings. It was a very dominant civilisation throughout many centuries. Theological thought was always interpreted and conceived within that logical domination. Muslim thought was interpreted as imperialistic in the context of domination. Oubrou noted that we are still living through this interpretation, which is anachronistic in relation to our contemporary world where Islam in its imperial aspect has been dismembered into various nation states and political entities.

Today, there is an interconnection between the political being and religious being of Islam. Hence, Oubrou argued that Muslims had not been prepared to their modernity, which demanded a form of secularisation – ie. a separation of religion to the demands of the state and civilisation. This situation placed classical Islam in a very uncomfortable situation, with the confrontation between civilisations leading to a situation of violence. A number of Muslims live their lives as an existential situation of violence.

What is the answer to this kind of situation?

People are evolving in a very globalised world where civilisations and cultures are all intermixed and intertwined by virtue of sophisticated digital means of communication and rapid physical means of transportation. For instance, we can find the whole of humanity represented in one small area.

According to Oubrou, the fundamental question then becomes “how do we all live together?”. Muslim thought should be able to modulate this mental violence by putting forward a proper theology of alterity. It is not only about respect the other; but to understand oneself relation with the other. In other words, there is a need to bring our own religion in a new configuration where Islam, like other religions, should resolve the status of the other in relation to oneself.

This alterity, this relationship with the other, should begin with the relationship to oneself. It is not only a question of one's identity but also to discover what is foreign in ourselves and what is intrinsic to us. According to Oubrou, we have a foreignness within ourselves, which leads us to others. The question of identity in the sense of its inflexibility and rigidity of the self leads to another rigidity, potentially breeding fanaticism. The recognition of oneself presupposes that it is totally incoherent mentally, which leads to the total isolation of the individual in relation to its environment. Sometimes, unfortunately, religious discourse reinforces this problem of identity.

Secondly, there is the question of transcendence within Islam. Like in Christianity, in Islam, a transcendent God reveals himself to and for humanity and becomes. This relationship with the divine is a dialogical relationship, which takes place between the divine and oneself. A dialogue between oneself and the other is established as well. The perception of the self today is within the framework of subordination to the divine – there is a submission to the divine with the suspension of reasoning in front of the enlightenment the sacred being can bring us. What is paradoxical is that we position ourselves in a tradition where the Abrahamic figure is a monotheist in terms of the submission, whether conditional or unconditional. We have an Abraham who for both religions incarnates the doubt as a relationship for the divine. There are a number of passages of the Quran which highlight this dialogue between Abraham and God, where doubt prevails. For instance, Abraham asks for proof of the existence of God.

And God replies, “why don’t you believe me?”. Abraham replies he wants to believe but he also wants to be sure of the appropriateness of his faith. The believer must interrogate the divine. Since we only have traces of God given to us; no one has actually encountered God. God was distant and left man to assume his responsibility. It is up to man to construct the religion that he deserves, as long as this logic of interrogation remains. What is of interest in the dialogue between Abraham and God is that we have to cultivate even greater doubt. Doubt is in fact intrinsic to faith according to the Prophet. It is at the very heart of the faith.

The terrorist and the fanatic does not do this. They do not doubt. According to Oubrou, fanaticism, suspension of reason, suspension of interrogation is an arbitrary God who just establishes norms and it is up to the believers to submit to these norms. This means you just need to read the text and simply implement it as stated. This is a violent posture and many Muslims live this form of violence. Some have doubts and other contain that violence.

There is a deep need to change the whole theological discourse because this is the origin of the violence, which is lived through by many Muslims as if our contemporary society is dirty, is impure and permeated by original sin. For Oubrou, “happiness is here and now so we need to get out of this guilt, this sense of sin, which multiplies the need for violence”.

In conclusion, for Oubrou it is important that we all learn from each other by putting forward the whole notion of diversity. Religions must not be instrumentalised, and then we will come into a real and veritable theology of peace, which is one of the fundamental aspects of each and every religion.

## RESISTING EXTREMISM THROUGH DIVERSITY AFFIRMATION

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROFESSOR DOUGLAS PRATT**

Waikato University, New Zealand

Today, we are confronted with new forms of an old issue. Religious extremism is not itself something new, but it is causing new waves of concern and stirring up confused and confusing reactions.

Religions normatively espouse values of peace and harmony even in contexts of challenge and contes-



tation. But religions may also – and do – produce fanatical and radical extremists. Religious extremism is an ideologically and theologically based phenomenon requiring to be critically understood in order to be resisted and ameliorated.

It is imperative to attempt to understand critically any potential – let alone real – relationship between religion and extremism. Prof. Pratt suggested that that it is the underlying issue of the rejection of diversity – both of religious and other kinds – that lies at the heart of the impositional exclusivism which drives religious extremism. It drives the extreme ideologies that manifest in deadly terrorist acts. To the extent diversity is called into question, let alone actively rejected, then disharmony, discord and disunity reigns. And a violent rejection of various ‘others’ ensues.

Today there is increasing evidence of violent reactions to diversity, all too often grounded in religious ideology and a presumption of competitive identities. While by no means the only causal element, religion, or rather religious ideologies, especially when taken and applied in what can only be described as an ‘extreme’ fashion, is undeniably a major component. It appears in many situations of conflict and strife.

How are we to address the challenge of religious extremism and related terrorism?

The primary component in any strategy aimed at countering this extremism and terrorism has to be in respect to identifying, and addressing, the ideological rhetoric and elements within communities from which potential terrorists are likely to come, and by which they are likely to be nourished. But to do that, to make sense of any potential data or evidence, we need a framework of interpretation, a lens of perspective that offers a way of understanding the origin and dynamic structure of religious extremism and so of religiously-motivated terrorism. Fundamentalism is one such lens. The pernicious persistence of religious extremism is because it is grounded in a specific, and mostly fundamentalist, religious belief system.

Although religion has often ‘been implicated in violence, especially where it becomes a marker of identity in situations of social conflict’ yet also ‘religion has often been a voice of moderation and reconciliation’. Thus ‘Religion cannot be exempted from the almost universal human tendency towards hatred of and violence against others’. The particularities of any given religious extremism are, of course, dependent on the actual religion of which it is extreme.

In a nutshell, a fundamentalist ideology involves a combination of absolute attitudes, values, pre-suppositions and judgements that yield a certain religio-political perspective and results in a set of

totalizing claims. Fundamentalism is both a specifically focussed mindset and a certain kind of narrow worldview. It has a *modus operandi* indicative of absolutism, which can apply to just about any sphere of human activity. What is of interest is the link between violent extremism and fundamentalism, including terrorism to which it may lead.

It is the absolutism of 'fundamentalism' which is at the core, and it is manifested in an exclusionary stance that rejects the diversity of other religions and often also diversity within a religion, especially that of the 'fundamentalist'. In other words, an absolutist mindset with an accompanying ideological framework leads to forms of extremism that can, and do, manifest in violent rejections of that which is different; which is 'other-than'.

The critical issue of religious extremism is the matter of perceptions of, and responses to, religious diversity and plurality that are held and advanced by the religious communities themselves.

While most, if not all, religious traditions have promoted unity – or internal uniformity and coherence – as a *sine qua non*, the lived reality of religious people everywhere has been the context of, and contention with, difference of viewpoint, experience, cognition, interpretation, and hence competing claims for religious allegiance and identity. Pluralism, broadly speaking, is the stance that embraces the fact of diversity and gives it a positive interpretation with a self-reflexive edge. Inclusivism is the response of regarding all other religions as in some sense subsumed within, or under, one dominant or 'superior' religion. Exclusivism, as the word suggests, regards only one religion as correct, true or valid, with all others necessarily 'excluded' as false, or simply ignored as meaningless.

One positive way of thinking about religious diversity sees religious differences as reflecting a parallelism of religious phenomena. The affirmation of pluralism asserts authenticity of phenomena across religions without commenting on matters of validity or veracity. Religious plurality may then be interpreted in terms of dynamic parallels of religious intuition and response. This yields a point of commonality that yet preserves the integrity of difference. Religions are not variants of the same thing, but they may variably express parallel processes. For example, all major religions contain a narrative account of an inherent less-than-satisfactory state of affairs for human existence, howsoever arrived at in terms of specific narratives. In all cases, however, this state of affairs requires some transformative action to overcome and so enable the attainment of an ultimate outcome or destiny. The stories expressing this vary, as do the doctrines and teachings relating thereto. But the dynamic contained within the differing narratives redounds with parallel similarities.

Yet another pluralist paradigm arises out of global ethical concerns and the awareness of religions' contribution to the future of humankind – for good, or ill. It is succinctly expressed: No world peace

between the religions; No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions. The aim is to promote interreligious détente and dialogical relations centring on global ethical concerns. In the process this promotes an affirmation of religious diversity on the basis of shared ethical responsibilities.

What we call 'pluralism' is itself no one thing. By digging into what it can mean, and how it can be applied, we have been introduced to different ways of seeing and understanding what affirming diversity might look like. This is the positive side of things. What about the negative? What can we say and do about religious extremism? Are there better ways of responding to it than what seems to be today's currency of extreme reaction – attempts at elimination, of immigrant and refugee exclusion, and making war?

In general terms, religion is about commitment to that which is conceived as 'absolute'. Religious absolutism refers to the stance of an utter commitment to an absolute religious truth; a commitment to an ideological construct that holds to a specific set of religious beliefs, teachings, values and worldview absolutely and without any possibility of question or critique. It is this that often goes by the name of fundamentalism.

A critical analysis of fundamentalism distinguishes between passive, assertive and impositional forms. Passive fundamentalism amounts to a sincerely held, but not impinging or imposing upon anyone else, set of beliefs. These exist within the marketplace of non-threatening religious ideological options. But then comes the more rigid and insistent view of some groups whose style and approach identifies them as being in the middle assertive or 'hard-line' phase. This is often marked by a sense of withdrawal – as into communities or compounds, or in other ways absenting themselves from wider secular society – and by expressions of being necessarily oppositional to the wider world. Such fundamentalism is also inherently 'over against' the religious tradition with which it is otherwise identified, or opposes ideologically the status quo of the society from which it withdraws. Assertive fundamentalism sets the scene for religious extremism that leads into the impositional fundamentalism that may certainly yield up violent behaviours.

The violent behaviours in which religious extremists indulge are by no means random or arbitrary. There is a very particular logic and rationale that applies. 'The groups and individuals engaged in violence construct and maintain a social and theological reality in which killing and mayhem are legitimated'. They generally take action against that which is perceived to be a threat or danger and regard any responsive measure as 'an ethical and moral act'.

The ideology of religious extremism is not confined to one religion alone. Violence that is fomented

by extremists of any religion can be viewed sociologically as an attempt 'to achieve specific goals deemed appropriate and necessary in particular religious worldviews ... where sacred texts and traditions continue to hold people's pious allegiance'. Religious extremists portray themselves as 'true believers' or 'holy warriors', or such-like, and may even be upheld as such by a wider supportive constituency. While it is usefully instructive and informative to engage in analysis and reflection on the nature and extent of this extremism, a key pressing question remains: What can we do about it?

In recent years, much attention has been paid to the issue of countering violent extremism (CVE) – a term that embraces more than just religious extremism.

CVE has become a field of both academic study and practitioner engagement, with wide international support and involvement. It (CVE) typically has two dimensions – the application of a security apparatus to detect and thwart violent extremist acts before they take place, and engagement with communities from which extremists emerge. This latter is with respect to both supporting the security dimension and also promoting dialogue and education with the aim of undercutting the appeal of extremist ideologies and claims. Thus far the attention of such strategies has been primarily with Islamic extremists and Muslim communities. Is this adequate? Given the anti-Muslim extremists driving Islamophobia and the evidence of reactive or mutual extremists in response to negative perceptions of and reactions to Islam, should not similar strategies be applied to other religious extremists and their communities?

So the specific issue we face is that of combatting diversity rejection. This is, at heart, the issue of human beings learning to live together in peaceful productive relationships not simply in spite of, but in positive affirmation and appreciation for, the rich diversity – including religious – of the identity and make-up of individuals and societies.

The particular thrust of Prof. Pratt's research and reflection suggests that, when it comes to religious extremism the underlying problem of the rejection of diversity – the eliminative denial of differing 'others' or of that which presents alterities and alternatives to a status quo – needs to be addressed, both ideologically and practically.

For Prof. Pratt, the answer to the problem of religious extremism will not be found by looking outside of religion and its ideological structures, but looking to religion and into its ideologies. If extremism is a manifestation of the rejection of diversity and rejection flows from an ideology of exclusivism resulting in exclusionary stances, then addressing exclusivism would be a good place to start. The capacity for peaceful co-existence in a context of mutual acceptance and respect is premised on the capacity to assert some form of pluralism: to affirm diversity. Hence the possibility that religions may counter

religious extremism via the route of affirming religious diversity is something that needs to be explored further and actively promoted. A self-understanding of being a unique and valid member of a diverse community of faith needs to be asserted as inherent to one's own religious identity. At the same time, this needs to be acknowledged as being likewise the case with the religious identities of others. To affirm the uniqueness and the integrity as the chief counterpoint to exclusive ideologies.

For such a perspective stands in contrast to the paradigm of religious exclusivism that is a specific marker of highly conservative or fundamentalist religion. Indeed, it is from within this latter religious ideological perspective that the rejection of diversity, and so the extremisms that manifest it, spring.

It is the way of diversity affirmation that effectively combats exclusivist rejection and, in so doing, neutralises religious extremism. If we are clear that it is certain affirmation that will counter the negativities of exclusivism and rejection that give rise to extremism and terrorism then we have a clear aim or goal in mind. The next step is to design educative and promotional program to bring that about.



## THE NEED FOR AN INTER-RELIGIOUS APPROACH IN ORDER TO LEAVE VIOLENT EXTREMISM BEHIND

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**JOHAN QUILBEUF**

(Department of Defense, France)

Johan Quilbeuf started with a citation of Marc Bloch: “man is much more the product of his time and of his context than of his parents”. These are very important elements to bear in mind when discussing the factors that play a significant role in the acceptance of the discourse, which leads to extremism.

Michel Foucault developed the concept of episteme, which is a sort of unconscious framework that enables a man to think about a number of things. Hence, the individual human experience will have an influence on how certain things are apprehended and be able to accept a certain type of discourse or to reject it. Michel Foucault stated that when we are thinking about a topic or a subject, we think we are apprehending it objectively where in fact we are being very prejudiced. Quilbeuf argued that individuals actually have definite parameters in order to accept or reject it. In other words, there is a cognitive bias that we need to bear in mind.

He distinguished two parameters. The first bias comes from affirmation. Whenever a discourse or texts are presented to us that try to confirm or affirm our prejudices, or our apriori beliefs, and whenever it does, then that particular discourse or text will be easily accepted. If the discourse or the text clashes with our daily-lived experiences, it will be rejected. So individuals rather accept discourses that affirm their beliefs rather than those who infirm it. For instance, radicalised youth explained the reasons, which have pushed them to accept the terrorist discourse, ie. it resonated with their lived experiences.

For Quilbeuf, this was where inter-religious approaches can be effective. It is not inter-religious dialogue but about actions. When Quilbeuf spoke of this cognitive bias, this framework, which has a bearing on how one sees and perceives issues. It has an impact on everyone, not exclusively on radicalised youth. In a way, we are all victims of our own cognitive barriers and in order for things to change then they need to change from both sides. It is not enough to change these youths who are susceptible to terrorism without changing our own gaze on them. Quilbeuf gave the example of the Belgian radicalised youth who explained that whenever they started reading the Quran during their radicalisation, they were presented only with the texts which were the most violent and which led



to adopt violence. This is of course a well-known sampling technique. So, intervention should be focused on the early stages of the daily experiences. By changing the episteme from the very beginning, then the concept of the acceptance or the access to the text can be changed.

Why is there a distinction between interfaith dialogue and interfaith action? Interfaith dialogue is well known and it is a necessary form of action. However, it is not sufficient. Quilbeuf critically pointed out that very often interfaith dialogue is based on a discussion without any particular aim, except the better understanding of each other. Moreover, during this dialogue if shocking statements are made, which will result in rejecting someone, this will consequently prohibit communication. It will not change the experience of that person. So this is what Quilbeuf meant by action. Action can actually lead to change. Whenever we refer to otherness or alterity, we need to do so at the daily level, at the experiential level, at the immediate level.

Given the international context in which we operate, very often, we are tempted to reduce people to one particular aspect of their being, whether it is a religious identity or an ethnic identity. However, we all have multiple identities. So, when we exchange at the every day level, in a name not of one particular identity but of multiple identities forming part of a much wider group, we can create a sentiment of belonging to something much bigger than us.

So to conclude, Quilbeuf recommended that we need to think about reciprocity as a concept. We do not want to change just the lived experiences of individuals who are potentially radicalising into violent extremism but we also need to change ourselves reciprocally. We need to change our own gaze and this, preferably before these at risk individuals reach an extreme violent path. Inter-religious actions, recognition and acknowledgement of others should allow us to accept the discourse and better act in order to change things.

JULY 27, 2017

DAY 4

PRACTICAL ACTION

## KEYNOTE: ANTICIPATING THE POST-ISIS LANDSCAPE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**PROFESSOR RIK COOLSAET**

Ghent University, Belgium

ISIS is no longer what it used to be. It has lost much of its territory, its income and many of its fighters. ISIS global media output has decreased significantly. ISIS as we used to know it is rapidly coming to an end.

What comes after the decline and the waning of ISIS?

Many of us in 2010 thought that jihadism was declining, and that we would see the end of jihadism during the second half of 2010. Why did we think so? We saw worldwide and in Europe a decline of terrorist attack. We saw worldwide a number of victims. We saw the decline of Al Qaeda; it was no longer the disciplined organisation it once was. It was replaced by a kind of patchwork of local groups without much of a strategic coordination. Worldwide, there was a local cells linked to Al Qaeda that were being dismantled. From the end of 2010, the Arab Spring did what Al Qaeda had been trying in vain to do for many years, ie. toppling Arab governments. Additionally, in 2011 Osama Bin Laden was gone. It was believed that it was the beginning of the end of jihadism.

But then came ISIS and the Syrian war. No one predicted the emergence of this particular jihadi wave, let alone the success of ISIS overtaking Al Qaeda.

Today, we hear dire predictions. Some observers already predicted the eventual re-emergence of an ISIS 2.0 or even 3.0, exactly what the jihadists are saying themselves. Others warned that the ISIS narrative would live on and continue to inspire new generations of “wannabe” terrorists. Many have also raised the question whether the collapse of the ISIS’s caliphate would result in increasing numbers of homegrown plots, overwhelming the security services by the sheer numbers of willing volunteers or returning foreign fighters.

Prof. Coolsaet, however, is not convinced that these predictions will come true. He believes they are

not inevitable and their coming true will also depend on the way CVE actors, as communities seize the opportunity that is offered by the fading of ISIS's self-declared caliphate.

Now that this self-declared caliphate is fading, there is a window of opportunity. Much of the conducive environment that permitted ISIS to blossom, that permitted ISIS success in widely different locations around the world, are still very much in place. If we fail to seize the window of opportunity that is offered, at some point in future it might again prove difficult to timely address the emergence of a new wave of jihadism.

### The Success of ISIS

There is no consensus among scholars and the larger CT community on what exactly are the causes of the success of ISIS.

New concepts as 'radicalisation' and 'violent extremism' were invented as a concept in order to answer one simple question, which was induced by what happened in Spain in 2004 and in London in 2005. How can you explain that individuals who were born and raised in a certain country at a certain moment use terrorist violence and which the victims are their own compatriots? In order to address this new issue, the concept of radicalisation was created to entangle what happened in between a person being "normal" and a person being a terrorist.

Thirteen years later, no consensus has been reached on the key drivers that explain how individuals turn into terrorists. Many drivers have been identified, from ideology and religion, to socio-economic deprivation to personal and cultural characteristics, but their exact sequencing and relative importance has failed to achieve a consensus.

In 1981, Professor Martha Crenshaw wrote: "context is of the essence in understanding terrorism. Context not only accounts for the instigating circumstances that permit the emergence of terrorism, it also provides situational factors that motivate and direct groups and individuals to use violence". Crenshaw always insisted on looking at the interplay between this societal context and group dynamics to understand terrorism. Terrorism is never the automatic reaction to given conditions.

Terrorism and pre-terrorism radicalisation can be viewed as the interplay between (a) a conducive environment (b) opportunities, (c) networks or hubs, and (d) ideology.

**How can the interplay between these factors help understanding the success of ISIS?**

## A Conducive Environment

What pushes groups to join an organisation? There has to be an opportunity; without any opportunity factors have pushed so many, often young, people from Europe to Syria to join ISIS?

Jihadism surfs on this 'trendiness', religion is not the engine of this movement and that is precisely its strength. Two groups of Europeans who have travelled to Syria can be distinguished.

- A first group was composed of individuals, often youngsters in their early twenties, with a past of juvenile delinquency. Joining ISIS represented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join a 'super-gang'.
- The second group had no criminal case, solitary adolescents, frequently estranged from family and friends, in search of belonging with a desire to be 'someone', to be accepted, to do something 'useful'.

The common denominator between the two groups is the lack of prospects, both real and perceived.

## Opportunities

A conducive environment does not automatically lead to violent extremism or terrorism. There has to be an opportunity or a 'pull factor'. Why was ISIS able to appeal to such a wide variety of individuals, to a degree that al-Qaeda could not (and was not willing to)? A crucial part of the answer lies in ISIS' unique feature among contemporary jihadist groups: control over a large territory.

- ISIS advertised to them status, empowerment, belonging, camaraderie, respect, recognition, adventure, heroism, and martyrdom.
- ISIS also offered material wealth: a salary and a villa with a pool. It offers, opportunities to be come a fighter. ISIS also proposed somewhat normal jobs: doctors and nurses, officials and engineers, mothers and teachers. ISIS went to great lengths to project a new utopia of peace, harmony and universal brother – and sisterhood, a potent alternative to a life of drugs and petty crime, with simple and straightforward rules.
- ISIS seizure of large swathes of Iraq and Syria made this catalogue of solutions credible and within immediate reach, as never seen before.

## Networks

- Between a conducive environment and an opportunity, a link must be established for terrorism to gain ground and grow. That is where the sense of brotherhood intervenes.
- Such groups or bonds or hubs make the difference between street gangs and terrorist groups.
- An individual joining a given group evolves with the group he (or she) is part of.

## Ideology

Ideology is what distinguishes terrorism from other crimes. ISIS offered (as al-Qaeda did previously) an overarching narrative that wraps the variety of individual motivations into a collective storyline, that heavily emphasises surpassing oneself, heroism, victory, and apocalyptic revenge.

## Window of Opportunity

It is realistic to anticipate the continuation of the recent lone actor activity and also some networked plots in Europe – before these start to decline.

- Positive developments not to overlook:
- The fascination with ISIS will die out as a result of its loss of territory, since this constituted a critical part of it and the Isis brand will lose its appeal overtime.
- Alternative jihadi theatres do not seem to project the same pull of the Levant. There are currently no indications of a significant shift of ISIS foreign fighter contingents to other jihadi locations.
- The populist wave that capitalises on the fear of Muslims and migrants, failed to materialise in 2017.

A similar window of opportunity was missed in the second half of the 2000s – and as a consequence, the environment was probably made conducive and the potential pool of individuals vulnerable to the appeal of the new opportunity – ISIS – had probably increased.

To conclude, Prof. Coolsaet posed the very important question: “What would ‘addressing the conducive environment’ actually mean in Europe this time?”. He offered some responses:

- There is a need to pursue basic broad prevention work directed at vulnerable youths, with the goal of helping them to find a place in society instead of focusing on an ill-defined radicalisation.
- Shifting the discourse from ‘security first’ to ‘inclusion-first’
- It implies taking a hard look at the reasons why so many young people feel like second-rate citizens and without horizon
- Europeans have to reinvent a new sense of belonging and shared destiny for all its citizens.





JULY 27, 2017

# SESSION 1

## LEAVING ISIS

CHAIRER BY DR. JOSHUA ROOSE  
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

## UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE RETURNEE FOREIGN FIGHTER PHENOMENON

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**ASSOC. PROF. AKIL N. AWAN**

University of London, UK

At the height of ISIS's power, around 30,000 young men and women flocked to its banner from every corner of the globe willing to fight for its Caliphate. Today, as ISIS continues to suffer territorial losses and military defeats, and its Caliphate project is fading, many countries are facing the increasing influx of returnee foreign fighters as the conflict nears its conclusion. Fighters escaping from the front lines, brutalised by the ravages of war, perhaps having engaged in horrific human rights violations and having internalised this fanatical violent ideology might prove incapable of easily slipping back into their respective host societies. This has caused great concern to us all, particularly to those countries who are dealing with the largest influx.

What policy options have government put forward so far?

Firstly, states could just do nothing or simply monitor returnees. The lack of information about the returnee population might compel governments to endorse the 'wait and see' strategies, and monitoring foreign fighters pending more relevant information.

Secondly, states could opt to remove citizenship. For most countries, this is not really an option. Unless the accused possesses dual nationality, it is illegal to render a person stateless under existing United Nations conventions. This would violate international law.

The third option would be to criminalise all those who return from fighting in Syria giving them mandatory prison sentences on return, even without evidence of criminality. Simply having joined a group is grounds for incarceration. Some states have gone a little further trying to kill at least some of their foreign fighters at least before they return.

The final option would be to rehabilitate returnees through some de-radicalisation measures.

Prof. Awan noted that there are problems with the term radicalisation. Many scholars have critiqued the unhelpfulness of the term with so even calling into question the phenomenon's very existence.

Consequently, we are not quite sure what causes radicalisation or what it actually is, and the prospects of somehow reverse engineering a solution in response, or de-radicalisation, remains quite problematic. One other problem, radicalisation and de-radicalisation have functional analogues in terms like brainwashing and its opposite deprogramming, which are now obsolete, but have been used in the sixties and seventies. They were used extensively to describe and explain religious cult, religious sects and new age movement to young people. Deprogramming then described the unethical and coercive interventions made by their families and psychotherapists to reverse and somehow rescue them from their lifestyle choices. Those methods, however, have been described as unethical and coercive interventions.

What does this say to the de-radicalisation strategies? Many countries have experimented extensively with these kinds of interventions with varying degrees of success. However, what is quite clear is that many successful de-radicalisation programs have not de-radicalised but simply disengaged from violence at home in most cases. In other words, they modified behaviour using a range of incentives rather than fundamentally altering beliefs and attitude.

In order to tackle this problem more effectively, Prof. Akil suggested a step back should be taken and to look at what was so attractive in ISIS radicalising appeals in the first place. Why its narrative resonated so strongly with so many for so long? Understanding the motivations that drove these individuals to join ISIS in the first place may help to gage the potential danger they are likely to pose in their host societies on return. Also, it may help to tailor disengagement and de-radicalisation measures rather than using a one size fits all. In addition, there are two other reasons for which this understanding is particularly pressing. ISIS will continue to view terrorist attacks instigated abroad as a kind of compensatory mechanism for increasing losses in core territory. Some of those attackers are likely to involve hardened returning foreign fighters bringing violence back home. In other cases, the siren song of ISIS has simply inspired individuals to carry out largely autonomous domestic terror attacks in their home countries despite having no tangible links to or having received trainings from jihadist groups.

Recruitment by jihadists in the West is not a new phenomenon. ISIS has simply overtaken Al Qaeda's role as the organisation of choice for Western jihadists today. The broader appeal of jihadist narrative beyond ISIS itself needs to be considered, highlighting in particular the continuity and change. What stayed the same and what changed in the narrative over time? If ISIS disappeared tomorrow, the problem would not go away.

Prof. Awan suggested that we should think of what radicalisation would look like in a post-ISIS context. To do so it is important to examine what was so appealing in the ISIS narrative to so many.

The narrative offers something; it is one of the important pull factors. But the individual's context or circumstances, psychological framework, group dynamics, structural conditions, etc. are central to whether or not the narrative resonates with the individual on a personal level. Those are the push factors. Narratives resonate only when they intersect with individual agency and individual contexts. The extremist narrative is almost irrelevant unless it finds fertile ground to take root. The way it does that is by resonating with individuals on a personal level, ie. resonating with our everyday lives and experiences. Extremist narratives only resonate when they intersect with real world issues. Consequently, CVE campaigns cannot only focus on content or medium of message and neglect real world issues, which allow the message to resonate.

Looking at the theme of identity and belonging within the ISIS narrative, both the ideas of jihad and caliphate are underpinned by the primary identity of all Muslims as first and foremost as part of this worldwide ummah or community of believers and not as residents or citizens of their countries of birth or residence. It is this radical interpretation of these religious communities of beliefs that becomes the sole locus of identity and belonging. So jihadist media and narratives in relation with identity have 3 central aims and strategies. The first is attachment; they reinforce and strengthened self-identity and making audiences see themselves as part of the in-group identity. Secondly, they deracinate, they weakened and de-linked from all types of identity whether they are national, ethnic, and cultural identities. Thirdly, through polarisation they are reinforcing diametrical opposition between identities.

In conclusion, Prof. Awan asked why would, in terms of CVE, contesting the message have any tangible impact when nothing is done to change the reality of the individuals' predicament and lived experience?

## SOCIAL WORK: WHAT KIND OF REHABILITATION PERSPECTIVE FOR RETURNEES?

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**KHALED BOUTAFFALA**

AMO AtMOSphères, Belgium

In the first instance, Khaled Boutaffala explained that we need to listen to our youth to fully understand the causes for which they leave for places such as Syria. In France and in Belgium, sometimes it is not possible to think about the causes, to reflect on them; we only think about how to bring better



and more security to our neighbourhoods. This is not the right question. We need to understand what can be done to prevent for Belgian youth to leave to places like Syria.

Very often they decided to go because they went through a number of processes, which lead to significant hurt and bitterness. They met an ideology, which responded to their ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity even. They find themselves in a situation within their own society, which seems to be more violent than what may be awaiting them elsewhere.

The Belgian government has taken a number of actions to address the issue of returning foreign fighters, which often are counter-productive and in the case of young people, they are generating even more, whether rightly or not, sentiments of bitterness and anger.

In Belgium, foreign fighters automatically go to prison when they return and meet inhumane conditions, regardless of their initial motives or involvement in Syria. Very often the youth are put in isolation without any support. They are criminalised to the end degree. Prison is not the answer.

Some returnee youth have explained that they regretted bitterly returning to Belgium because psychologically it hurt them even more. To be in maximum isolation, they have no access to their families, spouses or their children. They may not even have access to a chaplain.

Therefore, once they have left prison, there needs to be a full psychological support, in order to immediately assist them and their entourage. It is important to understand that the entourage also goes through enormous pressure in their local environment and bringing them support is as essential demonised, and this should be prevented

A second issue that Boutaffala raised the notion of professional secrecy and confidentiality, which needs to be maintained. The Belgian government has tried to limit confidentiality within social work. Social workers are now compelled to report any person who might be suspected of radicalisation. This undermines the atmosphere of trust that social workers have at the level of the general public. This confidentiality is vital to create trust and ensure maximum efficiency of the process.

Boutaffala truly believes in the need to reintegrate as soon as possible these young returnees upon their release from prison within their families and society. It is also important to recognise their skills and asset to society in order to facilitate their reinsertion. It is also important that a trust person (ie. a person considered a legitimate by the returnee) stands by the returnee and supports him or her in his or her reintegration process into society. This person could be a friend, a chaplain, a social worker, a psychologist, whoever is the most appropriate for this person.



In conclusion, Boutaffala stressed that the best way to stop radicalisation and enable people to go and fight overseas is to address the real issues that are predominant in the urban areas. This is a political work, which needs to be undertaken as a matter of urgency by national authorities, otherwise it will be almost impossible to fight the ideology that offers them so much. Unless we do so, it will create an even greater gap between “us” and “them”. There is a need to fully collaborate and fully participate in bringing all the concerned agencies together to make it happen.

## LEGATO- THE KEY CLIENT APPROACH

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**JOHANNA SCHUETZE**

Legato, Germany

#### Some experiences about radicalised youngsters in Germany

Depending on the region, up to one third of the radicalised youngsters have recently converted to Islam. Meaning we have teenagers and very young adults who had little knowledge of Islam before their radicalisation process started.

The radical scene in Germany is still predominantly a first generation phenomenon. By first generation, Schuetze referred to youngsters with no radical parents and a scene that is very new and youngster- based. The youngsters who built the scene are still the leading part of it. The scene itself is hardly violent. In Germany, there is little to no experience with violent groups that plan to fight against Germany and German society. So little danger is coming from this scene. Schuetze explained that while Germany had been facing terror attacks, these attacks were mostly committed by individuals who were not part of the German scene.

The common language (German) is a key factor for radicalisation in Germany because it shows us that the youngsters are mostly born, raised and therefore socialised in Germany. This means that radicalisation is hardly a migration problem.

The triggering crises are mostly adolescence-based. In Legato's experience, there is always a personal crisis that opens the gates to the radicalisation path. Since Legato's clients are mostly teenagers, Schuetze explained that they have mostly observed adolescence-based problems such as bullying in

school or major problems with parents. The lack of father figure plays also a significant role in many cases.

Those who reach out to Legato are most often the families of the youth, or people who interact within the social surrounding of the youngster such as teachers and social workers.

### Radicalisation and possible intervention

When it comes to the radicalisation process in Germany, Schuetze distinguished two different steps, which can provide opportunities to interrupt and change that process.

First, there is the personal crisis, which is characterised by a cycle of social isolation and radicalisation. This leads to the youngster conversion to Islam and then his or her radicalisation. This radicalisation leads to the young person's social isolation, as there is little to no acceptance from his or her social surrounding. Two significant factors supports and reinforces the radicalisation cycle: 1/ ISIS Propaganda that tells the youngster that Muslims are discriminated and he or she needs to fight back; 2/ society and media appear to be against the Muslim community, which reinforces that the ISIS propaganda. Together, these factors keep evolving and lead the youngster to slip deeper into isolation and radicalisation, which leads to extremism.

As counsellors, there are two opportunities to interrupt the process. The first one would be the crisis: by talking to parents, for example, Legato tries to analyse the crisis and find a way to end it. The second opportunity of interruption is during the social isolation. When the youngsters isolate themselves, they will have not have any other input from outside when it comes to propaganda - they lose track of reality. Most importantly, they are losing their loved ones. To interrupt this isolation, an important person is needed - a key client.

A key client is the person in the social surrounding of the radicalised youngster who has the closest bonding to them. Legato tries to engage the key client in the evolving process of radicalisation by bonding to stop the isolation and get them back into reality.

### The Legato coaching processes

To understand how this works, Schuetze looked at a typical coaching process.

### Contact

First of all, someone calls the Legato office - mostly family members, sometimes teachers or social workers. Often they will say that their child is a radical Muslim and ask for help. Legato invites them to their office and ask many questions about the family's situation and the youngsters' own situation

to get an idea of the situation. During that phase they try to find the key client through their first contact's input.

### Analyse

Having all of the information they try to analyse how deep the youngster slipped into radicalisation and why it happened - which most often has to do with the family- history. Once this step is completed, Legato tries to engage their key client.

### Training

To engage their key client, they need to train and support him or her. An important factor here is trust:

- » trust between the counsellor and the key client.
- » trust between key client and the youngster.

The task of getting a teenager out of a radicalisation process is very difficult and nerve wrecking, and can take a long time. So it is Legato's task to coach, support and look after their key clients constantly.

### Advise for key clients

**Avoid religious based discussions** - This cannot be stressed enough: religious based discussions only lead to one thing: conflict. Since these discussions are very emotional on both sides, there is no positive outcome. No one will win. Instead, it is more productive and efficient to try to create positive interactions and show interest/empathy/acceptance. This is the only way to create a positive environment around the youngster. This is what is needed, for youngsters to have a safe place of acceptance and empathy at home. When a child feels accepted, it tends to open up very quickly.

**Respect the religion** - in Germany it is everyone's free choice to choose their religion. It is important to accept that choice. It takes away a lot of daily family drama and discussions.

**Do not hesitate to get help** - when tasks get too hard or the key client's well-being is in danger, it is important to ask for help. Key clients do not have to go through this alone and support will be provided for as long as it is needed and wanted by Legato.

Legato not only trains its clients to work on every task but they also constantly support and help them mastering these tasks. Because Legato as a significant network of partners, it has many ways to offer help and get other partners on board if needed. They sometimes have to be very creative to find solutions, since every case is slightly different but they always try their best to accompany their key clients as long as they want them to in order to get their child back.

## SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL AND SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS: MAJOR ISSUES IN TERMS OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**FLORENCE BRION**  
CAPREV, Belgium

The CAPREV is a multi-disciplinary organisation dealing with radicalised minors and adults with the help of different professionals (such as educators, psychologists and lawyers). An important part of their mission is the setting up of the disengagement process. Their disengagement process focuses on preventing the acting out of any violence by radicalised individuals and not on making them change their ideas.

Disengagement can be defined as the eventual reinsertion of the radicalised individuals into society, which will touch all aspects of life and requires a number of actors. Thus, it needs to be looked at as a long and continuous process. The reinsertion process has to take into account all aspects of the life of the person and need to be based on a number of areas (such as psycho-social guidance, training, access to employment, psychological monitoring, trauma treatment) and has to take into account the individual's social context, and the possibility of holding alternative discourses to violence. There is no "one size fit all" disengagement process; it is an individualised process.

Confidentiality is extremely important in this line of work. That is why the CAPREV never allows anyone, including the police or any judicial authority, to look into or access any of their case files. Trust is of the utmost importance in order to enable a free space to be given to these individuals to freely tell their stories.

In regards to their ideology, Brion encountered two kinds of returnees: those who came back because they were disappointed by what they found in Syria and those who continue to be vulnerable to Daesh ideology, even after their return. The accompaniment program will be personalised to each category of person. The core of the work is to identify certain key life moments, which enabled the individual to adopt violence so to better assist with their disengagement process. In addition to the psychological work, another important part of the work is to give the individual reasons to want to remain in their birth country, showing her or him that he or she is an asset to society and give her or him hope in her or his future. This step is undertaken with the help of the families and social workers.

In conclusion, Brion stressed the need for institutional changes in order to give these individuals a valid place in society. Otherwise, the work operated at the individual and local levels will not be effective in the long run.



JULY 27, 2017

# SESSION 2

## FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS AND PRISON

CHAIRER BY ALYAS KARMANI  
CO-DIRECTOR OF STREET UK, UK



## AUSTRALIA'S APPROACH TO RETURNING FOREIGN FIGHTERS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DANIEL LONEY**

Assistant Director, Strategy and Prisons, Countering Violent Extremism Centre, Australia

Australia has a small but increasing number of prisoners incarcerated for terrorism-related offences. For the Australian government, the major challenge is the rehabilitation of those individuals.

The issue of greater concern is terrorist offenders and offenders indicating sympathy or support for terrorism who do not rehabilitate and remain a significant risk to the community on release. This is a key reason why the Australian Parliament passed a new law in December 2016 to establish a post-sentence detention scheme for high-risk terrorist offenders. The objective of this legislation is to ensure that, where terrorist offenders cannot be rehabilitated, they will have the power to keep the community safe by keeping them behind bars.

A notional working group chose VERA 2R risk assessment tool to underpin the High Risk Terrorist Offenders scheme.

Many prisons have been trained to administer the tool, its application being as broad as:

juvenile justice agencies using the tool to assess and risk and inform rehabilitation activities;  
law enforcement agencies using the tool to assess returning foreign fighters;  
prison psychologists and parole officials using the tool to inform parole decisions, and;  
prison psychologists and social workers using the tool to guide approaches to rehabilitating terrorist offenders.

Regarding rehabilitation or disengagement programs, Australia is implementing two programs nationwide – the Community Integration Support Program (CISP) in Victoria and the Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM) in New South Wales.

### Community Integration Support Program

It is a prison-based rehabilitation program. Participants are supported in their efforts to disengage from violent extremism and to reintegrate back into the community. Since 2015, CISP has expanded to service community-based clients – both former prison-based clients as part of their post-release reintegration, and individuals who may not have yet reached a criminal threshold but were displaying signs of, or vulnerabilities to, radicalisation.

### Proactive Integrated Support Model

It is a pilot assessment and early intervention project to assist offenders in custody to disengage from violent extremism. Psychologists, Imams and social workers oversee the assessment and intervention of at-risk offenders across New South Wales.

### Impact of Disengagement Programs

Preliminary evaluations indicate that these programs are achieving positive change with some participants. Implementing effective terrorist rehabilitation programs is complex, with many sensitivities to consider, including offenders reluctance to participate and the challenges involved in engaging communities, community leaders or other mentors to assist with rehabilitation activities.

### Role of Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations have a critical role to play, these rehabilitation services are likely to have more credibility with offenders, if they are not government branded or seen as being imposed by government officials. For example, the involvement of the Islamic Council of Victoria is one of the major factors behind the success of the CISP with some participants.

## CARING FOR MINORS WITHIN IPPJ

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**SEYFI KURLU**

Pedagogical Director IPPJ Fraipont, Belgium

The placement in public institution of Youth Protection (IPPJ) of minors for acts qualified as «participation in the activities of a terrorist group» is a recent phenomenon. It questions from a new angle educational intervention within the context of constrained support; a specific sector within Youth Aid in Belgium.

There are six IPPJs in FWB. Of these, five are for boys and one for girls. On the basis of a judgment or an order issued by a Juvenile Judge, these IPPJ admit minors aged 12 to 18 from 14 French judicial districts. Depending on the case, ie. the profile of the young person, his age, the nature and gravity of the offense committed, the Youth Judge, who is expected to know and respect the educational projects of each institution, will opt for an open or closed placement.

Each IPPJ provides in its educational project, the specific duration of placement both in open and closed regimes. In all regimes, these durations vary roughly from fifteen days to one year or more in some cases. The placement time is subject to various factors including the development progress of the young person in the institution, the possibilities of his orientation to a new project of living at home, supervised autonomy or in another institution.

Open regime placement offers young people, depending on their evolution, the opportunity to return to the family unit during weekends and school holidays as long as this family exists, that it is available and collaborating. Placements in a «closed regime» do not include provisions of this kind; it is a strict confinement where family visits are not considered during the youth's follow-up period.

Regardless of the type of regime, open or closed, the objectives pursued with the young person revolve essentially around two axes.

The IPPJ work around two main axes with the young person:

- » To accompany the young persons to enable them to understand their offender journey, to be aware of it and to be able to build a new future. This work is often very hard and painful for the young person. Done by volunteer adults, the questioning oblige young people to globally rethink and reconsider all things that they have built beyond their delinquency path.
- » To put into place an accessible project of social reinsertion for young people in a peaceful environment.

The IPPJ intervention with «radicalised» youth is not aimed at their «de-radicalisation» involving the renunciation of radical ideas, but rather their «disengagement»; the renunciation of a violent commitment. Ideally, Kumlu explained that they would like this disengagement to be able, in a future time, to open the path of their «desistance», ie. the stopping of their course in radicalisation. However, this desistance supposes a new renunciation, even more trying and which consists in recognising the possibility of having been mistaken, of having been fooled, without this being accompanied by a psychic collapse. Desistance is therefore equivalent to claiming a positive place in society. This choice in no way subjects the young person to apostasy or to a renunciation of his aspiration for more social justice.

Kumlu clarified that under the current circumstances, ie. the security stiffening of the states supposed to satisfy the credulity of the average citizen, political expediencies and the media pressure which weighs on the shoulders of the Youth and Family Judge and magistrates, the care of the young radicalised is not easy and seems all the more important. In Kumlu's view, it is a heavy responsibility because it is likely to influence the implementation of policies that he fears. The risk being to see on

he horizon the theories of the grouping of these young people in «specialised» institutions with the direct consequence of their stigmatisation and the danger of watching helplessly their irremediable crystallisation in a posture of conservatism, whose radical anchoring, it will no longer be the object of a choice but that of an obligation, of a question of survival likely to further nourish the divisions, the dichotomous vision of the world, the gaze on the Other.

Kumlu and his teams' experience in this area have taught them to consider carefully the idea of the heterogeneity of groups. This has advantages since the diversification of delinquent problems avoids the formation of «hard cores» and contributes to the permeability of young people to opinions and points of view that are not theirs. In this context, the risk of anchoring radical ideas in the group of life is greatly reduced. To date, they have not been confronted with issues of proselytism within their services. However, vigilance remains with certain vulnerable young people, particularly sensitive to the appeal of the charismatic-fantasy image attributed to the young radicalised, who is ready to take up arms and to whom it is easy to identify himself given its proximity.

Therefore, the assessment that will be made of their social rehabilitation in terms of success or failure will undeniably impact the gaze placed on these young people who, with a few nuances, do not differ fundamentally from their peers, whether delinquent or not. It is not a question here of redefining the troubled period of adolescence, but of recalling that it is a period of delicate transition between childhood and adulthood, that it sets in motion individuation, empowerment, emancipation, distancing, breaking with the first agents of socialisation that are parents and that it supposes new affiliations to peers whether real or virtual.

In 2015, the multi-disciplinary team of the Fraipont IPPJ's SOORF (Observation and Orientation Unit with Closed Diet) welcomed their first young radicalised person. Since then, they have welcomed three others. Kumlu explained how the first placement in SOORF of a radicalised youth changed their vision of radicalisation. Its support led effectively to the questioning of their practices through the issues that it represents at various levels: is the social rehabilitation of radicalised youth possible? Should their care be considered in accordance with the requirements of public security or should it enjoy the same pedagogical standards as those applied to «classic» juvenile delinquents?

They do not present any psychopathic traits; they are not murderers. Often, they are intelligent, seductive, in full identity construction. A salient feature of these «radicalised» minors entrusted to the IPPJ is that these do not have a significant delinquency path. In other words, none of these youths had ever had a previous IPPJ placement.



These young people have in common a rudimentary mastery of geopolitical issues, a lack of knowledge of the dynamics and power issues that exist between the different armed groups, a mistrust displayed vis-à-vis the media and they are particularly sensitive to logics of conspiracy. Often, their knowledge of Islam is incomplete, selective, superficial. Their engagement with Daesh raises questions. Their radicalisation results from a free consent, a voluntary submission to the tutelary image of the Islamic state. All these young people were offered a status, the restoration of an identity in need of recognition. But beware, beyond their vulnerability, they are committed, determined and convinced. Their desire for a terrorist act was undeniable. They had organised themselves in this way, had regular and fed daily contacts with other cells in Europe via the internet and on the front in Syria.

Therefore, how can educational teams counterbalance this? What alternative can they offer to help these youths and encourage the emergence of personal projects, give them ways to rediscover themselves differently? It is no small task to face Daesh indoctrination strategies. Kumlu explained that their intervention had to change and work towards the establishment of a relationship of trust invested affectively by the educator able to withstand with serenity and benevolence the flip-flops of these youth torn between the rediscovery of their conscience, the reappropriation of their capacity for discernment and their blind adherence to the Islamic state.

In concrete terms, what is at stake here is the adaptability potential of the referent educator, psychologist, social worker or trainer vis-à-vis the young person who is under severe stress. The aim is to avoid stigmatisation, to guard against a direct and violent confrontation and to imprison the young person in the role of the victim or villain and to freeze at the same time in agreed roles: “they would be wrong, we would be right”.

For Kumlu, working with families is essential. It constitutes the pivot of their intervention. Accompany the family in accepting the problem of their child, lead parents to recognise that they were sometimes in denial; they did not see anything coming, too busy with their personal problems (without it being perceived as a trial or a reflection of their parental incapacity) and to restore communication, to talk about what angers, what hurts and what has not been solved. Creating an educational alliance is important. In other words, the reestablishment of the family bond is decisive in the radicalised young person's approach. The bonds of love and affection «re-humanise» him or her in his or her own eyes and that he or she approaches with apprehension.

The objective consists, in terms of educational intervention, to not deny the principle of structuring conflictuality, which tends to disappear in society and which characterises not only these new profiles but also many delinquent minors. In this respect, the educational space is faced with the need to re-create this environment in the eyes of the youth to give them recognition and allow them to redeploy their aspiration to meaning, their need for answers in a place willing to listen to them without the to judge or to serve them a hollow speech while maintaining it in the relation to the otherness since their taking charge also inscribes in times when the life of group takes precedence over the individual.

However, the need to accompany the young person in a real «harmonious living together» forces the educator to discuss with the young person what makes a difference, what seems irreconcilable, what opposes without jeopardising because the risk is to see the youth to turn away from the worker who would then be considered as an agent enrolled in a normative and binding approach. Avoiding breakage is precisely the goal to achieve.

## VIOLENCE AND IDEOLOGY

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**FOUAD SANAADI**

Regional Council of the Muslim Cult, France

Sometimes it is hard to reconcile theory and the experiences encountered through professional career with the reality. On the issue of radicalisation, how to reconcile these three facets? As a practitioner, all the theories Sanaadi had learned were not adequate. Rapidly, he had to rethink his work through his experiences.



Institutions are often asking for a very simple solution to a problem, a structured method, applicable to all situations. The reality is completely different, there is no phenotype of the « perfect terrorist », no special archetype, no specific criteria used to recognise a young radicalised person. Sanaadi explained how these criteria as laid out in some guide for schoolteachers can be problematic. For instance, if a young person observed Ramadan and wore a beard, then those were considered as signs of radicalisation, and teachers would need to inform the authorities of their student's radicalisation.

Sanaadi explained how he felt even more uncomfortable with these prescribed theories and practices, especially within the realities of school and prison environments. In the case of prisons, as a chaplain he was trained to know about and use secularism to engage with radicalised prisoners, which in his own experience in dealing with this type of population was counter-productive. Secularism would have no effect in the discussions he would have with the concerned radicalised youth. Therefore, the reality of the field was in stark contrast with the advocated theories and approaches.

Because one single case is not similar to another, the de-radicalisation process must be humanised, specialised and individualised. One can find common elements in some cases such as the vulnerability of youth, or difficult family situations, but even the slight differences in life paths involves a different kind of program.

For Sanaadi, dogmatic attitudes, when dealing at the practitioner level with radicalised youth, have to be abandoned; it is really important to always consider the context of radicalisation and level at which and environment in which the practitioner operates. A holistic approach is required which a multi-disciplinary approach.

## TEACHING HUMANITIES, PREVENTING RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**DR. CLAIRE THI LIEN TRAN & BILAL BRAHIM**  
IRASEC, Thailand/Telopea Park School, Australia

As teachers teaching humanities in jail for more than 10 years, Claire Thi Lien Tran and Bilal Brahim have observed the rise of radical thoughts among their student inmates. While Thi Lien Tran and Brahim's experiences were different; they also converged. Therefore, they can propose solutions to prevent radicalisation in jail.

Teaching humanities is not only crucial to understand this phenomenon with the tools of social sciences but also to prevent terrorism by concrete proposal of education programs in jail and much earlier in secondary schools in order to develop the capacity of knowledge and critical thinking among youth; and so to avoid radicalisation at school or in jail. Tran and Brahim argued that a cultural and educational proposal is a part of a sustainable solution in a long-term perspective.

Dr. Tran taught for more than ten years at the Fresnes prison, the second largest prison in France, located in the southern suburb of Paris. She taught the same courses in the prison as on campus. She observed the progressive radicalisation of some of her students in prison as their behaviours changed. She stressed that access to knowledge and culture is a necessity, a fundamental right, which inmate should not be deprived of. The students-professor relation offers an alternative structured framework to the strong hierarchical prison society; they were considered, if only for a couple hours, not as inmates but as students.

For Dr. Tran, it is very important to develop education in jail. All inmates, but especially those who have been radicalised need education as much as they need psychological support. Some of them are cut from education from early on, and in some cases for a long time. Education is an important way to open their mind.

Bilal Brahim used philosophy classes to challenge extremist ideology and jihadist influencers in jail. He tried to influence the prison community by spreading more complexity to fight the ideology within the prison. According to him, the indoctrination process is the real enemy and prison is the most accessible place to counter ISIS influencers. It is an interesting place for teachers and researchers to listen, to observe, to operate and to keep up with the quick evolution of the terrorist propaganda. Brahim had several terrorists in his lessons for many years, but he focused his work on the valuable inmates threatened to be indoctrinated. A teacher can have a great influence in a closed environment such as prison.

Brahim identified 8 main narrative themes used towards inmate radicalisation, for which the order is as meaningful as the content:

» International politics, ummah versus kufar and crusaders, occupation of Muslim countries and murdering Muslims globally. The use of kufar, the tone and the frequency of it is very important to understand the degree of radicalisation. It defines the enemy and it shows us that the physical and political violence starts with linguistics violence. Muslim are again the first victims of this linguistic violence since none of them wants to be considered a kufar. This is one of the many linguistic weapons that it used to influence believers towards adopting a violent form of wahhabism.

- » Western islamophobia, misrepresentation and ignorance about Islam in western societies: being a Muslim puts a burden of suspicion that can build a lot of anger and resentment over the years.
- » Injustices against Muslim in Paris such ghettosisation, discrimination, stigmatisation, racism; and injustices against Muslims overseas such as bombings.
- » Insulting Islam and the Prophet has become a symbol of liberty of speech in Europe.
- » Censorship: no foreign Muslim scholars are allowed to preach in France and the state's try to impose to Muslims the Islam of France (by Sarkozy). This leads them to underground uncensored exciting Islam and violent version of Islam.
- » An empowerment narrative - "We have our own hope, our own social and political utopia, our own Muslim way of life to build. Since there is no future and not much hope for Arabs and Muslims in France, we can achieve a better social status, become international leaders and obtain a commanding position in the revival of the Islamic state". For politically excluded individuals this project can be mind blowing and act as a complete revelation. This can explain the quickness of some radicalisation processes.
- » Eschatology, pride and heroism driven by a sense of nostalgia of the Muslim empire. Personal despair and extreme interpretation turns some into mujahidin of the Caliphate, to be part of the greater history of the Muslim world instead of being political puppets of the West.
- » Revenge for their treatment in prison plays a significant role.

Brahim explained that this is mostly a political agenda, and therefore, focus should be on their political analysis and interpretation of the news as much as on the extreme religious views.

What is so special about prison? Each prison offers a huge intellectual void and a trauma during the first couple of weeks to the new comers. So, indoctrination can take place very easily if some pseudo imam fills that void. Prisons are unfortunately a wonderful radicalisation ground because propaganda filled the void in terms of social, emotional and intellectual development. Intervention in the first couple of weeks of detainees' arrival is crucial. Being imprisoned is in itself a major crisis and can create a trauma that can facilitate the process of radicalisation. The judge sentence is a second traumatic experience that pushes them for radical change, which can trigger again the process of radicalisation. Isolation is another component that accelerates the process.

What makes the jihadist narrative so attractive in prison?

- » Socialisation is vital inside the prison.
- » Redemption – the will to become a knight of god, to override their criminal record.
- » Status elevation, from a pointless offender to a political detainee.

According to Brahim, it is possible to compete with these three appealing traits of the narratives with the following alternatives:

- » Socialisation to break isolation brought up by incarceration. Classes bringing together a mixed group of students can broaden their community and intellectual environment.
- » Dive into the complexity of religions by discovering hermeneutics, epistemology, history of ideas and general philosophy.
- » Help them build a personal cultural interest, and reflect on an appealing personal project.

In conclusion, there is a need for linguistic peacemakers, or simply put teachers, to help detainees to develop their critical creative thinking and methodical doubt. By dismantling simplistic views of the world, the process of radicalisation can be deactivated from the inside. We simply need to train detainees to grasp more complex view of the world with a long-term dialogue about Islam, politics, history and philosophy.

JULY 27, 2017

# SESSION 3

## **PATHWAYS OUT OF EXTRE- MISM AND WORKING WITH FORMER EXTREMISTS**

CHAIRIED BY BRUCE MCFARLANE  
LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTITIONER, AUSTRALIA

## LIFE AFTER HATE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**TONY MCALEER**

Life After Hate, USA

“Nobody comes into the world as a neo-nazi; no body comes into the world as a jihadist”, stated Tony McAleer.

Tony McAleer described his pathway to violent extremism, from childhood to his teenage years. Traumatic events in McAleer’s childhood led him to build up a whole lot of anger and a deep need for acceptance that led to a path of violence and involvement in far right groups.

As a child and later as a teenager, McAleer’s survival strategy has always been to “befriend the bully, become the bully”. To have the protection of his peers, he needed to have their respect. To have their respect, he had to commit the all the same violence they did. He participated in street fights and beating people up. Unlike his peers, McAleer had to learn to become a street fighter.

He explained that he did not blame his childhood as everything he did he chose to do. The reason why he shared his experience was for us to understand the lens through which he made those decisions.

He became influential in the white power movement in Canada. He was driving the ideology, was involved in recruitment, wrote the literature, created posters, and used the internet. Together with his peers, he managed to build up the movement to a significant size. He built a phone line, which was one of the very first white power websites. He was involved in Aryan nations and White Aryan Resistance and became quite prolific.

The experience of violence was new and thrilling for him. The sense of connection, of brotherhood, and the sense of fighting for something so much greater than oneself (the hero’s journey) are very powerful experiences. The white power scene is filled with Viking imagery. The belief in a white genocide led him to want to protect by any means the white race, and provided legitimacy for violence. The ideology made sense as it helped to justify the anger and the violence that he was experiencing at that time. It is important to remember that unresolved anger expresses itself in violence and most often this violence is directed towards the self. In his case, it was towards the self and towards others.



So, how did McAleer turned it around? The birth of his children was the beginning of a long but steady evolution, with having to start making decision with someone else in mind other than himself. Until then, he explained that he was narcissistic, disconnected from his heart and operated through a distorted ego.

What is it about children that make people have that change? It is simple. Children are safe to love and to open up again.

For McAleer, it all comes down to shame. What does the economic dislocation do? What does overt racism do? What does structural racism do? What does income inequality do? It creates shame. As a young person, whose brain is still developing, this shame becomes part of his or her identity beliefs system, with a perpetual belief to be « less-than ». McAleer calls it toxic shame. As a consequence, individuals live their lives in reaction to that shame.

One way of dealing with this toxic shame is to adopt an ideology that convinces oneself, that she or he is greater than. Looking at a couple of words that are the opposite of shame are the words pride and honour. A lot of these expressions are a hyperextension of the opposite of shame, often coming from a place where there is a lack of pride and honour and that sense of toxic shame.

What is the antidote to shame? It is compassion. The approach adopted is one of compassion without trying to change people's minds right away, as ideology and identity become intertwined. When attacking the ideology, the identity is attacked; it triggers a defence shield meant to protect the identity. Compassion has an incredible power in disengaging individuals from violent extremism.

## THE EXPERIENCES FROM EXIT SWEDEN – DISENGAGEMENT, RE-INTEGRATION AND BUILDING A NEW SOCIAL IDENTITY

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**ROBERT ÖRELL**

Exit Sweden, Sweden

Exit Sweden was created in 1998. Its team is composed of practitioners with different types of professional competencies, such as trained therapists, counsellors and psychologists, as well as people with former experiences in belonging and leaving extremist groups. This particular formers experience is used with people who want to leave. The benefit of this can be seen especially in the initial

phase when Exit workers meets with individuals who are used to be met with anger, disgust or distance; it really bridges and makes it possible to create a strong relation, which is essential in effecting change and assist individuals to leave violent extremism. Having people involved in the exit work that shared a similar experience and who are able to relate to the person's journey helps establishing trust.

Regarding the individuals who are seeking help, they come from everywhere and cover the whole age spectrum. Therefore, they have very different needs depending on what their situation is, where they are within the whole range of different factors that would influence their personality, their role and involvement in the movement, their level of commitment to crime, their capability of building new social relations outside of the movement, their capacity of handling stress and difficult situations.

Exit Sweden therefore focuses on helping people to get out of violent extremist groups, using individualised programs adapted to their specific circumstances and catering to each person specific needs. Building bridges back to society is an important part of the work, as extremists have rejected society. After (re)building trust, the exit workers help to reconnect the individuals with, case adapted and needed authorities and other partners such as, police officers, with prison probation officers, social workers, and even tattoo removers. Building bridges and trust are a key part of the exit strategy as when the individual distrusts anyone who is not part of the group.

Another important part of the job is to use a wide range of networks to help these individuals by enabling access to every professional support they may need.

Most importantly, if the individual has evolved in this extremist environment and is in conflict mode with other people, when the individual decides to leave, he or she will have to build new relations to others and a new social identity. This can cause a lot of stress. From the binary extremist world, the individual moves to a more complex world in which he or she has to make new decisions everyday. It becomes quite a challenge to manage this change. Therefore, an important aspect of exit work is to assist these individuals to "manage through", to assist them in understanding what they will have to go through and how to keep it together. It all comes down to support, support in finding resources, in finding help, being present at every step of the rehabilitation process.

## MY EXTREME JOURNEY AND TRANSITION TO VICTOIRE

**CONFERENCE SPEAKER****OMAR MULBOCUS**

WL Initiative CVE Specialist, UK

His own journey has led Omar Mulbocus to think deeply how to counter and tackle violent jihadist ideology, which has taken away many young people around the world, who are involved in or about to be groomed into any type of violence and extremism. Drawing from his life experiences and being a former member from different extremist groups, he explored the factors of similarities and ways of ground operating from the group prospective. As well as, ideological pull factors around young people searching for normality in the current society.

Mulbocus explained that extremists are very different from one another, and there are no blue prints or checklist that can identify an extremist or a terrorist. There is no one size fits all. However, many young people start their pathway by growing up in the midst of conflict, division, and differences.

In his case, the extremist group gave him a sense of purpose and filled the void left by an absent father. The group provided him with a role model, and an opportunity to work towards a project, the creation of a Caliphate, which would eventually enable him to bring his father to justice.

Extremist groups target vulnerable victims by building trust and fulfilling their needs through control and isolation. Provided with a sense of belonging, they are then exploited and abused through a whirlwind of violence, control and fear of loss. Manipulated, brainwashed, groomed, young people are led to believe that violence is the only way to protect their identity. As a young person, Mulbocus explained that he did not understand all the complexity of his actions. To come out, he went back to the root of his faith and studied the original scriptures of Islam.

Mulbocus explained that the roadmap in exit strategy evolves around 6 phases:

- » Identify - Understanding the triggers or the roots of the problem is essential. What are the push and pull factors (eg. identity, belonging to the group, Status, isolation, ideologies)?
- » Respond - Understanding how the individuals were recruited or groomed to the group.
- » Engage – It is important when engaging to build trust
- » Prevent – Counter any extreme narratives with alternate narratives.
- » Transition - Support with any Lapse or Relapse with Prevention

JULY 27, 2017

# SESSION 4

## COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND SOFT APPROACHES

CHAIRERD BY PROF. MARTHA CRENSHAW  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, USA

## INTERNATIONAL THREAT - LOCAL STRUGGLE

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**JESSIKA SOORS**

City of Vilvoorde, Belgium

Jessika Soors works in a city just outside of Brussels, with a diverse community, which is experiencing similar issues as the cities of Antwerp and Brussels but at a much smaller scale. It counts 43,000 inhabitants but rapidly growing. The city of Vilvoorde became known since 2012 for its high departure rates of individuals to join the conflict in Syria and in Iraq. In 2013, she was appointed by the city to develop a CVE local policy, which centres on a local multi-agency approach and entails cooperation between the City, the civil society sector and local law enforcement. Through this approach, the official policy plan developed by the City has been endorsed and adopted by their civil society partners and local law enforcement agencies. The sense of ownership and partnership with civil society and law enforcement agencies in the development of a CVE local policy has been essential.

The urban nature of the issues around radicalisation has definitely played a role in the broader context of the nature of the issues of radicalisation experienced in Vilvoorde. More specifically, in 2012, people from Vilvoorde were involved in two separate riots. The first one was organised in Molenbeek (May 2012) in protestation against the ban of the niqab. The second riot (September 2012) was in Brussels against what was perceived as an anti-Islam film. Following these riots, there were 30 police arrests, 19 of whom were from Vilvoorde. Amongst those 19, 18 have left to Syria. With today's knowledge, this is probably something that could have been prevented.

Another direct link with the context of radicalisation in Vilvoorde was the presence of Sharia for Belgium. This group was initially from Antwerp and they made a very active dawah on the streets of Vilvoorde. They tried to enter the mosque of Vilvoorde and were immediately expelled. Some youngsters at that point had to make the very polarising decision between staying in the traditional mosque governed by old men who did not know what they were experiencing or being attracted by this new appealing movement and which also dared to say out loud what was on their mind.

Out of the 43,000 inhabitants, Vilvoorde had 28 departures to Syria, 3 of them were minors at the time they left. In the meantime, 9 have died. The city counts 8 returnees who are in jail, and one currently released under probation. There is also a group at risk of 133 persons, including 13 minors. At

the moment, there are 41 individuals who are still on the consolidated list put together by the intelligence services.

When Soors started working for the City of Vilvoorde, specifically on this issue, her mandate was quite clear. Very reactively, the city board wanted an immediate response to the departures to Syria. At the time, there was very little existing policy or infrastructure to make use of. There was a backdrop of youth work but no youth centre. There was no real integration work, no real investments by the city in social work. This situation was particularly challenging, but at the same time it was also an opportunity to rewrite the entire approach. While doing so, one question that was carefully considered was which initiatives should be labelled PVE or CVE. Which initiative should carry the label of being directly related to violent extremism or radicalisation? What was to be avoided was the creation of a parallel universe where all the existing structures would be copied only for radicalisation.

The result was an official policy document titled “An Integrated Plan for Warmth and Safety”. The combination of warmth and safety is carefully chosen because this is the combination that is needed to tackle violent extremism. The policy planned was recognised by the city council, by the city partners and also by the local police council. In effect, the police endorsement of the plan meant that it was not only the city’s narrative but also the police’s narrative.

### Vilvoorde’s Model of Prevention

The theoretical model behind Vilvoorde’s policy plan is a triangle of prevention with different levels that are interconnected.

**Level 0** represents society in Vilvoorde as it is, with its dynamics, its population, its political atmosphere. These circumstances cannot be changed.

**Level 1** reaches out to the entire population. This is where general prevention takes place. The aim is to make people feel they are part of the city, which can translate in good infrastructures and good schools for instance.

**Level 2** considers specific prevention of violent extremism such as training for firstline workers. Society is vulnerable to a specific phenomenon. Both level 1 and level 2 are non-problem based.

**Level 3** is a level of individual interventions. In this case, individual cases of radicalisation are dealt with, such as returnees, siblings of those who have left for Syria.

**Level 4** is the level of law enforcement. This level only intervenes when all the other levels have outplayed their role. This is also the vision shared by the local police.

It is important to note that these different levels share a co-dependence: one cannot exist without the other. Hence, this is what you need to create an integrated CVE approach.



### Looking at individual interventions

In Vilvoorde, from a local government perspective, the City takes the position of directing these interventions through the Local Unit for Integrated Security. These are small monthly meetings with the mayor, the chief commissioner of local police and Soors to discuss whether soft or hard measures are best suitable for each specific case.

If soft measures apply, there are the partners round table. The partners round table is a multi-agency monthly meeting with all the social partners (psychologists, school authorities, social workers, parents, child care and local police) to create individual programs of support. The city directs this multi-agency panel and oversees the tailor-made approach that is developed for each case.

In conclusion, the experience in Vilvoorde shows that a layered approach is needed to tackle all issues related to violent extremism. The baseline of the local approach is a healthy balance between safety and security and a clear coordination role for the city. The mantra of the approach is that inclusion works better than exclusion, therefore every individual intervention is tailor-made.

## CVE FROM A LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVE: LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**GARY TROVATO**

Victoria Police, Australia

### Victoria Police CVE Experience

CVE Unit are tasked with designing and overseeing CVE intervention programs, which are delivered by community-based service providers under contractual arrangements with police.

The CVE Unit identifies persons of interest who could potentially benefit from CVE intervention services; facilitates referrals of persons of interest to community based intervention service providers; and, monitors the progress of clients in intervention support services and programs.

The flagship CVE program began in October 2010 as a prison-based deradicalisation/rehabilitation program servicing convicted terrorists and prisoners assessed as holding, or vulnerable to acquiring, radical views. In early 2015, the program expanded to include a community-based early intervention component, servicing individuals in the community deemed to be radicalised or on the path to radi-

calisation to violent extremism.

The CVE Unit is now looking to engage other services providers to deliver other types of intervention programs which service a particular need such as vocational training programs, or social engagement services.

Essentially, the CVE programs offer a combination of the following on a voluntary basis:

- » Spiritual support: one-on-one mentoring with an Imam, the opportunity to explore ideology (including the “taboo” aspects) in a safe space, and to increase religious knowledge and provide context to certain doctrines and issues).
- » Social support: skills training, academic assistance, and job support.
- » Clinical support such as engaging with psychologist to address underlying issues/needs.
- » Family support: engaging with a client’s family to provide wrap-around support.

### Challenges

Identifying suitable service providers can be challenging, as there are trust issues between various communities and government/law enforcement agencies. Organisations often concerned with community perceptions of working with law enforcement in CVE space. Sometimes, the groups that volunteer their services are not the best suited to deliver CVE intervention. Successful interventions are based on trust, openness and slowly building relationships.

While law enforcement agencies are built on the traditional concept of investigating, arresting and prosecuting offenders, CVE interventions prioritise early intervention, support and soft approaches. Thankfully the police culture is changing and the CT Command culture has shifted over the years. CVE now seen as a useful tool to reduce the numbers of individuals vulnerable to radicalisation, and allow investigators to keep their focus on the very small number of actual violent extremists who are plotting attacks.

### Lessons Learned

**CVE works best in the shadows** - It is best to avoid drawing media and government attention to CVE programs. Media and government attention almost always fuel community tensions and bring CVE programs into disrepute. It is also important to protect the identity of service providers and the privacy of the clients. While service providers often prefer not to have their involvement in CVE programs publicised, clients and their families often agree to participate in intervention programs on the condition that they remain anonymous.

**Ideology is the point of entry** - The pathways to radicalisation differ for every individual. However, experience demonstrates that ideology is often the point of entry with any successful intervention. Once an individual has interpreted their particular issues and identity crisis in terms of an ideology, the client needs to be met on their level and frame any intervention in an ideologically compatible context. To win the trust of a client, a mentor must first demonstrate sufficient ideological credibility in the eyes of the client. Once this is achieved, the intervention plan can then start to address broader issues such as social relations, coping mechanisms, mental health issues etc.

**Prioritise relationship building over processes and procedures** - Clients are naturally sceptical of CVE programs with links to government and law enforcement. Therefore, building a relationship between client and mentor outweighs the need to satisfy procedural requirements, record statistics, formal reporting, etc. Clients can often stay in an “intake and planning” phase for months before a formal intervention can begin.

**Law enforcement involvement is not a barrier to success** - Very few individuals refuse to be referred to intervention services. Investigators build a rapport with a person of interest and offer CVE intervention as a “way out”. CVE is proposed to the client as:

- » an opportunity to explore ideology/religion in a safe environment.
- » it is not an exercise in intelligence gathering.
- » it is a way for clients to get their lives back on track, identify and pursue personal goals, and address their issues.
- » services providers do not provide intelligence to law enforcement. Instead they simply report on client progress.

Finally, law enforcement involvement ensures that CVE intervention services are being provided to those who need it most – i.e. people at the very “pointy end” of radicalisation to violent extremism. Other CVE initiatives tend to get caught up in the social cohesion space and shift their focus to individuals who display the vulnerabilities that may lead to radicalisation.

## SOCIAL COHESION JEOPARDISED BY TERRORIST ACTS IN BELGIUM. POLICE, OPERATIONAL AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASPECTS OF CURRENT SECURITY MEASURES

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER

**BEATRICE BOUHARMONT**

Federal Police and COPPRA, Belgium

Since 2014, Belgium has been the scene of bloody Islamic terrorist attacks. The four murders at the Jewish museum of Brussels perpetrated by a member of ISIS in 2014 were the forerunners of other attacks, the foiled attack in Verviers in 2015 on the one hand and those that took place in Brussels in 2016 on the other.

Police Commissioner Bouharmont briefly revisited the history of the measures put into place since 2005, date of the establishment of a first action plan against radicalisation referred to as Plan R (for radicalisation). She then discussed the strategy that is currently being used to fight radicalisation and extremism more effectively, these latter two being understood as the preliminary stages preceding the terrorist act itself. Among other things, this strategy rests on multidisciplinary cooperation, exchange of information and raising the awareness of those involved on the ground.

She explained how the terrorist bombings of Zaventem airport and Maelbeek metro station in March 2016, highlighted some of the police shortcomings and mistakes in the chain of security, information exchange, human and material resources. It has become obvious that the police is not able to defeat terrorism by itself, which is why integrated cooperation between the various public service entities has been put into place in order to identify those individuals and groups who are having a radicalising effect on those around them and so as to reduce the impact of radicalisation trajectories.

Such cooperation takes the form of systematic management and exchange of information relating to “Foreign Terrorist Fighters”, “Homegrown Terrorist Fighters” and those preaching hate, specifically within operational “Local Task Forces” that bring together police authorities, intelligence agencies and the judiciary. This information is collated into a single dynamic database. In addition, close cooperation with administrative entities ensures that the required links in the security chain are created in the form of local integrated security cells. Although all municipalities and police districts in Belgium are not directly affected by terrorism, they are all concerned and involved in an overall approach designed to stamp out violent radicalisation, polarisation and alienation.



**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
**JOUNAID HAYANI**  
Jounaid.hayani@hotmail.be

For any information regarding the conference initiative  
please contact [virginie.andre@gmail.com](mailto:virginie.andre@gmail.com)

**CONFERENCE REPORT**