

The Four Realms of Extremism and Mitigation Techniques

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Abstract

In today's increasingly divided world, extremism presents significant challenges to governance, civil society, and global stability. This study investigates the factors that exacerbate extremism and categorizes them into four distinct areas to better comprehend and address these issues. The four areas where these factors emerge are political, social, religious/identity groups, and psychological. After exploring each area and identifying key factors, this paper applies a policy perspective focused on preventing and countering violent extremism. This perspective offers a framework for proposing mitigation strategies that could help counteract the harmful consequences of extremism. For each area, the paper presents specific measures and policy recommendations that governments can implement in relevant contexts.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Question

The rise of extremism as of late has been conspicuous through the countless acts of violence perpetuated yearly on a global scale. This research centers around identifying conditions that may precede or exasperate extremist rhetoric formation. These conditions have been separated into four distinct realms of civil society which can all provide cultivation of extremist rhetoric. Following a discussion of conditions and respective realms, mitigation techniques will be examined through the lens of government using Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism policy(P/CVE). Therefore the research questions guiding this thesis are as follows:

1. What conditions and overarching themes create the opportunity for extremism to be cultivated within a state?
2. What can government do to minimize or mitigate these conditions that create extremism?

The importance of coherent cognizance of extremist groups is prevalent in state security. The increasing utilization of globalized communication and modern technologies allows extremist groups to expand recruiting and indoctrination methodologies. The upsurge and increasing size of these groups provide a direct threat to political systems and cause fractalization within a population that may lead to increased civil unrest. The potential influence of these groups raises concerns regarding increased dissent, as well as a rise in populist rhetoric aimed at fractalizing a population at the expense of another. The manipulation of populist rhetoric in itself can effectively undermine and defile a state's power and ability to rule, more insidiously the

legitimization of this rhetoric can span generations and produce increased terrorist-like actions. Often, the rhetoric is aimed at the current ruling system or government, which undermines the political process and provides cultivation for increased civil unrest. If civil unrest is left unbridled, it raises potential concerns to spiral toward civil war in the worst contexts. It's vital that states actively constrain and attempt to diminish this type of threat to the governance system, this replicates the importance of having an anatomical understanding of such groups. A coherent understanding includes the conditions that served for conception and conditions that continue to exacerbate this phenomenon. Having understood the threat that these groups cause to governance, citizens, unity, and peace; the amelioration of extremist conditions is imperative to the maintenance of good governance.

Following a discussion of conditions that precede the cultivation of extremism or provide a means for radicalization, mitigation techniques within the field of public policy will be discussed as a means of amelioration. Traditionally, states implemented the usage of hard power techniques such as military, intelligence agencies, and policing to minimize the outcome and increase of extremism. However, although this approach has seen success in international contexts, it is not sufficient in deterrence within a domestic context. The growth of "home-grown" terrorism in Western nations has demonstrated that traditional approaches such as hard power were becoming outdated and ultimately ineffective. It was clear new techniques were needed to effectively counter extremism and those conditions that precede it. This would mark the rise of public policy efforts as a solution to dealing with mostly domestic extremism. The spectrum of policy solutions within this field has been coined CVE or Countering Violent Extremism.

1.2 Hypothesis

All found conditions relating to the rise of extremism will be easily categorized into themes that can be separated and approached through various disciplines. Themes will include political, social, religious/identity groups, and psychological. Each theme will be able to be accurately and appropriately mitigated through the usage of preventing and countering violent extremism policy.

1.3 Significance of Study

The significance of this research is multifaceted, as it seeks to enhance our understanding of the complex factors and dynamics that contribute to the development of extremist ideologies and actions. Investigating these conditions allows researchers to provide valuable insights that inform the development and implementation of effective preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) policies and strategies, which are crucial in combating the spread of radical ideologies and mitigating the risk of extremist violence. A deeper understanding of the root causes of extremism enables the development of tailored interventions that address specific factors and dynamics contributing to radicalization. These factors may include individual psychological and emotional factors, social identity and group dynamics, socio-economic and political grievances, and ideological and religious motivations. By targeting these factors, researchers and policymakers can develop more effective prevention and intervention strategies that consider the unique context in which extremism arises. Furthermore, research on the conditions that cause extremism contributes to fostering societal resilience and cohesion. Identifying effective community-based interventions that promote social cohesion, trust, and inclusion helps to create an environment less conducive to the spread of extremist ideologies. In addition, examining the role of education, interfaith dialogue, and civic engagement in building

resilience against extremist ideologies can provide valuable insights into how societies can be better equipped to counter the appeal of extremist narratives and prevent radicalization.

Investigating the conditions that cause extremism is also essential in understanding the potential impacts on democratic values, institutions, and norms. Extremist ideologies can lead to the radicalization of political discourse, the rise of populist and far-right movements, and the erosion of civil liberties and human rights in the name of security. By studying these conditions, researchers can provide important insights into how extremism can influence political decision-making, exacerbate existing tensions, and contribute to polarization. Moreover, understanding the conditions that cause extremism can help inform the media's approach to covering extremism, both traditional and social media. As the media plays a critical role in the dissemination and amplification of extremist views, responsible coverage, and reporting can potentially reduce the spread of radical ideologies and minimize their impact on society. In conclusion, this research holds significant importance for multiple reasons. It provides a foundation for understanding the factors that contribute to extremism, informs policy development, and promotes societal resilience and cohesion. By addressing the root causes of extremism, researchers and policymakers can work together to develop targeted interventions, foster understanding, and inclusion, and ultimately create a safer and more unified society.

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

Extremism can be defined and conceptualized in many different ways as there is a myriad of factors that influence the very definition. Some of these factors include the political system,

prevailing political culture, values, ideologies, written law, and social structure.¹ This paper will refer to extremism as activities that are not morally, ideologically, or politically in accordance with written and non-written norms of the state. They include the characteristics of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, and a rejection of the existing social order.² They vehemently reject democracy as a means of governance and use tactics of intimidation, manipulation, extortion, and violence, to achieve goals. Often, the expression of action by extremist groups can be referred to as terrorism; the unlawful use of violence and intimidation primarily against citizens to provoke a state of terror in pursuit of a political, social, and religious aim. The term radicalization plays a prominent role in the discussion of extremism. Radicalization is the process by which an individual or group adopts an extreme position or ideology that is opposed to the status quo and or challenges mainstream ideas³. Through radicalization, one can also move from non-violent to violent and this is understood as the process of radicalization to violence. This is the process by which individuals and groups adopt an ideology and/or belief system that justifies the use of violence to further advance their cause⁴. Radicalization of violence is not a phenomenon that uniquely affects individuals of a symmetrical background, culture, or religion. there are several diverse factors that can cause radicalization toward violence and similarly, there is diversity in the backgrounds of those susceptible to radicalization. In Canada for instance, the socio-economic circumstances, levels of education, experiences of marginalization, and religious affiliations of individuals who have radicalized to violence are extremely diverse⁵. This same

¹ Michael A. Hogg, Arie Kruglanski, and Kees van den Bos, "Uncertainty and the Roots of Extremism," *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 3 (2013): pp. 407-418, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12021>, 411

² Hogg et al., 412

³ Public Safety Canada, "National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence," Public Safety Canada, July 28, 2022, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ntnl-strtg-cntrng-rdclztn-vlnc/index-en.aspx>, 6

⁴ Public Safety Canada, "National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence," 6

⁵ Public Safety Canada, "National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence," 6

notion can be said for any nation around the world, extremism is not the modus operandi of a single group, and anyone can be affected given the right conditions present.

Chapter Two: Methods

2.1 Literature Review:

Extremism: Extremism has emerged as a pressing global concern, threatening democratic values, social stability, and security. Scholars have sought to understand the phenomenon, examining factors contributing to its emergence and exploring its various manifestations. The literature review reviews key findings from the field to provide a more nuanced understanding of extremism. A majority of scholars have struggled to reach a universal consensus on the definition of extremism as it tends to vary across different disciplines and contexts. Despite this, a majority of definitions tend to share some core elements. These elements are understood as a belief system, attitude, or behavior that deviates largely from society's social, political, or religious norms. Extremism tends to advocate or use violence to achieve goals and arises through a complex interplay between the self, group, social, and political factors. Factors tend to range depending on discipline, however, some common factors noted are experiences of injustice, marginalization, or discrimination. Societal factors involve broader social, political, and economic contexts, such as political instability, lack of socioeconomic opportunities, and perceived cultural threats (Gurr, 1970; Piazza, 2011). Researchers emphasize the importance of considering these factors in conjunction to develop a comprehensive understanding of extremism. Extremism can manifest in various forms, including religious, political, and ethno-nationalist extremism. Religious extremism is often fueled by the belief that one's religion represents the ultimate truth, and that violence is justified in pursuit of religious goals (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Political extremism encompasses radical ideologies from both the left and the right, advocating for revolutionary or reactionary changes to the political order (Mudde, 2000).

Terrorism: Terrorism has emerged as a significant global security concern, prompting extensive research and analysis in various academic disciplines. The literature review focused on attempting to synthesize the existing literature on terrorism, focusing on the key theories, concepts, and debates that have shaped the field. Similar to extremism, defining terrorism remains a contested issue among scholars but does include some common traits. Traits include the use of threats or violence to further goals, goals that are driven by political, religious, or ideological objectives. Additionally, most definitions include the willingness to target bystanders, civilians, and non-combatants to create fear and influence a wide audience. Various types of terrorism were noted in the literature, including ideological, such as left-wing, right-wing, nationalist, and religious. Geographic, which includes domestic, transnational, and global terrorism. Finally, targeted terrorism is also noted, including state terrorism and the killing of specific targets as a means to further objectives. The literature also seeks to explain various causes and motivations for terrorism. These included political grievances which tended to focus on perceived injustice (Crenshaw, 1981; Gurr, 1970). Social identity and group politics also play a prominent role in the environment surrounding extremism. (Sageman, 2004; Moghaddam, 2005) Socio-economic factors and marginalization were also cited as routes that may increase the chances of extremism (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003; Piazza, 2011). In conclusion, it is a consensus of the literature that understanding terrorism requires a complex, multifaceted, and multidisciplinary approach as terrorism can be approached from several angles.

Countering Violent Extremism: The increasing threat of violent extremism has led to the development and implementation of P/CVE policies across the globe. These policies aim to

address the root factors and contributing factors to violent extremism through various prevention and intervention strategies. The development of P/CVE policies has been informed by various frameworks and models, including The European Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (EU, 2005), The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UN,2006), The United Kingdoms Prevent Strategy (UK,2011) and The United States National Strategy for Counterterrorism (US, 2018). These frameworks tended to be similar in emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach to P/CVE, incorporating elements such as prevention, protection, pursuit, and response.

Despite the growing body of research on P/CVE policy, several challenges and limitations have been identified including the lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of programs and concerns that programs tend to target a specific demographic which can be counterproductive in producing marginalization and discrimination. Finally, the balance between human rights and security is another concern of these programs and combatting violent extremism as a whole.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Post-Colonial Studies: Postcolonial studies as an approach are primarily focused on the social, cultural, political, and economic consequences of colonialism by hegemonic powers.⁶ Beginning in the early 1970s, postcolonialism developed into a multiplicity of ideas and concepts through a focus on post-colonial practices and conditions in different contexts. A cardinal notion

⁶ Jan Wilkens, "Postcolonialism in International Relations," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies, November 20, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-101>.

regarding post-colonial scholarship includes the multifaceted approach that aims to empirically analyze post-colonial power relations and derive normative strategies to resist or decolonize dominant historiographies, and epistemological and ontological assumptions that draw on Eurocentrism.⁷ Postcolonialism can neither be understood as a single nor substantive theory regarding international relations theories. The post-colonial scholarship includes a diversity of concepts and methods that draw on literature, history, social sciences, and other disciplines to further understanding. In a more general sense, postcolonialism exists as a performative mode of critical examination and revisionism. It is focused on the colonial past and assessing its legacies for the present but also focuses on forms of colonialism that have surfaced more recently in a growing globalized world.⁸ It contests Eurocentric narratives but also rejects teleological conceptualizations more generally.⁹

Critical Terrorism Studies: Critical Terrorism studies at their broadest can be understood as a critical orientation and a skeptical attitude towards traditional knowledge and definitions regarding terrorism. In a sense, it represents a willingness to challenge received hegemonic wisdom and knowledge about terrorism. Therefore it is a very broad church that allows for multiple perspectives, some of which are considered outside the mainstream understandings. Critical terrorism studies lend themselves to disciplinary and intellectual pluralism and a willingness to engage with a range of perspectives and approaches. It can be said that Critical terrorism studies seek to practice a ‘redemptive hermeneutic’ which aims to redeem what is valuable and useful in the views of the ‘other’, the other taking many forms such as being

⁷ Jan Wilkins, 3.

⁸ Jan Wilkins, 3.

⁹ Jan Wilkins, 3.

positivist, post-structuralist, terrorist, counterterrorist or so on.¹⁰ Terrorism has now become one of the most powerful signifiers in contemporary discourse, the term generates a vast amount of social and political activity.¹¹ Critical Terrorism Studies exist as a need for greater self-reflexivity in terms of attitudes toward terrorism-related research and create a strategic attempt to provoke debate and draw in a wider range of scholars. This can be understood as a research orientation that is willing to challenge dominant knowledge and understandings of terrorism, whilst being sensitive to the politics of labeling terrorism. It is transparent about values and political standpoints while adhering to set a of responsible research ethics that challenge Eurocentric and culturalist reductions of terrorism.

Relative Deprivation Theory: Relative deprivation theory is theory posits that relative deprivation can be understood as primary causation for several outcomes, being social movements, revolutions, crime, or radicalization. Relative deprivation is a subjective measure that depends on how social groups are perceived in comparison to other similar social groups. This can be further understood as the mental state that occurs through the discrepancy between the expectations of the people and the quality of life they obtain. The recognition of this state, called cognitive relative deprivation originates negative emotions such as feelings of frustration, disappointment, and anger.¹² It is through these negative emotions that the individual or group seeks to right these emotions through corrective action. Corrective action does not always necessarily result in violence or illegal action, corrective action can result through legal, political, and social channels of change. However, when the feeling of deprivation is high enough

¹⁰ Marie Breen Smyth et al., "Critical Terrorism Studies—an Introduction," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 1 (May 2008): pp. 1-4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539150701868538>, 2.

¹¹ Breen Smyth et al., 3.

¹² Breen Smyth et al., 3.

juxtaposed with a lack of routes for corrective actions, radicalization can occur in which the individual or group seeks alternative measures for corrective action. Alternative measures, therefore, can include terrorism, extremism, or crime, with that action being directed towards a particular group which the deprived group feels caused this deprivation. Targets can also include government or the state, in cases of high repression and violence in authoritarian states.

The Economic Theory of Religious Extremism: This theory helps explain the larger theory of supernaturalism which explains the persistence of religious belief. The approach views people as rational religious consumers, who focus on costs and benefits in interaction with various religions. Over time they may modify the level of activity based on tastes, norms, and beliefs. Religious producers, therefore, aim to maximize members, resources, government support, or other aspects of determinants of institutional welfare. The actions of producers thus vary depending on the various constraints and opportunities found in the environment. Religious Extremism is a high-powered social structure rooted in separation from a broader society that most often entails tension with broader society.¹³ Extremist groups due to high demands can offer great benefits to potential members, especially those on the margin of society or those living in geographical locations in which government fails to provide basic services or needs. An economic perspective aids in explaining how extremist groups can persist and prosper within modern societies of rational citizens.¹⁴ Religious extremism cannot be equated with religious militancy. Whilst barriers of mutual suspicion separate sect members from mainstream society, this rarely results in violent conflict. However, political conflict and militancy are common and when the state favors one religious group over another, it raises the stakes for all sides. This

¹³ Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Religious Extremism: Origins and Consequences," *Contemporary Jewry* 20, no. 1 (1999): pp. 8-29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02967957>, 18.

¹⁴ Iannaccone., 18.

means that groups of rational individuals will take greater and greater risks to enlarge their visibility and political power.¹⁵ Therefore, religious groups are often in better positions to obtain the commitment, resources, and membership to direct effective attacks on and inflict dominance over other groups in a milieu that presents turmoil. This theory falls in line with the others presented as it denounces a culturalist or Eurocentric view that religion is a curation of extremism or terrorism. In contrast, it recognizes that religious groups happen to have resources and commitment to battle for dominance in situations that present turmoil.

Psychological Drive Theory: The link between frustration caused by relative deprivation and aggression has been understood as Drive theory. Some view this theory as a master explanation for understanding the causes of human violence. The basic premise of this hypothesis is twofold. First, aggression is always produced by frustration, and second, frustration always produces aggression. However, it is important to note that when this is subjected to empirical analysis, research shows that frustration does not always inevitably lead to aggression. It can also lead to problem-solving behaviors through acceptable and legal routes of action.¹⁶

2.3 Methodology

The methodological approach to this research utilizes qualitative research in part with thematic analysis. This approach was chosen due to its ability to analyze several different types of texts through different types of theories. This paper utilizes several theories through multiple disciplines and thematic analysis is crucial in being able to combine those into attempting to glean a reliable conclusion. The theme-based analysis provides an appropriate understanding of

¹⁵ Iannaccone., 18.

¹⁶ Randy Borum, "Psychology of Terrorism," *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470672532.wbpepp275>., 12.

each realm whilst building on separate theories that all provide understanding for each other. Thematic analysis is not bound to a single particular orientation, instead, it can be used in part within constructivist or critical realist approaches. Thematic analysis can help emphasize the social, cultural, and structural contexts that influence individual experiences, further enabling the development of knowledge that is created through socially constructed meanings. Terrorism or extremism in this case. In this particular case, there is a wide range of data and thematic analysis is particularly suited due to its ability to illustrate how social constructs develop and identify patterns. Within the critical realist framework, such as critical terrorism studies or post-colonial studies, this analysis allows for the focus on power relations informing reality and engages in emancipatory investigations that value the voices of oppressed populations.¹⁷ The primary function is to identify, analyze and interpret patterns of meaning and themes found within the qualitative data. In particular, themes relating to the cultivation of extremism. The method included six steps as identified by leading thematic analysis scholars, Virginia Braun, and Victoria Clarke.¹⁸

Phase 1: This phase consisted of a substantial literature review of academic research, policy documents, government releases, and literature focusing on extremism, radicalization, and terrorism. These documents were reviewed and re-read to become familiar with the data while focusing on particular trends or patterns.

Phase 2: Preliminary start codes or “conditions” were then created to serve as categories or areas of focus in further reading. The generation of codes was created through documentation

¹⁷ Michelle E. Kiger and Lara Varpio, “Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data: Ameer Guide No. 131,” *Medical Teacher* 42, no. 8 (January 2020): pp. 846-854, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2020.1755030>.

¹⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): pp. 77-101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

of particular trends and inferences of how particular patterns would occur. This allowed for data reduction in creating categories that would serve as separate realms for more efficient analysis.

Phase 3: Codes were then combined into overarching themes that attempted to depict and understand data. These themes served as categories in which empirically proved codes through data could further be categorized. The candidate themes in this stage included the political, social, and religious for initial codes that had been empirically proven.

Phase 4: Themes were examined individually against empirical data to view how the themes supported the data. The aim was for coherent recognition of how the themes told an accurate and comprehensive story about the data. The primary goal was in understanding if the current themes were sufficient in answering the research question wholly. However, this was not the case, and another theme was added to include codes that didn't quite fit into other themes. This theme was psychological. In addition, codes tended to belong to multiple themes and had to be sorted into a single theme which mostly served to describe the code.

Phase 5: Themes were next defined comprehensively to understand which aspects of data it captured and how these themes related to answering the research question. Another substantial review of the literature was again done at this stage to ensure that no codes nor themes were further needed to answer the research question.

Phase 6: The themes throughout the research are further examined to provide the meaningful contributions they made to understanding the data. The themes were finally included in the research to answer the research question and assert the central hypothesis.

Chapter 3: Realms & Conditions

3.1 Political Conditions

In an increasingly polarized world, extremism poses significant challenges to social cohesion, political stability, and peace. This research aims to explore the development of extremism through four key realms: political, social, religious/identity groups, and psychological. By examining these domains, we strive to deepen our understanding of the driving forces behind extremist ideologies and behaviors and their consequences. Throughout this comprehensive analysis, we will delve into the intricacies of each realm, scrutinizing their unique characteristics and intersections, and ultimately presenting a holistic perspective on the complex issue of extremism. The Royal United Services Institute, the United Kingdom's oldest security, and defense think tank, conducted a literature review on drivers of violent extremism in March 2011 and created Figure 1 below based on the available research regarding extremism. This thesis will rely on the following chart. The largest and core structure of the pyramid consists of situational push factors, which are covered in the political realm. Moving upward, we have group pull factors that account for social explanations and religious/identity explanations. Lastly, we have individual pull factors that account for individual psychological susceptibilities and vulnerabilities. Therefore, the four realms to be explored are political, social, religious/identity, and psychological. These realms aim to comprehensively capture a wide scope of push and pull factors while allowing for the reflexivity needed to approach each condition with the appropriate discipline or understanding.

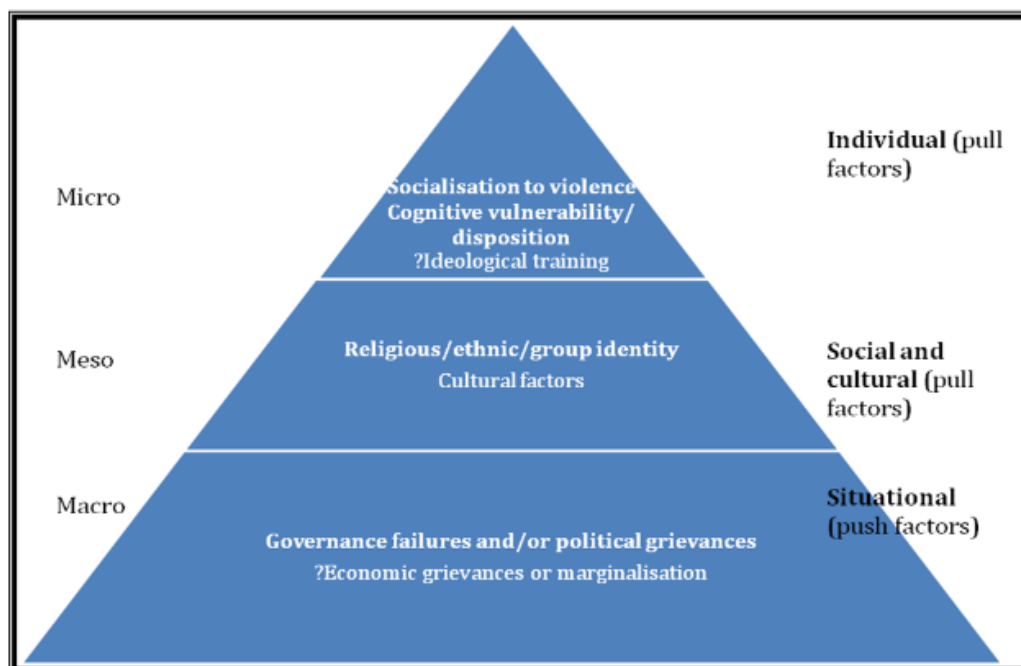


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Drivers of Violent Extremism

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The first and most prominent realm includes the political milieu. This realm is the most prominent in understanding the rise of extremism because it provides the overarching context in which extremist ideologies and movements emerge and gain traction. Politics directly influence the social environment, economic conditions, and distribution of power, all of which can contribute to the development of extremism. Understanding the political realm is crucial for comprehending the rise of extremism, as it often sets the stage for the emergence of extremist ideologies and movements. While the other realms (social, religious/identity, and psychological) play a significant role in the development of extremism, it is the political context that frequently catalyzes for these dynamics to unfold. Factors within this realm also varied to the highest degree, including international influences down to domestic disputes. However, the first and foremost factor to discuss in the political before moving on is the role of hegemonic countries in

¹⁹ Allan et al., 13.

destabilizing other countries in the pursuit of personal gains. Therefore, the first condition examined in the political realm is the role of hegemonic powers exploiting and influencing less developed nations.

1. Hegemonic Countries Influence

Hegemonic countries, often characterized by their dominant economic, political, and military influence, have contributed to the rise of extremism in lesser visible or stable countries in several ways. It is vital to note that not all cases of extremism are solely due to the actions of hegemonic powers, their role in shaping the political, economic, and social landscapes plays a prominent role. Some of how hegemonic countries have contributed to the rise of extremism in third-world countries first and foremost include Colonialism. The historical colonization of third-world countries by hegemonic powers such as the scramble for Africa has left deep-seated political, economic, and social divisions within the states. The Rwandan Genocide in 1994, in which an estimated 800,000 to 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed by extremist Hutus, is a tragic example of extremism caused by the legacies of colonization. The Belgian colonial administration played a crucial role in exacerbating ethnic tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi populations by imposing a racial classification system based on questionable physical characteristics and stereotypes, as well as favoring one ethnic group over the other. During the colonial period, the Belgians favored the Tutsi minority and placed them in positions of power and authority, creating resentment among the majority Hutu population. After Rwanda gained independence, the power dynamics shifted, and the Hutus took control of the government. This led to a series of escalating tensions and violence between the two ethnic groups, culminating in the genocide.

Another notable example of extremism resulting from colonialism is Boko Haram in Nigeria. Contrary to popular belief, the group's origins are not primarily based on the country's religious divide but rather stem from the historical legacy of British imperialism. British colonial rule in Nigeria sought to modernize the nation by imposing Western institutions and worldviews, aiming to make the country more economically efficient.²⁰ The British believed they were bringing a superior society to Nigeria, rescuing the people from their supposedly barbaric conditions. To create a competitive economy, the British amalgamated the northern and southern territories of Nigeria, intending to enhance infrastructure and development across both regions. However, this process forced diverse populations together without any policies to address the social unification of these distinct territories, which were predominantly Muslim in the north and Christian in the south.²¹ This amalgamation led to a deepening of religious divisions and distrust between the two groups, fueling a power struggle as each side vied for dominance. The turmoil resulting from Nigeria's modernization under British rule laid the groundwork for the emergence of Boko Haram.²² Established in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, the group initially aimed to counter Western modernization and eliminate its influence in Nigeria. Over time, Yusuf declared a total jihad, threatening to Islamize the entire country.²³ Boko Haram's continued existence and spread can be traced back to the societal issues arising from Western modernization efforts during the colonial era, emphasizing the need for concrete actions to address these deep-seated problems.

Perhaps the most controversial of an example, yet painfully salient, Al Qaeda and ISIS are examples of a made-in-the-USA instrument of terror initially designed to do American

²⁰ Ava Williams, "Boko Haram's British Roots," ISLAM+MODERNITY, April 30, 2018, <https://blog.uvm.edu/imorgens-rel195a/2018/04/30/boko-harams-british-roots/>.

²¹ Williams, 1.

²² Williams, 1.

²³ Williams, 1.

bidding in the middle east.²⁴ Former British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, told the House of Commons that Al Qaeda was unquestionably a product of Western intelligence agencies. Mr. Cook explained that Al Qaeda, which literally means an abbreviation of “the database” in Arabic, was originally the computer database of the thousands of Islamist extremists, who were trained by the CIA and funded by the Saudis, to defeat the Russians in Afghanistan.²⁵ To understand why the Islamic State has grown and flourished so quickly, one has to take a look at the organization’s American-backed roots. The 2003 American invasion and occupation of Iraq created the pre-conditions for radical Sunni groups, like ISIS, to take root. The botched occupation of Iraq in 2003 was a deep cause leading to ISIS, by toppling Saddam Hussein and then failing to establish a viable post-Saddam political order, the USA created a power vacuum.²⁶ That vacuum then fosters immense internal violence, releasing long-repressed sectarian tensions while exasperating the sense of Sunni displacement and grievances that would give rise to ISIS.²⁷ America had invaded and destroyed Saddam Hussein’s secular state machinery and replaced it with a predominantly Shiite administration. The Shiite occupation caused mass unemployment and created a power dynamic shift that caused mass turmoil.²⁸ Unlike the white Afrikaners in South Africa, who were allowed to keep their wealth after regime change, upper-class Sunnis were systematically dispossessed of their assets and lost their political influence. Rather than promoting religious integration and unity, American policy in Iraq exacerbated sectarian

²⁴ Chengu, Garikai. 2014. "How the US Helped Create Al Qaeda and ISIS." CounterPunch, September 21. 1-4. <http://eyahistory20.pbworks.com/w/file/90614507/CounterPunch%3A%20Tells%20the%20Facts,%20Names%20the%20Names%20%C2%BB%20How%20the%20US%20Helped%20Create%20AI%20Qaeda%20and%20ISIS%20%C2%BB%20.pdf>, 1

²⁵ Chengu, 2.

²⁶ Hal Brands and Peter Feaver, “Was the Rise of Isis Inevitable?,” *Survival* 59, no. 3 (April 2017): pp. 7-54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2017.132559>

²⁷ Brands and Feaver, 11.

²⁸ Chengu, 3.

divisions and created a fertile breeding ground for Sunni discontent, from which Al Qaeda in Iraq took root.²⁹

2. Domestic Government Repression

Government repression is widely recognized as a significant factor in driving extremist groups to transition from non-violent to violent tactics. Repression can radicalize even moderate members of a group, as they may perceive aggressive actions or repression directed towards their more radical counterparts as attacks on themselves. Furthermore, persistent pressure and repression can push moderate actors to adopt more radical means of expressing their grievances. Delegitimization can arise from repeated interactions between the state and nonviolent groups, with the most notable action a state can take to delegitimize itself being the use of violence against its citizens. Della Porta posits that state violence against mobilized groups is a crucial mechanism for delegitimization.³⁰ The state's use of excessive force not only delegitimizes the state but also justifies the use of violence by groups in retaliation. Repression heightens the likelihood of violence or extremism within a state, and unsuccessful repression underscores the state's vulnerability to revolution. Activists may view excessive state violence as a dismissal of peace, leading them to believe that violence is the only means to resist an authoritarian state.

In Egypt, the widespread and severe repression of violent Islamists led to solidarity with them. Violence broke out when, at the end of the 1980s, the regime shut down channels of institutional access and peaceful opposition.³¹ The violence in this situation began with a wide-

²⁹ Chengu, 3.

³⁰ Donatella Della Porta, "On Violence and Repression: A Relational Approach the Government and Opposition," *Government and Opposition* 49, no. 2 (2014): pp. 159-187, <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2013.47>, 13.

³¹ Della Porta, 12

ranging crackdown on Islamist movements, encompassing moderates, radicals, and bystanders alike. State violence took the form of arrests, hostage-taking, torture, and executions. The frequent killing of Islamists, along with storming mosques, mass arrests, and mass executions, represented a particularly harsh form of repression.³² This repression was not only brutal but also indiscriminate, often targeting moderates and bystanders. Consequently, this antagonism enabled inactive supporters and sympathizers to become more engaged, allowing the movement to gain strength through heightened state violence.

Another notable example of state repression leading to extremism is the case of Algeria during the 1990s. This period, known as the "Black Decade," was marked by a brutal civil war between the Algerian government and various Islamist groups, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 people.³³ In 1991, Algeria was on the verge of holding its first multiparty elections, and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), a popular Islamist party, was poised to win a majority of seats in the Algerian parliament.³⁴ However, fearing the rise of an Islamist government, the military intervened and canceled the election results³⁵. This action led to widespread protests and a crackdown by the military-backed government on the FIS and its supporters³⁶. State repression included the arrest and detention of FIS leaders, the outlawing of the party, and a widespread crackdown on suspected Islamist militants and their sympathizers. The government's actions were characterized by excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, and torture.³⁷

³² Della Porta, 12

³³ Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁴ Willis, Michael J. 1996. *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History*. Reading, UK: Ithaca Press.

³⁵ Willis, 4.

³⁶ Martinez, Luis. 2000. *The Algerian Civil War, 1990-1998*. New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁷ Martinez, 7.

In response to the state repression, previously non-violent Islamist factions became radicalized, leading to the formation of extremist groups like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which later became Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). These groups engaged in a brutal insurgency, targeting not only government forces but also civilians who were perceived as supporting the government. The Algerian government's repression and cancellation of the democratic process are widely believed to have contributed to the radicalization of Islamist factions and the escalation of violence in the country³⁸. The case of Algeria during the 1990s demonstrates how state repression can serve as a catalyst for extremism and foster an environment where violence becomes more widespread and entrenched.

3. Delegitimization/Illegitimacy of Government

When organized civil society and political groups functionally engage with the state and are unable to achieve change, they may resort to extremist tactics if they have support from the wider population or believe the state has become delegitimized. Delegitimization of the state includes regime support for unpopular economic, social, or cultural institutions, evidence of corruption, weak infrastructural power, exclusion of mobilized groups from political participation or access to resources, and regime use of indiscriminate violence against oppositional groups or political representatives. Moreover, the delegitimization of the regime occurs in the context of rising inequality and increasing resistance, during which frustrated members of political parties or social movements become alienated and militarized in opposition to fraud and repression, concluding that violence is the only way out. Piazza demonstrates that

³⁸ Volpi, Frédéric. 2003. *Islam and Democracy: The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria*. London: Pluto Press.

the blocking of non-violent political participation is a strongly correlated factor to increase the risk of extremist groups solidifying ideology and or turning to violence.³⁹ Civil society or faith-based organizations may be targets due to established structure and therefore states may be suspicious and target them for repression. In severe cases, this leads to violence from the group being repressed.

In situations where extremist groups resort to violence against the state, the perception of the state's illegitimacy often plays a crucial role. Variations of this idea focus on how opposition groups view the legitimacy and weakness of a regime. The more illegitimate a regime is perceived, the more likely it is that opposition groups will employ violence. Some experts suggest that a combination of permissive conditions can erode the relationship between citizens and the state until a crisis point is reached.⁴⁰ These permissive factors can be categorized into global systemic factors, state structural factors, and social/cultural factors. State structural factors encompass elements such as modernization, economy, repression, and other political or state-related aspects. Social/cultural factors include education, insecurity, grievances, and ideology.⁴¹ The accumulation of factors in each category increases the risk of creating a hostile environment, leading to the emergence of extremism within the state. Delegitimization often occurs during periods of political or social change within a state, but it can also be triggered by international events, such as foreign occupation.⁴² A specific crisis point may arise when a state's efforts toward reform or modernization are obstructed by a rival group of elites. A connection has been

³⁹ James A. Piazza, "The Determinants of Domestic Right-Wing Terrorism in the USA: Economic Grievance, Societal Change and Political Resentment," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34, no. 1 (August 2016): pp. 52-80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894215570429>.

⁴⁰ Davis et al., 20

⁴¹ Davis et al., 20

⁴² Davis et al., 20

observed between elite disenfranchisement and terrorism, primarily in the literature related to revolutions.⁴³ A state's inability to mobilize adequate resources for reform can result in administrative and military collapse, creating an opportunity for opposing groups to vie for control. Weinberg found that political parties are most likely to resort to terrorism when they have ambitious goals, such as establishing a new social order, and when their doctrine deems the current regime illegitimate.⁴⁴ A perceived view of a regime as both illegitimate and weak creates fertile ground for extremist groups to challenge its power. In addition to ambitious goals, party doctrine must emphasize the illegitimacy of the prevailing regime. This emphasis allows radical members to justify escalating violence in pursuit of their objectives.

3.2 Social Conditions

The second area of focus in understanding extremism revolves around social conditions and primarily examines the general circumstances of citizens. One key theory that offers a social explanation for terrorism is the theory of relative deprivation. This theory integrates psychological factors, such as the subjective perception of social reality and the comparative disadvantages experienced relative to other groups.⁴⁵ Relative deprivation theory suggests that it is the perceived extent of relative deprivation or the belief that others are to blame for such deprivation, which can lead to revolutionary movements like terrorism. Terrorism, therefore, is deeply embedded in the sociocultural fabric of society, rather than solely originating from individual consciousness.⁴⁶ While immediate causes and consequences may appear to be

⁴³ Davis et al., 20

⁴⁴ "Turning to Terror: The Conditions under Which Political Parties Turn to Terrorist Activities: Leonard Weinberg," *Terrorism Studies*, January 2013, pp. 137-151, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203717622-18>, 436.

⁴⁵ Bhimasen Hantal, "The Coming Crises of Social Terrorism," *The Journal of International Issues*, Vol. 16, No. 4(2002): pp. 3

⁴⁶ Hantal, 3

psychological, there are underlying sociological factors such as alienation, deprivation, inequality, poverty, religious decline, and unemployment that contribute to the rise of terrorism.⁴⁷ These factors can manifest as resentment towards the cultural, economic, and military dominance of the West, territorial or ethnic conflicts arising from postcolonial nation-building efforts, and challenges faced by immigrants, including unemployment and social isolation.⁴⁸ Post-colonialism examines the history of colonialism and imperialism, exploring how their effects continue into the present day. The inequalities and oppressions stemming from colonialism, which manifests through race, class, and gender dynamics on a global scale, contribute to feelings of relative deprivation in nations affected by globalization. This section will delve deeper into the connection between post-colonialism, relative deprivation, and globalization for a better understanding of these complex issues.⁴⁹ By exploring these aspects of relative deprivation theory, we can gain a clearer understanding of the complex social conditions that can foster extremism and terrorism.

1. Societal Strains⁵⁰

Extremism is more likely to arise from experiences of collective strain felt by members of identifiable groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, religion, politics, class, or territory. However, only a few types of collective strains and social factors are associated with an increased likelihood of extremism. These strains can be described as (a) high in magnitude with

⁴⁷ Hantal, 4

⁴⁸ Hantal, 4

⁴⁹ Wilkins, 3.

⁵⁰ Robert Agnew, 3.

civilian victims, (b) unjust, and (c) caused by significantly more powerful others, including complicit citizens with whom strained group members have weak ties.⁵¹

(A) High-magnitude strains involve actions causing significant harm, including death, severe physical assault, dispossession, and major threats to core identities, values, and goals. These strains are frequent, long-lasting, and expected to continue in the future. Case studies examining empirical examples of terrorism, such as the Tamil Tigers, Basque Homeland, Kurdistan Workers Party, Irish Republican Army, Hezbollah, Hamas, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and Al-Qaeda, provide preliminary support for this claim.⁵² Such strains may involve serious violence like death and rape, major threats to livelihood, dispossession, large-scale imprisonment, or attempts to eradicate ethnic identity.⁵³

(B) Unjust strains may result from various sources besides intentional infliction by external actors, such as natural disasters, epidemics, and fires. However, certain characteristics increase the likelihood of a strain being perceived as unjust and potentially leading to extremism.⁵⁴ First, if a strain is seen as undeserved; second, if it cannot be justified for a greater good, such as wartime casualties being seen as justified if the war itself is perceived as justified. If a strain violates prevailing social norms and values, it will likely be seen as unjust and unjustifiable. Finally, if the collective strain experience differs greatly from past experiences in similar contexts, it is more likely to be perceived as unjust.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Robert Agnew, 6.

⁵² Robert Agnew, 6.

⁵³ Robert Agnew, 6.

⁵⁴ Robert Agnew, 7.

⁵⁵ Robert Agnew, 8.

(C) Strains caused by more powerful others also increase the likelihood of extremism. "Others" in this context can refer to members of different religions, races/ethnicity, class, or political ideologies. These "others" possess greater resources, such as numbers, military equipment, and support, either domestically or externally. Goodwin argues that extremists are more likely to believe that civilians in democratic states play major roles in influencing their governments, which may lead to further strains.⁵⁶ The roots of these strains lie in weak emotional and material ties to the source of strain, resulting from factors like lack of contact, strong cultural differences, language, values, or significant economic disparities, which tend to limit positive interactions.

These strains contribute to a range of persistent negative emotional states. Negative emotions naturally create a desire for corrective action, as individuals inherently want to rectify their negative emotions. The more severe the negative emotional response, the less likely the individual will cope with it legally, especially in contexts where a legal resolution is unlikely or impossible. Emotions can lower inhibitions, reducing concerns about the consequences of one's corrective actions, and fueling a strong desire for revenge to right the perceived wrongs.

2. Failure to deliver basic social services

In several situations, extremist groups have demonstrated their ability to deliver essential services. This has a dual impact: extremist groups gain support and legitimacy, while government and state structures lose credibility and support. Consequently, both the support for extremist groups and the potential for state failure increase. Some extremist groups genuinely seek to improve the conditions for the people, while others prioritize retaining resources and

⁵⁶ . Goodwin, "A Theory of Categorical Terrorism," *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (January 2006): pp. 2027-2046, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2006.0090>.

power for themselves. Successful groups often manage to provide public goods to their members while imposing significant barriers to entry, excluding those who are not committed. This approach increases individuals' commitment to the group to access basic services. De Mesquita's empirical evidence suggests that terrorist groups organized in this manner are more deadly and effective. He argues that the economy plays a crucial role insofar as a failed economy and the government creates a demand for social services not supplied by the government, thereby creating a niche for extremist factions to fill.⁵⁷

A salient example can be found in the case of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah's overwhelming success as a global extremist or Shi'a defense organization and subsequent political power in Lebanon can be directly attributed to excellence in providing social services.⁵⁸ This social service-heavy model has been proven successful in advancing political-military goals. They established a solid popular support base by leveraging the needs, injustices, and religious affiliation of the Lebanese Shi'a. In the absence of government support by Lebanon, Hezbollah provides basic social services such as health, education, and warfare to its constituents, further enabling the group to gain legitimacy and support among the population. Also subsequently delegitimizing the current government, which was viewed for political reasons as a key indicator for the further growth of extremist factions.⁵⁹ The reason service provision can be so successful in moving community members is due to power dynamics that are inherent to social service providers. In particular, when those community members are poor and

⁵⁷ Minerva Nasser-Eddine, et al., "Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review" (Counter Terrorism and Security Technology Centre), accessed March 25, 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235024824_Countering_Violent_Extremism_CVE_Literature_Review., 41.

⁵⁸ James B. Love, "Hezbollah: Social Services as a Source of Power," January 2010, <https://doi.org/10.21236/ada525243>., 37

⁵⁹ James Love., 37

have unmet basic needs.⁶⁰ The amount of power a social service provider has over the recipient is a direct result of the recipient's ability to obtain aid elsewhere and service providers often maintain a monopoly in their service areas.⁶¹ Given the high reliance on alternative service providers in the developing world, insurgent organizations providing health and social services instead of government can have a substantial influence on those recipients. When a service recipient is dependent on one particular organization for aid, the recipient lacks the power and liberty to accept or decline services or question a service provider's demands.⁶²

3. Globalization

The relationship between globalization and extremism is complex and often contentious. However, globalization is linked to political difficulties in several countries. Britain's leading academic specialist in the study of terrorism, Paul Wilkinson noted that modern terrorism is merely a reaction to globalisation.⁶³ Globalization is a very complex process that involves the widening and deepening of international connectedness.⁶⁴ However, it goes much beyond simple increases in economic interactions, it also binds with the cultural, military, political, and social dimensions of a nation. Thus, this aspect was chosen to belong to the theme of the social. While globalization offers benefits such as economic freedom, open markets, and the free exchange of ideas, products, and trade, it can also contribute to negative outcomes like political instability, cultural alienation, and economic stagnation, which can foster extremism.⁶⁵ Groups that are

⁶⁰ Shawn Teresa Flanigan, "Nonprofit Service Provision by Insurgent Organizations: The Cases of Hizballah and the Tamil Tigers," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): pp. 499-519, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802065103>, 4.

⁶¹ Shawn Flanigan, 4.

⁶² Shawn Flanigan, 4.

⁶³ Brenda J. Lutz and James M. Lutz, "The Middle East and North Africa," *Globalization and the Economic Consequences of Terrorism*, 2016, pp. 65-86, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-50394-7_4, 2.

⁶⁴ Brenda Lutz and James Lutz, 2.

⁶⁵ Nasser-Eddine et al., 44.

disadvantaged by changes that accompany globalization begin to oppose those who bring on these changes, such as leaders, groups, or political systems.⁶⁶ While these forms of opposition can take acceptable forms, they can also take on more violent forms when groups fail to achieve the changes they seek. The importance of globalization as a contributor to conflict can also be observed in the fact that symbols of modernity that accompany globalization are often targets for attacks.⁶⁷ Violent challenges by governments and opposition groups can result in a vicious circle of unrest and challenges that reduce the ability of the government to process, and instead leave it in a state of decay. Globalization can lead to the perceived corruption of customs, languages, religions, and economies, with many groups blaming American cultural and political influence. Modernization can create moral complexities within some states, which can result in strains that contribute to negative emotions.⁶⁸ Frustration with US-led globalization is often felt most acutely in countries or regions with low to poor human development indicators.⁶⁹ This frustration, combined with resentment and anger towards US foreign policy in the Middle East, creates a volatile environment ripe for extremist exploitation. It is necessary to view globalization through a post-colonial lens in order to understand how it feeds into the cultivation of extremist rhetoric. The widespread dissemination of Western values and culture has created a cultural homogenization. Which many communities perceive as a threat to local identity, which in turn can lead to movements to regain a sense of identity. As mentioned above, economic disparities create a more fractalized societal standard in which post-colonial societies are often left behind. The dismantling of colonial structures or governments has left many post-colonial societies in political instability. Characterized as weak governments high in corruption with the inability to

⁶⁶ Brenda Lutz and James Lutz, 3.

⁶⁷ Brenda Lutz and James Lutz, 3.

⁶⁸ Nasser-Eddine et al., 44.

⁶⁹ Nasser-Eddine et al., 45.

provide basic services or security. This creates the environment for extremist factions to rise up and compete for control.

3.3 Religious/Identity Groups

The relationship between religion, identity groups, and extremism is a multifaceted and intricate issue, especially when analyzed from a post-colonial perspective. As societies confront the remnants of colonialism and the consequences of globalization, religion, and identity have become influential factors in shaping both personal and communal reactions to these challenges. This inclusion of identity groups alongside religion aims to emphasize that extremism is not a direct outcome of religion itself but rather arises from identity groups. Religious affiliations often represent stable identity groups with significant commitment and resources, positioning them to compete for power in situations where the government is unstable. In this context, it is vital to comprehend how extremist ideologies can harness religious and identity-based affiliations, frequently rooted in historical grievances and a longing to counteract perceived cultural homogenization. By investigating the interplay between religion, identity, and extremism through a post-colonial lens, we can attain a more profound understanding of the factors that contribute to the emergence of extremist movements and devise strategies to reduce their effects on social cohesion and stability.

1. Economic Theory of Religious Extremism

The economic theory of religious extremism offers insight into the broader theory of supernaturalism, which seeks to explain the persistence of religious belief. This approach views individuals as rational religious consumers who weigh costs and benefits when engaging with various religions. Over time, they may adjust their level of involvement based on personal

preferences, norms, and beliefs. Religious producers, on the other hand, aim to maximize membership, resources, government support, or other factors that contribute to institutional welfare.⁷⁰ The actions of these producers depend on the constraints and opportunities presented by their environment. Religious extremism involves high-powered social structures rooted in separation from broader society, often resulting in tension with the larger community.⁷¹ Due to the demanding nature of extremist groups, they can offer significant benefits to potential members, particularly those on the fringes of society or living in areas where the government fails to provide basic services or needs. An economic perspective helps to explain how extremist groups can persist and thrive within modern societies populated by rational citizens. It is important to note that religious extremism should not be equated with religious militancy. Although barriers of mutual suspicion often separate sect members from mainstream society, this seldom leads to violent conflict. However, political conflict and militancy are common when the state favors one religious group over another, raising the stakes for all involved. Consequently, groups of rational individuals may take increasing risks to enhance their visibility and political power.⁷² In such situations, religious groups are often better positioned to secure the commitment, resources, and membership needed to launch effective attacks on and exert dominance over other groups amidst the instability.

⁷⁰ Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Religious Extremism: Origins and Consequences," *Contemporary Jewry* 20, no. 1 (1999): pp. 8-29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02967957>.

⁷¹ Iannaccone., 18.

⁷² Iannaccone., 18.

2. Inequality directed toward religious/identity groups.

There is substantial evidence indicating that radicalization is a social process in which identity plays a significant role, with numerous studies highlighting the importance of social factors over purely ideological ones. Religion and ethnicity are among the most potent expressions of individual and group identity, and many extremist groups inherently oppose the state. In certain contexts, these groups may even assume state functions, such as providing basic needs.⁷³ In the case of Islamist extremists, the emergence of a transnational Muslim identity in the 1980s – which transcended ethnic, cultural, or geographic boundaries – was initially mobilized for defensive purposes.⁷⁴ However, it was later adopted by organizations like al-Qaeda to create a global doctrine of terrorism and revolution. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Islamist extremism; ethnic or nationalist identity markers can also be mobilized in similar ways. When states are weak or failing, religious and ethnic identities can be easily weaponized by extremist groups to vie for power. Iraq serves as a prime example, with the excessively violent and repressive ISIL gaining considerable community support by positioning itself as the defender of Sunni Muslims' rights and privileges, acting as a protector against a hostile state.⁷⁵

It is crucial to emphasize that religion is often used as a tool by extremists to manipulate believers into adopting militant interpretations of their faith. Religion can be exploited to serve the self-interests of group leaders and justify their actions. In his survey on the politics of terrorism⁷⁶, sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer asserts that while religion is frequently blamed for

⁷³ Harriet Allan et al., 21.

⁷⁴ Harriet Allan et al., 21.

⁷⁵ Harriet Allan et al., 21.

⁷⁶ Juergensmeyer, M. (2006). 'Religion and the New Terrorism', in Andrew T. H. Tan, ed., *The Politics of Terrorism: a survey*. London: Routledge, 73–79.

causing conflict and terrorism, it is not the primary instigator. Instead, religion serves as a medium through which group grievances, such as alienation and marginalization, can be expressed. Leaders can then instrumentalize religious or ethnic identities to solidify group structures. Politically motivated ethnic elites can also capitalize on shared identity or emotions and irrational beliefs by fostering insecurity through selective and distorted narratives. This manipulation enables them to achieve their goals through violence.⁷⁷

3.4 Psychological Conditions as a Result of intersecting realms

The path toward extremism is a complex process influenced by various factors, including individual psychological susceptibilities. It is essential to understand the role of personal vulnerabilities in driving individuals towards extremist ideologies to develop targeted interventions and preventative measures. This analysis delves into the psychological factors that may predispose certain individuals to radicalization, such as identity crises, feelings of marginalization, and the need for belonging. By examining the intricate interplay between individual psychological vulnerabilities and broader social, political, and economic contexts, we can better comprehend the factors contributing to the rise of extremist movements and work toward promoting resilience and social cohesion.

However, the psychological realm should not be considered in isolation, as it is deeply interconnected with the political, social, and religious/identity group realms. Individual psychological vulnerabilities often arise from the pressures and influences exerted by these other realms, shaping an individual's perception of the world and its place within it. The political

⁷⁷Mark Juergensmeyer, 75

context, including repression and discrimination, can evoke feelings of disenfranchisement or marginalization. Social factors such as poverty, unemployment, or lack of access to education can lead to alienation and despair, which contribute to the appeal of extremist ideologies that promise solutions to these emotions. Social networks and peer influences also shape individuals' worldviews and development, with political factors potentially impacting these networks. The intersections between religion and identity significantly affect psychological well-being. In situations where identity is under threat due to external forces, individuals may feel compelled to protect their identities. Extremist groups can exploit this urge by offering a sense of purpose and acceptance, thereby reinforcing their ideologies. Thus, this section is merely a result of the other realms and should be viewed as more of a result of the preceding realms than an isolated realm.

Chapter Four: Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is a term widely used by various actors, such as governments, academics, and NGOs, to describe non-coercive efforts to mitigate terrorism. Common manifestations of CVE include counter-radicalization activities, which aim to deter disaffected and potentially radicalized individuals from becoming terrorists.⁷⁸ However, given the context-dependent nature and ambiguity surrounding universal definitions of terrorism and extremism, it is not surprising that CVE has evolved into a catch-all category for responses that lack precision and focus.⁷⁹ Despite being a catch-all term, European and American CVE tend to encompass three large branches: General Preventive Measures, Outreach/Engagement Measures, and Individual Interventions.⁸⁰ (Figure 2 below classifies the position of CVE measures on combatting extremism)

⁷⁸ Shandon Harris-Hogan, Kate Barrelle, and Andrew Zammit, "What Is Countering Violent Extremism? Exploring CVE Policy and Practice in Australia," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 8, no. 1 (May 2015): pp. 6-24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2015.1104710>, 6.

⁷⁹ Harris-Hogan et al., 6.

⁸⁰ Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, "Countering Violent Extremism in America," Center for Cyber and Homeland Security, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4079/poe.06.2015.00>.

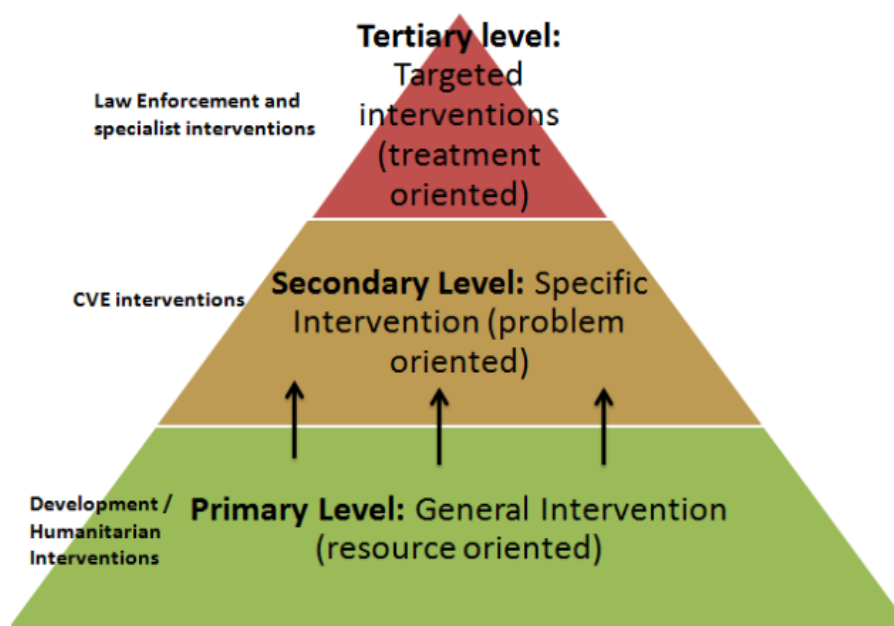


Figure 2: PET's Intervention Model (source: STRIVE Horn of Africa Programme)

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4.1 History:

The shift towards a Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approach in counterterrorism signifies an evolution that has primarily taken place in Western nations over the last decade. Before the 9/11 attacks, counterterrorism measures centered on coercive mitigation methods, such as military action, law enforcement, and enhanced intelligence services for threat monitoring. This focus on hard power began to change after several domestic terrorism incidents in Western countries during the mid-2000s, including the Toronto 18 in Canada and the Virginia Jihad Network in the United States.⁸² These events highlighted that the threat of extremism and

⁸¹ Allan et al., 13.

⁸² Harris-Hogan et al., 7.

terrorism was not only ongoing but also domestic. The notion of terrorism being a distant Middle Eastern threat was increasingly proving to be inaccurate, and broad hard power tactics would be ineffective domestically.

The emergence of CVE was first observed in Europe when the UK introduced a counter-terrorism strategy, Contest, in 2005, primarily aimed at preventing radicalization towards terrorism.⁸³ The EU's counterterrorism strategy comprised four pillars: prevent, protect, pursue, and respond.⁸⁴ The prevention aspect refers to addressing societal conditions that foster individual radicalization. Until 2009, there were significant differences in counter-terrorism approaches based on location, with the United States hesitant to adopt CVE measures in contrast to their traditional hard power methods.⁸⁵ Although the UK's Contest program provided a viable example, the US strategy had to shift towards non-coercive or CVE methods to adapt to the changing threat. In 2011, the Obama administration unveiled a strategy to combat violent extremism, marking a turning point for US counter-terrorism policy.⁸⁶ The program incorporated standard CVE practices such as building community partnerships, using counter-terrorism tools appropriately, and fostering a culture of resilience.⁸⁷ Australia and Canada also adopted their national CVE strategies in 2011.⁸⁸ Countries like France, Finland, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland have since developed similar national strategies to address

⁸³ Harris-Hogan et al., 7.

⁸⁴ United Kingdom Government, "The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism," GOV.UK (GOV.UK, March 24, 2009), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-united-kingdoms-strategy-for-countering-international-terrorism>.

⁸⁵ Harris-Hogan et al., 7.

⁸⁶ "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," accessed December 28, 2022, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf.

⁸⁷ Harris-Hogan et al., 7.

⁸⁸ Harris-Hogan et al., 7.

terrorism, focusing on CVE policies that enhance community resilience in the face of extremism.⁸⁹

4.2 Three Primary Branches:

CVE policy aims to address both push and pull factors contributing to radicalization. Pull factors exist on two separate scales: individual-level factors and aggregate-level factors. Individual-level pull factors encompass psychological and social conditions, such as early exposure to violence, psychological vulnerabilities, and general susceptibilities that put an individual at risk for radicalization. Aggregate-level pull factors involve elements like religious, ethnic, or group identities and the influence these groups exert. Groups can be radicalized similarly to individuals, with political, social, and religious situations putting an entire group at risk for further radicalization. Push factors include political circumstances that create opportunities for radicalization. These factors comprise government failures, political grievances through discrimination or inequality, and civil wars that generate governmental turmoil. CVE policies counter these factors through various activities aimed at addressing the root causes of motivation.

General Preventive Measures: aim to reduce extremist influences in society and promote democratic principles such as tolerance, respect, and pluralism. These preventative measures can be implemented on various scales, from nationwide initiatives to individual-level programs. Nationwide measures may include improvements to the educational system and the reinforcement of civic standards. Education can encourage human rights, tolerance, and critical

⁸⁹ Owen Frazer and Christian Nünlist, "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism," *CSS Analyses in Security Policy* 183 (December 2015), 3

thinking, which are all effective in combating radicalization. At the community level, programs can focus on fostering community cohesion to build strong, positive communities. On an individual level, tools that contribute to a person's sense of belonging and civic responsibility fall within this category of programs.⁹⁰ Societal measures often emphasize economic and educational initiatives as a means to empower vulnerable communities by providing access to education or employment opportunities. Community engagement plays a vital role in this approach, as it offers mentors, leaders, and role models who can positively influence young people. Many programs in this area aim to promote critical thinking and self-awareness among youth, who are typically the primary target of preventive measures in CVE implementation.⁹¹ An example of such an initiative is the Radical Middle Way, a British Foreign Office-sponsored project that connects Muslim scholars with predominantly British Muslim youth. This program serves as an illustration of how preventive measures can be implemented to address the root causes of radicalization and promote tolerance and understanding within communities.

Outreach/Engagement Measures: concentrate on enhancing trust and mutual respect between authorities and the communities they interact with. These measures involve establishing connections with local community leaders and civic groups. The primary objective is to initiate dialogue or discourse with potentially hostile communities that might otherwise be unresponsive. By forging these connections, the potential for trust-based relationships yields increased intelligence from these communities, although this is a secondary benefit compared to the main focus of fostering communication.⁹² For example, Danish officials have a history of visiting schools with a significant number of Muslim students to clarify and dispel misunderstandings

⁹⁰ Colaert, 69.

⁹¹ Vidino & Hughes, 16.

⁹² Vidino & Hughes, 17.

about Danish society and foreign policy. This approach demonstrates how outreach and engagement measures can effectively build trust and facilitate open communication between authorities and communities.

Individual Intervention & Disengagement Measures: provide cost-effective ways to rehabilitate individuals who seem to be radicalized by violence. De-radicalization and disengagement programs fall under the intervention category and aim to decrease recruitment and the allure of extremist organizations. At a macro level, these tools include nationwide or international counter-narrative projects, which can be effective in addressing individuals in the early stages of radicalization.⁹³ By instilling doubt and promoting reconsideration of extremist ideologies, these programs can sometimes reverse radicalization. Community-level programs target the immediate family or social environment of at-risk individuals to slow down their commitment to extremist beliefs through multi-level support. Countries adopting these approaches invest resources in training a wide range of employees and partners to identify risk factors, causes, and indicators of radicalization. Potential trainees include police officers, educators, university administrators, health professionals, social workers, housing officers, prison guards, and other community members who frequently interact within society. The goal is for these individuals to detect potential cases of radicalization and report them to the relevant authorities for further examination. Under Great Britain's targeted intervention program, Channel Programme, referrals are directed to coordinators appointed for each local government district. These coordinators usually have a police background and training in identifying potential indicators of radicalization. In various Dutch and Danish municipalities, law enforcement is not

⁹³ Colaert, 69.

directly involved in programs. Instead, the units that run the interventions and assessments consist of civil servants, psychologists, and, in some cases, even former extremists. This approach illustrates the diverse range of strategies and personnel involved in addressing radicalization at the individual level.⁹⁴

4.3 Keys to Effective Implementation:

The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) is an informal, apolitical, multilateral platform that plays a role in the global framework for addressing terrorism. At the core of its mission is the promotion of strategic, long-term approaches to prevent and counter-terrorism and the violent extremist ideologies that underlie it. The GCTF develops non-binding best practices for policymakers and practitioners, aiming to enhance capabilities, strategies, and action plans. Successful implementation relies on executing these practices and fostering effective cooperation between agencies at various levels.

Identifying the problem: Effective implementation relies on a proper multilateral understanding of the problem at hand. Identifying the issue and comprehending the radicalization process is crucial, if not the most critical aspect, for mitigating violent extremism and future prevention.⁹⁵ To identify the problem, information must be gathered from multiple sources; government and intelligence agencies provide essential data, but it alone is not sufficient to determine the problem's scope. Studies conducted by academics and research institutes can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the issue, offering a comprehensive perspective on extremist groups. Since community cooperation is vital for any program's success, the

⁹⁴ Vidino and Hughes, 17

⁹⁵ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 3.

implementation should strive not to alienate community members based on group identities.⁹⁶

When examining problems, it is essential to recognize that no two groups are identical, although they may share similarities that can help provide a broader understanding. Addressing extremism requires a wide variety of disciplines to explore different aspects, such as social, political, policy, and welfare factors. All of these disciplines contribute invaluable, interrelated information that creates a complete picture of the problem at hand.

Multi-Agency Cohesion: A critical aspect of addressing extremism is adopting multi-agency approaches within the state. Developing and implementing comprehensive government strategies can be a lengthy and complex process. Apart from logistical difficulties, inconsistencies across levels of involvement can further result in inconclusive or wasted efforts. To produce a more cohesive effort and increase the success of program implementation, a shared understanding among agencies must be developed.⁹⁷ The involvement of multiple agencies allows for the allocation of diverse efforts that may include ensuring human rights, fundamental freedoms, new job opportunities, community stability, and increasing resilience in communities. A broad range of actors, such as civil society, NGOs, religious organizations, and academic communities, are necessary for the effective implementation of policy, and their contributions should be encouraged at all levels.⁹⁸ This variety of actors helps address the wide spectrum of challenges in implementing policy and allows for mitigation at multiple levels, ultimately improving the effectiveness of efforts to counter extremism.

⁹⁶ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 3.

⁹⁷ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 4.

⁹⁸ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 4.

Public-Private Partnerships: Public-Private Partnerships⁹⁹ play a crucial role in building trust within communities and addressing the root causes of violent extremism. Messages from the state to communities can be misinterpreted or manipulated by extremist groups to validate their rhetoric. Since governments are often perceived as adversaries by these groups, any state-level messages are likely to be ignored or weaponized.¹⁰⁰ To effectively deliver counter-rhetoric messages, engagement with civil society and multi-level actors is necessary, as they can serve as alternative outlets for communicating similar messages. This collaboration requires trust between community-level and state-level actors. The government cannot work alone in particularly vulnerable communities, as they are usually seen as the enemy in such contexts. Thus, including community-level actors is crucial for implementing policies aimed at countering extremism.

Socio-Economic Focus¹⁰¹: When considering socio-economic approaches to P/CVE, it is essential to focus on youth radicalization, specifically targeting individuals between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Research shows that men in this age group tend to be the largest demographic in extremist organizations. Since youth are a core component of these groups, they should also be considered part of the solution to reducing their influence. Youth programs should emphasize peer groups, as young people are often more receptive to their peers. These programs should involve a wide range of actors, such as mentors, families, and communities, to encourage positive development.¹⁰² Education can instill values, skills, and tools necessary for success and should be an important aspect of effective youth programs. Binary thinking and a lack of critical

⁹⁹ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 5.

¹⁰¹ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 7.

¹⁰² Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 7.

thinking skills can increase susceptibility to radicalization. Although it is generally rejected that poverty directly leads to violent extremism, the gap in strain theory might still contribute to promoting extremism.¹⁰³ Extremist groups sometimes offer financial or material support to individuals with limited economic means, which can improve community perception and increase recruitment. Programs supporting economic livelihoods, such as vocational or job placement training, may help mitigate some of the economic conditions that encourage radicalization.

Law Enforcement¹⁰⁴: Lastly, the role of law enforcement in good CVE practices is crucial. A community-oriented approach should be adopted in policing efforts to reach out to vulnerable communities. The focus should be on building common ground among communities, rather than emphasizing differences. Programs should be designed with the goal of winning the trust and support of citizens by ensuring the protection of their well-being, property, and public spaces. By fostering strong relationships between law enforcement and communities, CVE initiatives can be more effectively implemented and supported.

¹⁰³ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, 9.

Chapter Five: Suggestions & Conclusions

In today's world, the rise of extremism across various domains has become a pressing concern. Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) has emerged as a highly effective policy tool to curb the growth of extremism when implemented correctly. However, mitigating political conditions through P/CVE can be particularly challenging among all the realms examined. This is primarily due to the need for a semi-established structure in order to implement policy effectively. The involvement of multi-level agencies is crucial, and in situations where governments experience turmoil or lack structure, policy implementation can become ineffective. It is important to note that the legacy of colonialism has left some countries in the political realm, particularly vulnerable, further complicating the process of addressing violent extremism. Consequently, it is essential to discuss state resilience and explore ways in which states can better prepare themselves to handle unexpected crises or political turmoil, taking into consideration the historical context and lasting effects of colonialism. Following a discussion of particular traits that may better situate states to deal with extremism, particular recommendations for P/CVE methods will be made to mitigate some of the conditions found within the political realm.

State Capacity¹⁰⁵: One of the fundamental requirements for an effective state is capacity, which refers to the state's ability to gather and synthesize information, understand citizen behavior, and efficiently respond to crises and challenges. During times of turmoil, citizens tend

¹⁰⁵ Brown, 3.

to rely more heavily on the state, and if the state is unable to address its needs, it creates a vulnerability that threatens the overall structure. Ineffective bureaucrats who lack professionalism, and resources, and are prone to corruption struggle to respond to crises, and these situations often reveal the state's weaknesses. Extremist groups that are well-established can capitalize on these weaknesses, further exacerbating the issues faced by the state. Regime Type¹⁰⁶: The relationship between a country's political system, whether democratic or autocratic and its ability to respond to external shocks is not clear-cut. However, research has indicated that certain characteristics of autocratic governments can increase the risk of extremism and radicalization, such as repression, illegitimacy, or limited political participation. Democracies tend to be more transparent and accountable, allowing them to self-correct and adapt more effectively when responding to crises. However, it is important to note that autocracies may benefit from reduced internal elite friction, faster decision-making, and greater control over media and information dissemination. Institutional Memory¹⁰⁷: Governments need to learn from past crises to build resilience and establish a framework for handling future challenges. Experiencing multiple crisis events enables governments and other actors to test different response strategies and adjust their capacities to better manage subsequent crises. Elite Cohesion¹⁰⁸: Elite cohesion plays a complex role in determining a state's level of resilience. When faced with challenges, a state's ability to withstand shocks often depends on the willingness and capacity of its elites to unite and support governance institutions. Elite factionalism can significantly contribute to ongoing state fragility, and in post-conflict situations, exclusionary political settlements may lead to the resurgence of violence or the rise of extremist

¹⁰⁶ Brown, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, 6.

groups. In fragile political systems, high levels of polarization based on identities or ideologies among elites can be a strong predictor of instability. Studies indicate that partial democracies affected by deep elite factionalism are thirty times more likely to experience instability than consolidated, unified democracies.¹⁰⁹ In states controlled by competing factions, manipulating the state becomes a means to gain and maintain power, often at the expense of the state's resilience. Civil Society and Non-State Factors¹¹⁰: Civil society plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of P/CVE measures and contributes to a state's resilience in several ways. Firstly, civil society can deliver essential services, either in collaboration with the government or by filling gaps, ensuring that even the most marginalized groups receive assistance and acting as a frontline defense. Secondly, they can offer early warning signs by monitoring local developments and providing information to governments. Thirdly, civil society can bridge divides and unite communities, as demonstrated in various P/CVE programs. Finally, they serve as channels for citizens to express their preferences and grievances, reducing the likelihood that individuals will seek alternative means of expression, such as joining extremist groups.

5.1 P/CVE Recommendations for Political:

Some of the main factors found within the political realm included a history of colonialism that damaged states, domestic repression, and perceived illegitimate governments. In order to combat these complex issues, this research produced four factors that seek to provide solutions to the conditions mentioned. The suggestions represent key goals that should be aimed to be achieved through policy implementations.

¹⁰⁹ Brown, 8.

¹¹⁰ Brown, 8.

1. **Promotion of Good Government:** Governments should strive to build trust between the state and citizens. In the building of trust, governments must ensure equal representation of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs. Through mutual trust, citizens are more willing to live in accordance with laws and encourage other citizens to live within the same boundaries. Governments can increase citizen trust through transparency with policies, accountability with certain domestic issues, and a strong rule of law.
2. **Encouraging appropriate conflict resolution:** Promoting dialogue between different political, ethnic, and religious groups can help build trust and reduce tensions. Governments should support and facilitate such initiatives, and promote a culture of tolerance, empathy, and understanding.
3. **Reducing state repression:** States should avoid using excessive force or repressive measures to deal with dissent or opposition. Instead, they should focus on addressing the root causes of unrest and providing avenues for peaceful protest and dialogue. Security forces should also be trained in human rights and conflict resolution to prevent human rights abuses.
4. **Fostering regional and international cooperation:** Efforts to mitigate the impact of political factors contributing to violent extremism should be supported by regional and international cooperation. States should collaborate with regional and international organizations to share experiences, lessons learned, and best practices in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Discussion:

A specific policy designed to enhance good governance, facilitate effective conflict resolution, and reduce repression could involve the establishment of a National Dialogue and Reconciliation Policy. This policy would strive to foster an inclusive and transparent environment for participation, addressing the root causes of conflicts, grievances, and injustices. In order to increase inclusivity, neutral and experienced mediators or civil society groups should be appointed. Transparency is crucial in building trust between the government and citizens. It is important to note that measuring the success of P/CVE policies can be challenging. Therefore, it is essential to set up mechanisms for implementing agreements and monitoring progress, ensuring accountability and tangible impact on communities. Public engagement is a critical aspect of the policy, which can be achieved through consultations and awareness campaigns.

5.2 P/CVE Recommendations for Social:

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) plays a crucial role in mitigating social conditions that contribute to the rise of extremism. To effectively address the complex interplay of factors leading to radicalization and violent extremism, a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is required. In this discussion, we will explore four key strategies that can be employed within a P/CVE framework to tackle the underlying social conditions that foster extremism: enhancing social cohesion, promoting education and critical thinking, fostering economic development and job creation, and strengthening community resilience. By implementing these strategies, we aim to create a more inclusive and stable society, thus reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies and violent movements.

1. **Strengthening social cohesion:** Promoting social cohesion and inclusion can help address societal strains that may lead to violent extremism. Encourage intercultural dialogue and understanding, and support community-building initiatives that bring people from different backgrounds together. Engage religious and community leaders in promoting tolerance and unity.
2. **Enhancing government capacity to deliver basic services:** Improve the capacity of governments to provide essential services such as education, healthcare, and security by investing in infrastructure, training, and technology. Address corruption and promote transparency and accountability in the allocation of public resources.
3. **Fostering economic development and job creation:** Economic development and job creation can help address the grievances stemming from the negative effects of globalization. Promote policies and initiatives that support small businesses, vocational training, and entrepreneurship, particularly in marginalized communities. Encourage foreign investment and facilitate access to credit for local businesses.
4. **Promoting education and critical thinking:** Invest in education, particularly in areas with limited access to quality schooling. Encourage curricula that promote critical thinking, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Support initiatives that counteract extremist narratives and provide alternative viewpoints.

Discussion:

To promote social cohesion, enhance basic service delivery, boost economic development, and improve access to education, a state can adopt various investments and policies. Social cohesion can be strengthened through community empowerment programs that involve organizing regular events and cultural activities to celebrate diversity and encourage tolerance.

Establishing community centers for dialogue and collaboration among different groups can further bolster social cohesion. Moreover, training programs for educators, public officials, and community leaders can equip them with tools to foster a more inclusive environment. Improving basic service capacity involves investing in public infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, and transportation networks, to increase accessibility and service quality. Implementing an evaluation system can help track service delivery progress, enhance transparency, and hold the government accountable to its citizens. Economic development can be supported through skills development and vocational training programs, particularly for underprivileged and marginalized populations, including women and youth. Providing financial support and access to capital for micro, small, and medium-sized businesses can encourage local entrepreneurship, job creation, and community development. Enhancing education necessitates investment in infrastructure and resources for learning. Developing a national curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, literacy, and civic values is essential for promoting high-quality education. Teachers should receive training programs to improve pedagogical skills and gain tools for identifying early signs of radicalization or extremism. Offering scholarship programs and financial assistance for disadvantaged or marginalized populations ensures equal access to education.

5.3 P/CVE Recommendations for Religious/Identity Groups

In this discussion, we will delve into the importance of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) methods in addressing pressing issues such as identity group populism, religious discrimination, and competition between identity groups and state loyalties. By adopting a multi-faceted approach, we aim to create an inclusive and harmonious society that is resilient to the appeal of extremist ideologies. We will explore a range of P/CVE strategies designed to promote social cohesion, foster dialogue, and encourage cooperation among diverse

groups, with the goal of mitigating the factors that contribute to violent extremism and creating a more stable and tolerant society.

1. **Combat religious discrimination:** Promote laws and policies that protect religious freedom and prohibit discrimination based on religion. Encourage religious leaders to play an active role in promoting tolerance, respect, and interfaith dialogue. Create awareness campaigns that challenge stereotypes and highlight the shared values among different religious groups.
2. **Encourage responsible media reporting:** Sensationalist media coverage and misinformation can exacerbate divisions between identity groups. Encourage responsible reporting by the media through training and awareness programs that emphasize the importance of balanced and accurate reporting, avoiding hate speech, and promoting understanding among different communities.
3. **civil society organizations:** Collaborate with civil society organizations working on P/CVE initiatives, as they often have valuable insights into local dynamics and can contribute to addressing the root causes of identity-based grievances.
4. **Address grievances through dialogue and conflict resolution:** Facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms between different identity groups to address historical grievances, promote reconciliation, and build trust. Support community-based initiatives that foster understanding and cooperation among diverse groups.

Discussion:

Several key strategies can be employed by governments to address pressing issues such as identity group populism, religious discrimination, and competition between identity groups and

state loyalties. To tackle issues like populism, the National Dialogue and Reconciliation Policy mentioned in political conditions can be utilized. Holding town hall meetings, workshops, and consultations with diverse stakeholders can help identify challenges and grievances faced by various groups. To combat religious discrimination, governments can strengthen existing legal frameworks and anti-discrimination measures or introduce new legislation. Establishing independent bodies to monitor, investigate, and address cases of hate crimes and discrimination can enhance transparency and accountability. Implementing affirmative action policies in education, employment, and public service can promote equality and representation for marginalized populations, fostering greater diversity and visibility. Lastly, to decrease religious discrimination, governments can encourage interfaith and intercultural dialogues through community events, religious gatherings, and cultural exchanges. Supporting initiatives that promote interfaith collaboration, such as joint projects, workshops, or community forums, can help create an inclusive atmosphere. Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic groups as vital to the nation's development can ultimately strengthen civic nationalism.

5.4 Conclusion:

In conclusion, we have discussed the importance of developing and implementing government policies that promote good governance, conflict resolution, social cohesion, basic service delivery, economic development, and education. We explored the potential benefits of a National Dialogue and Reconciliation Policy in addressing the root causes of conflicts, grievances, and injustices by fostering an inclusive and transparent environment for participation. We also discussed the significance of P/CVE policies in mitigating radicalization

and extremism. Furthermore, we delved into specific strategies to enhance social cohesion, basic service capacity, economic development, and access to education, including community empowerment programs, infrastructure investment, skills development, and financial support for marginalized populations. We highlighted the need for legal frameworks and anti-discrimination measures to combat religious discrimination and identity group populism, emphasizing the value of interfaith and intercultural dialogues in fostering national unity and civic nationalism. Overall, the implementation of these comprehensive and multi-sectoral policies can contribute to building more resilient, inclusive, and equitable societies, ultimately reducing tensions, and fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose among diverse populations.

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