TDH-ChildHub Webinar: Reconceptualising the drivers of violent extremism

Moderated by Kristen Hope Burchill
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Why we care?

- The ‘jihadism’ promoted by Daesh is almost exclusively associated with young men under the age of 25.

- Before its fall, there were at least 50 British children growing up in Islamic State, and around 31,000 pregnant women.

- In the UK alone, 96 children have been arrested for terrorism-related offences since September 2001, with 13 convicted as at March 2015.
What this webinar will cover

- How the policy community generally understands the radicalization-extremism process
- An evidence-based explanation of what drives violent extremism
- Critical review of policy and program approaches to date
- Identifying effective entry points
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

Push and pull factors

• Too generic to consistently explain group attachment in individuals

• Radicalization doesn’t seem to explain violent extremism
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. Individuals join a violent extremist group because of structural motivators, or because of individual incentives.

2. Then enabling conditions - group ideology and opportunity - provide a context to address individual needs.
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. Structural motivators: Something to fight for, someone to fight against …

   The West

2. Individual incentives
3. Enabling conditions
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. **Structural motivators:** Something to fight for, someone to fight against …

   - The West

   - The Shi’a

2. Individual incentives

3. Enabling conditions
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. **Structural motivators**: Something to fight for, someone to fight against …

   - **The West**
   - **The Shi’a**
   - **The Assad regime**

2. Individual incentives
3. Enabling conditions
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. **Structural motivators:** Something to fight for, someone to fight against …

   - The West
   - The Shi’a
   - The Assad regime

2. Individual incentives

3. Enabling conditions

   - The State
The state

"I feel at war with the police, with the government, with the media. Why not join Daesh? At least I would feel welcomed."
Understanding the journey into violent extremism

1. Structural motivators: the West, shi’a, Assad, state

2. Individual incentives: Heroism, the winning team, sex, and material reward

3. Enabling conditions
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. Structural motivators: the West, Shi’a, Assad, state

2. Individual incentives: Heroism, the winning team, sex, and material reward

3. Enabling conditions: Networks
Understanding the journey into violent extremism?

1. Structural motivators: the West, Shi’a, Assad, state

2. Individual incentives: Heroism, the winning team, sex, and material reward

3. Enabling conditions: networks, religion

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Poll

What types of PVE programs have participants engaged in?
Summing up

- No liner or predictable pathway
- No simple programmatic or policy response
Securitization measures (CVE)

1. Widened definitions of terrorism
2. Elaborated powers of arrest and pre-trial detention
3. Enhanced intelligence gathering.
4. Revocation of citizenship
5. Controlling communications
Securitization measures (CVE)

1. Right to life
2. Due process rights
3. Freedom of belief and expression
4. International obligations
   - Marginalization and new grievances
   - De-legitimation of key actors
   - Cutting off key sources of assistance
Messaging and counter messaging

“Don’t invoke my religion as a solution to a problem the government created.”

“The West is very good at saying what it is against, but very bad at articulating what it stands for.”
Spotting a budding Extremist

- Searching for role models
- Introspective behavior
- Feelings of grievance
- Emergent political engagement
- Self-expression
- Feeling under threat
- Sensing discrimination
- Visiting mosques, engaging in prayer

I AM NOT A TERRORIST
Poll

What challenges have participants faced in developing and implementing PVE programs?
What now ???

Violent extremism is caused by structural drivers, individual motivators and enablers, that work in a non-linear process.

These factors are rooted political-development challenges that have no easy or quick solutions.

Violent extremists are not brainwashed or coerced, they’re exercising agency.

Preventing people from exercising such agency is fraught with difficulty.

A more effective approach may be to adjust the risk-return assessment in favour of non-extremist options.
Meaningful ‘stuff to do’

- Keeps young people busy, mitigating idleness
- Meets the need for excitement and risk taking, but in a controlled environment
- Empowers and builds self esteem
- Fosters feeling of connectedness, identity and teamwork
- Develops cognitive capacity such as problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Provides positive role-models and mentors.
Space for dissent

- Most radicals do not become violent extremists, but they’re more likely to if they feel scapegoated or isolated.

- Societies need to be sufficiently inclusive that those harbouring radical views have a safe space to exist, but with clear red lines.

- Create alternate pathways for ‘would-be’ fighters to constructively address their concerns.
Critical thinking and engagement

- Youth do not want to be persuaded; they need to be informed
- Build skills in critical thinking, constructive debate and analysis
- Create safe spaces to discuss extremism and political dissent
Poll

What are the areas where additional tools/guidance would be useful?
Moving forward: Questions and next steps