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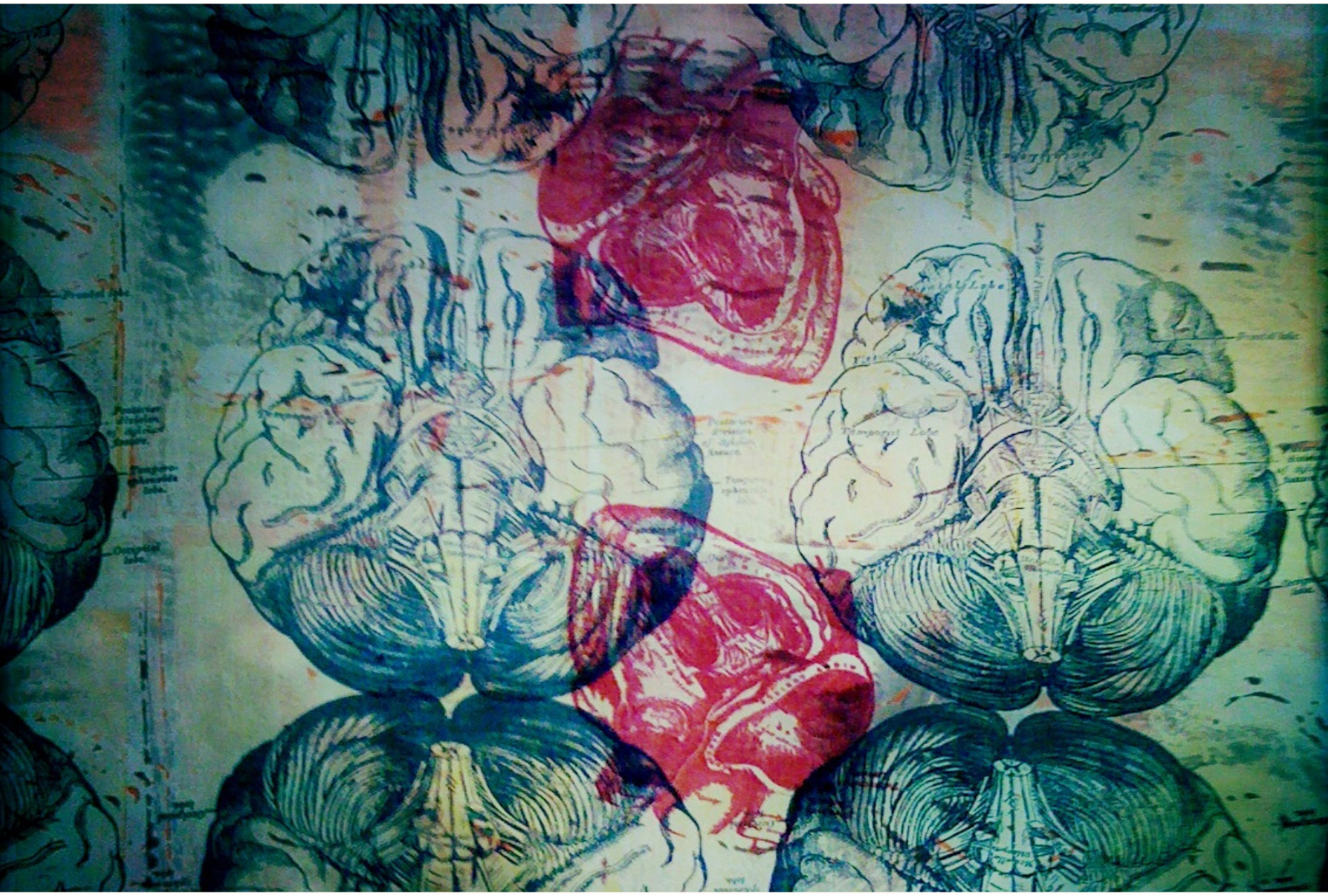
EXAMINING PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS OF RADICALISATION IN JORDAN



West Asia-North Africa Institute, March 2017

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, it is estimated that over 35,000 foreign fighters have joined Sunni militant groups, such as Daesh and al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria. The threat posed by such groups — both inside conflict zones and in countries of origin — has focused attention on the drivers that render individuals vulnerable to recruitment, as well as strategies for bolstering resilience to indoctrination, and rehabilitating those who have defected and returned. To date, most analysis has focused on the contextual, religious, ideological, and socio-economic push and pull factors that drive radicalisation. Less attention has been directed to how governments and development organisations might respond to the *psychological* drivers of radicalisation. This report aims to fill this gap by examining the relations between individual psychology, group affiliation, and the socio-economic context in Jordan.

An individual moves through three stages before he or she engages in acts of violence extremism. First, radicalisation starts with **individual vulnerability**. This includes one or more of the following: threats, a sense of duty, enticement, and revenge. But vulnerability does not lead to radicalisation on its own. Usually, it combines with psychological factors, such as fragmented social identity, indoctrination into a religious ideology, frustration with social injustice, mental health conditions, and desire for material rewards.

A vulnerable individual, however, does not become radical even if psychological factors encourage **radicalisation**. An individual becomes a radical when a group is available to offer both an ideology and social support; providing the necessary worldview and social backdrop for a vulnerable individual to become a radical.

Finally, opportunity has to present itself for a radical to engage in **violent extremist behaviour**. This opportunity can be material abilities, physical access, or favourable geopolitical conditions.

These three stages from individual vulnerability to violent extremism operate within an enabling political and cultural environment. Individual vulnerabilities and psychological motivations manifest differently according to context, making it difficult to identify fail-safe strategies or programmatic direction. Psychological drivers must thus be understood as separate to, but operating alongside contextual push and pull factors when developing a holistic response to radicalisation and violent extremism.

This report is a collaborative effort. It draws upon research conducted by the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute in radicalisation hotbeds targeting youth and refugees in 2016.[1] It also

[1] The WANA Institute conducted FGDs and semi-structured interviews in Irbid, Ma'an, Salt, and Rusayfeh in the period between June and September 2016 for the project "Religion for Peace and Development in WANA Region." This project is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and examines radicalisation drivers in Jordan, tools for developing effective counter-narratives, the links between human security programming and CVE, and develops policy recommendations in consultation with civil society, religious leaders (Imams and *Waethat*), and youth. This report is part of this project that is expected to achieve its objectives by December 2017.

draws upon primary research data collected by Dr Anne Speckhard in Jordan in November 2016.[2]

Collectively, this research found that psychological dynamics tend to influence four of the driver sets that explain the process of radicalisation into violent extremism: social identity, religious ideology, personal status, and social injustice. The salient findings are summarised below:

- Social identity: Multiple identity dynamics can be seen as creating vulnerabilities to radicalisation in Jordan. First, fractious and narrowing conceptualisations of self-identity in reference to the 'other' create social schisms that associate positively with radicalisation and extremism. Moreover, not understanding what the collective represents or if one belongs to it, make it more difficult for youth to transition through the natural process of forming a self-identity independent of their family unit. This is even more problematic in contexts of diminishing opportunity and worsening socio-economic conditions, as group-belonging, work, identity, and pride — elements that usually facilitate youth self-actualisation — are missing. Such identity politics are easily manipulated by radical armed groups that peddle a more inclusive and clear identity: that of a pure Muslim belonging to the Muslim *ummah*. Psychological precedents may also create a readiness among some Jordanians to unite in solidarity with groups fighting occupation. Widespread sympathy for the occupied 'other' can be linked to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, the US occupation in Iraq, and even the Afghan 'Holy Jihad.' Such events played a role in consolidating an idealisation around liberation theology[3] and reinforcing the status of the martyr with that of a hero. Against this, when Jordanians saw the shrinking political space for Sunnis, and the atrocities being committed against them, they identified strongly and began to associate their purpose as becoming warriors for justice.

- Religious ideology: The ideologies of Daesh and al-Nusra build on the idea that Muslims, Muslim lands, and even Islam itself, are under attack. Moreover, that all Muslims are related to one another in the *ummah*, and thus have an individual duty to take *hijra* (migration to Islamic lands) and to fight '*jihad*' (in their limited definition), and assert the latter as a religious individual duty (*fard al-ayn*) against oppressing regimes. While such tactics have undoubtedly proven effective, it is the context in which this messaging is received and processed that is most significant. Jordanian youth lack a sophisticated understanding of religious scripture, particularly as it relates to *jihad* and martyrdom, and the critical thinking skills required to interpret and contextualise such messaging. Compounding this, there are few safe fora for youth to discuss or seek clarification on

[2] Dr Anne Speckhard is Adjunct Associate Professor of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine, Georgetown University, and Director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE). Details on her works are available at http://www.icsve.org/

[3] On Liberation Theology, see Mohamad Nasrin Nasir, Daud Vicary Abdullah and Arzu Merali, *The Universal Theology Of Liberation*, 1st ed. (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2011), 19-28, available at http://www.ihrc.org.uk/attachments/9589_Theology%20of%20Liberation-v6.pdf; see also, Hassan Hanafi, *New Directions In Islamic Thought*, (Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar: 2010), available at https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/559276/CIRSBrief4HassanHanafi2010.pdf;sequence=5

religious precepts; Imams, teachers, and parents avoid discussing religious interpretation or radicalism for fear of being questioned by authorities. One result is that youth consult the Internet, where they are exposed to a growing volume of fundamentalist and content manipulated Islamic messaging, as well as recruiters.

- Mental health disorders: There is a growing body of evidence that individuals suffering from mental illnesses, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychopathic disorders are disproportionately represented within radical armed groups. Such groups have marketed martyrdom as a legitimate means of committing suicide, and target the mentally ill with promises of 'treatment'.

- Self-cleansing: People with substance abuse problems that are trying to rehabilitate can be attracted to groups like Daesh, as they impose strong limits and a fundamentalist lifestyle. The same can apply to victims of abuse and criminals who wish to self-cleanse.

- Social significance: Dysfunctional family dynamics, unemployment, and lack of opportunity diminish personal significance and inculcate feelings of worthlessness. A prime example is marriage, which continues to be socially aspired to, but is increasingly out of reach for those living in poverty or who are unemployed. Daesh taps into such needs and frustrations by promising salaries, homes, and marriage, alongside life purpose, honour, and social significance.

- Grievance: While high rates of underdevelopment and unemployment are positively associated with radicalisation, the factors giving rise to such situations are a separate driver. High unemployment, for example, seems to be less potent of an issue than the nepotism and corruption that facilitates it. With no means of upward social mobility, individuals feel that they have lost honour and dignity. Daesh plays into these frustrations by promoting itself as an organisation where all skin colours and ethnicities are equal, and that merit is attached only to the observation of Islamic values.

The final section of the report discusses face-to-face and online recruitment patterns. It highlights the sophisticated techniques used by extremist groups, including the use of slick and professionally-produced propaganda to attract the attention of individuals, who they then carefully monitor. Those who 'retweet,' 'like,' or otherwise endorse their messages are promptly targeted. Indeed, modern social media allows recruiters to easily find out details regarding an individual's background, crutches, and vulnerabilities by examining their profiles, friends, and the types of material they engage with. This makes it easier to tailor messages that respond to an individual's particular mix of vulnerabilities and/or motivations, whether this is belonging, romance, adventure, sexual gratification, or justice.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations on how to incorporate psychological dimensions of radicalisation into broader response strategies:

- Reforming education curricula to eliminate content that glorifies or idealises violent conflict, gives religious support to violence, or promotes Muslim (Sunni) superiority, as

well as integrating skills for living in and contributing to a cohesive society such as critical thinking, constructive debate, and peaceful conflict resolution.

- Creating safe channels for individuals to seek advice on questions pertaining to religious ideology or report cases where an individual is showing signs of radicalisation.

- Empowering community members (particularly parents, teachers, and imams) with knowledge about the ideologies and terrorist recruitment techniques that youth may be exposed to, and the skills to detect the early signs of radicalisation.

- Develop multi-genre, authoritative counter narratives and disseminate through popular media, including television, social media and print media.

- Delegitimise extremist groups by accurately disseminating evidence of corruption, illicit activity, and human rights abuses. Narrative accounts of defectors can be a powerful tool to discourage individuals from joining an extremist group and to encourage repatriation.

- Better understanding on how some individuals exposed to similar driver sets resist recruitment, the role of knowledge and critical thinking skills, strong families, group cohesiveness, peer resistance, and positive aspirations, need to be articulated and incorporated into programming.

- In the context of a projected spike in the return of weapons-trained and ideologically indoctrinated individuals, procedures for detention, prosecution, and reintegration need to be articulated. Very little is known about the psychological rehabilitation of this phenomenon of violent extremists and the risks of unsuccessful rehabilitation (or not detecting fake defection) are severe. It is clear, however, that successful programs will need to include both psychological and Islamic re-indoctrination, as well as a tangible change in the contextual factors that motivated their departure.

1. Jordanian Fighters in Syria and Iraq

Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, more than 38,000 foreign fighters from over 80 countries have joined Sunni militant groups, such as Daesh and al-Qaeda, in both Iraq and Syria.[4] With approximately 11,000 of these fighters hailing from the Middle East, the region — perhaps unsurprisingly — is the primary source of foreign militants.[5]

While official government estimates are not publically available, experts posit that between 3,000 and 3,950 Jordanians travelled to the conflict zone between 2011 and 2015, and that anywhere up to 1,500 have been killed.[6] This ranks Jordan as the country with the highest ratio of foreign fighters on a per capita basis in the world, followed by Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Bosnia (Table 1 and Figure 1 below).

Table 1: The Middle East Foreign Fighter Breakdown by Country[7]

	Country	Number of Foreign Fighters	Rank	Number of Foreign Fighters (Per Capita/Million)
1	Saudi Arabia	1,500 - 2,500200	3	69
2	Jordan	1,500 - 3950[8]	1	309
3	Lebanon	900	2	201
4	Israel/Palestinian Territories	120	4	26
5	Yemen	110	8	5
6	Kuwait	7015	5	20
7	United Arab Emirates	15	9	2
8	Qatar	15	7	7
9	Bahrain	1220	6	9

[4] See Nicholas Rasmussen, "Countering Violent Islamist Extremism: The Urgent Threat of Foreign Fighters and Homegrown Terror", testimony before the US House Committee on Homeland Security, (February 11, 2015) available at https://homeland.house.gov/files/documents/02-11-15-McCaul-Open.pdf; see also, "Foreign Fighters", *The Soufan Group* report (2015) available at http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

[5] Peter R. Neumann, "Foreign Fighter Total in Syria/Iraq Now Exceeds 20,000; Surpasses Afghanistan Conflict in the 1980s", *International Center for the Study of Radicalization*, (January 26, 2015), available at http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s.

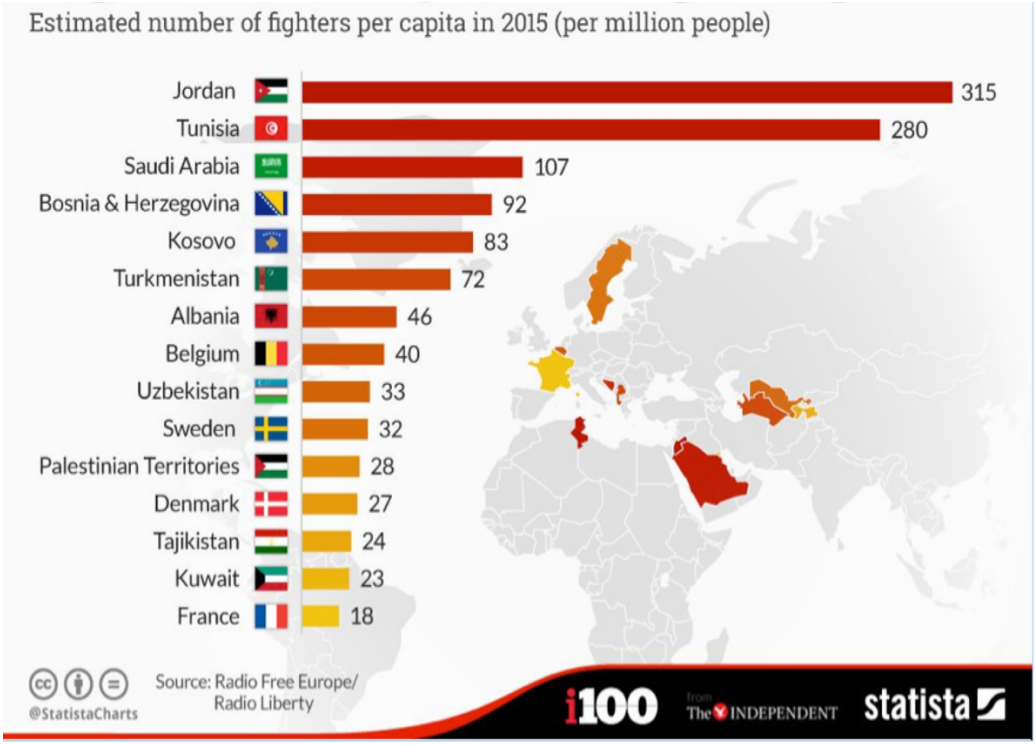
[6] Anonymous, retired intelligence officer (GID), interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman, (November 10, 2016). See also, Suha Ma'ayeh and Tamer el-Ghobashy, "Islamic State Lured a Son of Jordan's Elite", *The Wall Street Journal,* (December 1, 2015), available at http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-lured-a-son-of-jordans-elite-1449015451.

[7] Data collected by the *International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism*; see also "Foreign Fighters" *The Soufan Group* (2015), available at http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

[8] The Soufan Group estimates the number of foreign fighters at between 1500 and 2,500. "Foreign Fighters", *The Soufan Group* (2015).

Jordanian fighters are principally males from impoverished backgrounds, who were previously underemployed or unemployed.[9] The caseload, however, contains several exceptions with some fighters being highly educated, from wealthy families, and/or holding secular (not religious) leanings.[10] The psychological profiles of these 'less usual' fighters are discussed at the end of this paper. There is also evidence of female foreign fighters; however, little verifiable information is available.

Figure 1



Fighters from Jordan left for Syria and Iraq in two separate waves. The first group left at the beginning of the Syrian conflict and joined Jabhat al-Nusra (now known as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham). Jordanians were strongly affected by Assad's attacks on what began as peaceful demonstrations, and as the conflict developed increasingly sectarian overtones, they identified with their fellow Sunni neighbours, on the basis of religion, common experience, and demographics (actual or 'fictive' kin).[11]

> The videos coming at the beginning of the Syrian revolution, we were watching kids and women being killed and raped. …We have all been raised on 'those are our brothers.'[12]

[9] Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November, 2, 2016).
[10] Hasan Abu Hanya, radicalisation expert, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 10, 2016).
[11] Ibid; Walid Sarhan, psychiatrist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).
[12] Anonymous, activist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an, Jordan (November 11, 2016).

The second group left following the consolidation of Daesh in early June 2014 and its proclaimed establishment of a Caliphate. Since then, only a small number have managed to travel to Syria and Iraq, principally due to effective government security measures.[13]

> [O]f those who went to Syria, they were divided between al-Nusra and ISIS. They did not go to FSA, Ahrar al-Sham, etc. but stayed with the *salafi* groups.[14]

The motivations of females are less well-understood; participants in Focus Group Discussions (FGD) pointed to three factors: a woman's religious duty to follow her husband, seeking an outlet for her frustrations at home, the desire to marry, and revenge (revenge is specific to Syria refugee women only).[15]

[13] "Creating a Dialogue on Countering Violent Extremism in the WANA region." Panel Discussion, WANA Institute Conference, Amman, Jordan, November 16 and 17, 2016.

[14] Hasan Abu Hanya, radicalisation expert, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman, (November 10, 2016).

[15] These findings are detailed in Neven Bondokji, Kim Wilkinson and Leen Aghabi, *Trapped Between Destructive Choices: Radicalisation Drivers Affecting Youth In Jordan*, (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017), 18-9, available at http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/RadicalisationDriversFULLFeb12.pdf.

2. Social Support for Violent Extremism in Jordan

In 2015, a Reuters report cited Jordanian diplomats and analysts who estimated the presence of 6,000 to 7,000 radical sympathisers in the country.[16] Such estimates have some evidential support. A 2005 survey of 1,417 respondents (representatively selected) found that 67 percent defined al-Qaeda as a legitimate resistance movement.[17] These numbers changed significantly when the survey was repeated shortly after the al-Qaeda hotel attacks in Amman, with only 20 percent classifying the group as a legitimate resistance movement. Moreover, those who considered al-Qaeda as a terrorist organisation rose from 11 to 49 percent, with another 24 percent of respondents being undecided. By comparison, support for Zarqawi's al-Qaeda, stood only at 6 percent: 72 percent of respondents viewed it as a terrorist organisation, 6 percent viewed it as a legitimate resistance movement, and almost 16 percent were undecided.[18] This trend has continued, suggesting that the general population is less supportive of violent and/or extremist movements, and perhaps reflecting that their groups have gone beyond what is considered acceptable in terms of violent acts, irrespective of their ultimate purpose.

The most recent polling data available suggests that 7 percent of interviewees endorse violent extremist groups. An examination of this survey data found that these 7 percent were more than likely to be male, aged 18-24 years, living in urban areas, classified as middle-class,[19] and having a university or advanced education. This rate has remained relatively stable since 2010, with endorsement rates for Daesh at 3 percent, al-Qaeda at 2 percent, and al-Nusra at 2 percent. Interestingly, only the endorsement rate pertaining to Daesh fell (from 7 percent to 3 percent) following the posting of video footage showing the murder of downed Jordanian fighter pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh in February 2015.[20]

Another set of interviews conducted in 2016 with 840 youth found that 4.5 percent from Zarqa rated Daesh as being closely representative of their personal convictions and 2.7 percent saying the same for al-Qaeda. In Irbid, the findings were 1.5 percent for both Daesh and al-Qaeda, while in Tafilah, al-Qaeda was representative of 2.4 percent of the sample's personal convictions. Interestingly, support for both groups increased with respondents' monthly family income,

[16] Samia Nakhoul and Suleiman al-Khalidi, "Insight: Jordan takes no chances in confronting homegrown Jihadis" *Reuters* (February 26, 2015), available at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-jordan-insight-idUSKBN0LU1TU20150226.

[17] This survey, on file with Anne Speckhard, investigated Arab and Muslim support for terrorism. A three-level framework for analysis was applied: 1) examining respondent perceptions on killing civilians of an occupying state/country, 2) examining respondent perceptions towards groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda (Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi), and 3) examining respondent perceptions towards government/state armed forces actions in terms of whether they could be viewed as terrorist or non-terrorist. The poll was conducted between 1-7 December 2005, sampling 1,417 respondents throughout the Kingdom, including 669 public opinion leaders (political leaders, business executives, and the media). See also, Fares Braizat, "Post-Amman Attacks: Jordanian Public Opinion and Terrorism" *Center for Strategic Studies*, University of Jordan, 2006.

[18] Ibid. Similarly, 84 percent of respondents in 2004 defined Hezbollah as a legitimate organization, however, in 2005, this number dropped to 64 percent. This shift can be attributed to political perceptions towards the situation in-country in 2005; the 2005 assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, and events in Iraq that pitted Sunnis against Shi'a. See, Fares Braizat, director at NAMA - Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).

[19] Defined as belonging to a family that spends JOD800/month.

[20] Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November, 2, 2016).

lending support to the view that moderately to well-off persons have more resources, time, and ability to be concerned with the social and political issues that terrorist groups purport to address, as compared to those who are impoverished and more concerned with existential needs.[21] Support was fairly evenly divided between males and females. Daesh endorsement decreased with age, with 3.1 percent of 16-19 year-olds endorsing the group compared to 1.4 percent of 24-26 year-olds. Support also increased with education beyond the high school level, again consistent with the view that more educated youth, particularly those in universities, are often more passionate about social change and, thus, more likely to concern themselves with issues of violent extremism.[22]

As part of this research, in November 2016 two edited video clips of Daesh defectors denouncing the group were focus tested in Zarqa on 48 youths aged 14-26.[23] Most viewers strongly rejected the footage. At the same time, they expressed a longing for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate, but were unsure if the Daesh Caliphate was the correct one. They likewise endorsed Daesh's brutal punishment of thieves saying that they were correct to enforce Islamic laws according to shari'ah principles. In a FGD organised by Strategic Intelligence Solutions (NAMA) and held in Zarqa in 2016, nearly half of the 20 youth participants noted that they watched *salafi* and '*takfiri*' videos from Gulf countries, Iraq, and Syria that invoked participation in *'jihad.'*[24]

Three important points can be drawn from this. First, it is clear that social support for terrorist groups and violent extremism waxes and wanes with political events, and particularly with self-perceptions of security. There is also an observable tension between individuals' denunciation of terrorist methods, and their appreciation (and even admiration) of the ends being fought for. One expert noted that when Zarqawi was killed, many went to give condolences,[25] suggesting a tendency to idealise those who push back against perceived injustice. Third, while those supportive of violent extremist groups appears to be low, the numbers in absolute terms are high when understood against the damage they can inflict.

A final point is that trends in convictions need to be understood against the move towards socio-cultural conservatism that has taken place in Jordan (and other Middle Eastern states) over the past decades. One expert explained, 50 years ago, "few women were covered and modern Western dress was common. Up to 1967, Jordanians did not fast during Ramadan."[26] A retired Jordanian military expert concurred: "Jordanians prior to 1945 were so not conservative. They

[21] This is similar to findings from, Alexander Lee, "Who Becomes a Terrorist? Poverty, Education and the Origins of Political Violence", *World Politics*, 2, vol. 63 (2011), 203-245, available at https://www.rochester.edu/college/psc/clarke/214/-Lee11.pdf

[22] The data from this survey is summarised by Fares Braizat, Anne Speckhard, and Ardian Shajkovci; see *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan,* forthcoming, (2017).

[23] See Anne Speckhard, "The Best Weapon To Defeat ISIS: Use Testimonial from Disillusioned Recruits Who've Defected Against Them", *New York Daily News,* 6 July 2016, available at http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/anne-speckhard-best-weapon-defeat-isis-article-1.2700282 and the videos at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCumpEsozixbl-PyKw12hmnw.

[24] Fares Braizat et al., *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan,* forthcoming, (2017).

[25] Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amma (November 5, 2016).

[26] Ibid.

didn't fast. All the men drank. Fundamentalist Islamic ideology is at its peak right now."[27] But it is important not to conflate religious conservatism with religious scholarship; the conservatives who harbour strict viewpoints are not usually knowledgeable on Islamic *shari'ah*.

> We are not at all moderate. Our people don't accept others, don't accept pluralism, we don't tolerate others, Shia and Sufi for instance.[28]

> In Jordan, we are noticing social ISIS. Young men and young women are embracing *takfir*. 'This guy is going to hell.' 'This is *haram*.' It is evolving in words, the state of mind. … even the kids of prominent generals and parliamentarians have become extreme in their ideas.[29]

[27] Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016).
[28] Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).
[29] Ranya Kadri, Jordanian journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).

3. The Psychological Drivers of Radicalisation and Extremism

Although there is a wide degree of overlap, psychological dynamics tend to influence four of the driver sets that explain the process of radicalisation and the transition into violent extremism: social identity, religious ideology, personal status, and social injustice.

3.1 Social Identity

Much has been written on the fractious state of Arab identity.[30] It is broadly accepted that following colonisation and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the states that emerged were not homogenous. The imposition of artificial boundaries resulted in states composed of numerous ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic minorities. Kumaraswamy argues that states henceforth struggled to define, project, and maintain a territorial identity that was both inclusive and representative.[31] At the same time efforts to impose a construct of national identity — whether religious, dynastical, power-centric, or pan-Arab — were not only unsuccessful, but created new social fissures.[32] To an extent, these trends can be observed in Jordan. One expert drew attention to what he termed 'constructive confusion.' For example, the army being referred to as the 'Arab Legend', and government's references to the 'Hashemite' rather than the Jordanian collective:

> In the Army ceremony to start the war against Daesh, a red flag was raised, and they said it was the Hashemite Army.[33]

Identity is increasingly narrowly conceptualised: "Jordanian identity is not sufficiently strong to contain everyone."[34] Moreover, as Jordanian Muslims become more fundamentalist, they increasingly dismiss their shared roots with the Christians, Yazidis, and Ismailis of the country.[35] It is certainly true that Jordan, like most Middle Eastern states, has opted for a religion-centric identity. And like in other states where the population is composed of multiple religious groups, this construct has resulted in polarisation.[36] Indeed, if youth do not fully understand 'what it is to be Jordanian' and are not sure if their particular faith or ethnic heritage allows them to claim Jordanian identity, this leaves them vulnerable to groups that are peddling more inclusive identities, such as Daesh offering recruits inclusion in the Muslim *ummah*.

[30] See Peter Webb, *Imagining The Arabs. Arab Identity And The Rise Of Islam*, 1st ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Yasir Suleiman, *Arabic, Self And Identity*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[31] P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Who am I?: The Identity Crisis in the Middle East", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1, vol. 10 (March, 2006).
[32] Ibid.
[33] Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Kumaraswamy, "Who am I?: The Identity Crisis in the Middle East."

> Long ago, I didn't even know if I was Shia or Sunni. I had to ask my parents. Now everyone is totally aware of this identity.[37]

Most relevant to this analysis is that a narrowing of self-identity in reference to the 'other' creates social schisms that associate positively with radicalisation and extremism. When youth do not understand if they belong to the collective, or even what exactly it means to be a national, it is harder to develop a cohesive sense of identity. Such fractured identity politics are easily manipulated by extremist groups.

Moreover, efforts to bolster unity can be perceived as a manufactured, weakening trust in the state. One respondent criticised radio broadcasters for playing music to bolster "the region's fake ethnic pride."[38]

Some scholars describe the 'Arab identity crisis' as a tug-of-war between opposing spheres of interest. Arabs, particularly youth, are drawn towards Westernisation because it offers returns in the form of technological innovation, dress, and food, as well as a perceived route to better opportunity and social advancement. And while they are ideologically inclined to revere their Arab culture, the form this takes is unclear and offers fewer returns. Many interviewees lamented why Arabs were once leaders in philosophy, the arts, and science, but are not today. This tension is compounded by a deeply entrenched anger harboured against the West. Such hostility can be linked to post-World War I interventions, the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and its support of Israel, perceptions of the West as being anti-Sunni, and its propping up dictators over Islamic people and lands. There is also a sense of hypocrisy in the West's dealing with the Arab world; powerful states ignored democratic elections in Algeria, Palestine, and Egypt when Islamists gained power,[39] routinely overlook egregious actions by Israel, and interfere in Arab affairs in contravention of international law. Daesh and other groups are adept at selecting footage that substantiates such views, such as civilian deaths caused by American drone attacks and military abuses.

> Our problem in Jordan is not with the citizens, but with [those] who control us and oppress us. When my sons went to Syria, it was for these reasons. They felt the oppression of Bashar and his people in Hezbollah and Iran. In Jordan, there is a very close geographic tie with Sunnis. They [the Assad forces] were decapitating bodies in front of Arab silence, and American and European acceptance, because Americans were thinking of the gas in the Middle East more than the people, and how to divide Syria.[40]

These pressures on self-identity create a vulnerability to radicalisation in two groups, albeit in different ways.

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[37] Ranya Kadri, Jordanian journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).
[38] Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).
[39] Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016); Anonymous youth, interview by Anne Speckhard, Zarqa (November 10, 2015).
[40] Anonymous, father of two returnees, interview by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an (November 11, 2016).

All adolescents go through a developmental process where they separate from their parents and search for a wider identity and belonging to other groups. In doing so, they often look outside their families — to governmental and nongovernmental institutions, schools, mosques, and the Internet — for role models, patterns, and clues for who they should become. In Jordan, the scarcity of opportunity to engage in sports, cultural, or other extra-curricular activity means that mosques can be extremely influential,[41] particularly insofar as they constitute the only places outside of the family for youth to 'belong.'

For the youth in Jordan today, this developmental process is taking place in the context of diminishing opportunity, worsening socio-economic conditions, and weak social cohesion. This makes the developmental task more difficult as group-belonging, work identity, and pride — elements that usually facilitate the transition — are missing. Moreover, it creates confusion and anxiety, and an inability to self-actualise. Against this, Daesh can be seen as offering a simple and attractive alternative: a clear identity as a pure Muslim for those who travel to live under the Caliphate. The 'all or nothing solutions' offered in fundamentalism can resonate strongly with youth, especially the more vulnerable, who come to believe that they do not belong to the Jordanian identity, but instead to the Muslim *ummah*. Indeed, groups actively try to sever family bonds in the process of inculcating individuals in an extremist mindset.

The alternate identity provided by extremist groups also appeals to an older generation of Jordanians. Unlike in the youth context, however, this vulnerability had been building up over time. A series of psychological precedents created a readiness among some people to unite in solidarity with groups fighting occupation. This sympathy for the occupied 'other' has its roots in Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and the US occupation in Iraq. Even the Iranian revolution (1979), Afghan 'Holy Jihad,' and the creation of Hamas (1987) may have played a role in consolidating an idealisation around liberation theology, identifying with the warrior, and reinforcing the status of the martyr with that of a hero.

> I still remember the books [Abdullah Azzam] would distribute about miracles of *'jihad'* in Afghanistan. He brought [from Afghanistan] a shirt with bullet holes and said he wore it and nothing happened. Streets and mosques today in Jordan are named after him.[42]

Feeding on this, a further important point is that when people support a particular cause, they rationalise the tools and actions used to fight that cause. The use of suicide attacks, for example, may appear reasonable when fighting an agent with more sophisticated weaponry. This makes it easier to accept the brutality of groups like al-Qaeda and Daesh.

[41] Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).

[42] "In the 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood told that generation to go and fight the Russians in Afghanistan," Sebayleh recalled, "but they wanted to fight for Palestine. However, they were told that the door of *jihad* is closed for Palestine now, so let us go and train ourselves in Afghanistan to be ready. They made *jihad* a fascinating issue." Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).

> [W]e had a survey about Abu Musab Zarqawi and 82 percent of young men liked him. This survey was done in west Amman. They are well off people. They want a hero. Yasser Arafat and Sadaam Hussain were heroes for people in the last 15 years. Now there are no heroes.[43]

> There is a very important difference between terrorism and extremism that goes toward civilians and innocents — that in our religion is a crime that cannot be forgiven—and between a group that goes out to defend its country to get rid of occupier from its land. This is not terrorism.[44]

Against this backdrop, when Jordanians saw the shrinking political space for Sunnis and the atrocities being committed against them (and women in particular), they identified strongly. Men began to associate their purpose and identity as becoming warriors for justice. Existing convictions then met with opportunity, as groups such as Daesh called for foreign fighters.

> They wanted to protect the Sunni women from the Shia men that were raping them … it's a mobilisation tool to protect the Sunni symbolism of dignity against those Shia.[45]

> The old *'jihadis'* that would go anywhere to fight *'jihad'*, saw an opportunity. … the ideologies were already created, and there were *'jihadis'* ready to go.[46]

3.2 Religious Ideology

The ideologies of both Daesh and al-Nusra build on the idea that Muslims, Muslim lands, and even Islam itself, are under attack. Moreover, that *all* Muslims, everywhere, are related to one another in the Muslim *ummah*, and thus have an individual duty to take *hijra* (migration to Islamic lands) and to fight *'jihad'* (in their limited definition), and assert the latter as a religious individual duty (*fard al-ayn*) against oppressing regimes. Daesh also preaches *End Times* prophetic theology, inviting all Muslims to join these apocalyptic battles. Groups have used images and footage of events inside Syria to reinforce such arguments, thereby creating a sense of religious obligation in those outside the conflict zone.[47]

Moreover, of those who went to fight in Syria on sectarian grounds, many subsequently adopted religious ideology: "once in Syria, they crystallised in their ideological inclinations because the *'jihadi'* groups have long experience in ideological propaganda."[48] For some, an initial sense of sympathy and duty to defend, evolved into fanatical religious beliefs. For others, this transition

[43] Walid Sarhan, psychiatrist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).
[44] Mahmood Latif, Iraqi former fighter and head of the political office to groups of the Resistance in Anbar and Iraq, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 13, 2016).
[45] Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016).
[46] Hasan Abu Hanya, radicalisation expert, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 10, 2016).
[47] Participants in FGDs conducted by the WANA Institute expressed opinions that Daesh media content is manipulated, but they said it makes them feel sympathetic to fellow Syrians. FGD with Jordanian Males, Salt, July 12, 2016); FGD with Jordanian Females, Rusayfeh, (July 14, 2016); FGD with Jordanian Males, Ma'an, (August 30, 2016); FGD with Syrian Refugee Males and Females, Irbid, (August 28, 2016).
[48] Hassan Abu Hanya, radicalisation expert, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 10, 2016).

may have been more insidious; Daesh and al-Qaeda are known for using *takfiri*-inspired threats, such as claiming that those who do not follow their Islamic 'duty' can be killed on this basis.

Daesh created additional pressure with its declaration of an Islamic Caliphate in 2014. The Caliphate was presented as a future utopian paradise where Muslims of all ethnicities would be welcomed as equals and provided an opportunity to live a traditional conservative Islamic life with material and spiritual benefits accrued under *shari'ah*. Indeed, one interviewed for this research explained that he would go to the Islamic State if the situation stabilised:

> They are acting from the real hadiths of Prophet Mohammed, when he mobilised his armies to open the other countries he called them to religion. We might disagree with their methods; beheadings may be controversial, I might agree with them or not, but they have a religious basis for it.
>
> The dream of the Caliphate exists among the people. The people always wanted the Caliphate. Here in Ma'an, we wait for *shari'ah* and dream about the uprising of the Islamic Nation to be like it was in the past.[49]

But it is the context in which this messaging is received and processed that is most significant for the current analysis. Jordanian youth lack a sophisticated understanding of religious scripture, particularly as it relates to *jihad* and martyrdom. They also find it hard to distinguish between legitimate and non-legitimate modalities of radicalism and extremism, and their political versus actionable manifestations. In youth FGDs conducted by the WANA Institute, most were confused about the difference between radicalisation and terrorism. Few regarded fighting in Syria as legitimate *'jihad,'* but distinguished this from 'radicalisation' which they saw as criminal e.g. blowing up a bottle shop or a night club in Jordan.[50]

Generally, practitioners in Jordan notice that youth also lack the skills in critical thinking required to be able to interpret and contextualise religious messaging. This has been linked to outdated school curricula that focus on doctrinal learning and authoritarian teaching pedagogy. Compounding this, there are few safe fora for youth to discuss or seek clarification on religious precepts. The youth survey conducted by NAMA revealed that 44 percent and 33 percent would approach their mosque and or the *Iftaa'* Department respectively, to resolve questions of a religious nature.[51] Many Imams, however, (as well as teachers and parents), avoid discussing issues concerning religious interpretation or radicalism for fear of being questioned by intelligence authorities or accusations that they are sympathetic to violent extremism.[52]

Imams interviewed by the WANA Institute clarified that they are not allowed to address terrorism and violent extremism. If they talk for or against it, they are questioned by security

[49] Anonymous, activist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 11, 2016).
[50] These views were expressed in two FGDs conducted by the WANA Institute. FGD with Jordanian Males, Salt, (July 12, 2016); FGD with Jordanian Males, Ma'an, (August 30, 2016).
[51] Braizat et al., *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan*, forthcoming, (2017).
[52] Based on Interviews conducted by the WANA Institute with four Imams. Interview with two anonymous Imams (A) and (B), Rusayfeh, (June 28, 2016); Interview with two anonymous Imams (C) and (D), Salt, (June 30, 2016).

officials. Imams feel powerless when individuals ask them on their religious opinion on the political situation in the region.[53] Ultimately, youth do not have anyone to talk to.[54]

The result is that, although youth are aware that extremist recruiters are active online, many search for answers on the internet. Fifteen percent of respondents in the NAMA youth survey looked online for answers to religious questions and over 50 percent followed religious organisations and movements via their websites.[55]

This has dangerous implications for youth vulnerability to radicalisation. First, there is a growing volume of fundamentalist Islamic messaging available on the Internet, including that which is lacking in authority or is content manipulated. Modern youth (millennials and post-millennials) are disposed to believe, without high amounts of scrutiny, information they find on the internet, particularly where the website in question is professional in appearance. Second, the combination of youths' respect for Islam, weak critical thinking skills, and limited options for authenticating messages, makes them vulnerable to charismatic recruiters who can knowledgably quote scriptures. Focus group participants from Zarqa stated that they found recruiters who could quote religious hadith and scriptures intimidating,[56] and that they did not know how to refute religious justifications of extremism.[57]

> Once a guy from Syria came to tell us about the religion, and he was not talking anything right but using all the religious words. One of my relatives said, 'Look how much knowledge he has.' He didn't say anything in these three minutes. He is saying stupid things, but everyone was brought in by him. They don't think critically when it comes to religion.[58]

3.3 Personal Status

3.3.1 Mental Health Disorders

The power of extremist groups to market martyrdom as a means of legitimately committing suicide cannot be underestimated. A Jordanian psychiatrist noted cases where even non-Muslims suffering from mental health disorders had attempted to enter Syria to join Daesh, and that persons suffering from schizophrenia and other severe mental illnesses have replicated Daesh crimes such as beheadings.[59] Moreover, unlike al-Qaeda in Iraq, which was disinclined to use the

[53] Interview with two anonymous Imams (A) and (B), Rusayfeh, (June 28, 2016); Interview with two anonymous Imams (C) and (D), Salt, (June 30, 2016).
[54] These views were expressed in four FGDs with youth conducted by the WANA Institute. FGD with Jordanian Males, Salt, (July 12, 2016); FGD with Jordanian Females, Rusayfeh, (July 14, 2016); FGD with Jordanian Males, Ma'an, (August 30, 2016); FGD with Syrian Refugee Males and Females, Irbid, (August 28, 2016).
[55] Braizat et al., *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan,* forthcoming, (2017). Also in the FGD held in Zarqa for this research, many stated that they used the Internet for this purpose; Zarqa Youth Focus Group Respondents, conducted by Anne Speckhard and Fares Braizat, Zarqa (November 12, 2016).
[56] Ibid.
[57] Braizat, et al., *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan,* forthcoming, *(*2017).
[58] Anonymous, activist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an (November 11, 2016).
[59] Walid Sarhan, psychiatrist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).

mentally ill on the ground that they may not have understood their suicide missions, Daesh harbours no such reservations.[60]

Indeed, it is highly beneficial for Daesh to make use of such persons as it contributes to the idea that they can attack anywhere and at any time; this is a standard goal of extremist groups that are trying to influence politics by spreading fear throughout societies. This has been made easier by technological advances that enable networking. In the past, terror plots relied upon sound-minded and trustworthy group members to execute them. Today, groups use encrypted social media platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp to co-opt followers to collect weapons or carry out attacks in countries outside of the conflict zone. Health experts are beginning to see that such followers are often suffering from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or other mental health disorders.

Anxiety disorders and self-medicating with drugs and alcohol are increasingly common tools used to deal with identity confusion, relationship breakdown, and unemployment in modern societies. Promises by groups like Daesh to impose strong limits and a fundamentalist lifestyle often appeal to such persons where they are attempting to rehabilitate. Substance abusers are disproportionately represented within extremist groups for this reason. A Belgian Daesh defector stated that he joined the *Shari'ah for Belgium* group because he wanted 'limits' after having grown up in a dysfunctional alcoholic family and subsequently becoming a drug abuser.[61]

There is strong evidence that persons suffering from post-traumatic disorders, associated flashbacks, and high arousal states can be easily manipulated by extremist groups offering a 'legitimate' or 'holy' way to escape their situation through martyrdom. A thought experiment conducted in Belgium found that of a sample that was instructed to imagine strapping on a bomb belt, more than half described feeling euphoria and a sense of empowerment. This same sense of euphoria has been described by suicide bombers who were stopped before completing their missions. Terrorist groups interpret this as religious confirmation that the act is spiritual and one that is blessed by *Allah*.[62]

The medical evidence, however, suggests that this is most likely an endorphin-motivated response. This supports the idea that the brain requires a strong endorphin release to override the self-preservation instinct required to carry out a suicide attack — something that can be achieved with medication. Indeed, for someone who is suffering post-traumatic flashbacks and hyperarousal, the emotional response of contemplating and preparing for a terror attack can act as a form of short-term 'psychological first aid,' albeit one that ends in their death.

Finally, psychopaths can be drawn by groups like Daesh that offer them an opportunity to play out sadistic urges and fantasies. Interviews with Daesh defectors have found that Daesh trainers

[60] Anne Speckhard, "Female suicide bombers in Iraq", *Democracy and Security 1, vol. 5* (2009), 19-50.
[61] Anne Speckhard, *Talking to terrorists: Understanding the Psycho-Social Motivations of Militant Jihadi Terrorists, Mass Hostage Takers, Suicide Bombers and "Martyrs* (McLean, VA: Advances Press, 2012).
[62] Ibid.

observe their recruits carefully and specifically select those with psychopathic and sadistic tendencies to carry out beheadings and crucifixions.[63]

3.3.2 Self-cleansing

Interviewees from security forces provided many anecdotal accounts of individuals with lengthy criminal backgrounds joining Daesh; these people usually have weak religious backgrounds and are either looking to reform themselves, or their criminality has left them with few options for employment or social integration.[64]

> [T]he majority [of those joining ISIS] have lost hope in life, have nowhere to go, and are a nobody in society. This guy is mostly, and has always been, far away from his religion and doing everything that is not allowed in Islam. Once he woke up, he wanted to turn back to *Allah* for redemption, and directly, before getting anywhere, this guy has been hunted by ISIS. Because of his bad past, he is isolated. He is socially unaccepted. Most of the ISIS people are like this, including their leadership.[65]

> If you look at those who conduct these attacks, they are clean converts and they are not educated much in the Islamic way. They are criminals. He has a criminal ideology and he wants to cleanse himself and delete his history, and wants to be a *shaheed* [martyr].[66]

One respondent highlighted the risk of being recruited while serving time in prison:

> The *salafis* in prison recruited him by telling him, 'If you want God to forgive you, memorise the Quran. Or, to make it easy, join us as a '*jihadi*' and, if you are killed in any operation, you will go to Paradise.'[67]

Another form of self-cleansing relates to victims of child sexual assault, a serious problem in Jordan.[68] These crimes often go unaddressed, and there are few options for rehabilitation due to social taboos concerning pre-marital sexual activity and homosexuality, and the non-acceptability of bringing such crimes into the public sphere. As a result, many victims go on to exhibit dysfunctional behaviours as adults, including exacting revenge, forgiveness-seeking, or a

[63] Ibid.
[64] Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016).
[65] Huthaifa Azzam, Free Syrian Army fighter, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 3, 2016).
[66] Ibid.
[67] Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016). Note that when Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a current al-Qaeda ideologue, was in prison, he became the spiritual mentor of the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq; Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi; see Ḥasan Abu Haniyah and Muhammad Abu Rumman, *The "Islamic State" Organization* (in Arabic), 1st ed. (Amman: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2015), 23-30.
[68] For further detail on sexual assaults on children in Jordan, see Ali M. Shotar et al. "Sexual Offenses Among Children in the North of Jordan: An Exploratory Study." *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2015), 538-54. doi:10.1080/10538712.2015.1042181 available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26301439; see also, "Overview," Overview | Children | Jordan River Foundation", accessed February 16, 2017, available at http://jordanriver.jo/?q=content%2Fjrcsp%2Foverview.

disproportionate desire for social standing. Some turn to religion. They are then more vulnerable to extremist movements; as such groups give voice to their inner anger because they identify with other victims, and because extremism provides a means for atonement while simultaneously allowing them to not disclose their situation.[69]

3.3.3 Desire for Social Significance

Many experts referenced a sense of worthlessness and longing for escape among young people in Jordan. One driver appears to be dysfunctional family dynamics, including patriarchy, repression, and humiliation.[70] Those who are marginalised or have weak positioning within family units seem to be most impacted. Some research suggests that dysfunctional relationships between young men and their fathers are positively associated with violent radicalisation.[71] Another driver is unemployment, which diminishes personal significance and frustrates the attainment of higher life ambitions. The prime example is marriage, which continues to be socially aspired to but is increasingly out of reach for those living in poverty or who are unemployed.

> If I want to marry, I need at least 10,000 JD. Where will I get that job? No one will give their daughter to someone unemployed.[72]

This creates sexual frustration. The sex drive and biological imperative to mate are strongest in men, and youth males in particular. Those who are sexually frustrated and can see no legitimate means of finding relief may respond to terrorist groups that promise wives and sex slaves. Frustrated libido can also drive men — and women, although to a lesser extent — to take atypical risks. Sexual repression in conservative Middle Eastern societies also drives feelings of shame among those who meet their sexual needs outside of wedlock, and in some cases, can drive them towards opportunities to 'cleanse their sins.'

Daesh and other groups tap into such needs and frustrations by promising men salaries, homes and marriage, alongside life purpose, honour, and social significance. The number of Jordanian leaders in the battlefield signals to youths that they too can become prominent players in the new Caliphate.

> Those people who feel insignificant suddenly have control over power, weapons, money, women, etc. They go from zero to hero; the person who is nothing can suddenly appear on social media, in *Dabiq,* and in videos threatening the King of Jordan, the United States, etc.[73]

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[69] Anonymous, activist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an, Jordan (November 11, 2016); see also, Anne Speckhard and Mubin Shaikh, *Undercover Jihadi: Inside the Toronto 18-Al Qaeda Inspired, Homegrown Terrorism in the West*, (McLean, VA: Advances Press, 2014).

[70] Based on FGDs with youth in Jordan. For further detail see, Bondokji et al., *Trapped Between Destructive Choices,* (2017) 9-11.

[71] Unpublished findings from research conducted in Ma'an. Main researcher presented the findings under Chatham House rules during, "Creating a Dialogue on Countering Violent Extremism in the WANA region." Panel Discussion, WANA Institute Conference, Amman, Jordan, November 16 and 17, 2016; Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).

[72] A Jordanian Male in a FGD conducted by the WANA Institute, Salt, (July 12, 2016).

[73] Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).

> I saw with my own eyes that if you go with ISIS, you will be very rich. This is how they are calling the people who are nothing in his country. Abu Jihad Shishani had 16 vehicles, including a Mercedes 5000 BMX. When he was governor of Idlib, I met him twice. When he came from Chechnya, he was a 'nobody'; now sixteen vehicles, four Jeep Cherokees, four Toyotas...all of this before 2014. They have houses in Syria; the best houses and the best cars. And the best weapons were in the hands of ISIS.[74]

3.4 Grievance and Social Injustice

A final driver can be best summarised as grievance against multifaceted social injustice. Cities such as Zarqa, Irbid, Ma'an and Salt — which have produced the majority of fighters — have high rates of poverty, underdevelopment, and unemployment (Table 2). However, it is not socio-economic conditions per se, but instead the factors that have allowed this situation to evolve that create angst. High unemployment, for example, is less potent of an issue than the *wasta* that drives it — the notion that without personal connections and social influence, one is unable to secure employment.

> [I]f you are poor and cannot find a job because there are no resources, you are upset, but if you feel you are not getting a chance in life, but someone else is getting it by cousin or father's power that it is nepotism. Your son has A's in medical school, but can't get in, and someone else's C's son gets the spot and your son has to go study business, how angry would you be?[75]

Nepotism and corruption perpetuate divisions within social classes and the belief that political elites are purposefully marginalising the governorates outside of Amman for their own interest. With no means of upward social mobility and prevented from overcoming poverty traps, individuals feel that they have lost honour and dignity. Many spoke of the idea that at least with Daesh one dies as a martyr.[76] For example, in Ma'an, there is frustration with the government in terms of corruption, nepotism and economic marginalisation, as well as the dearth of youth and cultural activities. Even mosques are heavily controlled, and only open for prayer times. There is a sense of injustice. Why are we paying taxes when we don't see the end results, wonder young men in Ma'an.[77]

[74] Huthaifa Azzam, Free Syrian Army fighter, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 3, 2016).
[75] Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016).
[76] For further detail see Bondokji et al., *Trapped Between Destructive Choices,* (2017), 9-11.
[77] FGD with Jordanian Males conducted by the WANA Institute, Ma'an, (August 30, 2016).

Table 2: Youth Unemployment (as % of Total Labour Force, Ages 15-24) for Countries Supplying the Highest per Capital Numbers of Foreign Fighters[78]		
Country	**Per Capita Foreign Fighters**	**2014 Youth Unemployment Rates**
Jordan	315	28.8
Saudi Arabia	107	29.5
Bosnia	92	57.5
Kosovo	83	50.8
Turkmenistan	72	20.2
Albania	46	25.1
Greece		53.9
Bulgaria		25.9

Groups such as Daesh play into these frustrations. Daesh promotes itself as an organisation where all skin colours and ethnicities blend equally, and that merit is attached only to the observation of Islamic values. They also highlight class differences and draw attention to the inequality between the elite in the Gulf States, Syria, and Iraq who live lavishly, while the poor suffer, despite sufficient resources for all citizens to live a decent life. [79] Some people in Jordan can draw parallels from this with their own lives. They might also agree with ideologues like Abu Qatada when he speaks about a polarised society of 'haves' 'and have nots,' and that elites have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.[80] One respondent stated that people did not support a strict *shari'ah* state, but simply wanted serious reforms. When this did not happen, they looked to more radical alternatives such as Daesh.[81] Indeed, one of Daesh's strengths is that it offers an alternate form of governance free from such deficits and where doctrinal obedience is rewarded over class.[82]

For many in Jordan, a tipping point is the absence of fora to voice grievances and a political system that responds to such. Respondents spoke of a sense of the hopelessness in influencing change, encouraging people to take risks and behave in dangerous ways:

[78] Derived from Radio Free Europe and the World Bank, "Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate)," available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS

[79] Anne Speckhard and Ahmet Sait Yayla, *ISIS Defectors: Inside Stories Of The Terrorist Caliphate*, 1st ed. (Mclean, VA: Advances Press, 2016).

[80] Abu Qatada al-Filistini (Jordanian *salafi* preacher), interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016).

[81] Khawla al-Hassan researcher, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).

[82] Amer Sabayleh, expert at Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute and university professor, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman, (November 5, 2016); Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman, (5 November, 2016).

> If you cannot protest, show resentment or hold anyone accountable, then you are so helpless. … You want to assert yourself. … If someone offers you a channel, you can be a doer, you can do something about all of these things, you are going to jump on it. … ISIS and Nusra don't have to do a lot to convince.[83]

> If you ask a 23-year-old living here, is there any political party that will push for you? Are there any demonstrations you can join? Can you even write on Facebook?' You'll be put in jail. There is so much money to target the youth, putting them as political participants, but then you get a student lobbying to have a sit-in about the food in the cafeteria dismissed from university for four semesters. There is no lively political life. … Daesh and Nusra give them a voice.[84]

[83] Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016).
[84] Ibid.

4. Understanding Radicalisation Patterns

According to security sources, there are few on-the-ground recruiters for Daesh and al-Qaeda inside Jordan. However, face-to-face and network-based recruitment is more voluminous than is estimated, and probably outweighs internet recruitment.[85] Indeed, there are known pro-al Qaeda ideologues living in Jordan, like Abu Qatada and al-Maqdisi, although their activities are closely monitored.

This is not to suggest that online recruitment is not prevalent; there is at least one known case of a female-to-female recruitment via social media.[86] Facebook is the most popular social media platform for youth in Jordan, with around 79.9 percent holding a Facebook account, 58.9 percent being active on Instagram, and 22.3 percent on Twitter.[87] Each of these platforms has active Daesh and al-Qaeda recruiters. These groups use slick and professionally-produced propaganda videos and posts to attract the attention of individuals, who they then carefully monitor. Those who 'retweet,' 'like,' or otherwise endorse their messages are promptly targeted, usually with messages that directly respond to an assessment of their individual vulnerabilities. Youths in one FGD stated that if they posted anything 'despairing' about the economic or political situation in Jordan, or their own lives, Daesh recruiters would respond rapidly and seductively.[88]

> You don't have to look for people; if you are lost, someone will find you.
> If you complain about your life on social media, ISIS contacts you.[89]

Regardless of the method of recruitment, the discussion in this report clarifies important radicalisation patterns (Figure 2). Extremist groups will hone in on both their own group needs and individual vulnerabilities. These include: **response to threat** (that Muslim lands, Muslims, and Islam are under attack), **duty** (all Muslims are part of the *ummah* and are obligated to fight *jihad*), **enticement** (the promise of wealth, sex and status), **belonging** (the Caliphate as a utopian paradise where all Muslims are welcome), **righteousness** (freedom from marginalisation, corruption, and nepotism), and **revenge** (the desire to avenge the wrongs done to Muslims by the West and particular Arab leaders).

But individual vulnerabilities alone are not enough. These vulnerabilities together with the psychological drivers discussed above (fragmented social identity, religious ideology, social injustice, mental health conditions, and/or the search for personal significance and material reward) make a person vulnerable for radical recruitment. For each individual who becomes a radical, the prominent driver may be one of these or a combination. Responding to individual drivers, therefore, is not a complete solution.

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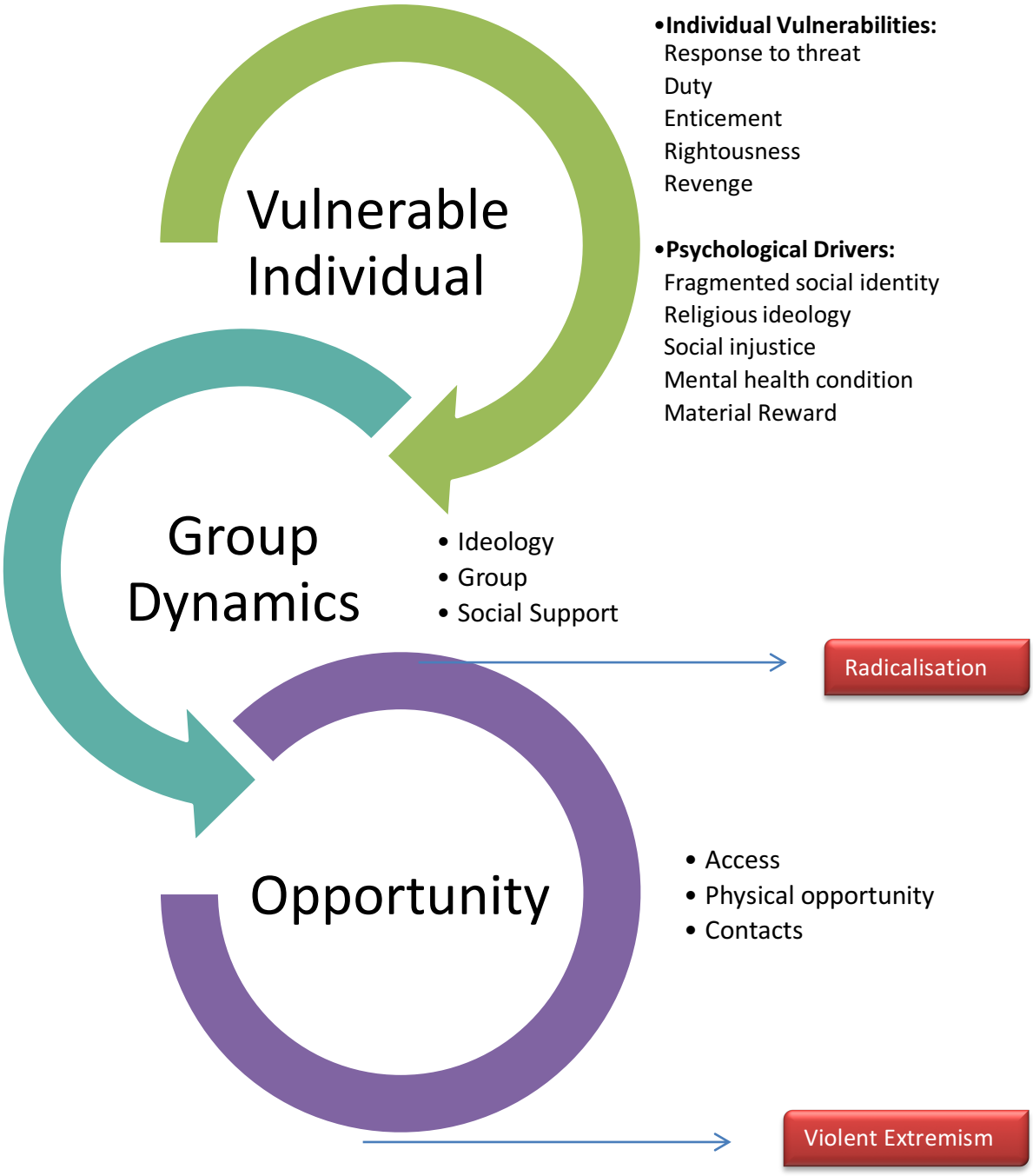
[85] Ibid.
[86] Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016).
[87] "Facebook most popular social media site in Jordan — report," *Jordan Times*, July 18, 2016, accessed February 16, 2017, available at http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/facebook-most-popular-social-media-site-jordan-%E2%80%94-report.
[88] Zarqa Youth Focus Group respondents, conducted by Anne Speckhard and Fares Braizat, Zarqa (November 12, 2016).
[89] Ibid.

Figure 2: Radicalisation Patterns



The vulnerability of an individual does not turn one into a radical. **Group dynamics** (the sense of belonging and self-actualisation), a **group's ideology**, and the **social support** it offers, turn a vulnerable individual into a radical. In her work, Speckhard argues that extremist *action* requires a group, an ideology, and social support.[90]

However, the analysis in this report shows that these factors turn a vulnerable individual into a radical, not into a violent extremist. The transformation from being ideologically radical to being a violent extremist is **opportunity**. This can be physical or financial opportunity, access to smugglers, etc. Without opportunity, a radical will remain ideologically inclined, but without engaging in violence – locally or in conflict zones. Opportunity allows radicals to act upon their convictions. That said, it is important to note that opportunity may present itself to radicals who choose not to join an extremist group. This might be due to a balancing of benefits versus risks of such a decision. Others may do so due to moral and/or familiar responsibilities at home.[91]

In short, individual motivations and vulnerabilities are not sufficient to make a violent extremist, but they must be understood to address why individuals gravitate to groups.[92] These vulnerabilities and motivations are multifaceted, and it is rarely one factor alone that moves a person towards radicalisation. Instead it is patterns of push-factors within specific cultural and political contexts, coupled with a vulnerable person, who is then exposed to an extremist group, its ideology, and social support.

> Those who are radicalised who can be angry at the system, protesting corruption, injustice, unequal development, bad school systems, lack of schools, hospitals, roads, politics, and engage in needs-based protest, or express dissatisfaction with the political system and its delivery. They are one strand of people who radicalise. Then you have religious radicals who like black and white rules. You are either with or against me, depending on their interpretation of religion. Then there are the sociological reasons: poverty, unemployment, etc. There are millions in this category, but most don't become radicals and don't make that transition. There are also the 'insignificants' in family and societies who try to find self-significance to become relevant in their social environment, to stand up to something like Islamic State.[93]

The enabling environment is also critical, but changing it requires serious measures towards good governance. Economic growth, individual opportunity, and the elimination of corruption are long-term development challenges. Likewise, the geo-politics that have incited Arab frustration and inculcated radical ideologies can neither be reversed nor easily ameliorated. As Daesh and al-

[90] Anne Speckhard, "The Lethal Cocktail of Terrorism", *The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism*, (February 25, 2016), available at http://www.icsve.org/brief-reports/the-lethal-cocktail-of-terrorism/

[91] For example, responsibility towards their mothers was an important factor that convinced some al-Nusra fighters to return to Jordan after they have left their mothers without any means of financial support. See Mercy Corps, *From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups* (Oregon, USA: Mercy Corps, 2015), 7-8. http://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/jordan-jihad-lure-syrias-violent-extremist-groups.

[92] Speckhard, "The Lethal Cocktail of Terrorism", 2016.

[93] Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).

Nusra continue to demonstrate, recruitment that takes place online, in secret or through highly discreet networks, is very difficult to monitor or prevent. The geographic proximity of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and easy transit paths through Turkey, also provide opportunity.[94]

4.1 Understanding Radicalisation in Unusual Suspects

Respondents gave anecdotal accounts of radicalisation taking place very quickly and in unusual suspects, such as those who were not particularly religious and/or had never displayed a perchance to violence or political activism.[95] This is a well-recognised phenomenon common to terrorism (and cult) studies globally. This type of radicalisation is a response to the recruiting group honing in on and responding to an individual's needs, often using the near-instantaneous feedback mechanisms embedded social media. Even more invasively, social media allows recruiters to easily find out details regarding an individual's background, crutches, and vulnerabilities by examining their profiles, friends, and the types of material they engage with. They then tailor their messaging to respond to an individual's particular mix of vulnerabilities and/or motivations; this may be belonging, romance, adventure, sexual gratification, or justice. These motivation drivers are applied with rapidly increasing intensity; once inside a group, the process of overtaking individual identity whereby an individual serves the group's goals rather than their own needs, occurs quite quickly and easily.

The scholarly literature on advertising provides additional insight.[96] Daesh uses highly-emotive social media posts, videos, and statements that highlight injustices. When coupled with *nasheeds*, music, Islamic verses, pictures, and video footage, emotive content can crowd out rationality in some people. The drivers that compel an individual to make choices based on emotion are a central concept in advertising. The idea is to leverage emotional content so that people believe that an advertised product can meet a life need that cannot otherwise be met from a rational perspective (youth appearing energetic and sexually attractive when they drink Coke, or a female in a romantic marriage after joining Daesh). The outcome — as it is in effective advertising — is that youth agree to 'buy' the product on sale without consulting others or fact-checking the advertiser's claims. Indeed, one of the characteristics of emotion-driven purchasing is the pace at which it occurs.

[94] Jordan shares a 375 kilometre border with Syria which, until more recently, has allowed for the easy mobilisation and movement of foreign fighters from Jordan into Syria.
[95] Walid Sarhan, psychiatrist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 5, 2016).
[96] For example, psychological parallels between charitable giving and joining extremist groups, see Kiwan Park and Seojin Stacey Lee, "The Role Of Beneficiaries' Group Identity In Determining Successful Appeal Strategies For Charitable Giving", Psychology & Marketing 32, no. 12 (2015), 1117-1132, doi:10.1002/mar.20852. See further, Melanie B. Tannenbaum et al., "Appealing To Fear: A Meta-Analysis Of Fear Appeal Effectiveness And Theories.", Psychological Bulletin 141, no. 6 (2015), 1178-1204, doi:10.1037/a0039729. For literature discussing Daesh media strategies see, Alex Schmid, Challenging The Narrative Of The "Islamic State" (The Hague: International Center for Counter-terrorism, 2015), https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ICCT-Schmid-Challenging-the-Narrative-of-the-Islamic-State-June2015.pdf.

4.2 The Vulnerability of Refugees to Radicalisation

Some literature suggests that individuals within refugee populations may have specific vulnerabilities to radicalisation.[97] Such literature needs to be interpreted cautiously given the negative impact that this relationship may have on the protection space for refugees seeking asylum. It must be highlighted that there is no empirical evidence that links refugees with radicalisation or terrorism. With this caveat, it is clear that refugees face many of the established radicalisation drivers — socio-economic deprivation, hopelessness, frustration, and fragile social identity. In addition, they may face resentment from their host communities and disruptions in tribal, familial, social, political, and economic hierarchies. They are also more likely to have been directly exposed to violence and trauma, which can manifest in post-traumatic stress disorders or a desire for revenge.[98] For refugees who have experienced injustice first-hand, this driver may be more potent than in other populations. A retired security officer interviewed for this research underscored his concern that Syrian refugees were vulnerable to radicalisation, highlighting that unlike Iraqi refugees, this population is principally poor, direct victims of the war, and have found it more difficult to localise within the Jordanian societal context.[99]

[97] See Huma Haider, *Refugee, IDP And Host Community Radicalisation*, (Birmingham: GSDRC Helpdesk, 2014), available at http://www.gsdrc.org/publications/refugee-idp-and-host-community-radicalisation/. See futher, Alex Schmid, *Links Between Terrorism And Migration: An Exploration*, (The Hague: International Center for Counter-terrorism, 2016), available at https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Alex-P.-Schmid-Links-between-Terrorism-and-Migration-1.pdf.

[98] See Bondokji et al., *Trapped Between Destructive Choices,* (2017), 18-9, available at http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/RadicalisationDriversFULLFeb12.pdf.

[99] Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016).

5. Intervention Strategies

Much has been written on possible responses to the drivers of radicalisation, including creating livelihoods opportunities, improving social-economic conditions and eliminating corruption. Less concrete direction is available on how governments and development organisations might respond to the psychological drivers of radicalisation, or incorporate psychological dimensions into broader response strategies.

5.1 Education

The deficits within the Jordanian education curricula are well discussed in the available literature. Within this discourse, the importance of eliminating content that glorifies or idealises violent conflict, gives religious support to violence, or promotes Muslim (Sunni) superiority must be underscored. Subjecting youth to teachings that their religion is superior to another and that 'might makes right' causes them to experience in-group and out-group dynamics. In addition, youth — particularly those with limited opportunities — need to be taught practical skills for living in and contributing to a cohesive and context-informed society. Such skills include critical thinking, constructive debate and analysis, along with values such as tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution. Importantly, such reforms go beyond curriculum to include pedagogical techniques. Authoritarianism in the classroom and doctrinal approaches, which tend to inculcate obedience and rote learning, need to be replaced with teaching environments that promote creative thinking, safe idea experimentation, and mutually respectful dialogue.[100]

5.2 Safe Avenues for Early Intervention

Jordan lacks safe channels by which individuals can seek advice on questions pertaining to religious ideology or report cases where an individual is showing signs of radicalisation. Two surveys organised by NAMA investigated this issue. The first found that only one-third of respondents would take action in a situation where an acquaintance was leaning towards joining an extremist/terrorist organisation, either by offering advice, informing their parents, or reporting the situation to authorities.[101] A second study of 62 families of men who had left, or attempted to leave, for Syria, revealed that in all cases parents were unaware of their son's radicalisation nor of the risk posed by extremism in their community. Critically, however, even had they known, they would not have contacted authorities due to fear and mistrust.[102]

Given the high levels of exposure to radical online content and the speed at which radicalisation can take place, community and family members must be made aware of the ideologies and extremist recruitment techniques that youth may be exposed to, be able to detect the early signs of radicalisation, be empowered to speak against violent extremism, and have incentives to seek assistance. Similar sensitisation and skills training should target imams, teachers, health care

[100] Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016).
[101] Braizat et al., *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan,* forthcoming, (2017).
[102] Unpublished findings from research conducted in Ma'an. Main researcher presented the findings under Chatham House rules during, "Creating a Dialogue on Countering Violent Extremism in the WANA region." Panel Discussion, WANA Institute Conference, Amman, Jordan, November 16 and 17, 2016.

professionals, and community leaders with a view to opening up a safe environment within which diverse forms of assistance are available. Other options might include telephone or SMS help lines staffed by trained personnel,[103] and early intervention networks composed of psychologists, imams, social workers, and radicalisation experts. To be most effective, such teams should be able to mobilise rapidly and 'go to' individuals or their concerned family members, rather than requiring than an individual seek assistance. Key to such a transition is making a demarcation between the response mechanisms available at the community level, and securitised modalities of countering violent extremism. Unless it is clear that discussion of violent extremism and early intervention will be dealt with in a proportionate and assistance-geared manner, the requisite relationship between individuals and authorities will not evolve and may in fact be counter-productive. Frustration and resentment of authority make it easier for recruiters to gain footholds.

5.3 Counter narratives

It is unquestionable that multiple authoritative counter narratives need to be generated and disseminated through popular media, including television, social media, and print media. Strong religious and cultural narratives can be drawn upon, including the value of being patient against oppression and poverty, the denouncing of violence and killing, and tolerance of the other. Such messaging must be carefully developed to appeal to youth audiences (the principal consumer of online media). Defector voices that denounce violent groups can offer cautionary tales. Heroes actually fighting terrorism rather than being anti-heroic terrorists can also serve as role models for young minds.

Caution must be exercised; campaigns or messaging that are perceived as attacking Islam or Islamists can have a reverse impact by polarising population groups. Some were deeply angered by attempts to remove Islam from education curricula, for example. Others see CVE efforts that involve religion as circumventing the real issues of corruption and nepotism:[104] "No one wants to tackle corruption. They say instead, 'Let's reform the religious narrative, talk to the youth, make culture centres, and camps.'"[105]

Imams have also raised doubts insofar as how central a role they should play in CVE efforts. There is an argument that radicalisation is a matter of state security, and should be government-led, with religious actors delivering a complementary, but independent, message so as to maintain their credibility.[106]

5.4 Delegitimising Extremist Groups

NAMA's survey data highlights that extremist groups can quickly lose legitimacy when they overstep cultural boundaries; when hotels were bombed in Amman, Hariri was assassinated, and Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kaseasbeh was burned alive by Daesh, each of the related terrorist

[103] In Kyrgyzstan, a female in prison admitted that she may have used a helpline if one had been on offer; Anonymous, female prisoner, interview by Anne Speckhard, Bishkek (December 4, 2016).
[104] Street interviews by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an (November 11, 2016).
[105] Rula Amin, journalist, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 8, 2016).
[106] Ibid.

groups (al-Qaeda in Iraq, Hezbollah, and Daesh) suffered fast and significant falls in popularity. Indeed, extremist organisations do much to delegitimise themselves both in Jordan and globally and strategists should capitalise upon that through accurate, timely, and targeted dissemination.[107]

Another avenue for delegitimisation is through defector narratives. Indeed, corruption and illicit activity cut both ways when it comes to violent extremism. While many joined extremist groups as a rebuttal to political dissatisfaction in their own countries or instances of social injustice, when recruits see similar practices in the groups joined, they quickly become disillusioned.

> My son and son-in-law came back as they realised it was a game. They fought with Jaysh al- Hur and al-Nusra. … When they saw that people were fighting each other, my son and son-in-law understood that it was not an honourable reason. This was about money and power, so they asked to come back.[108]

Using such narrative accounts can be a powerful tool to discourage individuals from joining an extremist group or to encourage repatriation. Women in one FGD conducted by the WANA Institute explained that if women understood that they are forced to remarry if their husbands are killed, they would be more likely to feel that joining the fight is not a wise course of action.[109] Similarly, the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism has produced short video clips of interviews with defectors. Such clips were focus tested on 48 youth from Zarqa in November 2016 (30 women and 18 men aged 14-26) with positive results.[110] Viewers did not question the video's authenticity and were 'disgusted' and 'repulsed' by the Daesh actions described by defectors. The viewers were also easily drawn into an animated discussion after viewing the videos making it possible to diagnose of some of the issues needing to be addressed in Zarqa youth.

5.5 Exploiting Resilience

> When I go to Europe or when I first begin my speeches, the question I am often asked by the people in the West is, 'Why do people become extremists?' But in the Arab world the question should be, 'Why *don't* they become extremists? In the Arab world, there are political motivations. The economic situation is worse than in the Western world. There is no security. We have the Palestinian issue, sectarianism, oppression, corruption and abuses of power?[111]

[107] Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).
[108] Anonymous, father of two returnees, interview by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an (November 12, 2016).
[109] FGD with Jordanian Females conducted by the WANA Institute, Rusayfeh, (July 14, 2016).
[110] See Anne Speckhard, "The Best Weapon to Defeat ISIS: Use Testimonial from Disillusioned Recruits Who've Defected Against Them", *New York Daily News,* 6 July 2016, available at http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/anne-speckhard-best-weapon-defeat-isis-article-1.2700282 and the videos at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCumpEsozixbl-PyKw12hmnw.
[111] Hasan Abu Hanya, radicalisation expert, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 10, 2016).

Better understanding why individuals exposed to similar driver sets resist recruitment is also an important subject for research. It is clear that exposure to extremist groups and their ideologies alongside social support for their messaging can seduce vulnerable individuals into violent extremism, but what protects some against such exposures is less understood. Most likely, a pre-inoculation with knowledge and critical thinking skills cause the majority to reject such messaging; strong families and group cohesiveness, peers that also resist, and positive aspirations may also play a role.

5.6 Prison Rehabilitation

Alongside radicalisation, among Jordan's greatest concerns are persons returning from the conflict zone weapons trained and ideologically indoctrinated. Experience from the Afghanistan '*jihad*' is that returnees can bring with them schools of violent ideology and ideologues that endorse militancy. Between 100 and 500 individuals are said to have returned from Syria, suggesting that more than 1,000 others may still attempt repatriation if conditions in Syria or Iraq change.[112]

Jordan's policy response on the question of returnees is evolving; there are anecdotal reports of some having returned and been detained, persons prosecuted,[113] and others reintegrated into their communities.[114] There is likewise little known about the current Jordanian prison rehabilitation program. Braizat cited 100 foreign fighters as having retuned and been rehabilitated: "Everyone who came back went through a rehabilitation program. Some have been released … and are not managed by PSD [Preventative Security Department]." In rehabilitation, "they get exposed to religious preachers and scholars … and are seen by professional psychologists and medical staff …"[115]

Many argue that a combination of psychology and Islamic re-indoctrination is a necessary component of any successful rehabilitation program: "a rehabilitation system, if it doesn't go through psychologists and imams, you will waste your time. It has to be religious."[116] There is also a strong argument that youth should be rehabilitated and used to delegitimise the group rather than sit in prison. Some have argued strongly for a system that encourages individuals to return. A father from Ma'an who successfully secured the return of his son and son-in-law from al-Nusra lamented their treatment. "I went to the head of the Army and I brought them back in legally, although they took them to court and they stayed in prison. They should have dealt with

[112] Ibid; Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016).
[113] "250 guys came back from ISIS. They are all in prison. Just one woman is out of prison. Everyone who comes back from Syria goes to prison, except at the beginning. The ones who were with the Syrian revolution, they are not in prison. The ones with ISIS are all in prison." Hasan Abu Hanya, radicalisation expert, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 10, 2016).
[114] Anonymous, retired intelligence officer (GID), interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 10, 2016).
[115] Fares Braizat, director at NAMA – Strategic Intelligence Solutions, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 2, 2016).
116 Anonymous, retired military intelligence Counter-Terrorism and Special Ops colonel, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 1, 2016).

them through dialogue because neither was an ideologue."[117] (It should be noted in this case that the individuals in question were released after serving a short prison sentence).

Others believe that punishing returnees works against their rehabilitation:

> This young man turns back trying to get redemption, but we are making him into a criminal with a grudge. … There are people who were fooled, misled…they saw something they didn't like. [T]ake this guy to give speeches at the mosque to say, 'I went, and I saw this,' to tell his story. But they want to put him in prison and torture him. He will stay in limbo and the first organisation that comes he will go to it …[118]

The risks of releasing returnees into society following unsuccessful rehabilitation are severe. Experts spoke of rehabilitation programs in Saudi Arabia where extremists quickly returned to violence; several named al-Zarqawi as a poster child of failed rehabilitation. Indeed, for those exposed to conflict and brutality and heavily indoctrinated into *takfiri* ideology, it is difficult to know if rehabilitation has occurred, especially where the challenges that motivated their departure are still there. Indeed, there is evidence that staged defection is a tool used by Daesh. Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighter, Huthaifa Azzam, recounted supposed Daesh defectors joining and then attacking the FSA. "Now, even if he is 100% honest, we won't release him for a year, we need to be sure." Azzam explained that the FSA has a monitoring program whereby Daesh defectors are not jailed but 'treated' by scholars through *da'wah* training [Islamic teaching]. Although he admitted that, "ISIS people are very dangerous and very difficult. Even after many years they can revert."[119]

There is no sufficient knowledge about the modalities of rehabilitating such groups. And while it is clear that fake defection and group re-attachment can occur, it must also be recognised that if minds can be changed to accept violent extremism they can also be changed to relinquish a commitment to it. In any case, sensitive religious and psychological intervention is necessary, followed by reintegration support to respond to social stigma, and the provision of livelihood opportunities.

[117] Anonymous, father of two returnees, interview by Anne Speckhard, Ma'an (November 11, 2016).
[118] Huthaifa Azzam, Free Syrian Army fighter, interview by Anne Speckhard, Amman (November 3, 2016).
[119] Ibid.

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