UNDERSTANDING RADICALISATION:
A Literature Review of Models and Drivers

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Interest in the drivers of, and models to explain, the processes of radicalisation has increased exponentially since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Attention has focused on the West Asia North Africa (WANA) region due to the expansion and reach of armed radical groups, manifesting in acts of violence both domestically and aboard. Within the radicalisation debate, scholars and practitioners have wrestled to understand the ideologies that inspire the members of self-described 'Islamic' armed groups and other causal drivers, be they social, economic, or reactionary. While this has contributed to a diversity of literature on violent radicalism, terrorism, and extremism, there is little academic consensus let alone empirical studies to validate existing theories.

This paper seeks to synthesise current knowledge on the drivers of radicalisation. It examines literature on radicalisation in the WANA region, Western states, Central Asia, and Africa. Because the aim is to understand these phenomena in relation to those joining Daesh (also known as ISIS, IS, ISIL), al-Nusra (generally considered al-Qaeda's Syrian branch), and their affiliates, the analysis focuses on radicalisation at the level of the individual, not radical organisations.

The paper is divided into six sections. The first defines radicalisation. The second and third sections discuss the typologies of radicals and extant radicalisation models with particular emphasis on the factors that affect individuals. The fourth section examines the literature on political, socio-economic, social, and cultural drivers of radicalisation. It then identifies knowledge gaps and weaknesses in the existing literature, and makes suggestions on the development of a more reliable empirical evidence base on violent radicalisation.

The principal findings are that radicalisation is a personal process that starts with grievances and perceived injustices concerning political or social contexts, the subsequent identity crisis and, lastly, the search for purpose that follows. Moreover, radicalisation should be understood in the context of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Such factors include those of a political, economic, and ideological nature, as well as psycho-social drivers, such as a search for adventure, status, and belonging.[1] Radicalisation also develops within supporting social environments that include family influence and narratives of victimhood.

These insights are important for the development of targeted and workable policy interventions to counter the growth of violent extremism. However greater empirical evidence is necessary, particularly geared towards capturing the family dynamics at work in the radicalisation process, the role of women and female preachers, the causal relations between single factors, and driver confluence. The key challenge is limited access to radical individuals and those who have participated in violence. Until this can be overcome, a comprehensive understanding of their motives will be difficult, thus limiting the development of effective policies and programs to counter violent extremism.

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[1] Push factors refer to negative social, political, economic, or cultural root causes that influence individuals to join armed radical groups. Pull factors are defined as "the positive characteristics and benefits of an extremist organisation that 'pull' vulnerable individuals to join. These include the group's ideology (e.g., emphasis on changing one's condition through violence rather than 'apathetic' and 'passive' democratic means), strong bonds of brotherhood and sense of belonging, reputation building, prospect of fame or glory, and other socialization benefits." Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation*, 26.

1. Defining Radicalisation

A key challenge in building a comprehensive understanding of radicalisation drivers and pathways is that there is a lack of consensus on definitions.[2] Most studies use radicalisation as an umbrella term, under which notions such as extremism, radicalism, and terrorism are, at best, not distinguished and, at worst, conflated. The European Union, for example, defines violent radicalism as, "the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism."[3] This definition fails to acknowledge the process of transformation usually at work before a person becomes radicalised. It also defines radicalisation through an equally contested term: terrorism.

Western scholars and agencies define radicalisation from political science,[4] social psychology,[5] or terrorism perspectives.[6] For example, Borum simply defines it as the "process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs."[7] Crossett and Spitaletta offer a broader definition of radicalisation as, "the process by which an individual, group, or mass of people undergo a transformation from participating in the political process via legal means to the use or support of violence for political purposes." Whereas the Dutch Intelligence and Security Service defines it as, "the (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect)."[8]

Arab scholars, however, generally define radicalisation as a group process. For Ba'albaki, radicalisation is the use of violence to impose social and political change by advocating self-proclaimed in-group supremacy and a desire to 'purify' society.[9] Arab scholarship also emphasises the armed radical groups currently impacting the region. They isolate Salafi Jihadism as a motivating violent radical ideology, rather than examining radicalism per se. (Salafi Jihadism is the

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[2] Alex P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation* (The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2013), 17, http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf

[3] Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Concerning Terrorist Recruitment: Addressing the Factors Contributing to Violent Radicalisation* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2005), 2, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0313:FIN:EN:PDF

[4] Tinka Veldhuis and Jørgen Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2009), 4, http://diis.dk/files/media/publications/import/islamist_radicalisation.veldhuis_and_staun.pdf; Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert, "Why Conventional Wisdom on Radicalization Fails: the Persistence of a Failed Discourse," *International Affairs* 86 (2010): 889-901.

[5] Tim Stevens and Peter Neumann, *Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2009), 10, https://cst.org.uk/docs/countering_online_radicalisation1.pdf; Chuck Crossett and Jason A Spitaletta, *Radicalization: Relevant Psychological and Sociological Concepts* (Ft. Meade, MD: U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group, 2010), https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-RadicalizationConcepts.pdf; Ruud Koopmans, "Religious Fundamentalism and Hostility against Out-Groups: A Comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41 (2014): 33-57.

[6] Rem Kortweg, et al. "Background Contributing Factors to Terrorism: Radicalization and Recruitment," In *Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe*, edited by Magnus Ranstorp (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 21-49.

[7] Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 (2011): 9.

[8] Dutch Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), *From Dawa to Jihad: The Various Threats from Radical Islam to the Democratic Legal Order*. (The Hague: AIVD, 2004).

[9] Ahmad Ba'albaki, *Obstacles and Concerns in Developing Arab Resources (in Arabic).* (Beirut: al-Manhal Publishers, 2007), 140.

ideology that combines calls for Islamic monotheism and violence to achieve unity and fight 'tyrannical' leaders).[10]

A further challenge of definitions relates to the distinction between radical ideology and violent radical behaviour. As Neumann notes, the "principal conceptual fault-line is between notions of radicalisation that emphasise extremist beliefs ('cognitive radicalisation') and those that focus on extremist behaviour ('behavioural radicalisation')."[11] Sha'ban also distinguishes between extremism and terrorism: the former being related to the realm of thought, while the latter concerning the realm of action.[12] This distinction between radical ideology and the violent behaviour it inspires has influenced the divergent perspectives evident in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) literature. While some studies limit their discussion of radicalisation to individuals who were directly involved in violence, others confuse the dividing line between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation. The literature is also unclear on whether cognitive radicalisation is a pre-requisite to behavioural radicalisation; and if not, whether CVE efforts should focus solely on countering behavioural radicalisation.

This conceptual confusion complicates the task of defining radicalisation. Allen defines it as, the "process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect social change."[13] More specifically, radicalisation refers to:

> "a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence. It is both a mental and emotional process that prepares and motivates an individual to pursue violent behaviour."[14]

Taking these definitional positions into account, this paper understands radicalisation as the process of personal transformation that an individual goes through in response to contextual grievances. This transformation is marked by a personal crisis in search for role and meaning that eventually leads an individual to support the use of violence against state actors and civilians to bring about an ideologically-defined social and political order. A radicalised individual may have not directly engaged in violence, but supports its use for this purpose.

Therefore, this paper embraces the important distinction between ideology and behaviour by focusing on the transition from radical ideology to violent behaviour. It examines the contextual circumstances and push and pull factors that influence individuals to embrace radical ideology, and why they later make the decision to join armed radical groups.

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[10] Abu Mohamad al-Maqdesi as qtd. in Mohammad Abu Rumman, *I am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis* (in Arabic). (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014), 35.

[11] Peter Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization," *International Affairs* 89 (2013): 893.

[12] Abdul Hussein Sha'ban, "Is it Impossible to Combat Radicalism?" *Al-Jazeera*, February 26, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.net/home/print/6c87b8ad-70ec-47d5-b7c4-3aa56fb899e2/1e700b36-5567-483d-80a6-72b058245548

[13] Charles E. Allen as qtd. in Angel Rabasa, et al., *De-radicalizing Islamist Extremists* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2010), 1, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG1053.pdf

[14] Alex S. Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz, "Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 22 (2010): 38.

2. Typologies of Radicals

Two factors prevent the articulation of an overarching fighter typology. First, the nature of radicalisation — including its covert nature, the (un)reliability of research subjects, and high mortality rates of members – means that most empirical and qualitative analyses are based on a limited sample pool. Second, the research that does exist suggests a strong diversity in fighters' profiles and the drivers that influence their decision to join armed radical groups.[15] While acknowledging these constraints, the following examines characteristics that are relevant to better understanding radicalised individuals in Jordan.

As noted above, the difficulty of accessing research subjects means that few studies examine the profiles of radicalised individuals. Of those that do, most focus on returnees, with the exception of Abu Rumman who offers typologies of radicalised Salafi Jihadis in Jordan who have not engaged in violence.[16] While limited, these typologies are important as they provide practitioners and policy makers with insights into entry points for de-radicalisation measures i.e. a reverse transition individuals from radical violence to radical ideology and then to de-radicalisation.

al-Ruhaily offers a typology of Salafi Jihadi returnees based on his experience in the Saudi *Munasaha* (Advisory) Rehabilitation Programme. He identifies three categories of returnees. First, Salafi Jihadis who are passionate about their perceived roles and convictions, but are ignorant with respect to Sharia and religious ideology. Such individuals are not necessarily radicalised, but are misinformed and misguided. Second, there are individuals who excessively denounce political leaders as non-believers to be fought (*kafir*). Their convictions are not deeply enshrined and they are influenced by other leaders or radicalised individuals. Third, there are individuals who hold deep convictions about rigid, radical ideas. This group assumes they have attained full knowledge and are a religious authority. al-Ruhaily considers that rehabilitation (as practiced in the *Munasaha* program) is more successful with the first and second groups. The third group is more reticent to participate in dialogues and debates, and often denounces the Sharia and psychology experts involved in the programme.[17]

The principal weakness in al-Ruhaily's classification is that it ignores how an individual's experience in a conflict zone impacts their ideological stance. The typology offered by Neumann responds to this. He attributes the differences between returnees to the impact of their participation in violence. He categorises Western returnees as 'dangerous', 'disturbed', and 'disillusioned'.[18] The dangerous pose the greatest threat; they are returnees who have been further radicalised and no longer distinguish the West from their foe in Syria or Iraq. The disturbed are those suffering from mental health problems mainly as a result of violence they participated in,

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[15] Such diversity has been identified in al-Shabab and Boko Haram fighters, as well as in a study on radicalism in Jordan. For example, see Muhsin Hassan, "Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth," *CTC Sentinel* 5 (2012). https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/understanding-drivers-of-violent-extremism-the-case-of-al-shabab-and-somali-youth; Mercy Corps, *Motivation and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth* (Portland, Oregon: Mercy Corps, 2016), https://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/Motivations%20and%20Empty%20Promises_Mercy%20Corps_Full%20Report_0.pdf ; Mercy Corps, *From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups* (Oregon, USA: Mercy Corps, 2015), http://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/jordan-jihad-lure-syrias-violent-extremist-groups

[16] Abu Rumman, *I am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis*, 147-149.

[17] Suleiman al-Rheily, "Munasaha Origins, Evaluation, and Improvements: Practical Approach and Scientific Foundations (in Arabic)" (presentation presented at the Second International Conference on Countering Terrorism, Madinah Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, April 22-23, 2014), 243-246.

[18] Peter Neumann, "Western European Foreign Fighters in Syria: An Overview." In *Countering Violent Extremism: Developing an Evidence Base for Policy and Practice,* edited by Sara Zeiger and Anne Aly, (Australia: Curtin University, 2015), 13-19, http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/cve-edited-volume.pdf

while the disillusioned no longer want to be part of a radical group. Neumann speculates that the latter may benefit most from de-radicalisation and disengagement programmes, while the disturbed require psychological assistance. For the dangerous, "prosecution leading to prison may be the only viable option."[19] Importantly, although Neumann does not make this explicit, these categories may not be mutually exclusive; a returnee might be both disturbed and disillusioned.

The typology offered by Amarasingam categorises returnees into operational, disengaged and disillusioned. There are some overlaps with Neumann's theory; for example his 'operational' returnees functionally equate to Neumann's 'dangerous'. His concept of the 'disengaged, however is unique; such returnees still support global Jihadism but return for reasons not related to the movement (e.g. a sick family member or to get married).[20]

It is important to distinguish the above typologies (which characterise radicals who have engaged in violence) from studies that examine the *ideologically* radical. Abu Rumman's work on the personality traits of Salafi Jihadis in Jordan suggests that religious ideology plays a major role in shaping the behaviour of Salafi Jihadis. He follows that this becomes evident in their social and political ideas, and observable behaviours. Unlike other Salafis, a Salafi Jihadi exhibits four traits. First, they tend to isolate themselves from broader society, driven by a sense of religious superiority, whereby adherence to 'correct' religious behaviour grants them a higher status. Such isolation should not be mistaken for introversion in psychological terms. Most often, Salafi Jihadis are active in their *da'wa* (preaching) role, and they perceive themselves as transformers and influencers in society. Third, they actively protect themselves against being influenced by the 'corrupt and unreligious' society around them. This may explain their activism online; the Internet acts as a vehicle through which they seek a connection with like-minded individuals, create in-group bonds, and expand their influence. Finally, this self-protectionism leads to rigid ideologically positions against regimes and political actors. Salafi Jihadis proclaim to be "*al-firqa al-najiyah*" (the righteous religious group). All other groups and actors are perceived as not truly Islamic.[21]

This explanation shares close ties with Social Identity Theory. This body of learning (briefly discussed in the section on social drivers) is important for understanding radicalism as it highlights how notions like status and belonging to a superior in-group influence the mind-set of a radical. These insights may inform the development of policy and programmatic actions designed to formulate new group identities (including civic, ideological, and activism-based identities) to combat the self-acclaimed superior identity forged by radicals.

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[19] Ibid, 17.

[20] Amarnath Amarasingam, "Three Kinds of People Return Home After Joining the Islamic State – And They Must All Be Treated Differently," *Vice News,* December 3, 2015, https://news.vice.com/article/three-kinds-of-people-return-home-after-joining-the-islamic-state-and-they-must-all-be-treated-differently

[21] Abu Rumman, *I am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis*, 145-150.

3. Radicalisation Models

The literature on radicalisation is inter-disciplinary by nature, combining scholarship in psychology,[22] social psychology,[23] and criminology.[24] This has led to a number of competing models that attempt to explain radicalisation, as well as variables within the models.[25] Two themes run through most models: initial individual frustration about socio-political contexts, and the search for a role and achievement.

Wiktorowicz, based on his examination of al-Muhajiroun, a UK-based transnational Islamic movement, has developed a seven-stage model (see figure 1). Within this, he emphasises the notion of 'cognitive opening' — when an individual who is facing a crisis becomes prone to altering her/his previously held perceptions.[26] Political, economic, or social grievances usually lead to a cognitive opening.[27] But extremist recruiters do not rely on individuals' identity crises to spread their ideology. They also actively trigger cognitive openings. This happens through different communication strategies that include one-on-one interactions with vulnerable individuals, as well as demonstrations, pictures, and pamphlets that create a 'moral shock'.[28]

Where religion plays a strong role in an individual's life, she/he is likely to react to the cognitive opening through 'religious seeking' (the search for meaning and purpose through religion).[29] Afterwards, through a process called 'frame alignment' the individual examines whether narratives offered by an extremist group align with her/his views and attracts one's interest.[30] It must be noted that individual experiences and backgrounds influence their assessment on whether the frame makes sense or not. If frame alignment is not achieved, individuals might seek more information or alternatively abandon the process. However, if frame alignment is achieved, the individual undergoes a process of socialisation, whereby she/he becomes a committed member of the armed radical group and adopts its ideology.[31]

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[22] Kumar Ramakrishna, "Understanding Youth Radicalisation in the Age of ISIS: A Psychosocial Analysis" *The International Relations & Security Network*, February 12, 2016, http://isnblog.ethz.ch/security/understanding-youth-radicalization-in-the-age-of-isis-a-psychosocial-analysis?platform=hootsuite; Max Taylor and John Horgan, "A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18 (2006): 585-601; Jeff Victoroff, "The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (2005): 28.

[23] Jerrold Post et al., "The Psychology of Suicide Terrorism," *Psychiatry* 17 (2009): 13-31; Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers. Allah's New Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Italics Added.

[24] For example, see Andrew Silke, ed., *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014); Michael J. Lynch, Raymond J. Michalowki and W. Byron Groves, *New Primer in Radical Criminology: Critical Perspectives on Crime, Power and Identity*. 3rd Ed. (New York: Criminal Justice Press/Willow Tree Press 2000); Mary Beth Altier et al., "Turning Away from Terrorism: Lessons from Psychology, Sociology, and Criminology," *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (2014): 647-661.

[25] Borum argues that social psychology, Social Movement Theory and Conversion Theory offer theoretical frameworks that can significantly improve radicalisation research. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," 16-25. Crossett and Spitaletta's review of 16 theories from psychology and sociology also offer a set of radicalisation mechanisms pertaining to individuals, groups, and mass radicalisation. Crossett and Spitaletta, *Radicalization: Relevant Psychological and Sociological Concepts.*

[26] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam" (paper presented at The Roots of Islamic Radicalism Conference, Yale University, May 8-9, 2004), 7, http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wiktorowicz.Joining-the-Cause.pdf

[27] Ibid, 7-8.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid, 8.

[30] Ibid, 9 -10.

[31] Ibid, 10.

While this model is based on one group of radicals only, its value lies in its explanation of individuals as active agents in the radicalisation process i.e. individuals seeking alternatives in response to unsatisfactory conditions and the individual psychological variables that influence radicalisation. This parallels Abu Rumman's argument that Salafi Jihadis are not resigned introverts but perceive themselves as agents of social transformation.[32] At the same time it recognises the role and agency of armed radical groups, including through the media frames used to inspire and recruit supporters.

Figure 1: Wiktorowicz's Model for Joining Extremist Groups[33]
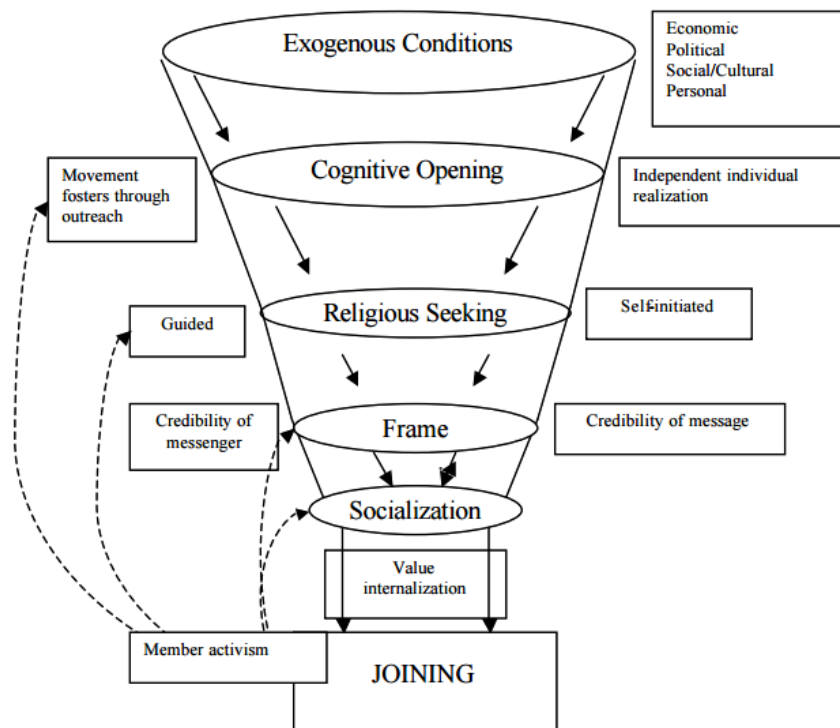
Individual agency is also highlighted in the theory developed by psychologist Borum in 2003. This model, originally developed as a law enforcement training tool, details the process of ideological development in four stages (see figure 2).[34] Radicalisation starts with an individual recognising an unfavourable condition such as poverty, unemployment or governmental restrictions on individual liberties as 'not right'.[35] This condition is then framed as 'not fair' and attributed to a target entity ('it's your fault'). Finally, the enemy is demonised, which often validates violence.[36]

This model highlights the important role of factors in the immediate social, economic, and political context that lead individuals to develop an awareness of their disadvantaged position in society either through comparison or by changing one's perceptions and worldview. Borum's theory falls short in exploring the ideological outlooks through which dehumanising arguments are

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[32] Abu Rumman, *I am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis*, 145-150.

[33] This figure is taken from Alejandro Beutel, *Radicalisation and Homegrown Terrorism in Western Muslim Communities: Lessons Learned for America* (Maryland, U.S.A: Minaret of Freedom Institute, 2007), 11, http://www.minaret.org/MPAC%20Backgrounder.pdf

[34] Randy Borum, "Understanding the Terrorist Mind-Set," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 72 (2003): 7. https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/201462.pdf

[35] Ibid, 8.

[36] Ibid.

formulated. Dehumanisation is a key psycho-social factor in explaining violence.[37] It contributes to a process known as "moral disengagement" by which an individual or group develops a moral justification to use violence.[38] This emphasises the significance of exploring the ideologies and discourses that affect the transition from frustration to reaction in Borum's model.

Figure 2: Borum's Four-Stage Model for the Process of Ideological Development[39]

The New York Police Department's Intelligence Division developed a linear four-stage model (see figure 3) to explain an individual embracing a radical ideology and acting upon it violently. The process begins in the pre-radicalisation stage, whereby an individual is exposed to Jihadi-Salafi ideology. This is followed by a 'self-identification' stage during which an individual closely examines Salafi Islam and its ideological principles. During the indoctrination phase, the individual's beliefs intensify and she/he surrounds herself/himself only with like-minded individuals. In the last 'Jihadisation' phase, the individual fully accepts Salafi Islam as a radical ideology and acts upon it.[40]

Figure 3: NYPD Model of Jihadi-Salafi Radicalisation

The stages in this model parallel the others discussed, but is presented in a more simplified form that does not take external factors into account. In doing so, it over-emphasises the role of the individual without acknowledging the contextual factors and personal crises that may facilitate progression between the stages. The model also confuses Salafi Islam with Salafi Jihadism, an important distinction given that the violent radical ideology of Salafi Jihadism is only one of six

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[37] On Dehumanization, see James Waller, "Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Murder." In *The Psychology of Resolving Global Conflicts: From War to Peace Vol. 1: Nature vs. Nurture*, edited by Mari Fitzduff and Chris E. Stout, (London: Praeger, 2006), 89-107.
On Moral Disengagement, see Albert Bandura, "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (1999): 193-209.
[39] This figure is taken from Borum, "Understanding the Terrorist Mind-Set," 9.
[40] Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: Police Department, City of New York, NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007), http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/files/NYPD_Report-Radicalization_in_the_West.pdf

branches of Salafi Islam.[41] It thus confuses the violent radical ideology with another mass of ideologies that have different non-violent visions of the role of religion in society.

Precht's model comprises four stages: pre-radicalisation, a shift to identify one's self with radical Islam, in-group bonding, and engaging in direct violence.[42] Compared to other models, Precht's work combines individual psychological factors and group dynamics from social-psychology, thus, offering two levels of analysis in one model.

McCauley and Moskalenko also distinguish between individual radicalisation mechanisms, group mechanisms and mass mechanisms. They argue that direct individual grievances and indirect political frustration lead to radicalism, particularly when an individual identifies with a persecuted in-group. They also refer to the 'slippery slope' factor, i.e. an increase in radical intensity after one joins a radical group. Like other researchers, McCauley and Moskalenko also stress the influence of family and friends in radicalisation, principally that they minimise the risk of an individual becoming a radical. A desire for improved status, thrill and 'unfreezing' (a quest for belonging and integration after a loss of family, career etc.) also contribute to radicalisation.[43] McCauley and Moskalenko do not offer a linear model or definitive process, nor do they distinguish between radicalism and terrorism. Instead, their findings are said to apply to diverse forms of political radicalism and terrorism.

Other scholars, such as Taylor and Horgan[44] and Moghaddam,[45] have developed terrorism-specific models. Moghaddam's 'Staircase to Terrorism' model (which shares several similarities with radicalisation models) shows individuals proceeding through six stages in their ascent to the narrow category of terrorist. Like radicalisation models, feelings of alienation and perceived injustice are preceding factors. Some alienated individuals will search for the means to improve their condition. When they do not succeed in finding an alternative, feelings of anger and frustration accumulate. These feelings are manipulated by radical/terrorist figures who convince an individual to attribute her/his frustration to a specific enemy. Once convinced, these individuals have the potential to engage in physical violence against the enemy, and gradually adopt the terrorist mind-set. Once they regard the terrorist organisation as completely legitimate, individuals are officially recruited. Finally, designated individuals are trained and their capacity is built in order to perform terrorist acts.[46]

Finally, it is important to reference models drawn from Conversion Theory. Conversion theorists see radicalism is an ideology that individuals *convert* to either from other religious or secular ideologies, or even from other branches of radicalism.

Farrall argues that Conversion Theory offers valuable insight into radicalisation research, because conversion is a transformational process that builds on the perception of the self and the

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[41] On branches of Salafism, see Abu Rumman, *I am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis,* 33-50.

[42] Randy Borum, "Radicalisation into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 (2011): 41- 42, http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1140&context=jss

[43] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalization," In *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalization and Disengagement*, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher et al., (2010), https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/U_Counter_Terrorism_White_Paper_Final_January_2010.pdf; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20 (2008): 415-433.

[44] Taylor and Horgan, "A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist."

[45] Fathali Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *American Psychologist* 60 (2005): 161–169.

[46] Ibid.

surrounding community.[47] This emphasis on radicalisation as a process, which myriad factors contribute to, resonates with the general understanding of the radicalisation process in the literature.

Rambo's conversion model offers seven non-linear components that influence an individual's conversion: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences. Context refers to larger surrounding factors that can prevent or facilitate conversion. Crisis is understood as the state of dissatisfaction produced by cognitive awareness of personal limitations within a given context. The quest refers to the active search for ideological alternatives. Encounter signals the first contact between an individual in quest and an ideology. The interaction component refers to wider involvement in seeking knowledge about the newly encountered ideology. Commitment depends on trust invested in the new ideology and belonging to the new in-group. Consequences refer to actions and decisions made to advance the new ideology.[48] While Rambo's model analyses conversion to a new faith rather than to a religious-political ideology, it explains the interactive elements that influence a change in convictions, the shift from an undesirable context to new convictions, and then to new behaviour inspired by such convictions. In this way, the model can explain the shift from contextual grievances to radical ideology and then to violent behaviour.

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[47] Leah Farrall, "Navigating Lived Experience: Reflections from the Field," *Journal for Deradicalization* Fall, no. 4 (2015): 120-144.

[48] Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

4. Radicalisation Drivers

The literature on radicalisation often refers to 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors are negative social, political, economic, and cultural root causes that influence individuals to join armed radical groups. Pull factors are defined as "the positive characteristics and benefits of an extremist organisation that 'pull' vulnerable individuals to join. These include the group's ideology (e.g. emphasis on changing one's condition through violence rather than 'apathetic' and 'passive' democratic means), strong bonds of brotherhood and sense of belonging, reputation building, prospect of fame or glory, and other socialization benefits."[49]

The following section discusses the literature on political, socio-economic, social, and cultural push and pull factors. It illustrates that scholars from different regions examine radicalisation drivers from varying perspectives. Specifically, Western scholars stress the psycho-social factors motivating European Jihadis whereas Middle Eastern scholars focus on political context while ignoring other factors. Such narrowness has resulted in a dearth of empirical evidence that might isolate lead drivers or explain driver interaction and confluence.

4.1 Political Drivers

While there is a general consensus on the significance of political grievances in radicalism, the causal relation between individual political factors and radicalisation is rarely discussed in the literature from the region. One exception is a perception study of Jordanian students conducted in 2011 and 2015 which positively linked radicalisation to political factors such as lack of freedom of expression and repression (although these factors were deemed less significant than social and religious factors).[50] Another is a study by Hegghammer which found that ideological and political drivers were more significant than socio-economic factors in the al-Qaeda recruits he studied.[51] Instead, the scholarship concentrates on three predicaments to elucidate the impact of regional developments on radicalisation.

First, the political upheavals in Iraq and Syria provided a favourable political environment for the rise of armed radical groups. In Iraq, the US invasion and strategic mistakes (such as dissolving the Iraqi army) created a ripe environment for the rise of Daesh; in fact Daesh's original goal was opposing the occupation and dismissed Iraqi generals carried their strategic and military expertise to Daesh.[52] The sectarian politics that followed, particularly those implemented by al-Maliki's government, facilitated the rise of Sunni armed groups in Iraq that sought to protect Sunni areas and counter the rise of Shia militias in Iraq.[53] At the same time, the political vacuum in north-eastern Syria after 2012 offered al-Qaeda in Iraq a safe haven to grow its power and expand its reach. Daesh exploited the isolation and distance of Sunni tribes from central governments in both Iraq and Syria to form alliances.[54]

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[49] Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation*, 26.

[50] Alaa' al-Rawashdeh, "Ideological Extremism from the Perspective of Jordanian Youth (in Arabic)," *Arab Journal for Security Studies and Training* 31 (2015); Ali al-Harby, "Perceptions of Saudi Youth Towards Ideological Extremism: A Sociological Study on a Sample of Students at Al-Qaseem University (in Arabic)" (Master's thesis, University of Jordan, 2011).

[51] Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalisation in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy* Winter 13, no. 4 (2006): 39-60.

[52] Kheir al-Deen Haseeb, "Daesh: The American Responsibility (in Arabic)," *Mustaqbal al-Arabi*, no. 443 (2016): 7-17.

[53] Abdulrazzaq Jedi, "An Evaluation of the Syrian Spillover in Iraq" (presentation presented at the seminar From Beirut to Baghdad: The Regional Impact of the Syrian Conflict, Doha, Qatar, April 14, 2014), http://www.brookings.edu/events/2014/04/14-regional-impact-syrian-conflict

[54] Lina al-Khatib, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding (in Arabic)." (Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, June 29, 2015), 7. http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/06/29/ar-60542/ibk6

Second, the crisis in Arab political thought and the diffusion of sectarianism created favourable conditions for the growth of Sunni armed radical groups. The rise of Iran as a powerful and influential regional actor can be seen as showcasing the weakness of Sunni political entities and the political and ideological vacuum of Arab Sunni thought. As a result, al-Sabbagh argues — albeit with some exaggeration – that Arab Sunni youth feel alienated and struggle between two choices i.e. to join armed radical groups or join government CVE efforts. The scope for the latter is limited since few youth in the region wholly trust their governments.[55] Along with this alienation, the rise of sectarian hostilities has encouraged armed radical groups to present themselves as the only force capable of countering Shia influence and protecting Sunnis in the region.[56] Daesh and other groups manipulate these sectarian sentiments to present an imposing radicalisation narrative in its media fora.

Third, Daesh has offered a political project for immediate implementation. Compared to the more pragmatic Islamic parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and to its extremist mother-organisation al-Qaeda, Daesh audaciously established a Caliphate in north-eastern Syria.[57] This urgency to achieve tangible outcomes appeals to youth who are in search for political expression and power after the failure of Arab Spring revolts. Against this ambition, the Muslim Brotherhood's gradualist approach, which emphasises Islamising society followed by political participation, no longer appeals to disillusioned youth.[58]

The contribution of Western scholars to this discussion has tended to look at the specific political/security factors that have shaped recruitment pathways and contributed to the manufacturing of radical leaders thus focusing less on regional political context. A particular area of inquiry has been the role of military occupations as a push factor.[59] McCants argues that the military occupation of Iraq by American forces incubated the radicalisation of al-Baghdadi, the so-called "Caliph" of Daesh.[60] Wilson's research suggests that many who later became Daesh fighters were denied their adolescence because of the occupation.[61] In this context, it is important to highlight that the factors that lead young men from Iraq to join radical militant groups such as Daesh may in fact be quite different from the factors leading a Jordanian or a Tunisian to join. Daesh is part of a 'motley crew' of groups fighting in a country characterised by increasing fragmentation and massive internal displacement.[62]

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[55] Osama al-Sabbagh, "Arab Sunnis between Extremism and Alliance (in Arabic)." *Rai al-Youm*, July 3, 2015, http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=281660

[56] Murat Özçelik, "The Two Radical Sources of Instability in the Middle East," *Council on Foreign Relations' Global Memos*, August 15, 2014. http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global_memos/p33347

[57] al-Khatib, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding," 2; Mohammad Abu Rumman, "The Rising Role of Armed Extremist Groups in Syria and Iraq (in Arabic)" (presentation presented at the Middle East Studies Centre, Amman, Jordan, February 2, 2014).

[58] It is also worth bearing in mind that in some countries, membership of the Muslim Brotherhood is no longer viable. Egypt, Suadi Arabia, and the UAE declared the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist organisation in December 2013, and March and November 2014 respectively.

[59] For example, see Robert A. Pape, "It's the Occupation Stupid," *Foreign Policy,* October 18, 2010, http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/10/18/its-the-occupation-stupid/; Will McCants "The Believer; How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer became Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Leader of the Islamic State," *Brookings,* September 1, 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2015/thebeliever; Martin Chulov, "ISIS: the Inside Story," *The Guardian,* December 11, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story

[60] McCants, "The Believer; How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer Became Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Leader of the Islamic State."

[61] Lydia Wilson "What I Discovered From Interviewing Imprisoned ISIS Fighters", *The Nation,* October 21, 2015, http://www.thenation.com/article/what-i-discovered-from-interviewing-isis-prisoners/

[62] Joshua Rovner and Caitlin Talmadge, "Why Victory in Mosul Won't Solve Americas Iraq Conundrum," *Lawfare,* April 10, 2016, https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-victory-mosul-wont-solve-americas-iraq-conundrum

Other authors discuss how radicalisation takes place in prisons. It has been argued, for example, that Iraq's Camp Bucca and other prisons have strongly contributed to the radicalisation of inmates.[63]

> "If there was no American prison in Iraq, there would be no [Daesh] now… Bucca was a factory. It made us all. It built our ideology."[64]

These facilities offered a space where charismatic radicals preached their ideology to former Ba'ath leaders with military expertise, and to young men zealous about fighting the US. The resulting alliances between Ba'ath leaders and radicals offered Daesh unique power compared to other groups in Iraq.[65] Likewise in neighbouring countries, prisons operated as a fertile recruiting ground where inmates were exposed to radical ideology by those serving terms after their return from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon.[66]

A final contribution comes from Central Asian and the Northern Caucaus scholars, in studies that have linked the appeal of Jihadism to an aspiration for political and social change.[67] This broadly includes frustration over limited rights, corruption, poor governance, and human rights violations.[68] Authoritarian political systems in a number of post-Soviet states and accompanying repression against independent Muslim groups have been argued to contribute ⸻ albeit indirectly ⸻ to generating fighters from the Northern Caucasus.[69]

4.2 Socio-Economic Drivers

The evidence on economic drivers and radicalisation is mixed and contradictory. Early studies that linked radicalisation to economic factors such as unemployment and corruption,[70] have been largely debunked by more recent research suggesting that such a correlation is tenuous at best.[71] One study in Jordan found that fighters came from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and that most were employed at the time they left to join armed radical groups.[72] Similarly, the phenomenon of European foreign fighters cannot be explained by their socio-economic profiles.[73]

Evidence from Africa and Central Asia, however, suggests that economics does play a role. One study on Boko Haram found that a desire to obtain a loan before joining the group or the hope

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[63] Chulov, "ISIS: the Inside Story."; McCants, "The Believer; How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer became Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Leader of the Islamic State."

[64] Chulov, "ISIS: the Inside Story."

[65] On this alliance, see Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qa'ida* (London: al-Saqi, 2006), 44-50; Christoph Reuter, "The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State." Der Speigel, April 18, 2015, http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html

[66] Abdul Rahman al-Hajj, "Salafism and Salafis at Syria: From Reform to Jihad (in Arabic)," *Al-Jazeera*, May 26, 2013, http://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2013/05/2013520105748485639.html

[67] International Crisis Group, *Syria Calling: Radicalisation in Central Asia* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2015), 2, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/central-asia/b072-syria-calling-radicalisation-in-central-asia.pdf

[68] Ibid.

[69] Maciej Falkowski and Józef Lang, *HOMO JIHADICUS: Islam in the Former USSR and the Phenomenon of the Post-Soviet Militants in Syria and Iraq* (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2015), 31.

[70] For example, see Wafa' al-Bura'i, *The role of Universities in Countering Ideological Extremism (*Alexandria, Egypt: Dar al-Ma'rifah Publishers, 2002).

[71] Claude Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 13 (2007), 1-36; Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova "Seeking the Roots of Terrorism," *The Chronicle Review,* 6 (2003).

[72] Mercy Corps, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups," 3-4.

[73] Rik Coolsaet, *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case* (Brussels: Royal Institute for International Relations, 2016), http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/egmont.papers.81_online-versie.pdf

of obtaining one after joining were important factors contributing to the decision to join.[74] Others have argued that the promise of good jobs and financial repatriation[75] "may be the single most important factor for Central Asian recruiting to the Syrian conflict."[76]

Another theory gaining traction in academia is that it is 'relative deprivation', not abject poverty, that plays a role in radicalisation.[77] Relative deprivation is the tension that develops from a discrepancy between what one feels entitled to and what one is actually capable of acquiring and maintaining.[78] Advocates of this theory reference youth as a prime example. Here, the intersection of young people's aspirations and frustrations regarding political, economic and social levels has brought their disadvantaged position to bear, and pushed them towards alternatives to assert their relevance and obtain status. Likewise, in their article, "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?" Gambetta and Hertog assert that the intersection of ambition and limited opportunity leads to frustration, and could plausibly contribute to engineers' radicalisation.[79] [80] The theory is also consistent with a study of former al-Shabab members which found that poverty per se was not a contributing factor, but the desire to overcome the low self-esteem and idleness it produced was highly significant.[81]

Other relevant socio-economic factors include the role of sex; Speckhard and Yayla speculate that the availability of sex for Daesh recruits may have enticed some young men to join these groups.[82] The prospect of marriage also appears to be a factor influencing both men and women to join groups.[83] Against critical levels of youth unemployment, the age of marriage is climbing in the Middle East, creating both frustrations and social tensions.[84] One fighter, who went to Syria, was struggling to find a wife in Jordan, but told his mother that he would find one in the afterlife.[85]

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[74] Mercy Corps, "Motivation and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth," 13.

[75] Cholpon Orozbekova, "Central Asia and the ISIS Phantom," *The Diplomat*, October 2, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/central-asia-and-the-isis-phantom/

[76] Noah Tucker, *Central Asian Involvement in the Conflicts in Syria & Iraq: Drivers & Responses* (VA, USA: Management Systems International and USAID, 2015), iii. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CVE_CentralAsiansSyriaIraq.pdf

[77] For example, see Ömer Taspinar, "Fighting Radicalism, not 'Terrorism': Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined" *SAIS Review International Affairs* XXIX, no. 2, (Summer–Fall 2009): 77-79, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/articles/2009/9/summer%20fall%20radicalism%20taspinar/summer_fall_radicalism_taspinar.pdf; Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?" *European Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2, (August 2009): 201–230, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29836/1/Why_are_there_so_many_Engineers_among_Islamic_radicals_(publisher).pdf

[78] Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 23.

[79] Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals," *European Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2 (2009): 1-30.

[80] Nevertheless, it is important to note that there is also no consensus on the role of relative deprivation in radicalisation. For more detail, see Hugh Roberts, "Logics of Jihadi Violence in North Africa." In *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 2nd edition, edited by Rik Coolsaet (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 27.

[81] Hassan, "Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth," 18.

[82] Anne Speckhard and Ahmet S. Yayla, "American ISIS Defector - Mohamad Jamal Khweis and the Threat Posed by "Clean Skin" Terrorists: Unanswered Questions and Confirmations", *International Centre for the Study of Violent Extremism,* March 20, 2016, http://www.icsve.org/american-isis-defector---mohamad-jamal-khweis-and-the-threat-of-clean-skin-terrorists-.html

[83] Erin Marie Saltman and Melanie Smith, *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon*, (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015), 16, http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Till_Martyrdom_Do_Us_Part_Gender_and_the_ISIS_Phenomenon.pdf

[84] The youth unemployment level in Jordan at 28.8 percent in 2014; The World Bank, "Unemployment, Youth Total (% of total labour force ages 15-24) (modelled ILO estimate)," 2016. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS

[85] Mercy Corps, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups," 6-7.

4.3 Social Drivers: Identity and Group Dynamics

Individuals' membership in radical groups, whether armed or not, is influenced by a wide range of psycho-social and sociological factors. Rambo's scholarship refers to the influence that identity crises and an individual's search for meaning and role can play; the New York Police Department model includes self-identification as a stage that precedes indoctrination; and McCauley and Moskalenko directly refer to the search for adventure. An examination of all relevant psycho-social drivers is beyond the scope of this paper. The discussion below will thus be limited to two distinct but pivotal factors: the prospect of adventure and immediate social networks.

Two quantitative studies targeting university students in Jordan found that social factors are major drivers of radicalism. Variables included dysfunctional families, immorality, peer influence, weak national identity, and domestic violence.[86] The variables and definitions used in the study, however, were vague and subjective, leaving the findings of limited value.

4.3.1 The Prospect of Adventure

> "The [Syrian/Iraq] conflict offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to 'hang out with the brothers,' fight for a cause, and – possibly – become a hero."[87]

Scholars including Neumann, Atran, and Victoroff identify the prospect of adventure as a pull factor drawing fighters to groups like Daesh. Specifically, Atran argues that Daesh recruits are inspired mostly by the allure of an exciting cause which will give them personal significance and glory.[88] This theory has parallels with 'novelty-seeking theory' in psychological literature. Joining a terrorist group offers the possibility of participating in something *thrilling* and outside of normal experience. Sensation and novelty seeking is a normal feature of adolescence, perhaps explaining why young people make up a large contingent of radicals: "adolescents *like* intensity, excitement, and arousal… It is a developmental period when an appetite for adventure, a predilection for risks, and a desire for novelty and thrills seem to reach naturally high levels."[89] Victoroff supports this thesis: "the normative developmental form of novelty seeking probably does contribute to terrorism."[90]

4.3.2 The Network Effect

A consensus is emerging among scholars on the significant role of family and friends in radicalisation. Sageman, who explores global Salafi Jihadism, highlights networks and peer influence, dismissing socio-economic causes and personal characteristics as factors in identifying what he describes as 'true terrorists'.[91] In his view, radicalisation occurs in stages beginning with moral outrage at violence or discrimination against Muslims, or more broadly the West's conflict with Islam. Later, "[e]ach new group became a 'bunch of guys,' transforming its members into potential [M]ujahedin, actively seeking to join the global [J]ihad."[92] It is this new formed group identity that facilitates in-group bias and demonising of the out-group. The end point of Sageman's process is the conviction that the use of violence is permissible. This theory yields support from

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[86] al-Rawashdeh, "Ideological Extremism from the Perspective of Jordanian Youth."

[87] Neumann, "Western European Foreign Fighters in Syria: An Overview," 14.

[88] Scott Atran "ISIS is a Revolution", *Aeon,* December 15, 2015, https://aeon.co/essays/why-isis-has-the-potential-to-be-a-world-altering-revolution

[89] Ronald E. Dahl, "Adolescent Brain Development: A Period of Vulnerabilities and Opportunities. Keynote Address," *Annals New York Academy of Sciences* 1021 (2004): 1-22. Italics in original.

[90] Victoroff "The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches," 28.

[91] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 99.

[92] Ibid, 115.

the scholarship on group think, specifically how sanctioning violence in groups reduces individuals' moral inhibitions against participating in acts of violence.[93]

Like Sageman, Atran and Davis argue that social relationships of "small groups of action-oriented friends"[94] largely influence the process. Young people coalesce through activities such as sport or study groups and "self-mobilize to the tune of a simple, superficial, but broadly appealing '*takfiri*' message of withdrawal from impure mainstream society and of a need for violent action to cleanse it."[95] Writing about Daesh fighters, Atran asserts that three quarters of fighters are recruited through friends.[96] The work of Sageman and Atran and Davis further explain the centrality of this peer influence. Supporters move from low level, low risk engagement, as part of a porous network. Later, and due to moral outrage, they move towards the radical core of high-engagement and high-risk terrorist activity.

In his study on Belgian fighters who left for Syria, Rik Coolsaet describes two groups:

> "The first group comprises pre-existing kinship and friendship gangs. For them, joining IS [Daesh] is merely a shift to another form of deviant behaviour, next to membership of street gangs, rioting, drug trafficking and juvenile delinquency. But it adds a thrilling, larger-than-life dimension to their way of life – transforming them from delinquents without a future into [M]ujahedeen with a cause."[97]

This theory is corroborated by Roy, who found that half of the European al-Qaeda recruits he studied followed their friends, frequently through channels of petty crime.[98]

Coolsaet's second group were loners who did not display deviant behaviour, but instead made reference to having no future, faced personal challenges in their life and/or lacked a sense of belonging.[99] This suggests that while friendships and peer groups contribute to the radicalisation of some European fighters, this is certainly not the case for all.

Family members also influence radicalisation. Hegghammer notes that a number of the fighters he examined who left for Afghanistan were inspired by a brother or a friend.[100] Mothers have also been found to influence their sons. In one anecdotal account reported by Mercy Corps, a Jordanian mother, whose three sons has joined Daesh, asserted that they learnt about Jihad at home from her.[101] Another fighter narrated how his father encouraged him and bought him a gun to join al-Shabab.[102]

This role of peers and family members can also be understood through broader intergroup

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[93] Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes.* 2nd Edition. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1982).
[94] Scott Atran and Richard Davis, "Executive Summary." In *Theoretical Frames on Pathways to Violent Radicalization*, (Washington DC, U.S.A: ARTIS, 2009), 5-12, http://www.artisresearch.com/articles/ARTIS_Theoretical_Frames_August_2009.pdf
[95] Ibid.
[96] "Expert: Friends Recruit Most Islamic State Fighters."
[97] Coolsaet, *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*, 3.
[98] Oliver Roy, "Al Qaeda: A True Global Movement," In *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 2nd edition, edited by Rik Coolseat, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 19-25, https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/2093059/file/6769814.pdf
[99] Coolsaet, *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case*, 3.
[100] Hegghammer "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalisation in Saudi Arabia," 49.
[101] Mercy Corps, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups," 6.
[102] Hassan, "Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth," 19.

dynamics such as Social Identity Theory.[103] Peer influence, for example, is connected to the psychological need to belong to a group, whereby an individual takes pride in this membership and builds bonds with fellow members. In return, the group offers her/him a new role and significance in the group itself, and in one's perception of her/his role in a broader worldview like that of armed radical groups. The narrative of these groups as agents of justice and protectors of Sunni Muslims also provides individuals with a larger and more noble role than their daily lives. Once this family support or peer protection is guaranteed, the risk of joining a group is minimised.

In all cases, role identity, whether in terms of a person's understanding of who they are or their perception of their role in society, determines individual behaviour. The same applies to radicalised individuals, and may explain the actions of some identity-conflicted Muslims in Europe. Khosrokhavar notes that in global European cities such as London, Paris, Leicester, and Rome, cultures may inter-mingle, but they are also "places where new forms of rejection and exclusion are concocted."[104] As a mother of a Belgian foreign fighter recently stated, "It's tough for all the youngsters, but if you've got an immigrant background doubly so. He started to say that people saw him as Moroccan while in Morocco they saw him as Belgian and asked me 'who am I?'"[105]

Empirical studies examining why Europeans become foreign fighters found that Francophone countries were more likely to have a higher number of foreign fighters. The authors posited that "Francophone" was a proxy for the distinctive French kind of secularism.[106] This deeply felt dislocation on the part of second or third generation of migrant communities is not examined in the literature on violent radicalisation in the WANA region, but may be highly relevant to countries such as Jordan, which is both home to large refugee populations (predominately Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian) and is one of the largest regional contributors of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria (more than 2000 in 2015). [107]

4.4 Cultural Drivers: Religion and Narratives

The most important contribution from the literature on the religious drivers of radicalisation is that an individual's knowledge of Islam does not correlate with her/his propensity for radicalisation. Instead, it is an individual's identification with a persecuted religiously-defined group that leads to radicalisation. The discussion below emphasises the influence of religious identity and religious narratives of victimhood on the radicalisation of Muslims. It also explores how educational curricula and the media can provide a supportive hub for radicalisation narratives.

It is important to highlight that scholars attach different levels of importance to religion in radicalisation. Hegghammer and al-Harby have found that religious factors are important — as important as political reasons in Hegghammer's research,[108] and of greater importance than all

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[103] On Social Identity Theory, see Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg, eds., *Social Identity and Social Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Henri Tajfel, "Inter-individual Behaviour and Intergroup Behaviour," in *Differentiation between Social Groups*, edited by Henri Tajfel (London: Academic Press, 1978); Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *Organisational Identity: A Reader*, edited by Mary Jo. Hatch and Majken Schultz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[104] Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers. Allah's New Martyrs*, 159. Italics Added.

[105] Jason Burke, "Radicalisation in Molenbeek: 'People Call Me the Mother of a Terrorist'", *The Guardian,* March 16, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/16/radicalisation-molenbeek-terrorist-brussels-belgian

[106] William McCants and Christopher Meserole, "The French Connection; Explaining Sunni Militancy Around the World," *Foreign Affairs*, March 24, 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-03-24/french-connection

[107] The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (New York: The Soufan Group, 2015), 8, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf

[108] Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalisation in Saudi Arabia."

other factors in al-Harby's study on Saudi students.[109] Others down-play the role of religion. Wilson, for example, argues that violent radicals are not usually very pious, and know less about Islam than might be expected.[110] al-Ruhaily's typology of radicals in Saudi Arabia, discussed earlier, supports this, and likewise anecdotes such as the two British foreign fighters hailing from Birmingham who bought books online including 'Islam for Dummies' and 'The Koran for Dummies' before leaving for Syria.[111] Moreover, one study found that al-Shabab fighters returned and renounced armed radicalism once opportunities presented themselves for a better life.[112] Had ideology been a major part of their decision to join the organisation, the decision to return would have required an ideological shift or justification.

The role of the religious narrative is emphasised by scholars like Jonathan Russell and Haras Rafiq.[113] They argue that Daesh has developed a narrative that is sufficiently malleable to apply to recruits from the West, local populations, and members of existing terrorist groups.[114] This narrative contributes to a worldview that gives an individual a place and role in society, demonises the perpetrator, and justifies violence. For many individuals, religion is useful in constructing that narrative. Religion offers individuals a role to play in the cosmic war of good versus evil. Political groups often use religious texts to justify political violence by connecting self-sacrifice to rewards in the afterlife, or to improved moral status in this life.[115] Religious narratives connect individual behaviour to a larger cause and offer an individual a sense of purpose and pride.

While religious actors undeniably have a role to play in some cases of radicalisation, it is questionable whether their involvement is usually a primary *cause*. It is more likely that they are a facilitating factor by introducing individuals to radical ideology and justifying radicalism in religious terms as a higher moral order.

> "Extremism does not appear because preachers [merely] call for it. It appears because we have young people who search for identity and revolt against the situation."[116]

In *Radical,* a personal account of his own radicalisation, Nawaz explains that his experience of racism, combined with online content and sessions by the radical group Hizb ut-Tahrir fuelled his perception of a global war on Muslims. He notes that the videos he watched of the conflicts in the Balkans were a key part of his radicalisation: "Southend, Gaza, Bosnia, Iraq, India: wherever you went in the world, the story was the same – Muslims were unprotected and under attack…."[117]

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[109] al-Harby, "Perceptions of Saudi Youth Towards Ideological Extremism: A Sociological Study on a Sample of Students at Al-Qaseem University."

[110] Wilson "What I Discovered From Interviewing Imprisoned ISIS Fighters."

[111] "It ain't half hot here, mum," *The Economist*, August 30, 2014, http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21614226-why-and-how-westerners-go-fight-syria-and-iraq-it-aint-half-hot-here-mum

[112] Hassan, "Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth."

[113] Jonathan Russell and Haras Rafiq, *Countering Islamist Extremist Narratives: A Strategic Briefing* (London: Quilliam, 2016), https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/countering-islamist-extremist-narratives.pdf.

[114] Ibid.

[115] On this, see Jeffrey R Seul, "'Ours Is the Way of God': Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 5 (1999): 553-69; and Mohammed M Hafez, "Moral Agents, Immoral Violence: Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in Palestinian Suicide Terrorism." In *Tangled Roots: Social and Psychological Factors in the Genesis of Terrorism*, edited by Jeff Victoroff, 292-307. Amsterdam: IOS Publishers, 2006.

[116] Abu Rumman, qtd in al-Arabiya English, "Jordan Tries to Stem ISIS-Style Extremism in Schools, Mosques," *al-Arabiya English*, August 8, 2015, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/2015/08/08/Jordan-tries-to-stem-IS-style-extremism-in-schools-mosques.html; Mercy Corps, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups," 6.

[117] Nawaz, *Radical*, 83.

Nawaz's experience is in no way unique. Neumann's study of European foreign fighters identified key narratives. Among the most compelling, in his assessment, was "fighting against an existential threat" facing Sunnis;[118] here Neumann found pictures depicting Sunnis being tortured, raped, and killed as having a significant impact on the European fighters his team was monitoring on social media. This is consistent with Mercy Corps' Jordan study which reported that the most common justification for joining the war in Syria was to protect Sunni women and children.[119] Moreover, that the "decision to fight appear[ed] to be less about a particular interpretation of one's religious obligations, and more an emotional response to injustices perpetrated by an outside group."[120]

Narratives of victimhood operate in two interconnected ways. First, as highlighted earlier, radicalised individuals often go through a personal crisis driven by contextual grievances and frustrations. This lead to a personal journey to find a role and meaning in life. In some cases, this stage is followed by converting or returning to Islam, and then joining armed radical groups.[121] Narratives of victimhood accentuate contextual frustrations and motivate individuals to take religiously inspired action to correct injustices. Such a pathway is common among Central Asian radicals, particularly as religion is deemed as "the only form of politicised expression that is not perceived as a compromise of moral values." [122] This, coupled with fragmented Muslim establishments, poor Islamic education, and the absence of indigenous civil society measures, have provided ample space for conservative iterations of Islam to establish a solid ideological presence.[123]

The second way that victimhood narratives operate is through religious discourse. The narrative of victimhood — as established in visual and textual discourses — provides a higher moral grounding that justifies violence as a moral act. This is to be understood within Islamic political philosophy that emphasises justice over peace;[124] and the narrative that defensive war (often usually misconstrued as *Jihad* by Muslims)[125] is permitted in Islam on the grounds of justice. These narratives of victimhood and moral justifications for engaging in violence facilitate moral disengagement. This is compatible with Borum's model which specifically lists 'blame attribution' as a stage in radicalisation.

Importantly, narratives do not evolve in a vacuum. An overall cultural and educational context usually facilitates their acceptance. 'Martyrs' weddings' — celebrations held when a fighter is killed in his home town commonly held in Iraq, Syria and even in Jordan — are a clear example of a cultural practice that is encouraged by a set of wider factors, including formal education and the media.[126]

In Jordan, a heated public debate has been unfolding on the pages of al-Ghad Daily between experts, analysts and a former Minister of Education on one side, and the Ministry of Education

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[118] Neumann, "Western European Foreign Fighters in Syria: An overview," 14.
[119] Mercy Corps, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups," 5-6.
[120] Ibid, 5.
[121] Falkowski and Lang, *HOMO JIHADICUS: Islam in the Former USSR and the Phenomenon of the Post-Soviet Militants in Syria and Iraq*, 33.
[122] International Crisis Group, *Syria Calling: Radicalisation in Central Asia*, 7.
[123] Onnik James Krikorian, "Radicalisation in the South Caucasus," *Democracy & Freedom Watch*, November 28, 2015, http://dfwatch.net/radicalisation-in-the-south-caucasus-39101
[124] On this, see Mohammad Shahrour, *Draining the Sources of Terrorism (in Arabic).* (Damascus: al-Ahali, 2008), 55-142.
[125] On the distinction between defensive war (*qital*) and Jihad, see Ibid.
[126] Abu Rumman, "The Rising Role of Armed Extremist Groups in Syria and Iraq."

on the other.[127] Calls for curriculum changes emerged after one study found the curriculum to be encouraging intolerance, ignoring Jordan's non-Muslims minorities, and offering a closed view on world cultures and diversity.[128] Critically, the worldview ingrained in the current curriculum supports the same ideological underpinnings of groups like Daesh and al-Nusra. But reforming education curricula faces considerable obstacles, not the least the perception that the proposed changes undermine Islamic values.

In a related domain, one Saudi study found that the media has spread *fatwas* (religious ruling) of radical groups and/or encouraged radical behaviour.[129] This '*fatwa* factor' is connected to a larger regional 'fatawisation' of the public sphere.[130] Religious media channels have created an industry of *fatwa* programs that work in a competitive commercial cycle. While this phenomenon cannot be directly connected to cases of radicalisation, it has contributed to the production and spread of *fatwas* by unauthorised personnel, by those with doubtful credentials, and without any mechanism to control the religious content on media platforms.

This debate over religious narratives, education and media content has evolved in parallel to calls for *amn fikri* (thought or ideological security).[131] *Amn fikri* is defined as a process that protects individuals from all forms of extremism by encouraging dialogue, independent thinking and objectivity in a way that can protect youth against fanaticism, *takfir* and the imposition of one's opinion on others.[132] For proponents of *amn fikri*, understanding radicalisation drivers and improving rehabilitation services for detainees is an important pillar in achieving thought security.

In Jordan, concerns about thought security escalated following research suggesting a spread of radical ideology among youth. One quantitative study, conducted in 2016 at the University of Jordan, found that 2 percent of students felt that al-Nusra represented them, another 2 percent listing Daesh, 1 percent listing al-Qaeda, and 1 percent listing the Iraqi group *asa'eb ahl al haq*. This 6 percent (equating to 1094 students) who find their voice in armed radical groups cannot be ignored.[133] Another study conducted in 2013 found that while Jordanian university students generally rejected radical ideology, they adhered to radical views with regards to non-Muslims, the West, and interactions between different sexes.[134] Moreover, alignment with Salafi Jihadism is predicted to be a natural development of the spread of Salafi ideology throughout the region.[135]

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[127] For example, see Rana Sabbagh, "Save Jordan from Ignorance Curricula (in Arabic)," *al-Ghad Daily*, January 6, 2016, http://bit.ly/233VgZy; Dhoqan Obeidat, "Yes Our Curricula is of ISIS Ideology (in Arabic)," *al-Ghad Daily*, July 12, 2015, http://bit.ly/1Dbya5h

[128] Dalal Salameh, qtd. In al-Arabiya English, "Jordan Tries to Stem ISIS-Style Extremism in Schools, Mosques."

[129] al-Harby, "Perceptions of Saudi Youth Towards Ideological Extremism: A Sociological Study on a Sample of Students at Al-Qaseem University."

[130] On this, see Khaled Hroub, "The Role of the Media in the Middle Eastern Sectarian Divide" (presentation presented at the International Seminar Sunni and Shi'a: Political Readings of a Religious Dichotomy, Córdoba, Spain, October 21-22, 2013), 45, http://www.awraq.es/blob.aspx?idx=6&nId=99&hash=14f25fb5ba9f8c3b63e81ae654450305

[131] Abdulaziz al-Ahmadi, "Evaluating Thought Security Programs through Munasaha Committees (in Arabic)" (presentation presented at the Second International Conference on Countering Terrorism, Madinah Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, April 22-23, 2014); Su'ood Khalaf, "A Vision towards Developing Thought Security Programs through Munasaha Committees (in Arabic)" (presentation presented at the Second International Conference on Countering Terrorism, Madinah Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, April 22-23, 2014); Ahlam Matalqa, "Mechanisms for Empowering Families to Enhance Children's Psychological and Thought Security: A Suggested Approach (in Arabic)" (presentation presented at the Second International Conference on Countering Terrorism, Madinah Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, April 22-23, 2014).

[132] Matalqa, "Mechanisms for Empowering Families to Enhance Children's Psychological and Thought Security: A Suggested Approach (in Arabic)", 155.

[133] Centre for Strategic Studies, *Students at the University of Jordan: Characteristics, Values, Trends* (in Arabic). (Amman: Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, 2016), 24-25.

[134] al-Rawashdeh, "Ideological Extremism from the Perspective of Jordanian Youth."

[135] Abu Rumman, *I am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis*, 14-16.

5. Gaps in The Literature

The subject of radicalisation is limited by a dearth of empirical evidence; the majority of that which does exist, lacks in methodological and scientific rigour. Writing in 2008, Silke concluded that, "only about 20 percent of research articles provide substantially new knowledge that was previously unavailable to the field." [136] Despite the surge in interest in radicalisation, this observation generally stands today. Studies mainly draw from a small number of case studies, lack of control groups,[137] and rely on secondary data, such as archival records, court documents, or press reports (as opposed to primary data). In Jordan, studies are predominately quantitative and fail to explain the factors that lead to radicalisation in a way that is applicable to national policy and programming. [138] Most critically, studies draw input from generic samples of individuals who are not necessarily radicals nor exposed to radical ideology. As such they lack relevance in explaining the actual radicalisation dynamics affecting potential fighters in Jordan.

The key reason for this weak evidence base is the difficulty in accessing radicalised individuals; such individuals may be based in conflict zones, detained, or closely monitored by authorities, and they are usually unwilling and unreliable research subjects. A compounding issue is that governments are usually reticent to disclose information on intelligence gathered or rehabilitation programs. However, without first-hand accounts and comparative impact analyses, research on religion and radicalisation will remain anecdotal and theoretical, and the impact of rehabilitation and reintegration programs will remain limited. Recent work undertaken by Atran and his colleagues in Iraq, Speckhard and Yayla's interviews with Daesh defectors, and Lina al-Khatib's report based on interviews with fighters mainly from Daesh,[139] has somewhat responded to these gaps. Additional evidence, however, is required in specific areas.

One such area concerns stakeholder impact. As a high-context region where social relations and group affiliation are of high influence,[140] little is known about the role of parents and tribal leaders in radicalisation, and thus their potential to contribute to CVE initiatives. There is anecdotal evidence that mothers in Libya have been influential in convincing fighters to return, and that tribal leaders have engaged in dialogue with armed radical groups, challenging them on ideological and strategic grounds and introducing conflict fault lines among members in a way that eventually convinced some fighters to repatriate.[141] In Kenya, former al-Shabab fighters highlighted the role of clan and family members in convincing them to return.[142] In what ways tribal and other thought leaders influence counter-radicalisation measures in Jordan thus needs further examination.

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[136] Andrew Silke, "Holy Warriors; Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalisation," *European Journal of Criminology* 5, no. 1 (2008), 101.

[137] Ibid; Victoroff "The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches," ; Matt Apuzzo, "Who Will Become a Terrorist? Research Yields Few Clues," *International New York Times,* March 27, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/28/world/europe/mystery-about-who-will-become-a-terrorist-defies-clear-answers.html?_r=0

[138] al-Bura'i, *The Role of Universities in Countering Ideological Extremism*; al-Rawashdeh, "Ideological Extremism from the Perspective of Jordanian Youth"; and al-Harby, "Perceptions of Saudi Youth Towards Ideological Extremism: A Sociological Study on a Sample of Students at Al-Qaseem University"; see also Mohammad Abu Rumman in discussion with the research team, April 5, 2016.

[139] Wilson "What I Discovered from Interviewing Imprisoned ISIS Fighters."; "Expert: Friends Recruit Most Islamic State Fighters"; Speckhard and Yayla, "Eye Witness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit."; al-Khatib, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and expanding," 7.

[140] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977) 91-133.

[141] Mustafa al-Sagezli, "Lessons from Libya CVE Efforts" (presentation presented at Expert Meeting on Radicalism and Violent Extremism, Ankara, Turkey, March 1-2, 2016).

[142] Specifically, when the clan of one fighter severed ties with al-Shabab, this forced him to return. Hassan, "Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of al-Shabab and Somali Youth," 20.

Gender is another area that has been neglected in radicalisation studies, particularly exploring which pathways lead women to violent radicalisation.[143] The rise of Daesh has highlighted a conceptual paradox i.e. how a group that oppresses women can so successfully recruit them? In this regard, future research must focus on the motives of female recruits. Specifically, does the lure of adventure disproportionately affect men over women, do men and women seek different forms of adventure, and how the motives of Western women compare to Arab women joining armed radical groups? Moreover, some studies have identified the significant role of mothers in radicalisation processes. Given the elevated position of mothers in Islam, how they (and likewise female preachers)[144] might be engaged in preventing the radicalisation of family members is both strategic and underexploited.[145]

A third gap area concerns the role of economics, and particularly relative deprivation, in radicalisation. For example, are economic factors more important to specific fighters' profiles or are they more relevant in Africa and Central Asia? How is relative deprivation affecting the decision to join armed groups? And what areas of material deprivation are more important than others?

A final knowledge deficit relates to psycho-social and religious drivers of radicalism. Studies examining how religious factors lead to ideological radicalisation, but preclude violent radicalisation, are particularly important. Similarly important are control group studies that compare violent radicals to individuals who travelled the same path but did not eventually engage in violence. Such research must also investigate whether it is ideology or simply lack of an opportunity that stops an individual engaging in violence. More broadly, while it is important to identify relevant contextual factors, scholars must also seek to understand how different drivers relate both to each other and collectively. Social networks and the appeal of adventure and purpose seem to create a virulent combination, for example.

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[143] For example, see Elizabeth Pearson, "The Case of Roshonara Choudhry: Implications for Theory on Online Radicalisation, ISIS Women, and the Gendered Jihad," *Policy & Internet* 8 (2015): 5-33; Edwin Bakker and Seran de Leede, *European Female Jihadist in Syria: Exploring an Under-Researched Topic* (The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2015), http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Bakker-de-Leede-European-Female-Jihadists-In-Syria-Exploring-An-Under-Researched-Topic-April2015(1).pdf

[144] Apart from Ameera Ali work conducted in Egypt in 2014, there are no such studies; see Ameera Ali, "Evaluating the Role of Ministry of Awqaf Female Preachers in Awareness Raising on the Dangers of Terrorism and in Countering Terrorism (in Arabic)" (presentation presented at the Second International Conference on Countering Terrorism, Madinah Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, April 22-23, 2014), 359-340.

[145] Mercy Corps, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups," 10.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the existing research on radicalisation typologies, models and drivers. Such research has evolved from a variety of contextual and thematic approaches, and has little grounding in empirical studies or primary source data. The result is that there is little scholarly consensus on how and why radicalisation takes place, let alone scientifically robust and verified theories. There are, however, some common themes and patterns that can be drawn from the extant literature.

Perhaps most importantly, there is broad acceptance that radicalisation is a process, whether linear or non-linear, that starts with grievances or perceived injustices. An individual then becomes alienated from the perceived unjust or unrighteous society. In response, the individual searches for a new identity or outlook on life. Through encountering armed radical groups (either actively sought by the individual or targeted by recruiters), an individual identifies with a radical group. This intensifies gradually leading to the support of and engagement in violent radicalism.

It is also clear that contextual factors play an important role in setting the stage for radicalisation once an individual becomes frustrated with the status quo. Such factors include political, economic, ideological, and psycho-social drivers, such as a search for adventure, status, and role. For example, there is consensus within the Arabic literature that the overall regional political context has pushed youth towards radicalism and provided armed radical groups with compelling narratives. Other scholars refer to specific political/security factors that have shaped recruitment pathways and contributed to the manufacturing of radical leaders, including international policy failures, Sunni marginalisation, and conflict contexts.

The evidence on the role of economic factors and poverty in radicalisation, however, is conflicted at best.[146] It appears that relative deprivation plays a more pivotal role than direct economic need, and moreover, that issues such as status, sense of role, and relevance are more influential in an individual's decision to support violent radicalism than abject poverty.

There is more consensus surrounding the socio-cultural drivers of radicalisation. Armed radical groups tend to exploit young people's vulnerabilities and offer them benefits ranging from familial-like bonds, to the promise of adventure.[147] They also elevate an individual's status and provide them with positions of influence and responsibility that they would not have had otherwise.[148] Other studies highlight peer and family influence along with in-group belonging and acclaimed superiority. These factors illustrate that psychological and sociological turning points deserve equal attention to that of political and economic factors.

Finally, ideological and religious factors impact the radicalisation process but in different ways than is usually assumed. Religiously-inspired narratives of victimhood, often introduced or reinforced in social media or educational curricula, for example, can influence the series of convictions and psychological process an individual goes through towards justifying violence. But the evidence overall points to a limited role of religion in radicalisation. Moreover, it must be kept in mind that adhering to radical ideology is closely linked to the identity crisis individuals go through in their search for meaning once disillusioned with the wider contextual factors around them.

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[146] Hamed el-Said and Richard Barrett, "Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism." In *Globalisation, Democratisation and Radicalisation in the Arab World,* edited by Hamed El-Said and Jane Harrigan (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 199-235.

[147] Homeland Security Institute, *The Internet as a Terrorist Tool for Recruitment & Radicalisation of Youth* (U.S.A: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2009), 1. http://www.homelandsecurity.org/docs/reports/Internet_Radicalization.pdf

[148] Roy, "Al Qaeda: A True Global Movement," 22.

While this analysis may appear to raise more questions than it provides answers, it does point to a few concrete action points for policy-makers, practitioners and academics. For example, the evidence suggests that CVE strategies and radicalisation counter-narratives should invest in the construction of new group identities that fulfil the need for belonging. In the WANA region, individuals feel alienated politically, socially, and economically. This minimises their belonging to social and political groups and results in feelings of indifference. Constructing national civil identities provides the first setting stone towards this process of involvement, and should augment the hard security approaches preferred by governments.[149]

Similarly, while it is clear that notions of status, role and honour influence radicalisation, these dynamics are usually overlooked in CVE efforts, with few investments in psycho-social support and civil society initiatives. A more difficult area is Daesh's 'revolutionary pull' — something that governments must develop tools to compete with.[150] Another entry point is online media content and education, which have been demonstrated to play important roles in driving radicalisation. The most important action that can be supported by donors and governments, however, is better evidence on the drivers and variables to inform the development of more effective CVE initiatives.

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[149] Omar Razaz, "Concluding Remarks." Presentation at the conference "Methods of Preventing and Combatting Terrorism in the MENA Region and in the West." Amman, Jordan. June 2, 2016.
[150] Scott Atran "ISIS is a Revolution", *Aeon,* December 15, 2015, https://aeon.co/essays/why-isis-has-the-potential-to-be-a-world-altering-revolution; "Expert: Friends Recruit Most Islamic State Fighters," *Associated Press,* November 25, 2015 http://www.voanews.com/content/ap-experts-friends-recruit-most-islamic-state-fighters/3073485.html

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