PAVE

Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism Through Community Resilience

Training Module 1: Discovering Community Vulnerability and Resilience Factors in Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Training Module 1 of the Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism (PAVE) project focused on providing you with findings regarding vulnerability and resilience factors discovered from the PAVE project. This training is offered to you by the PAVE (Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism through Community Resilience in the Western Balkans and the MENA) (https://www.pave-project.eu/) project in cooperation with Finn Church Aid (FCA) (https://www.kirkonulkomaanapu.fi/en/) and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org).

The PAVE project is a EU-funded Horizon 2020 research project that has conducted studies in the Western Balkans and the Middle East, with the selected municipalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia (NMK), Iraq, Lebanon and Tunisia. The project focuses on the community-level socio-political dynamics, providing insights on how local communities are impacting, and impacted by, violent extremism. This training combines the empirical insights and findings from a set of field-based studies carried out within the context of the PAVE project.

In this course, participants will acquire knowledge of the basic vulnerability and community resilience factors, as well as of basic concepts and key practices/approaches of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) identified in the PAVE research to support their learning. This course will also provide a basis for your learning for all of the other PAVE training modules.

Feel free to circle back to watch an introductory video about the PAVE Project.

Eurice. ''PAVE Project: Investigating Root Causes and Driving Factors of Violent Extremism.'' October 27, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Mxcrg-Tc3I.

PAVE Consortium

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Facilitator Guidance and Training Overview

How to use this document:

This training booklet serves as a tool that provides an experienced facilitator with a menu of options on how to unpack findings regarding vulnerability and resilience factors discovered from the PAVE project that can be useful to incorporate within local multi-stakeholder initiatives focused on preventing or addressing violent extremism. Each group facilitator can use a format that corresponds to each context and needs regarding conversations tailored to the unique country-based and regional findings of the project. It is the responsibility of each group facilitator on how the training is ultimately designed ahead of time and finally delivered, including adapting for various inclusive stakeholder groups and audiences. Conducting a baseline study on the needs of particular groups and/or local communities on the various focuses of this training is recommended before conducting this training to ensure delivery success. Learning objectives are laid out at the beginning of each section. Finally, ensure as facilitator that you use a 'do no harm' (https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/donoharm_pe07_synthesis.pdf) approach to not cause further damage and suffering to those you are serving. Think carefully about how you approach and talk about sensitive topics in order to protect yourself as a local facilitator.

Preparing for the training and setting up the room:

In preparing for the training, ensure to research and come up with your own regional or national-based or local resources to complement the various section topics. You are encouraged to create your own powerpoint or other supplemental materials to help in delivering the training. Develop and implement a budget for costs of your training to ensure you have the necessary resources for implementation, including for example, costs for food or beverages, meeting and activity supplies, or local travel stipends for inclusive participation.

In setting up the room, the best meeting design format is to set up a circle of chairs to ensure participatory behavior by the group. If you are using flip charts for breakout activities for example, ensure that these are behind the circle to ensure that everyone can see and speak to one another. You may want to have refreshments available.

Starting the training:

Lay the ground rules for the training and offer a space to capture questions that you can circle back to during the training. Request participants to follow the Chatham House Rule (https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule), to ensure a good trust-building space and atmosphere and to facilitate greater trust-building and sharing among participants. Let participants know the goal and objectives of the training and that the training space is not affiliated with any religious or political agenda.

Welcome, Introductions, and Ground Rules Exercise

Depending on who is hosting the training, it is important for a person from the organizing team to welcome the participants at the outset, thank them for their efforts and time and explain the aim of the module. You may wish to include general information about the PAVE project at this stage.

We recommend that the training team is introduced first to the participants before the participants are introduced to one another. A diverse facilitation team (i.e. gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity, etc.) can provide a model for collaboration. However, if less diverse – for instance owing to a lack of gender balance– the team should discuss this with the participants at this stage. It is also helpful to reference any of the team members' expertise that is relevant to the training.

To create a less formal atmosphere, it is a good opportunity to play a game or have an ice breaker to enable participants to get to know one another. Often, some participants will know one another already, and by having an exercise like this, the tendency to stick to known faces can be overcome.

This section of the session is crucial to establish a friendly atmosphere that will be conducive to discussions throughout the module training. As always, you should consider whether the exercise is sensitive to any specificities of the context and you are welcome to replace the exercise with one that is preferred or considered more effective. You want to make sure that participants know respecting other participants is fundamental to the training for ensuring a safe space, meaning using respectful language, accepting conflicting opinions, but also recognizing that others in the room may have different values or sensitivities and avoid causing unnecessary offence.

Write any preparatory notes here!

An Overview of Why These Modules Were Created

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers as part of Finn Church Aid, was tasked as a PAVE partner to develop five training modules for both in-person and online use based on the capacity-building needs of policymakers, faith actors and institutions and civil society within the Western Balkans and MENA regions, specifically the countries in-focus of the PAVE project.

Based on the research of PAVE partners, consultations conducted with the different stakeholder groups, and a validation workshop with PAVE partners and key stakeholders, five module topic areas were chosen:

1. Discovering Community Vulnerability and Resilience Factors in Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism

2. How to Recognize and Address Online Forms of Recruitment, Propaganda and Incitement to Violence

3. How to Advance Inclusivity Within Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Community-based Initiatives

4. Community Resilience and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration to Support Reintegration to Society and Disengagement from Violent Extremism

5. Bridging Partnerships with Faith-Based Actors and Institutions in Preventing and/or Countering Violent Extremism and Supporting Community Resilience

Amount of Time Anticipated for Training: 7.5 HOURS

SESSIONS

Session 1: A Conceptual Overview of Radicalization and Violent Extremism

Session 2: Factors of Vulnerability to Violent Extremism

Session 3: The Many Faces of Extremism: Overview of the Interface Between Religious, Political and Ethnic, and Sectarian Extremisms in the Western Balkans and MENA Regions

Session 4: Factors of Community Resilience to Violent Extremism

Photo: PAVE Validation Workshop held in February, 2022 to validate key-findings on capacity-building needs for PAVE training modules. "Validation Workshop on Training Needs." March 31, 2022. https://www.pave-project.eu/news/validation-workshop-on-training-needs.

SESSION 1:
A Conceptual Overview of Radicalization and Violent Extremism

Objective

In this first session, our objective will be to explore the key concepts related to violent extremism, including understanding cumulative and overlapping extremisms.

Expected Results

The expected results of this first session will be that participants have an introductory understanding of what violent extremism means and start to understand how various forms of extremism impact communities in the Western Balkans and MENA region.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 1:
1 hour

Agenda

What is Extremism Exercise

Suggested Time:
20 minutes

Materials:

- Post-it notes/sticky paper OR small pieces of paper and tape or sticky tack
- Writing utensils
- A wall or board on which to stick the notes

Start the Activity:

- Participants are provided with a question or prompt for which they need to generate ideas.
- Give each participant a few Post-its and give them 1-2 minutes to write out 1 idea or answer per Post-it. They can give multiple answers for each question, or just one answer per question.
- While participants are writing, divide the wall or board into two sections for the two questions.
- When participants have finished, they should walk to the front of the room and add the Post-its to the board or wall in the correct section.
- Once all the participants have posted their responses on the boards, encourage participants to get up, walk around, and read all the responses and then return to their seats.
- Once seated, ask participants what they thought about their responses. Have them raise their hands and offer their opinions, questions, insights, or comments. To get the conversation started, questions you might want to ask the group include:
  - Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
  - What was your favorite response? Why?
  - What was your least favorite response? Why?

Prompts:

1. Why is extremism to you?
2. Why might it be bad?

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon. Individuals and groups holding radical views and being willing to use violence in pursuit of their goals have existed throughout history. However, violent extremism has become of **increasing global concern** recently, partly due to increasing globalization, the effects of the internet and social media, and the impact of recent conflicts in Iraq and Syria. With two-thirds of all countries in the world experiencing a terrorist attack in 2016, terrorism has become an unprecedented **threat to international peace, security and development**, feeding off violent conflict. As conflicts have grown in intensity and number over the past decade, terrorist attacks have also increased and spread. As a result, a more tangible global effort has developed to combat violent extremism.

UN Women. ''Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.'' 2021. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20 Office%20ECA/Attachments/Publications/2021/2/PVE_TrainingManual-min.pdf.

The PAVE project defines extremism in terms of **any ideology that opposes a society's core values and principles.** It is, of course, a matter for debate what these core values and principles really are, but the emerging scholarly consensus tends to define extremism in terms of opposition to democratic values and institutions, pluralism, and human rights.

A more general definition of extremism is therefore the following: **Extremism is the advocacy of a system of belief that claims the superiority and dominance of one identity-based 'in-group' over all 'out-groups' and propagates a dehumanizing 'othering' mind-set that is antithetical to pluralism and the universal application of human rights.** The phenomenon of violent extremism which we study here is broader than the use of violence. Violent extremism can also be extremist ideologies which provide moral, political, or ideological backing of the use of violence. Extremism here serves as the rationale behind violence. Extremism, however, can occur without necessarily being violent, it can be pursued for illiberal political aims – questioning core values of democracy and human rights, for example – without providing support or legitimacy for the use of violence for political and religious ends.

Extremism has predominantly been perceived as pertaining to non-state actors. Yet, governments can provide space for these non-state actors, allowing them to function, even playing into their narratives, thereby making these actors and narratives be perceived as a normal part of the society.

Whereas extremism often denotes a particular ideological structure or status, **the term radicalization is predominately used to describe the *process* towards extremism.** Radicalization entails emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions and is the **change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the in group.**

For PAVE we adopted this distinction, although there is no complete scholarly consensus on this distinction.

Write down any thoughts on what you think extremism is.
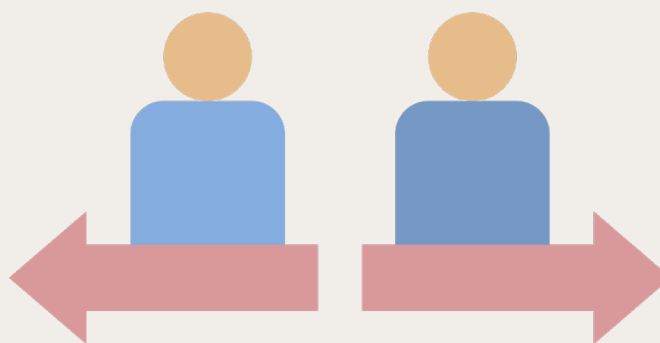
What Are the Different Forms of Extremism

Extremism varies significantly in terms of the goals pursued. One may ask whether it is reasonable to group so different phenomena under the same umbrella. In the PAVE project, however, we see this as a major benefit: to be able to detect the common threads across very different types of social conflicts, and to borrow insights regarding how community resilience can be maintained. The particular type of extremism that different countries and regions have experienced are often driven by long historical trajectories, with civilizational, cultural, or religious roots. Extremism does not occur at random, but it is **part of a larger historical contingency.** At the same time, as we shall see in the analysis below, there are also specific conditions and policies that have led extremism to get a grip and develop in certain places and at certain moments in time. While all of the countries studied have experienced extremism, there are also significant variations both within and across cases.

Extremist ideologies develop a collective identity of 'us' against 'them' or **othering** to guide the mobilization and justification of violence by the in-group against the out-group. Although different forms of extremism overlap both conceptually and practically, they can be divided into three categories:

The first type is **political extremism**, where violent extremisms can lean far left or far right. Components of far-left extremism center around overthrowing current capitalist systems and replacing them with communist or socialist societies. Far left-wing extremism can also occur within already socialist states as criminal action against the current ruling government.

For the purposes of the PAVE project, far-right political extremism played a more dominant role. Components of far-right political extremism found within the PAVE project consisted of: authoritarianism, nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and anti-democracy.

The second type is **religious extremism**, where violent extremisms rely on religious justifications for violence in all faith traditions. In the PAVE project, components of religious extremism found were religious fundamentalism, territory-related tensions, and religious competitiveness.

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Components of right-wing political extremism

Racism

Nationalism

Xenophobia

Authoritarianism

Right wing extremism

Anti-Democracy

Components of religious extremism

Territory-related tensions

Religious fundamentalism

Religious competitiveness
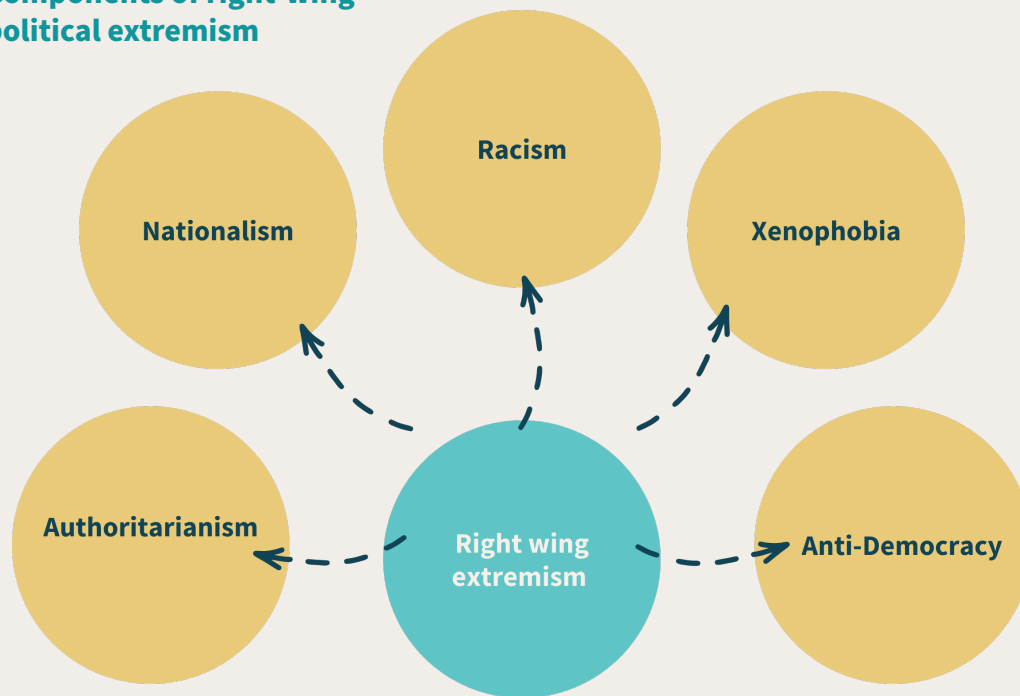
Religious extremism
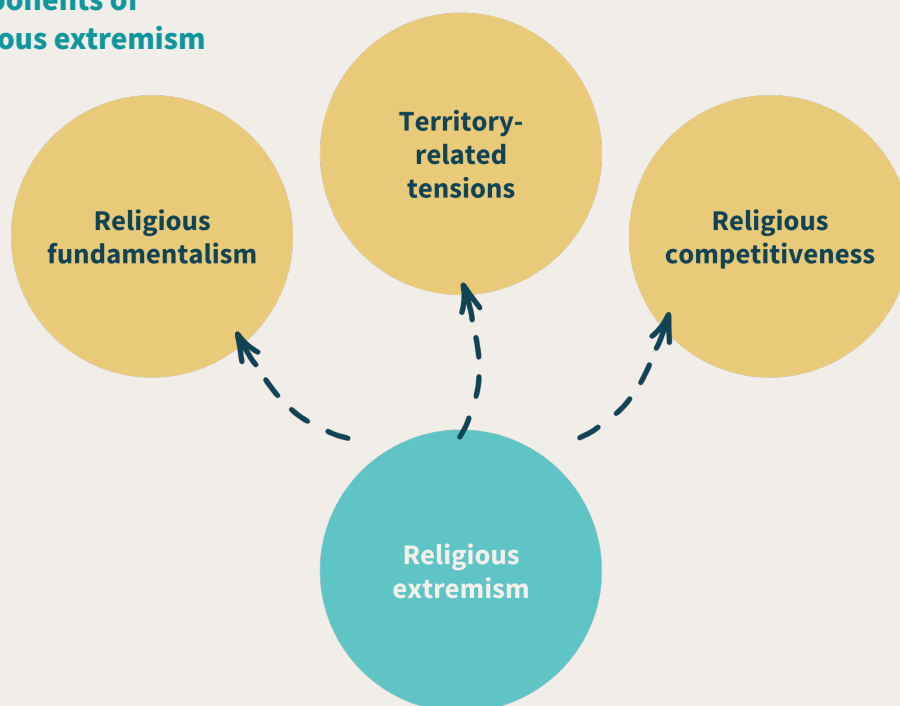
The final type is **ethnic and sectarian extremism**, where violent extremists rely on components such as: ethnicity-based politics, victimization, territory-related tensions based on ethnic lines, and hatred of marginalized groups. Below are more components found specifically in the context of the Western Balkans.

Ethnic extremism in the Western Balkans

Anti-NATO/ Anti-EU

Ethnicity-based politics

Glorification of war criminals

Reference to 1990s wars

Ethnic extremism

Pro-Russian attitudes

Victimization

Links with organized crime

Territory-based on ethnic lines

Hatred of LGBTQ+

In the MENA region, sectarian extremism can also be found. In Lebanon for example, the situation created by the increasing hegemony of the Shiite militia-cum-political party Hezbollah has been a key driver for the development of identity-based tensions and extremism along sectarian lines in the country. Sectarian extremism in Lebanon has manifested itself in violent episodes and incidents.

Understanding Reciprocal Extremisms

For the PAVE project, the terms reciprocal extremism and cumulative extremism are used as synonyms. **Reciprocal extremism is used to define situations where different forms of extremisms feed into - and react to each other.** The antagonistic relationship between different forms of extremisms is manifested through the definition of the out-group ('**othering**') where extremists can play into each other's narratives and activate and maintain stereotypes of the other side. **This can reinforce the threat perceptions in the sense that one form of extremism can create increased levels of fear and insecurity, which will prove a point that another form of extremism may have been making about their particular group being under attack.** This can enhance the sense of victimhood, which is often part and parcel of the extremists' worldview. In addition, this will also help to legitimize violence, by providing credibility to arguments made for the justification of the use of violence. **Reciprocal extremism can also lead to spiraling actions of revenge and counter-attack.**

There are three main types of actors that can stand in a reciprocal relationship:

- individuals,
- movements (or sometimes organizations),
- and communities.

Thus, actions by one violent extremist social group may lead to increased participation on another fringe, it may lead to shifts towards (more) violent tactics on an organizational level, or it may lead to increased polarization on the community-level.

Extremism does not occur in a vacuum. It may be affected by other developments, including the effect of other forms of extremism. **Extremism on one end of the spectrum may increase the risk of extremism on the other end.** Violent incidents by extremists in one community may be used as a rationale for further radicalization amongst other communities, which may then serve as an additional motivation for further escalating extremism. In this way, different forms of extremism can enter into a vicious circle where the extremist forces at the fringes of the political space can increase their strength, following, and capacity, by the reciprocal, antagonistic actions of each other.

Within the PAVE project, several instances of reciprocal extremism were found. In Serbia, while there is no reciprocal extremism between Islamist extremism and far-right extremism, there is a reciprocal extremism in the inter-ethnic relationships: the ethno-nationalistic extremism of Serbs and Bosniaks are interacting through a **reciprocal dynamic** – where extremist voices in the two communities enforce the perception, fear, and worldview of the other side.

Kosovo is an important case in point of how religiously inspired and ethno-political extremisms feed off and magnify each other. In Kosovo, religious extremism adds to ethno-political extremism in order to strengthen the demarcation along ethnic lines between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo (i.e., Albanians are Albanians and Muslims, Serbs are Serbs and Orthodox).

Reciprocal extremism could be visible in the Iraqi context. The US-led military invasion of Iraq, its following program of de-Baathification, and the overall mismanagement of the post-invasion occupation triggered both the development of further radicalization and formation of Shia militias, as well as Sunni-Jihadist groups. Several of the Sunni communities in post-Saddam Iraq felt marginalized and developed grievances not only against the American invaders, but also against the Shia-dominated governments. This paved the way for jihadist groups to establish themselves more firmly in Iraq. The establishment of these jihadist groups in Iraq, mobilizing on both a theological (Salafi-jihadist) and sectarian identity (drawing on Sunni grievances against Shias) basis, illustrates reciprocal extremism. Thus, sectarianism between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Iraq can been seen as both a cause and a consequence of jihadist extremism.

Understanding Overlapping Extremisms

The term **overlapping extremisms** was coined by the PAVE project to describe the fact that violent extremist movements sometimes draw on several mutually-enforcing sources of mobilization, based on various forms of social group-identities, as well as ideological trajectories. Whereas reciprocal extremisms develop in antagonism with each other. The concept of overlapping extremisms **describes a multi-layered extremist structure where different sources of extremist mobilization (religion, tribal ties, ethnicity, political affinity, etc.) serve to reinforce each other cumulatively, but within the same movement or community.**

Within the PAVE project, several instances of overlapping extremism were also found. In North Macedonia, religious extremism among ethnic Albanians has not generated any opposite dynamics among Orthodox ethnic Macedonians. Here the political and religious dimensions have been seen to be connected. In both Lebanon and Iraq, violent extremist movements also sometimes draw on several overlapping and mutually reinforcing sources of mobilization at once, including socio-economic disparities, local political dynamics and sectarian polarization.

How Do You Categorize Someone As a Violent Extremist Exercise

Suggested Time:
20 minutes

Materials:

■ Whiteboard and board markers or large pad of paper, stand and markers

Start the Activity:

■ Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the questions below.

■ Write participants' answers on the board in summarized form.

■ For each question, after a few minutes, or after all responses, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:

   ■ Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?

   ■ Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?

■ After a few minutes of discussion, move on to the next question.

Questions:

■ When categorizing a violent extremist vs. someone with radical views...

1. Think of some positive radical views in history or in your community.

2. When do radical views "cross the line" into extremism or violent extremism?

3. Think of an example of someone who "benevolently radicalized" or increasingly adopted extreme views that go against the mainstream, in your community, in a way that helped others or improved the community in a way that helped others or improved the community. What are the key indicators that such a situation is different than detrimental radicalization leading to violence?

Write down any notes!

SESSION 2: Factors of Vulnerability to Violent Extremism

Objective

In this second session, our objective will be to learn about the factors of vulnerability to violent extremism found within the PAVE project.

Expected Results

Participants will gain knowledge and understanding of the factors of vulnerability to violent extremism found within the PAVE project within the countries specifically identified in the Western Balkans and MENA regions.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 2: 3 hours

Agenda

Identifying Potential Vulnerability Factors Exercise

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Suggested Time:
20 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers or large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Start the Activity:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just should out freely answers to the questions below. Encourage participants to be as succinct as possible (1-2 word answers are perfect).

- Write participants' suggestions on the board.

- After a few minutes, or after responses end, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation by asking questions like:

  - Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?

  - Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?

- When 10 minutes is up, put the paper with all the responses aside or don't erase the whiteboard to use for an activity in the next unit.

Questions:

- What are some of the vulnerability factors that you think drivve individuals towards radicalization and extremism? (Spend approximately 3 minutes).

- Are these factors different for men, women, youth, and marginalizaed groups, or the same? (Spend approximately 3 minutes).

Write down any notes!

There are a number of factors that have been found within the PAVE project to increase communities' vulnerability to radicalization, including: economic, religious and transnational factors; legacies of violence; the role of the state, media and diaspora communities; online drivers and narratives fueling community radicalization; and the influence of gender and social norms. While there is a variation regarding how extremism has manifested itself in these particular cases, the PAVE project looked for commonalities, as well as differences between them.

Key Empirical Findings – Situational Overview

Extremism is present in both North Macedonia municipalities. **These are the types of extremist trends:** ethno-nationalism, religiously-motivated extremism, and violent right-wing extremism.

TETOVO	KUMANOVO
Religiously motivated extremism is not seen as a big problem.	Religiously-inspired extremism is seen as the main form of extremism posing threat to society.
Ethno-nationalism, political extremism and sport hooliganism represent the main threat for the community in Tetovo.	Religiously-inspired incidents have been present in Kumanovo where there are signs of recidivisim.
Tetovo has not faced public manifestation of religiously-inspired extremism.	Kumanovo is part of the North-East region, one of the poorest NMK a situation exploited by the extremists.
The religious community of Tetovo is considered to have more control of the religious life and the operation of self-proclaimed Imams compared to Kumanovo.	Radical Imams like Sadullah Bajrami are teaching in the surrounding villages.

Source: PAVE. "Second Stakeholder Meeting in North Macedonia." March 15, 2022. https://www.pave-project.eu/news/second-stakeholder-meeting-in-north-macedonia.

Economic Factors

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The first factor found within the PAVE project was economic factors, including economic grievances, a lack of resources for key segments of a population, and unequal distribution of resources. The way in which these economic factors play out in order to create fertile ground for the growth of extremism is not identical across the different cases. In Kosovo, the economic deprivation of the Serbian and Albanian communities provides the backbone for extremism. Extremist ideologies were seen as more perceptible in situations where communities are unsatisfied with the status quo and feel that they are hindered to pursue their full potential. Extremist ideologies hold out **the prospect for a radically different type of society**, which can be appealing when economic situations are dire. In particular, the **lack of employment opportunities** was seen as an important driver of extremism. This pertains especially to the youth of the Serbian and Albanian communities, where lack of job experiences and the possibility to earn their own wages, create vulnerabilities among young people to become radicalized.

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In the case of Iraq, it is the *lack* **of strong socio-economic policies** that fosters corruption and nepotism while failing to meet the demands of citizens and tackle poverty, laying the ground for violent extremism. Taken together, one of the key factors behind violent extremism, which has been found in many of the field studies, is the lack of economic development. It is in situations where the economic development is underperforming that extremist ideologies can establish themselves – people are motivated to find **alternatives to the current order.** This is not to say that economic factors are sufficient as an explanation, but they are definitely part of the story of how violent extremism develops and flourish in societies.

Legacies of Violence

The second factor found within the PAVE project was legacies of violence. Many of the PAVE countries emphasize their country's violent histories as drivers of violent extremism. Dealing with the contentious trajectories of societies with **a contemporary history of warfare and ethnic strife** is observed as a key factor underlying extremism. Absent processes of setting the historical track record right as well as efforts to reconcile fundamentally different perspectives on what the wars were about, who was responsible for any atrocities committed, who were the main victims, and who was to blame, and so on, the societies remain **stuck in rigid and polarized narratives** that inhibit inter-ethnic collaboration and interaction. Extremist perspectives can fester on these open wounds of wars.

For example, the Serbian and Bosniak communities in Serbia have radically different narratives of the civil war in the 1990s and both communities cultivate perceptions centered around their own group's sense of being the main victims of that war.

Photo Source: PAVE. "Serbia Stakeholder Report." March 2, 2021.
https://www.pave-project.eu/news/serbia-stakeholder-report_.

This sense of **victimization** provides an underlying rationale behind extremist perspectives and serves as a main obstacle for inter-ethnic relationships. The memories of the war linger on and partly contaminate the possibilities for communication and collaboration across ethnic lines. Religious education is divided, and interreligious education is rare. Parties, organizations, and movements organized along ethnic lines keep the sense of victimhood alive in their communities.

The legacy of the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) has also affected the development of extremism in the country. The sectarian tensions have remained unresolved and lie underneath the development of extremism and sectarianism. The legacy of war in Lebanon also takes on regional dimensions. The regional context and the shifting power dynamics at the regional level have also had repercussions for Shia-Sunni relations in Lebanon. Thus, in addition to an overall fragile situation coupled with socio-political dynamics, Lebanese politics have become a proxy battleground for regional powers. Hence, expressions of extremism and the overall risk of sectarian violence needs to be understood against the backdrop of this regional context.

Religious Factors

The third factor found within the PAVE project stemmed around religious factors. Religious actors – organizations, clergy, and leaders – play a role in upholding group identities that oftentimes are defined in hostility to an opposite 'Other'. Religion is often not seen as an inherent problem, but rather it is the way in which religious resources are instrumentalized for political purposes which is perceived to be the driving force behind violent extremism. Political actors use and exploit religious sentiments, frameworks, and images in order to mobilize support for their political programs.

For example, in Serbia, this is shown by how the Serbian Orthodox Church has not explicitly and credibly distanced itself from radical voices within the Serbian community, who have used religious symbols, language and imagery for political purposes. It is also shown in how external religious actors have been exploiting internal divisions. For example, the Islamic community in Serbia has been divided organizationally (between a Belgrade-centric and a Sarajevo-centric), and external Islamist actors have exploited this division in order to gain access and traction in the Sandžak region. At the same time, inter-religious collaboration, demonstrated in the malfunctioning Inter-faith Council in Serbia, has not been developed. Inter-faith dialogue is not prioritized among religious communities.

Religions cut across state borders. Religious identities are fundamentally transnational identities that create ties between co-religionists of different faith traditions. These can, and have been, exploited to serve the purposes of those propagating religious extremism. For example, religious extremism, as seen from both the perspectives of Kosovo Albanians and Serbs, originate externally from Kosovo and have been externally imported to Kosovo, including from the Middle East. Religious civil society organizations, some of them funded by external actors, have been able to work underneath the radar in Kosovo and contributed to a radicalization of segments of the population.

Religious actors have a major influence in Lebanon. Lebanon's main weakness to extremism lies within its very constitution that gives rights to religious institutions to practice without any oversight. This includes exemptions from tax obligations for religious institutions, the weakness of religious education, and the way religious leaders behave as supra-state actors and defend their positions in the sectarian system. The constitutional framework that provides privileges for religious institutions has created a fragmented country, lacking national cohesion. Religious actors have pursued their own group's self-interest, rather than to contribute to the building of a functioning Lebanese society, and thereby laid the basis for growing sectarianism and openness for extremism.

Photo Source: Sjöblom-Fodor, Gabriel. ''The Role of Religion in Countering Extremism: Notes from the Nordic Countries.'' European Eye on Radicalization. June 30, 2021. https://eeradicalization.com/the-role-of-religion-in-countering-extremism-notes-from-the-nordic-countries/.

The Role of the State

The **fourth factor found within the PAVE project was the role of the state.** The state may be a factor behind extremism not only by neglect and underperformance, but also by more **actively (even if indirectly) supporting the narratives and organizational basis for extremist movements.**

For example, the sectarian politics of Iraqi governments was a driver behind violent extremism in the form of the Islamic State (ISIS). ISIS was tolerated and even welcomed by some Sunni segments of the population, because of their frustration with the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad and its sectarian politics. By the **politization of sectarian identities**, the Sunni minority of Iraq was alienated. Inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian tensions affected the national cohesion: the country has been unable to foster a common Iraqi identity that would bridge identity individualities.

In North Macedonia, it was observed that the **mainstream political parties acted in a manner that helped to create conditions for extremism.** Moreover, the **absence of the state** provided opportunities for external actors to disseminate violent extremism. **The state weakness** is identified as a factor behind the spread of Islamist extremism, where external actors were able to capitalize on periods of state instability and step into the vacuum when the state was largely absent.

Furthermore, in Serbia, far-right nationalism has gained from the "benevolence" of the Serbian state. Criminal networks overlap with far-right organizations, and sometimes political organizations or football supporter clubs, provide a facade for smugglers and other forms of criminal activities. It may therefore be in the political and economic interest of the governments to maintain these organizations. Far-right nationalism has been normalized in Serbia, by the actions of the state. **The government applies a one-sided approach to different forms of extremism:** meaning, the P/CVE strategy in Serbia does not reflect the duality of extremism the country experiences, but rather focuses solely on preventing and countering Islamist violent extremism. The government strategy completely leaves out the issue of far-right extremism. A further example of this can be seen in how different types of foreign fighters have been treated. Muslim jihadist volunteers supported Bosniaks during the civil war, whilst Serbia received various types of Russian support. Muslim Bosniaks who have traveled to Syria to fight for ISIS, as well as Serbians who have traveled to Ukraine to fight for pro-Russian forces, have therefore done so with a sense of a moral obligation of "repayment of debt". However, the returnees have been treated very differently. The pro-Russian Serbians in Ukraine have received far less attention (and also less judicial implications), compared to those who fought against Assad in Syria.

Photo: Ongoing "graffiti war" in Belgrade between far-right groups and civic activists. The main struggle is over the mural to Ratko Mladić painted in the Belgrade city center. PAVE. "Second Stakeholder Meeting in Serbia." March 17, 2022. https://www.pave-project.eu/news/second-stakeholder-meeting-in-serbia.

The Role of the Media

The fifth factor found within the PAVE project was the role of the media. Media are generally viewed as a factor and as actors that play a negative role in radicalization. Findings of PAVE fieldwork show that media incite radicalization through misinformation, poor editorial practices and sensational reporting.

In Kosovo, the media have a detrimental impact on the spread of violent extremism. Due to journalists' lack of specialization on security or terrorism-related topics, reporting is unprofessional: media often publish unconfirmed information and sometimes spread extremist propaganda inadvertently by wrongly using terms. In addition, they are often not authoritative and knowledgeable on nuances of religion. Respondents also claim that the media often give space to influence the public opinion to individuals who are non-experts, biased and even agitating on matters of ethnic relations and religion. There are even those in the Muslim community who feel that their religion is purposely misrepresented in the media.

The media in North Macedonia are highly polarized along ethnic lines, with Macedonian-language outlets spreading content that fuels ethno-political radicalization. The situation has intensified in response to the Prespa Agreement, Tirana Platform and the ongoing political controversy with Bulgaria.

The underlying narrative is a feeling among ethnic Macedonians of their identity being threatened, and sometimes these events are portrayed as mutually related and part of a "master plan" to destroy the Macedonian nation and divide the state territory among neighbouring countries. Such an ethno-national extremist narrative overlaps with political extremism labelling leadership of the SDSM party, the most active political stakeholder in these events, as courting Albanian voters, and even 'traitors' who are hostile to Macedonian patriots and willing to 'sell' the Macedonian identity and state. Moreover, traditional media in the country are not seen as being free or professional, but rather tasked with promoting particular narratives of different state and non-state actors, including in some cases far-right narratives. Media also further fuel ethno-political radicalization by spreading the statements of political and religious leaders. The latter contributes to eroding citizens' trust in institutions and to a belief of the state acting selectively and not providing equal treatment. Ethnic Macedonians tend to believe that the system favours ethnic Albanians and vice versa.
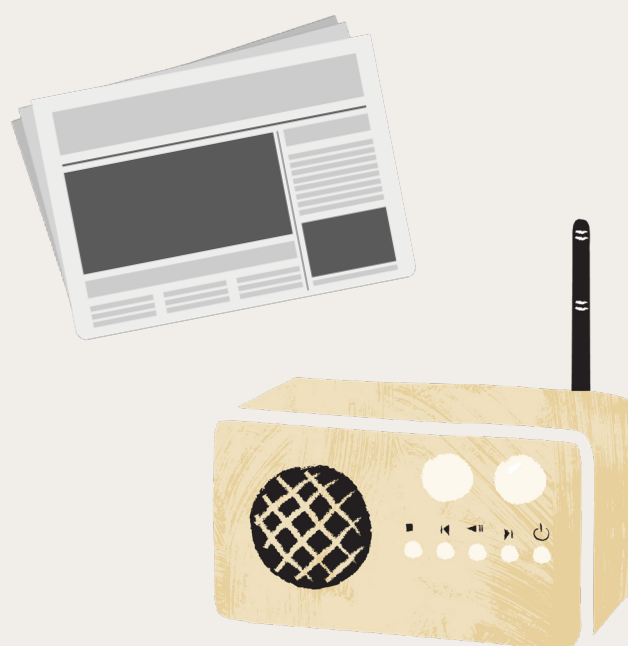
In Serbia, the ties between the ruling party and the far-right organizations have meant that the state has allowed these radical organizations space in the media landscape, which in turn has led to the further **normalization of their narratives in the public discourse** and the establishment of new organizations of similar ideological affiliation.

On the other hand, several main points can be made about the role of the media in Tunisia and Lebanon in radicalization.

- **First,** they contribute virtually exclusively only to inciting religious radicalization instead of ethno-political radicalization.

- **Second,** by reporting on violence occurring throughout the MENA region such as the Arab Spring revolutions, the Iraq conflict, the Syrian war, terrorist attacks and the Israel-Palestine conflict, they have for a long time been contributing to fueling religious radicalization, especially among young people.

- **Thirdly,** by amplifying a narrative of victimhood – **especially through graphic images portraying violence and socio-economic marginalization** and isolation caused by secular regimes ruling MENA countries prior to the Arab Spring – they have strengthened political Islam.

- **Fourth,** in Tunisia, increased media freedom and an **unregulated media environment** allows Islamist political forces to exploit media to come to power, thus bringing the highly-polarized political rhetoric from streets to institutional politics, and potentially amplifying a sense of resentment and the risk of political revenge between formerly-in-power secularists and Islamists in power.

- **Fifth,** the media have been contributing to amplifying the same kind of violent rhetoric and a strong sense of belonging across countries, in particular among the youth, thus increasing the risk of Islamic radicalization becoming a stronger transnational phenomenon.

A trend largely aided by the widespread use of the Internet and increase in the number of online media, this could make it more difficult to prevent and combat extremist radicalization and its violent manifestations such as terrorism.

Online Drivers and Narratives Fueling Community Radicalization

When it comes to the role of online channels in radicalization several patterns can be noted in the two PAVE research regions. One is that the role of such channels falls within the larger pattern, namely that they play a stronger role in ethno-political radicalization in the Balkans while the opposite is true in the MENA region. Another pattern is that **inadequately regulated environments** in which online media and social media in both regions operate increases societies' vulnerability to radicalization by **consolidating the path of sensation-driven reporting already paved by traditional media.** This fuels and further spreads in public space radical political rhetoric, extremist ethno-political and religious narratives, hate speech and conspiracy theories. Thirdly, **online channels in both regions play a much stronger role in radicalization than in deradicalization.**

Findings of PAVE research in Kosovo suggest that the online domain is dominated by **ethno-political radical communities** and online channels present a more potent mechanism for the dissemination of information and community mobilization on a particular issue, including radicalization-related ones. They also indicate that **root causes of online radicalization are the same as those of vulnerabilities to radicalization in general.** On the other hand, online channels, such as Youtube videos showing atrocities against civilians in Syria disseminated as part of the moral-shock campaign, have fuelled radicalization in Kosovo more than preachers. This is also explained by association of such imagery of violence with Kosovans' personal experiences from the last war. Yet a risk here is that it is very easy to disseminate fake information through social networks. This shows that ethno-political and religious radicalization reinforce each other also due to the legacy of unresolved past conflicts.
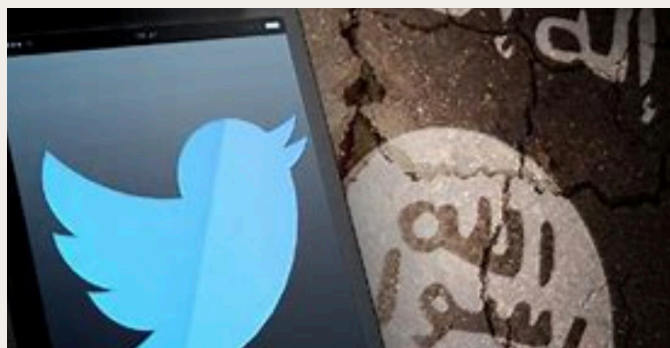
Easy access of radical content through social networks such as **Facebook and TikTok**, including lectures of radical imams, and difficulties institutions face to control online channels, especially with regard to credibility of their content, makes societies more vulnerable to online radicalization. Channels of dissemination and influence through online content in some social networks such as Facebook are more difficult to control given the availability of diverse tools, including video content, messaging, closed community group creation and networking. Yet PAVE research has found **no cases of radicalization in Kosovo exclusively through online channels.** Moreover, the global nature of religious affiliations and their use by ethno-political radical agents makes societies more vulnerable to online radicalization, whether ethno-political or religious, due to difficulties in controlling origins and channels of dissemination of radical online content.

The general perception in North Macedonia is that the online extremist propaganda represents a serious threat to citizens' and communities' security and to the public order in general. As the analysis of online content in this country conducted by PAVE found, the narratives of radical structures among the ethnic Macedonian community go beyond ethno-nationalism. Such content spreads far-right extremism, taking the form of **anti-migrant and anti-vaccines rhetoric**, support
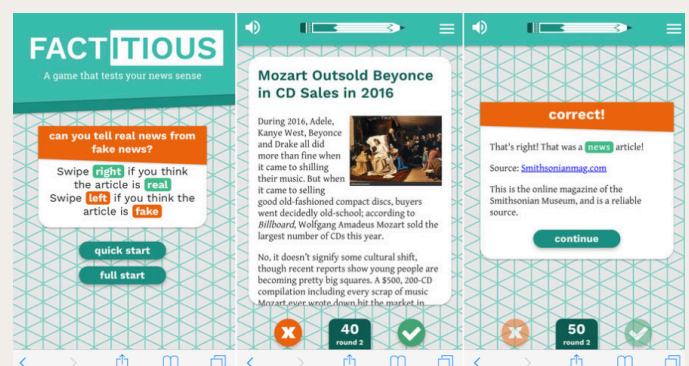
for right-wing politicians and condemnation **of Western progressive values** perceived by such ethno-political extremists as undermining traditional Orthodox and family values. The ethnic Albanian foreign fighter's phenomenon shows that online presence of radical groups and Imams could contribute to radicalization of individuals and perpetuation of violence offline. It seems that radical communities have created a **sophisticated mechanism combining online and offline practices** to attract, radicalize, and recruit individuals. They have their own **recruitment procedures**: it starts with online attraction/fishing, continues with religious manipulation through teaching of radical interpretation of the Islamic doctrine by radical self-proclaimed imams in Madrasas, and ends with their recruitment. There is also a tendency for Facebook pages with the most extremist content to shut down their activities and continue elsewhere, in new pages or profiles with different names where extremist posts co-exist together with humanitarian messages and with imams' sermons in an effort to evade detection by authorities.

On the other hand, PAVE field research carried out in the four sites in Tunisia and Lebanon confirms that the negative role of traditional media in radicalization extends into cyberspace. Over the last three decades online channels in Tunisia have been contributing to the spread of Salafist movements, including Wahabism. This research has also found strong **instrumentalization of religion in Facebook pages and websites of some political parties** and politicians in Tunisia aimed at spreading radical Salafist ideology. Despite nuances in the intensity of religious discourse from one political affiliation to another, they share a consensus on an Islamic societal model. In Lebanon, applications such as Facebook,

YouTube, WhatsApp, and **particularly Telegram** became widely popular when the Syrian war erupted in 2011. They played an important role in communicating violent events and were exploited by jihadist organizations, as proven by the increase in the number of online channels of violent radical Islamic organizations. **The number of websites affiliated with such groups increased from 12 in 1997 to 150,000 in 2017.** The number of official accounts of ISIS alone on Twitter reached 46,000 at the end of 2014. Other such organizations publish around 9 million short-videos in English, over 47,000 in French, over 20,000 in Russian and over 12,000 in Arabic. These numbers show such organizations' ability to exploit online channels in order to spread ideological propaganda and demonstrate greatness and strength, thus attracting young people. **The lack of critical thinking and inadequate media education make the youth particularly vulnerable to extremism as a result. Applications allowed people a direct line of communication with extremist organizations.** Online media also represented a Godsend for people who desired revenge against the practices of the security services who dealt unjustly with Sunni detainees on issues related to the Syrian war.

Online misinformation and fake news can have dire consequences. Are you able to identify fake news and misinformation when using online platforms? Test your knowledge: https://www.seriousgamemarket.com/2018/07/games-for-change-serious-game-to-test.html.

Photo Source: Alhadeff, Eliane. "Factitious: A Game That Tests Your News Sense." July 1, 2018. https://www.seriousgamemarket.com/2018/07/games-for-change-serious-game-to-test.html.

Transnational Factors of Vulnerability and the Role of the Diaspora Community in Radicalization

PAVE

"Those who have 'been there, done that' have a compelling story to tell us about why people join and then turn away from extremism. We want all our communities to better understand these complexities in order to create solutions, so that the politics of fear do not divide us."

~ Professor Lynn Davies – author of Educating against Extremism

Listen and Learn From Former Extremists On Their Experiences of Understanding Why They Became Foreign Fighters and Extremists: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42xIsBwVg4I.

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Transregional dynamics is another research cluster of the PAVE project. This cluster is based on the empirical study on transnational dynamics fueling cross-border manifestations of violent extremism between Europe, the Balkans and the MENA region, with a special emphasis on the role of Diaspora communities. Transnational dynamics are defined as processes of exchange that 'transcend' national and state borders. **Transnational dynamics exist where developments and incidences in one place affect or interact with developments in another geographical space.** Examples of transnational dynamics with regard to violent extremism include diasporas, foreign fighters, transnational mobility of humans, financial flows and economics activities, and organized crime, as well as other issues such as the failure of integration, marginalization and the perception of discrimination. Transnational factors are influenced by diaspora communities. **Diasporas** are defined through the connection to an original place of origin that through collective memory and mythology carries the notion of the homeland.

The main forms of transregional and transnational involvement that PAVE focused on were: i) identity crisis, disintegration, and discrimination; international geopolitics and military interventions/perceptions of a negative role for Western foreign policy; linkages with the home country and engagement with state and non-state organizations; role of the internet/social media and dissemination of radical propaganda; external influence from state and non-state actors; and linkages with foreign terrorist fighters or other radicalized persons.

Islamist extremism has important transnational and transregional dynamics. Terrorist organizations, social movements and foreign states are among the main transregional actors that can affect the trends and factors of radicalization, such as in the case of the Western Balkans and the MENA regions. The Western Balkans are among Europe's top exporters of volunteers fighting for radical Islamic organizations such as IS and Jabhat al-Nusra. The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) estimates that over 300 fighters from Kosovo have travelled to warzones in Iraq and Syria, while 330 fighters have come from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 110 from Albania, 100 from Macedonia, 50 from Serbia and 13 from Montenegro. This places Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as the top two European countries by percentage of population who have joined terrorist organizations, while Albania is ranked in fourth place just behind Belgium.

Radical interpretations of Islam were once alien to Muslim communities in the Balkans, which are traditionally oriented towards the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. Furthermore, 50 years of communist rule in the region instilled a sense of secularism in Balkan Muslim communities and gave rise to an Islamic tradition that is markedly different in its interpretations and practices from its more conservative counterparts in the Arabian Peninsula. More conservative interpretations of Islam (such as the Salafist movement) and its militant form (Takfirism) first arrived in the Balkans in the early 1990s, when some 2,000 Arab mujahedeen fighters came to fight on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims during the Yugoslav wars.

In the case of Muslim diaspora communities in Europe, there are several risk factors of violent extremism which emerge through **identity crisis, disintegration and discrimination.** This particularly is the case for second and third generation immigrants/refugees, who have fewer ties to their country of origin than their parents or grandparents. The Muslim diaspora can feel a **cultural of marginalization** or feeling alienated from their culture of origin and not fully integrated into the culture of their host country, which brings a feeling of non-belonging. The Muslim diaspora can feel an element of **disintegration** or a separation of religion from their culture of origin, in identifying as fire and foremost as members of the global Islamic community (Ummah). The Muslim diaspora can also feel **real or perceived discrimination**, which can lead to a source of frustration and increase vulnerability to violent extremism, such as women being discriminated for wearing a headscarf. **International geopolitics and military interventions**, notably Western military interventions in predominantly Muslim countries can also create further anger and a perception of Islam under a moral threat.

The linkages between diaspora organizations and congregations with their home countries and engagement with state and non-state organizations **can influence funding, donations and teachings**, including extremist narratives and dialogues, particularly for socially and economically marginalized diaspora communities. Salafists, mainly supported and funded by Saudi Arabia, have spread their interpretation of Islam and their ideas across the Balkans mainly through mosques, Islamic humanitarian centers and non-governmental organizations. It has also been estimated that of the $800 million of Saudi money to have entered Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the conflict in that country, $100 million is untraceable and lost in a maze of charity organizations and possibly used to fund Islamic extremism.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, ISIS receives donations from their diaspora communities, including in Sweden, Austria and the UK. The Sandžak Salafis has also received financial support from the Bosnian diaspora. Both Islamic communities are still very dependent on the support of the Bosnian diaspora, which plays a role in the recruitment of foreign fighters. **Foreign Fighters** are defined as individuals who travel to a state other than their state of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in acts of violent extremism or the provision or receiving of training, including in connection with armed conflict. The **linkages with foreign fighters** or other radicalized persons can be **potential multipliers of violence** upon their return to their homeland. The difference between the traditional "foreign fighters" and the "foreign fighters" of the younger generation is another important point. The first generation of Islamist "foreign fighters" focuses on the implications of their involvement in guerrilla warfare in the context of a particular conflict, while the second sees the destination of the battle as a mean of sacrifice and action, as tools for the violent transfer of political incentives. In this case, we can speak of a substantial shift from the battlefield as a final destination to the battlefield as part of a broader process of violent radicalization. However, the dependence on the support of the Bosnian diaspora could also be a factor of resilience, as the Bosnian population is generally well integrated into Western societies, which promotes social rapprochement between Sandžak and the West.

In North Macedonia, most **diaspora organizations seem to be concerned predominantly with ethnic and identity issues. They are mobilized by events affecting the national interests as defined through their lens and objectives.** They

are likely to organize and support peaceful protests (both in North Macedonia and in their respective countries) and publicity campaigns, such as the mobilization against the Prespa Agreement and the Tirana Platform. While they are certainly acting in sync with local organizations and initiatives, it is impossible to determine to what extent they follow or shape the agenda. **At the same time, on social media there is occasional backlash from ethnic Macedonians who actually live in the country against some extremist positions and initiatives organized by the diaspora.** Their main argument is that it is very easy for people from the diaspora to advocate for specific solutions and to preach what is right or wrong when they do not live in the country and will not face the potential consequences of such solutions. By contrast, some of the local extremist groups, usually involving the younger male population, have an agenda which includes and goes beyond ethno-nationalism and is more ideologically tainted with general far-right motives (anti-migration, homophobic, racist, neo-Nazi, etc.) Such groups tend to identify with, and strive to maintain relationships with, foreign groups and organizations which represent the same views (not the Macedonian diaspora, but home-grown organizations from other countries).

The online space can further shape attitudes and thinking of the diaspora. In the case of NMK, the number of Albanian foreign fighters in the Middle East, some of them from the Tetovo and Kumanovo regions, provides a perfect example of how the online presence of radical groups and imams has led to the radicalization of individuals from local communities and the perpetuation of violence offline. The Albanian case gives the impression of **a sophisticated mechanism that utilizes a combination of online and offline practices to attract, radicalize and recruit individuals.** This

mechanism has led to the establishment of a well-organized community that operates in all Albanian-inhabited areas of the Western Balkans and in the Albanian diaspora in Europe as well. This community has its own specific recruitment procedures which start with the online attraction/fishing of individuals (Islamist internet recruiting), continues with their religious manipulation through the teaching of the radical interpretation of the Islamic doctrine by radical self-proclaimed imams in madrasas, and ends with recruitment. Members of this online community can recognize each other on the basis of their activities, enabling them to expand their network through the inclusion of new followers and members.

Other examples of transnational dynamics that can be found in the Western Balkans include religious dynamics. For instance, Islamist preachers **have appealed to religion** but also to notions of nationalism among ethnic Albanians in the diaspora, recruiting individuals to fight along ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Photo: Representatives from the three sister projects PAVE, PREVEX, and CONNEKT met in Brussels for two in-person events where they shared insights from the three projects with Brussels-based civil society organizations and policy makers on cross-regional trends and implications for the European Union regarding radicalization and violent extremism. PAVE. "Policy Meetings in Brussel." June 27, 2022. https://www.pave-project.eu/news/h2020-projects-pave-prevex-and-connekt-join-forces-for-two-events-in-brussels.

Risk Map

One important objective of PAVE was to analyze the impact on European security and map the risks and challenges. The risk map created visualizes in a dual way the transnational risk and resilience factors. The risk factors (i.e. disintegration, identity crisis, vulnerability to propaganda etc.) and the resilience factors (i.e. integration, the role of credible voices, social media, education, intercultural dialogue etc.) with a dedicated signal representing them are the main parts of the map. Furthermore, using connecting lines is representing the main transnational implications. The information of the map is based on the outcomes of the field research. The diaspora communities studied include: Greece (Pakistani and Afghani, Ireland (Pakistani, Iraqi, Sikhs, Nigerian and Kosovo), Germany (Bosnian and Palestinian), Spain (Amazigh), Denmark (Palestinian) and France (Palestinian).

To view the map, go to: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9991be9323f945ee968cd63a4bed7098.

RISK FACTORS

■ **Risk Factor 1:** Identity crisis, disintegration, discrimination

■ **Risk Factor 2:** International geopolitics and military interventions/perceptions of a negative role for Western foreign policy

■ **Risk Factor 3:** Linkages with the home country and engagement with state and non-state organizations

■ **Risk Factor 4:** Role of internet/social media and dissemination of radical propaganda

■ **Risk Factor 5:** External Influence from State and non-state actors

■ **Risk Factor 6:** Linkages with Foreign Terrorist Fighters or other radicalized persons

Photo Source: PAVE. "Risk Map." 2022. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9991be9323f945ee968cd63a4bed7098.

Photo Source: PAVE. "Risk Map." 2022. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9991be9323f945ee968cd63a4bed7098.

RESILIENCE FACTORS

■ **Resilience Factor 1:** Successful integration- engagement and cooperation between the host country and the communities

■ **Resilience Factor 2:** Community Cohesion Programs linked with prevention of radicalization initiatives

■ **Resilience Factor 3:** Pluralistic inter-religion dialogue and initiatives to avoid the stigmatization and separation of Islam from other religions

■ **Resilience Factor 4:** Cooperation with the communities and engagement of credible and moderate voices

■ **Resilience Factor 5:** Counter narratives, use of social media

Ireland

Members of the Muslim Diaspora communities in Ireland who went to fight as FTF'S were second generation migrants and refugees, so it was stressed as a generational issue. Furthermore, the role or war veterans and solidarity was stressed as important factor and particularly in meeting offline. Connection with FTF's or radicalized persons were mentioned by some interviewees. They present many enrolled youths in Daesh in spite of themselves, they went for humanitarian work and saw themselves blocked there.

Photo Source: PAVE. "Resilience Factors." 2022. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9991be9323f945ee968cd63a4bed7098.

The Risk Map will be the main basis and driver for the development of the PAVE toolkit. In detail, using the two broad sectors of risk and resilience factors and the Risk Map movements the toolkit will include tips and suggestions for policy makers and practitioners in order to enhance their abilities for prevention politics and resilience initiatives. The Risk Map is also very useful for the development of case studies and scenarios which will help for the better use of tips and suggestions.

Influence of Gender and Social Norms

Hear from **Meral Musli Tajroska, Founder of Pleiades in North Macedonia**, whose organization aims to show that women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution is not only meaningful but also necessary. **"I get to be in a space where I can break religious barriers and gender stereotypes, which ultimately allows me to positively influence and empower the next generation of girls."** -Meral Musli Tajroska. Ms. Tajroska was integral in participating within PAVE's consultative process.

and I'm a psychologist who founded the NGO Pleiades.

Source: OSCE. ''Voices of LIVE - Meral Musli Tajroska.'' January 24, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGRb1Aqkg3g.

It is essential to pay particular attention to the gender dimension when analyzing factors behind both extremism and resilience. Previous research demonstrates a **close connection between gender inequality and political violence in different forms.** Patriarchal values such as an 'honor ideology' has been shown to be important for explaining why men more frequently become engaged in political violence. Violent extremism within the countries studied has predominantly been carried out by men. Men dominate within the political, ethnic, sectarian, and religious organizations and networks that carry the ideological project of extremism. **Women do also participate as active agents in violent extremism,** although commonly in different ways than men, as well as preventers and broader peacebuilders within society. Women as a target of ideological radicalization has also been evident in the case of the Western Balkans. Unlike in the MENA region where radicalization has been found to be male-centered, radicalization trends in the Western Balkans point to a **consistent targeting of women by ISIS.** Two phases have been specifically identified in relation to the targeting of women. In the first, ISIS narratives have aimed to depict itself as an opportunity for empowerment of women, whereas the second, has focused on the role of women as defenders of Islam.

The role of women and young women are many and varied across contexts within P/CVE efforts. However, one thing is clear: **patriarchal values** have been **dominant in the various forms of extremism. In fact, it is one of the common denominators regardless of whether we discuss ethno-nationalism, far-right extremism, or Islamist extremism – they all build on core assumptions of patriarchy and of the importance to maintain male dominance over women.**

How drivers of extremism affect the likelihood of extremism are impacted by gender-dimensions. For example, economic factors that are drivers of violent extremism are gendered through the **dependence and unequal access to resources and opportunities making women more vulnerable,** and often dependent on their

spouses. Some women have therefore been forced to move to conflict zones, for example Syria, when their men have been recruited as foreign fighters. Fieldwork conducted in the MENA region shows that women face significant hurdles in the labor market, where they often receive less pay for the same jobs compared to men. A similar level of disenfranchisement and **gendered alienation from active participation in the socio-economic sphere** is evident in the Western Balkans.

Another factor is around political participation and leadership. Despite relatively substantial legal frameworks on gender equality, women's limited agency in public life and in politics persists across the MENA and Western Balkans region. A robust level of **legislative initiatives** has been noted in both Kosovo and Tunisia in relation to the institutionalization of protection mechanisms for women across public and political life. In the case of Kosovo for example, institutional checks in the form of international conventions and anti-discrimination, gender-equality primary legislation is evident, in addition to the existence of a centrally mandated gender-equality body. In the MENA region, specifically Tunisia, the same is evident through the transposition and effective ratification of major international conventions related to women's rights, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The institutionalization of these legislative and legal checks however has not substantially impacted the role of women in these respective communities. In both cases, the **effective implementation of international and national legal obligations on gender-equality remains scarce** as women continue to face notable verbal and physical threats in relation to their participation in public and political life. Additionally, the misogynistic discourse targeting

active participation in public and political life is similarly a common denominator shared between the MENA and Western Balkans region. As noted in the case of the MENA region, women who have assumed active roles in politics have been susceptible to verbal and physical violence directed at "female bodies". While **physical violence targeting women actively participating in politics** has been limited in the Western Balkans, a **high level of misogynistic verbal abuse** is noted in the Kosovar and North Macedonian communities.

Moreover, **women's leadership and participation disempowerment can also be seen in the sphere of the religious sector.** While often forming the majority of active followers, women rarely play central roles in leadership within religious organizations. As pointed out in the case of Lebanon, the electoral system of religious representation is commonly restricted to the male-influenced elite, illustrating how gender inequalities play out in the institutional frameworks of the country.

Trends in online de-radicalization in the Western Balkans suggest a more active participation of women than in the MENA region. Similar to the differences in relation to women roles in community resilience, the participation and targeting of women in online de-radicalization narratives is seen to be much more accentuated in the Western Balkans. While women in the Western Balkans are not actively engaged as vectors of radicalizing messages compared to men, fieldwork has shown that they **actively participate in online platforms disseminating radical content.** As noted in the case of North Macedonia, there are specific **online platform groups/channels dedicated to exclusive content aimed at fostering radical ideologies among women.** The analysis in NMK

highlights that online platforms targeting women focus on two specific notions. The first, features online narratives that seek to present women as actors who have agency in shaping their societies. On the other hand, the second focuses on engaging women in behaving in accordance with strict moral codes which are predetermined and regulated by religious scripture. Additionally, the NMK fieldwork has found that women's roles go beyond offline perceptions of "good wives and mothers" and morph into active roles as "recruiters and propagandists" in online spaces.

In the context of MENA region case studies, **data on women's participation in online de-radicalization is absent.** The fieldwork in Lebanon found a complete dismissal of women's roles in community resilience and as agents of radicalization; the same is evident in online de-radicalization. The lack of data in both Tunisia and Lebanon highlights that women are neither seen as active actors of radicalization, nor are they seen as agents who disseminate radical narratives online.

Women Without Borders Video Exercise

Instructions:

■ Watch the video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hi6M5UGS7gA) and reflect upon the reflection questions.

Reflection Questions:

■ **1.** One woman recounted how she stepped in to prevent her son from being radicalized by a family member. One element of the Mothers School model is to raise awareness of radicalization and to educate mothers about warning signs. Are there always warning signs that family members can spot? What might be some examples of warning signs?

■ **2.** The main message of the video is that women (and particularly mothers) have power to prevent the radicalization of their children. To what extent do you believe that this is true in your context? In what ways do the benegits from the Mothers School extend beyond the women's families?

Source: Women without Borders. 'The MothersSchools Mission: Women Without Borders' Parenting for Peace Model Explained.'' May 11, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hi6M5UGS7gA.

SESSION 3: The Many Faces of Extremism: Overview of the Interface Between Religious, Political and Ethnic and Sectarian Extremisms in the Western Balkans and MENA Regions

Objective
In this third session, our objective will be to unpack the interface between religious, political and ethnic and sectarian extremisms found within the Western Balkans and MENA regions.

Expected Results
Participants will gain knowledge and understanding of the factors of vulnerability found in interactions between state and religious institutions.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 3: 2 hours

Agenda

The Many Faces of Extremism: Overview of the Interface Between Religious, Political and Ethnic and Sectarian Extremisms in the Western Balkans and MENA Regions

Violent extremism is the result of the complex forms of interaction between the religious environment and the historical and political context of the state. Political parties can promote various forms of political extremist ideology, on one hand; and on the other hand, informal and formal religious institutions and leaders promote a rigorous and even violent vision of religion. These same religious players can also mobilise against the state and its political system or, per contra, play a role in disseminating these ideas. For their part, individuals who slide towards radicalization and join extremist organizations seize their faith to build a defying discourse and perpetrate violent acts against institutions, groups or individuals. They also use their faith to justify their violence as a means to defend their religious community against a repressive system that they consider unjust, incompetent and incapable to meet popular aspirations. These organizations frame world events and political developments to explain one's personal life experience, driving people to turn to their religion where one can find refuge, regulation of social life, as well as answers to injustice. Religious and/or national collective identity failures can be used by violent extremist groups in targeting dissatisfied or alienated youth. Furthermore, religion or national affiliation can legitimize extremist acts, including violence. The study will take into consideration the influence of the collective identity, narratives, moral or legal behaviors, on vulnerability and resilience to violent extremism.

State and religious institutions at both the formal and informal level can play a similar role, and the impact of this role can vary based on the state model. The relationship between both is complex and subject to change based on the political system, constitution and political context. It could be a form of collusion, co-optation, conflict or 'gap-filling'. This could be measured by the influence of this relationship on the collective identity, narratives, or moral or legal behaviors.

The religious sector is vast, deep, and complex. Although we traditionally associate religious influence and authority with public figures who have official titles (bishop, mufti, etc.) or with specific organized institutions (churches, madrasas, etc.), these are not always the most relevant religious interlocutors for a given community. When thinking about effective engagement with religion in any context, it is important to understand the role of religion in that context. Recalibrating the understanding of the religious sector to go beyond formal religious authorities and formal institutions allows one to discern a much more complex religious landscape, populated by a much more complex range of actors and voices.

Within the PAVE project, there were also factors of vulnerability found in interactions between state and religious institutions.

For example, in Serbia, factors of vulnerability were identified between far-right extremists and Islamist extremists. In Serbia, religion attracted various foreign fighters during the Bosnian war, for example from Greece and Russia or from Middle Eastern countries, who fought for the Serbian and Bosnian sides respectively. The recruitment of foreign fighters from Serbia by ISIS in Syria or pro-Russian forces in Ukraine could also be seen as an act of religious solidarity and debt repayment. Serbian extremists, whether Islamists or far right, link their ideological beliefs to religious and warrior narratives. The ideology of Islamist extremism first arrived in Serbia (Sandžak region) mainly due to the presence of jihadists during the Bosnian war, while **almost all far-right nationalist organizations emphasize religious elements of Serbian identity in their political programs.** As Orthodox Christianity is considered the cornerstone of Serbian national identity, almost all radical ethno-nationalist organizations, and some far-right organizations, emphasize religious elements and include the values defended by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in their programs and manifestos. There is little evidence of cooperation between SOC representatives and these organizations. However, they often display similar attitudes when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights, the status of Kosovo, EU and NATO membership, the role of Russia, the unification of "Serbian territories", "war heroes", etc. Although the SOC does not officially support any political organization, its reluctance to distance itself from and condemn far-right organizations creates an impression of approval and support. The lack of transparency and democratic procedures within the SOC reinforces the image of a church that supports radical ethno-nationalism and the extreme right.

Religion influenced the radicalization process indirectly as well, as it was **fundamental to Serbian and Bosnian ethno-national identities.** Therefore, **state and religious institutions played a decisive role** in both cases since their activity, or rather their passivity, produced the main drivers of radicalization and extremism in the country. They have facilitated the production of narratives adopted by radical and extremist organizations through their 'normalization' and 'mainstreaming' of extremist discourses and have participated in various political conflicts that have led to socio-economic underdevelopment and the spread of radical ideologies, inter-religious/inter-ethnic discrimination and hate speech.

The Muslim population in Serbia is also affected by the **division of the Islamic community, which is represented by two rival organizations: Islamic Community of Serbia (ICoS) and the Islamic Community in Serbia (ICiS).** This division is primarily political, and is a consequence of the ethnic regulation mechanism. The Law on Churches and Religious Communities adopted in 2006 recognizes the Belgrade-based ICoS as the only legal community. After some unsuccessful efforts to unite the two Islamic communities, the ICiS was officially founded in 2007, operating under the auspices of Sarajevo, while the ICoS operates under Turkish influence and is seen as an attempt to weaken the influence of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sandžak. The ICoS is affiliated with the PDA, while the ICiS shares leadership with the PJR, and this division persists despite various attempts to reconcile the two Islamic communities, including Turkish mediation between 2010 and 2014. This religious and political division has opened up the Sandžak space to outside fundamentalist influences. It is therefore seen as one of the drivers of the Muslim population's vulnerability to radicalization and extremism.

In addition to the lack of dialogue and cooperation between the SOC and the Islamic communities, another factor of vulnerability is the lack of contact between the two Islamic communities in Serbia. Although they teach the same version of Islam, ICiS considers ICoS to be a political construct of Belgrade and the PDA (at the time when the PDA was part of the central government), aiming to take control of the entire Islamic community in Serbia.

In Lebanon, **hate speech** has also played a significant role. Since the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) became the first Christian party in Lebanon and its founder acceded to the office of President of the Republic, it adopted a strategy of rapprochement with Syria and began to adopt the same rhetoric as the other right-wing Maronite parties. The FPM which has a new leader since 2016, Gebran Bassil, President Michel Aoun's son-in-law, participates in the **polarization of the Christian electoral base.** When Gebran Bassil succeeded President Aoun as the head of the FPM, he started adopting a **radical and sometimes racist speech for electoral ends targeting Syrian refugees** who fled to Lebanon. For instance, in January 2019, he published a tweet saying that the presence of Syrians in Lebanon is exhausting for the Lebanese economy.

Watch the UN's video on how hate speech can affect others positively or negatively: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s20g3DaOVRI
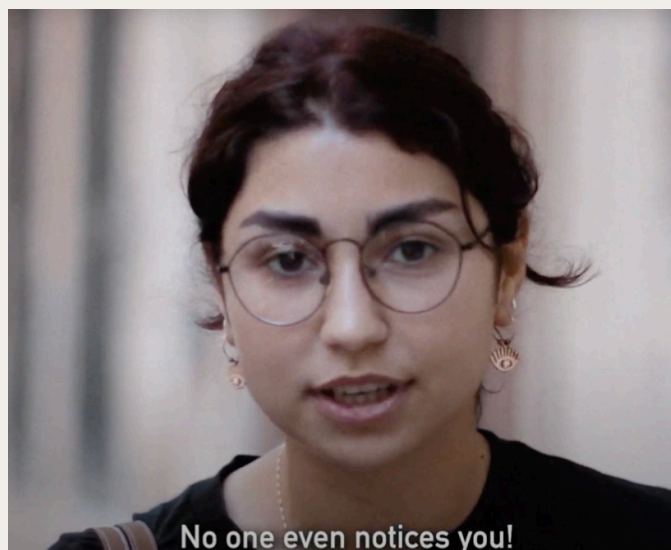
Source: UNIC Beirut. "PR stunt by UN Lebanon on hate speech." June 17, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s20g3DaOVRI.

The Dysfunction of Formal Institutions and the Impact of Informal Religious Institutions

The dysfunction of formal religious institutions is another vulnerability factor. For instance, some mosques participate in the dissemination of a rigorist and even violent vision of religion through the preaching of charismatic sheikhs and Koranic schools. There is a **hardening of the religious discourse** which does not only affect the cultural aspects. Thus, listening to these messages and preaching plays an important role in the way young people learn about the actions of extremist groups and becoming attracted to such groups. Violence is then seen as a means of pressure and affirmation in the face of a state perceived as a mere repressive entity, and religion as the only instrument of social regulation. Governmental religious institutions are sometimes seen as an extension of the government and therefore aligned with its competence to address the needs of the population in other areas. If the Tunisian government controls religious institutions but does not provide good programs in terms of infrastructure, education, training programs for imams, then **believers look for "more legitimate" religious support from foreign organizations.**

In the case of Lebanon, the government allows religious education in private and public schools but does not pay the teachers' salaries, which come from donations. This lack of funding, coupled with educational curriculum that may be biased or not contextually relevant in relation to current politics, can affect the type and quality of the education system and the ways in which youth view the current dynamics within the country. This also leads to conflicting historical narratives, which can drive violent extremism, with a national narrative, which is being produced and taught in schools. Likewise in Tunisia, most imams and preachers are not trained at university level. In Iraq, the lack of cooperation between different endowments and the absence of a unified curriculum have led to precursors to violent extremism. Furthermore, **the restitution of religious institutions as political actors, notably informal religious institutions, representatives and referents of the religious community places them in a 'competition' for legitimacy.**

For more information on the role and relationship between faith actors and institutions and governments on preventing violent extremism, watch this Berkley Center event: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAHpmd_XJpc&t=871s

Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi
Executive Director, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Photo Source: Berkley Center. "Religion, Governments and Preventing Violent Extremism: What Have We Learned?" February 27, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAHpmd_XJpc&t=871s.

The Relegation of Women's Roles

Another vulnerability factor found for violent extremism is the **lack of representation of women in the decision-making processes within formal religious institutions. In religious institutions, women are involved in affairs that concern primarily women.** Given the traditional role of men in the highest religious positions across the spectrum – ranging from all religions present in Iraq, Lebanon, Serbia, BiH and generally across the world – women naturally have a limited role in religious institutions as well as within the PVE work these institutions carry out. For instance, several in-depth studies conducted on the participation of women in peacebuilding state that women remain critically underrepresented in formal peace committees in Nineveh Province in Northern Iraq, but also in the Committee for Coexistence and Community Peace at the government level.

Women's political engagement is also limited. In Lebanon, for example, women's participation in politics is not sufficient to bring about substantial change. Only six women won seats in the Lebanese Parliament in 2018, out of 128. Of these six, only one is Sunni. Nevertheless, women are more present in the administrative bodies of the official religious establishment and in the educational institutions affiliated with Dar al-Fatwa. In the education sector, **women constitute the largest proportion of teaching staff in schools in the Central Bekaa**, due to the traditional tendency of women in this region to work as teachers. For example, a woman heads the al-Manahil school owned by Sheikh Adnan Umama.

The case of Tunisia is not much different. No women were reported to hold high positions in religious institutions. They are present in religious educational institutions, such as al-Zaytouna University, both as students and as teachers. In Iraq, the research team encountered two main challenges during the phase of data collection in relation to gender and patriarchal norms. On the one hand, **Iraqi society is traditionally patriarchal, and women are not given the space, freedom, and safety to freely express their opinions in family circles as well as within broader society.** On the other, there is limited space for women in Hamdaniyyah and Nineveh Province in general to express themselves, whether at the public or private level.

The Promises of ad-Dawlah to Women Video Exercise

Instructions:

Watch the video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP9hqqgCzR8) and reflect upon the reflection questions.

Reflection Questions:

1. What were the specific promises that the ISIL recruiter made to her that convinced her to take her four-year old son and travel to Syria?

2. This video appears to have used many clips from ISIL propaganda videos. What are some of the emotions that you think ISIL's video producers wanted you to feel with those clips? How would those emotions or ideas appeal to people from your context?
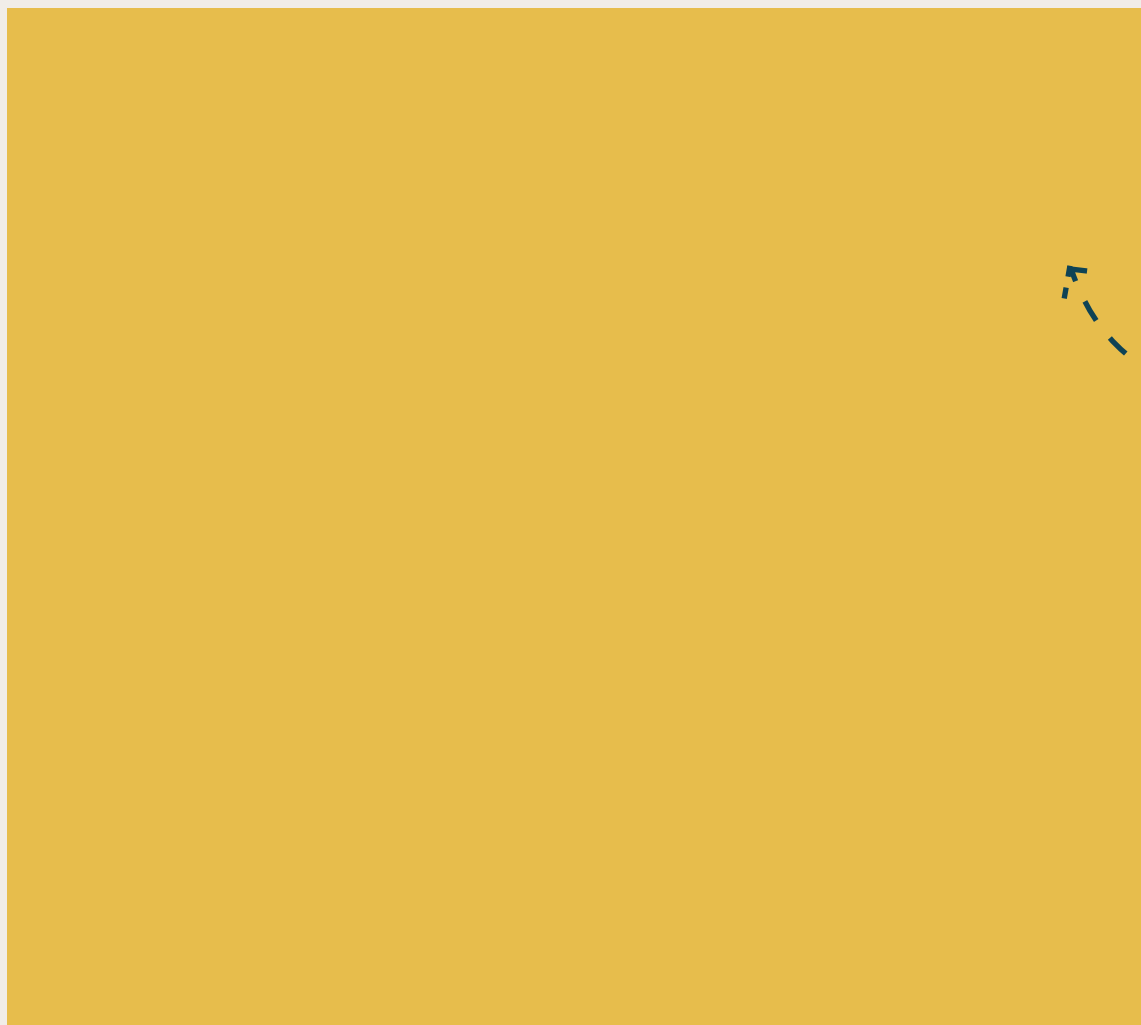
Write down any notes!

Source: The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism. ''The Promises of ad-Dawlah to Women.'' March 25, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP9hqqgCzR8.

Economy of the State and Religious Institutions

Another vulnerability factor found is the **relationship between the economy of the state and religious institutions.** There were different models found within the PAVE project, from Tunisia having a highly centralized organization of political and religious affairs to Iraq having a decentralized system of financing and management of religious institutions, and Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia representing a semi-centralized system in which the government finances and controls part of the religious organizations. The cross-cutting between the three models is relevant for studying the effects that more or less government intervention in religious life may have on the emergence of violent extremism.

Regarding the economic factors in Tunisia, we note that **the government is responsible for all religious institutions**, either through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Mufti or, indirectly, the Ministry of Higher Education. This means that all salaries of teachers, members of these public religious institutions and mosques are covered by the state. One of the vulnerabilities of this system is the **lack of funds for programming.** This is particularly relevant in Tunisia where there is a clear lack of resources, especially in the areas of education and religious education. The combination of centralized management of religious affairs with institutional neglect has become a vulnerability for violent extremism. On the one hand, it imposes a tightly controlled system by the government where certain manifestations are not allowed. On the other hand, government institutions do not provide good services. This has left a vacuum that private religious institutions (often sponsored by dubious foreign funds) have tried to fill.

In the Iraqi system, the three main endowments (communal, Shia and Sunni) organise and finance religious life in the country. These **endowments are financed by a government budget and specific allocations** (e.g. for the care of shrines by holy shrine organizations), as well as by private donations. Therefore, they are not formally or economically affiliated to the state and can manage their funds independently. The **independence enjoyed by religious endowments** in Iraq blurs the boundaries between what could be considered formal and informal institutions. On the one hand, it has extended the power of these endowments and sacred shrines to the point where **they negotiate directly with the state as regional political actors**, which can lead to sectarian tensions if they become too powerful. In this vain, the state's lack of knowledge of the source of funding and its lack of involvement in programming has allowed external powers to fund and manage some of the programs developed by these endowments (such as the expansion of the Imam Hussein holy shrine, which was funded by Iran and implemented by Iranian companies). This is seen as a vulnerability of the system, as it allows foreign interests to exercise soft power and play a political role in Iraq's already complex arena, which can potentially foster the emergence of violent extremism.

In terms of the economy and finance, Serbia is a perfect example of a **failed economic transition**, which has led to endemic unemployment, created a strong and deep division between the winners and losers of the transition ('haves' and 'have-nots') and induced a strong sense of deprivation among the latter. The feeling (or perception) of inequality is a powerful motivating factor for those who see themselves as being left behind

in the current economic system. This is most often the case for members of extreme right-wing groups. The inability of the state to provide for the welfare of a significant part of its population is compensated by the **parastatal system, which is based on illegal activities mainly linked to far-right extremism. Right-wing extremist organizations and football fan groups are often used as a cover for criminal activities, acting as 'mediators' between criminal and political groups.** Illegal funds are also used to **finance foreign fighters in Eastern Ukraine.**

Deviation of the Political System

The interaction between religious institutions, political authorities and state institutions could be a driver of community resilience or vulnerability, depending on the change of political era or the fluctuation of 'sectarian opinion'. The Lebanese example shows how the sectarian element also plays a key role in the legitimacy of state religious institutions. In the studied cases, community groups that are not represented in parliament or at the governmental level, that are outside the existing power-sharing system and do not benefit from it or are internally and financially linked to it are predisposed to be attracted to the discourse of informal religious institutions and leaders with more extreme tendencies.

In the Western Balkans, there are several reasons for the weak interaction between religious and political/state institutions in the fight against religious and political extremism. First, there is a general apathy in society towards the issue of religious and political extremism. Furthermore, the permeation of ethno-political concepts within the religious matrix leaves room for misinterpretation of these types of cooperation in public discourse. If it occurs, the **interaction is most often homogeneous as it occurs between the party or parties that belong predominantly to an ethnic group and a religious institution representing that ethnic group.** This collaboration is sometimes more or less visible, and sometimes formal or informal. However, this kind of joint effort, although desirable, does not have a horizontal dimension that would include the interaction of political parties of one ethnic group with a religious institution representing another group. In this sense, there may even be a risk that these types of relationships (although certainly desirable) will have an opposite effect because of the interpenetration of religion in political life. In other words, the **cooperation of a political party with a religious institution representing its ethnic group may create a potential fear among other ethnic groups or political representatives of their own groups, as it could be perceived as cooperation directed against them.**

The devastating episodes of sectarian violence in Lebanon during the civil war and in recent Iraqi history have led both countries to devise **power-sharing models** for the state in order to avoid further sectarian tensions and violent extremism. However, the effectiveness of these models is questionable. In the case of Iraq, for example, the so-called Muhasasa system introduced proportionality provisions for all the different

ethno-religious groups in the different government bodies. This system has been severely criticised and reformed several times since 2010, due to the disproportionate power of the Shias. The current situation is not much better. Each community holds on to its share of power. Among the respondents, the system is definitely perceived as an exclusionary factor.

The situation in Lebanon is quite similar with regard to the power-sharing system. Moreover, **as in Iraq, Lebanese institutions are weak, which provides a perfect framework for religious institutions and their political counterparts to act as supra-state entities that provide security, livelihoods and political representation for their communities.** Thus, the importance of these sectarian institutions for the different communities has made political and religious polarization the main driver of radicalization in Lebanon. In summary, the **power-sharing system seems to be a kind of political continuation of the civil war in the political arena. Polarization based on identity, rather than on political positions, leads to clientelism, nepotism and corruption.** This, undoubtedly, increases the vulnerability to violin extremism of young people facing sectarian barriers to employment and active citizenship.

Mistrust Between Citizens, State Institutions and Civil Society Organizations

Public disappointment with government policies is also at the root of violent extremism. The lack of change that can be perceived by vulnerable populations discredits the role of government and prolongs a sense of neglect. This was observed in Iraq, where poverty and development failure are key factors in violent extremism, as they fuel the process of radicalization and engagement in illegal and violent activities. A similar view is drawn from Tunisia, where people expected great changes after the revolution and were hit by an unfair development model that prioritizes coastal areas over inland Tunisia. This

sense of disappointment and neglect has spread throughout the political system and parties, allowing new marginal and extremist movements to enter the political arena.

The reality of most civil society initiatives in the MENA region is that they are very often funded and organized by foreign organizations. This has been seen as a significant element of risk, as the **development of these programs can be perceived as political interference and the use of PVE work as a means to promote other political agendas.**

State Security Approach to P/CVE

The complexities of the judicial system make it possible to detect vulnerability factors among the different studies examined. In this sense, a first risk factor detected relates to the corruption of legal affairs or the lack of **separation between the three powers of the state.** A good example of this is observed in Iraq, where during the government of Nuri al-Maliki (2006–2014), there was political interference in judicial affairs. In several cases, the judiciary was used to foster violent extremism by issuing warrant arrests against Sunni political figures based on terrorism charges. While Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi (in office since May 2020) has managed to depoliticize the court to a good extent, the Iraqi judiciary system remains generally weak. In this regard, the U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has reported that while trial proceedings were efficient and well organized in IS-related hearings, basic fair trial criteria of terrorism-related cases were violated. As a result, the judiciary is weak and lacks authority in the eyes of the public, which has made it easy for detainees to escape prison sentences, while false charges are processed and innocent people go to prison.

This corruption of judicial affairs is also present in the Lebanese legal system. According to the interviewees, it is common for security forces, the army, political and religious leaders to exchange favors by releasing certain detainees, especially when judicial proceedings are conducted without legal safeguards. This general perception of a **corrupt legal system where prison sentences are decided by political/religious leaders and used as bargaining chips** in their negotiations, adds to the perception of non-legitimacy towards the state.

A second factor is that the role that security institutions have played on violent extremism in the MENA region has been ambivalent. Wherever sectarianism has been a problem, public security actors have been seen by some groups as armed representatives of the other sect. This has led to security concerns among the different communities, which in the case of Lebanon and Iraq has led to each community having at least one armed branch.

Due to a lack of resources, the state tries to counter violent extremism through a security strategy, without preventing it through a socio-political approach. However, sometimes the security forces are not strong enough to maintain stability. This may be the case in Lebanon, where extremist movements take advantage of the weak legitimacy of the army and use an atmosphere of political, social and economic unrest to establish their influence. **These movements ultimately pose as the sole guarantors of their communities' security in the face of sectarian violence**, ignoring the rule of law and defying a state too weak to respond. **Thus, this constant perception of instability and insecurity makes communities vulnerable to extremist discourses that justify the use of violence.**

The third risk factor concerns the **spread of violent extremism in prisons.** Indeed, the Tunisian government has incarcerated approximately 7,000 people over the past decade, which has created an ideal environment for the spread of Salafism. The Tunisian authorities eventually realized their mistake and changed their security policy, which could lead to significant changes towards a more resilient security approach.

In the case of Lebanon, where mass imprisonment of Sunnis has taken place in some areas such as Saïda, prisons have also become hotbeds of radicalization. Bad reputation, shame and humiliation have generally followed detention and led to homelessness and poverty for their families, which in some cases has greatly increased the vulnerability of the detainees' families to end up joining violent extremist groups. However, official and unofficial sheikhs are aware of the consequences of such abuse and are meeting on the need to address it to avoid pushing more young people into violent extremism. Some sheikhs know what they are talking about because they are **former detainees.**

Participants from Lebanon held a second stakeholder meeting to discuss the preliminary findings of the PAVE research. The participants present included representatives from religious state institutions, members of Lebanese civil society, prominent academics in the field and lawyers with experience in Islamist prisoners and violent extremism. PAVE. "Second Stakeholder Committee Meeting held in Lebanon." December 17, 2021. https://www.pave-project.eu/news/second-pave-stakeholder-committee-meeting-held-in-beirut.

Write down any notes!

SESSION 4: Factors of Community Resilience to Violent Extremism

Objective

In this fourth session, our objective will be to learn about the factors of community resilience found within the PAVE project.

Expected Results

Participants will gain knowledge and understanding of the drivers of community resilience found within the PAVE project within the countries specifically identified in the Western Balkans and MENA regions.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 4: 1.5 hours

Agenda

Overview of Findings on Community Resilience

The PAVE project defines **resilience** as the ability of political systems and informal governance arrangements to adjust to changing socio-political circumstances, shocks and stressors, without breaking their structures. Resilience is the system's ability to "bounce back" after a crisis. **Community resilience** refers to the communities' ability and capacity to adjust to changing conditions, placing a particular emphasis on the role of social connections, social bridging and belonging. **Community** is a relational and regionally limited and/or shared interests-based group of people and institutions.

Locally-rooted PVE initiatives located at the community level appear to be best well-suited to address specifically cumulative extremisms. Examples include inter-group dialogue efforts increasing cohesion and tolerance across ethnic, sectarian and/or religious lines, while paying particular attention to addressing the drivers of reciprocal radicalization – such as cycles of revenge or dehumanizing narratives towards out-groups.

As part of building resilience, preventing violent extremism is critical. **Preventing violent extremism is the use of non-coercive means to address the drivers and/or root causes of violent extremism.** Preventing violent extremism was introduced in the policy sphere by the United Nations in its Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism in 2016, in reaction to the concept of **Countering Violent Extremism**, defined as the use of non-coercive means to dissuade individuals or groups from mobilizing towards violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation or engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives. While countering violent extremism encompasses a mixed range of hard security and civil-society led initiatives dealing with the threat of violent extremism, preventing violent extremism gives prominence to systematic preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize and join violent extremist groups.

Brainstorming Exercise on Preventing Violent Extremism

PAVE

Suggested Time:
10 minutes

Materials:

■ None

Instructions:

■ Instruct participants that they will each have exactly 1 minute to respond to a question you will ask to the group. (If there are more than 10 participants in the training, give everyone 30 seconds).

■ After you ask the question, the first person in the front of the seating arrangement will stand up and respond.

■ After 1 minute on the timer, the next person should stand and respond.

■ Continue the process until everyone has responded.

■ If there is still time left, ask participants questions such as:

   ■ Do any of the responses surpirse you? Why?

   ■ What was your favorite response?

   ■ Do you think any of the examples given might work well in your community?

Question:

■ What is the best example of successfully turning someone away from violent extremism, extremism, or radicalization that you have experienced or heard of?

In the PAVE project, several sources of community resilience were discovered, including: the role of the civil society, educational sector, religious institutions, the state, and the diaspora community; resilience through online and offline de-radicalization; co-optation between state, networks and religious formal and informal institutions and leaders; interreligious and trans-ethnic dialogue; and broader factors in advancing gender equality.

Write down any notes!

The Role of Civil Society

Several of the country studies refer to the role played by civil society actors in enhancing resilience against extremism and violent extremism. In some cases different non-governmental organizations have under some conditions contributed to extremism. However, across the different field studies, **civil society actors are found to play important roles in contributing to the resilience of communities against extremism.**

For example, in North Macedonia, civil society was unanimously recognized as having played a role in CVE efforts, particularly in the context of promoting good inter-ethnic relations and social inclusion. Similarly, in Kosovo civil society is perceived to have an important role in de-radicalization and reintegration efforts. In particular, NGOs and other grassroots organizations have been able to facilitate contact and dialogue between community groups and enhance social cohesion by challenging discourses that are based on dehumanizing the other. The organized activities have frequently involved youth actors, and sometimes involved women and girls.

In Serbia, civil society has taken on the role of **"substitute service providers"** and CSOs have been working both to empower youth and to build trust between youth and police. **Women have also played a central role** in this context. The civil society sphere has recognized the importance of women as agents of prevention since they are the majority of P/CVE activists. There are also other accounts that qualify or further nuance the role of civil society in community resilience. In the Lebanese context, "civil initiatives" have brought together actors from different sides in an effort to reduce tensions. However, these seem to be **more effective at the local level than at the regional or national level.** Moreover, while civil society –

domestic as well as international actors – has been active in Bosnia and Herzegovina in various ways and contributed to community resilience, it is also emphasized that it remains unclear what its real reach is, given the lack of a systematic approach to strengthening resilience that would overcome vulnerability factors. There is an "untapped potential" in this regard, pointing to the **need for a more systematic approach** towards education as well as political and religious institutions.

Related, civil society, as well as other actors including families or various networks, can help to build social ties. **Social bonding and bridging** have been identified as important for community resilience in some of the countries studied. In Kosovo, such connections both within and across communities have been found to be of significance for resilience to extremism. Likewise, the fieldwork in Serbia shows that processes of social bonding and bridging are important for resilience against Islamist extremism. In Serbia this has been especially relevant in the Sandžak area where the different communities – Bosniak as well as Serbian communities – have a long experience from living side by side and share a commitment against extremism.

Civil society organizations can thus be seen as critical in countering violent extremism. An important role for civil society organizations to assist in various types of **bottom-up peacebuilding approaches**, including to facilitate dialogue, and initiate processes of symbolic reconciliation or practical co-habitation. Civil society organizations were identified as important actors that serve to **promote cooperation** through various projects and provide spaces for interaction across inter-ethnic divides. This occurs, for example, through **empowering relatively marginalized segments of society** (including girls and women), raising community awareness, organizing debates, and initiating skill training programs.

For more information, check out: 'The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism.' (https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/2/400241_1.pdf)

Source: OSCE. ''The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism.'' August, 2018. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/2/400241_1.pdf.

The Role of the Educational Sector

Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education Video Exercise

Instructions:

Watch the video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79MTkVumCcQ) and reflect upon the reflection questions.

Reflection Questions:

1. The first two men in the video relate stories from their younger lives about encountering violence and conflict. How did these experiences influence their choices regarding violent extremist groups?

2. What other factors did you see in the video that might be considered drivers of violent extremism?

3. This video was produced in order to explain how education can promote resilience to violent extremism. What were the benefits described and how might they help prevent students from being attracted to violent extremism?

Source: UNESCO. ''Preventing violent extremism through education.'' September 19, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79MTkVumCcQ.

Several country reports discuss education as one area that could feature as important in building community resilience against extremism, but it is also brought out as a factor where there is significant room for improvement. In North Macedonia, education was reported as **indispensable in promoting critical thinking, respect and awareness of cultural differences, and fighting stereotypes.** Local community councils, for example, working with the prevention of violent extremism, worked actively to educate people as a way to build a larger degree of resilience against extremism. Other country reports that highlighted education had an emphasis rather on the potential role that education could play. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the **education is reported to be ethnically fragmented**, which has resulted in the permeation of curricula with different ethno-political narratives. In Kosovo, education is seen as one of the factors that can help strengthen community resilience.

Thus, the lack of critical thinking, inadequate media education, and lack of religious knowledge, make communities, and particularly the youth in the communities, vulnerable to extremism.

In Serbia, education is identified as a vulnerability, but the different religious communities have also cooperated on religious education. For example, the religious communities held a common position toward the Ministry of Education with the request to formally equalize the status of religious education. In Lebanon, religious education is mentioned as a potential weakness, rather than being discussed as important for community resilience. Overall, education is seen as important for resilience, but some contexts see significant room for improvement in this area.

Write down any notes!

The Role of Religious Institutions

Religious actors are in unique positions to increase the resilience of local communities and build deeper connections within and between communities. Actors of faith can serve to appeal to a wider sense of moral consciousness and call individuals and groups to act with restraint. Therefore, religious actors have particularly important resources to decrease the vulnerability of communities to attempts by extremist movements to radicalize them. By its wide and deep institutions, often **present at the local level and throughout societies,** as well as with **commitments to core values of peace, dignity and respect** (as present in all faith traditions), the religious actors can reach out to the wider population and act as a way to counter attempts to radicalization.

In North Macedonia, **inter-faith dialogue** between Orthodox and Muslim religious leaders, clergy, and communities, in order to create better understanding, and acceptance of each other is an interesting example of this. Indeed, both religious communities – the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Religious Community have been engaged in activities promoting inter-faith tolerance and co-existence.

In Serbia, religious leaders increased the resilience by pushing back against attempts of radicalization, condemning openly intolerance and acts of violence. Multi-ethnic societies have not only experienced episodes of violence, but also longer periods of peaceful interaction, living side-by- side with a working **tolerance towards each other.** In Serbia, religious communities traditionally express tolerance and respect toward each other.

Even absent formal institutions form collaboration across religious lines, religious communities have expressed messages of tolerance and co-existence, and sometimes found common cause in making demands against the state. Unfortunately, not all contexts served as factors of resilience. In Lebanon, the religious institutions have to some extent served as a constraining factor when inter-religious ties have been strained.

For more information on the "Important Role of Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism," read the Special Report from the United States Institute of Peace (https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/08/engaging-religion-and-religious-actors-countering-violent-extremism)

Source: USIP. ''Special Report: Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism.'' August 30, 2017. https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/08/engaging-religion-and-religious-actors-countering-violent-extremism.

The Role of the State

The state and its various government structures, at the national and local level, have across the cases made efforts to work for community resilience to varying degrees. These efforts have not necessarily been successful. In Iraq, prior to 2003, when there were instances of preachers being involved in sectarian discourse, it is believed that only the state could have acted against the preacher; the state being the only actor of resilience at that time. At the same time, the Iraq case suggests that it is the absence of the State that is in part responsible for the rise of cumulative extremism. In Iraq, the state did not fulfil its potential for resilience against violent extremism. Even if local communities sometimes tried to reject and question sectarian discourses, they were unable to do so, partly because of the **lack of political leadership**, to contain the spread of violent extremism.

Moreover, when **governments support (directly or indirectly) extremist movements, those governments also have a potential leverage which they could use to prevent violence.**

Governments can utilize their ties with extremist movements and contain their worst excesses. In Serbia, with regards to far-right movements, the government can influence their course of action and prevent them from committing violent acts.

It has been observed in the case of North Macedonia that the actions and rhetoric of political institutions can serve to slow the development of violent extremism. For example, when some parties sought to incite ethnic hostility, ethnic Albanian political parties avoided responding to the provocations, which thereby served to diffuse the tensions. In terms of governance, North Macedonia has moved in the direction of consociationalism since the signing of the Ohrid framework agreement. **Inclusive party politics and power sharing among ethnic communities, at the national and local level, serve to strengthen principles of democracy.** In North Macedonia, the local authorities have also been involved in efforts that seek to mitigate violent extremism, for example through the establishment of **local prevention councils.**

Write down any notes!

The Role of the Diaspora Community and Resilience-Conducive Transnational Interactions

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Another factor that was identified as important for community resilience was the role of diaspora groups and resilience-conducive transnational interactions. Several factors were found by the PAVE project among the Muslim diasporas in Europe.

Social connection was found to be at the heart of resilient communities and the need to increase community resilience to both harness and enhance existing social connections while endeavoring to not damage or diminish them. Furthermore, successful integration was highlighted as the primary condition for a resilient community, in both cooperating with other initiatives and organizations, including state institutions; as well as the role of education in general as very important for integration, with a specific focus on the principles of human rights and the cultural and religious respect.

Another factor of resilience was **increasing social cohesion programs linked with violent prevention radicalization efforts.** The Bosnian Diaspora community in Germany is a good example of this. During the war, the Bosniak communities' main activities were focused on supporting its community members in coping with the difficult circumstances in Germany and back in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The congregations were active in additional fields apart from the organization of common religious practice. These consisted in practically supporting people who arrived as war refugees in Germany, providing spiritual welfare to process trauma, and to provide economic support and helped to organize administrative processes in the new country. Community members gathered on the weekends to spend time together, receive Islamic religious education and tutoring as well as supplementary Bosnian school education. While challenges and needs of community members changed since the 1990s and 2000s, many members of the Bosniak communities who experienced this kind of support during this time are now engaged in the community and working to pass on this positive experience to the next generations. The experience of affirmation and providing positive role models especially for young people is carried on for the next generation. By now, the third and fourth generations of Bosniak individuals growing up are much better educated and integrated in German society than the older generations.

Photo Source: Oruc, Nermin. "Emigration from the Western Balkans." April 4, 2022. https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/laenderprofile/english-version-country-profiles/505179/emigration-from-the-western-balkans/.

The factors of promoting pluralistic inter-religious dialogue to avoid the stigmatization and separation of Islam from other religions, as well as promoting cooperation with the communities and engagement of credible and moderate voices, were also contributors of resilience, as well as the role of media. The role of media has been seen as a very important resilience factor in Ireland as media reporting has been perceived as responsible. Counter narratives in Ireland have greatly challenged stereotypes and prejudice that people might have about different people within society, particularly when there is ignorance or a lack of understanding. One example is the Hijab on Hat Tricks, a programme for young Muslim women who play football. It was set up in 2014 "to encourage young Muslim women to play football after FIFA had lifted the ban on the hijab". This counter narrative also got a lot of media attention and inspired RTE to create a radio drama about "Being Muslim in Ireland".

Photo Source: Beyond Sport. "Network Hijabs on Hat Tricks." https://beyondsport.org/project/h/hijabs-and-hat-tricks/.

Also, counter narratives play a crucial role for the resilience in the lives of people who are cognitively vulnerable towards radicalization. One example in the Irish context was the "Muslim sisters of Eire" who sends the message that "if you are young and want to fight in Syria, come feed the homeless and there is no need to take a gun to help".

Photo Source: Muslim Sisters of Eire. https://dlrppn.ie/covid-19/muslim-sisters-of-eire-1/.

In both risk and resilience factors, the PAVE fieldwork research with Diaspora communities in European countries shows that communities recognize that women play an essential role in the development of resilience initiatives and prevention and deradicalization initiatives. A community that promotes tolerance and inclusivity, and reflects norms of gender equality, is stronger and less vulnerable to violent extremism. Not only does women's active participation in a Diaspora community – formally or informally – strengthen its fabric, women themselves are among the most powerful voices of prevention. Women can, uniquely, help build the social cohesion, sense of belonging, and self-esteem that youth might need to resist the appeal of a violent group. Community engagement in countering violent extremism requires the participation of women to be successful.

Community Resilience Through Online and Offline Deradicalization

The media and online community can both serve as sources of resilience. For example, online channels can provide an opportunity for dissemination of information and mobilization of communities in the context of prevention and deradicalization efforts. The PAVE project defines **deradicalization as efforts to counter and oppose a radical doctrine, ideological positions or interpretations that are utilized to justify radical views as well as violence in their pursuit.** Deradicalization is the social, psychological or ideological de-commitment from extremism and violence, which can be divided into three sub-dimensions:

- **Disruption:** efforts to stop the radicalization processes from advancing, primarily on the cognitive/ideological dimensions but also in prevention of adopting violent behavior;

- **Disengagement:** behavioral change, attempts at convincing the radicalized individual to disengage from the violent behavior associated with their radical beliefs; and

- **Rehabilitation:** encompassing both dimensions, attempts and programs of reintegration that combine different forms of support that facilitate the individual's return to society or community.

Deradicalization requires effective tools to counter radicalization starting from counter-narratives, hence public institutions have yet to formulate an effective policy concerning online de-radicalization; **simply shutting down social network with radical content or removing such content does not solve the problem** because authors of such content can simply create alternative online presence. In the PAVE project, it was also found that **most community actors lack the capacities and funding to deal with the online space**, especially with chat rooms, gaming platforms and other open and dark online spaces which assist extremist groups to radicalize individuals. The social media landscape of violent extremist messaging and propaganda is fast-paced and ever-changing. This reality, in combination with the limited capacities of state institutions and civil society to design and implement relevant and highly reactive content, makes these kinds of projects more necessary than ever.

Some positive examples of de-radicalization found implemented in Kosovo are those of moderate imams disseminating knowledge through lectures published on Youtube, that tackle issues like nation, religious tolerance and patriotism as components of Albanian identity. Such examples include the case of Imam Idriz Bilalli, the FolTash online portal and the 'Real Jihad' platform. Also, in the case of Kosovo, other resilience factors found related to youth were the role of **education and media literacy**, as well as **online peer-group socialization** through social media.

Featured above is PAVE's second focus group on online and offline deradicalization organized in Kosovo. *Photo Source: PAVE. "Second PAVE focus-group on offline and online (de) radicalization organized in Kosovo." July 23, 2021.* https://www.pave-project.eu/news/second-pave-focus-group-on-offline-and-online-%28de%29-radicalization-organized-in-kosovo.

Co-optation Between State, Networks and Religious Formal/ Informal Institutions and Leaders and Interreligious and Trans-ethnic Dialogue

Another key factor in community resilience is the role of political, parastatal and religious leaders in condemning acts of violence and intolerance.

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, **interreligious councils** play an important role in promoting cooperation and basic human values and the **education sector utilizes universal preventive interventions** as part of regular school activities, including promoting the values of cooperation, tolerance and co-existence.

- In Serbia, **parastatal control of right-wing extremist activities** also serves as a resilience factor because the government can influence their activities and prevent groups from committing violence. **The use of clientelist networks** also provides political and religious leaders with the means to control radicalized individuals and groups.

- In Lebanon, **the relationship between Dar al-Fatwa and the presidency of the Council of Ministers can be a resilience factor at the national level when the Sunni Prime Minister decides to follow a conciliatory policy with the opponents of the rest of the sects and the political spectrum.** Another possible element of resilience observed is the **ability of informal, grassroots religious institutions to mediate between armed groups and the government in order to defuse violence.**

- In Iraq, another resilience factor **is the role religious organizations they play in not authorizing or otherwise delegitimizing armed groups or their leaders.** Religious leaders play a clear resilience role being at the forefront of nonviolent protests and publicly rejecting the use of violence by their own followers. **The introduction of laws recognizing the victims of violent extremism** is also another resilience factor.

- In Tunisia, the unification of Islamic knowledge creation in a respected and recognized institution, such as al-Zaytouna University, was noted as an element of resilience against violent extremism, as it **illustrates how a serious academic institution can have legitimacy in the religious community.**

Social bonding within communities and social rapprochement between communities play a key role in building community resilience. For example, in Serbia religious communities traditionally show tolerance and respect for each other and often adopt a common position towards the state. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Interreligious Council is another example of this. This also lays out in schools where the promotion of critical thinking and exchange of experiences helps in bridging social bonding and understanding. Likewise, in Tunisia, civic engagement and youth activism are strengthened by grassroots PVE initiatives.

Gender-Related Findings of Community Resilience

It is clear that gender equality is of importance for decreasing the risk of extremism, as well as increasing society's resilience against it. **Advancing gender equality, including women's leadership and participation within P/CVE efforts is thus another form of community resilience found within the PAVE project.** One example of this is through women's important roles as part of civil society. It is often women in the civil society organizations that are working to strengthen community resilience. For example, in Serbia, women make up the majority of those involved as members of organizations involved in prevention efforts, and in fact, female civil activists lead not just Belgrade-based but also Sandžak-based organizations. Although a high percentage of the population in Sandžak is very religious, this does not prevent women from participating in various social and political activities.

In the MENA region, women's presence in civil society is significant and greater than that of the religious sector. In Iraq, for example, women are more present in civil society organizations than men (65%). The presence of women in cultural and community events in the city of Kef for example was seen as an element of resilience against violent extremism. Similarly, in Lebanon, women are much more present in civil society organizations, sometimes even representing a higher percentage of the staff of local NGOs and associations. The role and work of civil society organizations and NGOs can be an important resilience factor for VE, as it improves women's representation, political participation and social engagement. Women's presence is also evident in local associations or local networks that have emerged from international projects. For example, the network of strong cities operating in Majdal Anjar includes five women for every ten men and women make up 50% of the workers of the Association of Youth Initiatives.

The PAVE project revealed the need for more gender awareness in P/CVE approaches due to the very simple fact that through their work in community organizations, schools, civil society organizations, and families, women tend to be the first to identify the initial symptoms of radicalization and should therefore be trained so that they can respond appropriately at an early stage.

Women and P/CVE Exercise

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Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers or large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the questions below. Encourage participants not to be afraid to get creative during a brainstorm session, the more creative and innovative the idea the better. Tell them to try to think outside the box and come up with activities, initiatives and interventions not currently used by P/CVE actors, but that would work well in their community context.

- Write participants' answers on the board in summarized form.

- After a few minutes, or after responses die down, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:

  - Do any of the responses surprise you? Why?

  - Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?

  - Which option do you think would work best in your community? Why?

Questions:

1. In what capacity are women missing as P/CVE actors in your community? Judges? Police officers? Teachers? Religious leaders? Other creative roles identified during earlier brainstorming activities?

2. How could programs or initiatives in your community help to counter that lack of women in P/CVE?

Write down any notes!

Source for Exercise: UN Women. ''Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.'' 2021. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ECA/Attachments/Publications/2021/2/PVE_TrainingManual-min.pdf

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For More Information on PAVE Sister Projects and other Related Projects and Networks see PAVE's collaboration page: https://pave-project.eu/collaboration.

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The Network for Religious & Traditional Peacemakers

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TRAINING

CERTIFICATE

OF COMPLETION OF TRAINING MODULE 1:
DISCOVERING COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE FACTORS IN PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
TO:

THIS CERTIFICATE IS PROUDLY PRESENTED BY

PAVE Consortium and The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Training and Learning Objectives of Module 1:

- Participants gain an understanding of what the community-level vulnerability and resilience factors are for violent extremism in the project-focus countries and how to analyze their local context from the perspective of these factors.

- Participants gain an understanding of the different forms of violent extremism and reciprocal extremism. They will explore local multi-stakeholder level approaches to address these forms of extremism in the online and offline spaces.

- Participants gain an understanding about the transnational interactions, including impact on and from Europe, contributing to violent extremism. Participants will focus on the role of the diaspora community in engaging in local prevention and countering of violent extremism.