

INTERVENTIONEN◀

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International Issue

PREVENTING RADICALIZATION

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Why Theology Matters

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Violence
Prevention Network

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October 2016



Dear readers,

Violent extremism is a global phenomenon. Extremists are acting across borders and so should PVE practitioners. Acknowledging that tendencies of radicalisation, ideologically motivated crime or violent extremism are global challenges which cannot be tackled with isolated, national measures, it is imperative to face the increasingly complex situation with a multi-agent-system. In today's globalised world, we need to include multiple stakeholders on local, national and international level in order to develop and implement holistic and integrated responses to this challenge. Violence Prevention Network is expanding its transnational and international cooperation in order to contribute to this endeavour. This international issue is reflecting our increased engagement, e.g. in introducing our most recent transnational collaboration, the European Practice EXchange (EPEX).



In our 7th and first English edition of Interventionen, we are compelled to dig deeper and go beyond our conventional point of view on the phenomenon of violent extremism. Many of our contributing authors address controversial questions in their articles which are persistently discussed on national as well as international level.

Hamed El-Said focuses on the question of balancing security driven responses with approaches of prevention or rehabilitation. He suggests that finally the tides may be turning on the hegemony of the military-security-administrative responses. He discusses the promise he sees in the United Nations' new Prevention of Violent Extremism Action Plan in its much needed corrective shift from countering more towards prevention.

Rüdiger Lohlker takes position in the ongoing debate about the actual role Islam as a religion plays in the phenomenon of Islamist extremism. He encourages us to finally move away from the perpetually recurring question of whether an act is

Islamic in its essence. One must speak of Islamic violence, he argues, but the "point of the designation is not that Islam causes this violence; rather it is that the violence is made meaningful by the actor in terms of Islam."

Mohammed Baobaid discusses the matter of access to (potential) target-groups. He reminds us how desperately we need "a successful community based model for early identification and appropriate intervention responses for the vulnerable," given that state actors do not and will never have the necessary knowledge or access at the community level.

And last but not least the yet unsolved task of understanding radicalisation and the function of ideology in this process. Resulting from more than 15 years of front liners' work with radicalised violent offenders we introduce a theoretical model of the Ideologisation | Radicalisation Cycle.

Drawing on Ernest Becker, we return to the radicalised individual and revisit the inextricably intertwined, psycho-social nature of ideologisation and radicalisation. "Violence is the means with which the frightened man promises himself to become the human agent as opposed to the trembling animal...powerlessness transforms to omnipotence." In contrast, we know that real power is mutual recognition, connection, and collaboration. May we draw on this knowledge in all of our work.

Sincerely,

Judy Korn
Thomas Mücke
Jan Buschbom



THE “I” OF ISIS: WHY THEOLOGY MATTERS

BY RÜDIGER LOHLKER

There has been an intense debate for many years now whether the ideational products of jihadi groups are to be understood as religious, merely ideological or not.¹

The fact that jihadis have produced significant amounts of resources that deal with religious issues, for instance under the umbrella of al-Qa’ida (Lohlker 2009) or IS (Lohlker 2016a), may allow

us to question this common assumption. Thousands of pages and uncountable megabytes have been filled with discussions on religious matters and the construction of a jihadi-type religion or somewhat of a jihadi Islam. Indeed, to everybody who can witness and understand what jihadists are writing and saying, it becomes clear that religion matters.



The combination of 'fighter-reader' has become part of the iconography of IS

telegram (accessed November 29, 2015)

Since this is not the place for a lengthy discussion about religion in general – as tempting as it may be for a scholar of religion – we will restrict ourselves to a more pragmatic distinction and approach to the issue from the perspective of jihadi communication. Consequently, we have to focus on the establishment of a religious-ethical community of jihadis by the means of communication and bear in mind that, in fact, terrorism itself may be regarded as communication (Waldmann 2005: 13), as long as:

“one pole of the communication has” a “*non-human, non-empirical, transcendent, or ‘supernatural’* character, the communication may count as religious. It is the negative definition [...] that gives religion in modern global society its fluidity and ambiguity, allowing the construction of cultural entities as religion if only they can be convincingly established as such.” (Beyer 2001: 144)

Turning to IS we may say that this entity spends many of its resources on the

production of religious material, which includes even teaching books for Islamic creed (*'aqīda*), Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), or the terminology of Hadith, to give but a few examples. This is done intentionally and not as a kind of camouflage for the real interests of IS (power, money or anything else); because it matters and because it is the 'real thing' for them.

If we understand ideology not simply as a set of ideas – be it political, economic, philosophical, or religious – or follow up the derogatory turn of the word 'ideology', as analysed by Mannheim (Mannheim 1936), we can discern a difference between ideology and theology/religion.

Referring to the standard introductions to ideology we may read, e.g., in Terry Eagleton's *Ideology: An Introduction*, which is essentially a list of 16 forms of ideology (Eagleton 1991: 1-2). Some of them are very general and particular, yet all of them refer to the behaviour and ideas of social groups. For Marxists, an understanding of ideology as 'false' and 'inverted' consciousness initially appears to be more appropriate (Rehmann 2013: 5). Others may differentiate between three forms of ideology: a) a form in which talk about certain mistakes is caused by epistemological shortcomings, b) a system of ideas and values, and c) a social and political program (Tepe 2012, 1-2). All these ways of conceptualizing ideology betray an uneasiness to acknowledge that religion may be still alive and may even be part of the realms of evil – at least to some extent. Regardless, not recognizing the importance of religion is, in fact, due to a Western prejudice that emerged in the 1960s and due to the paradigm of the inevitable decline of religion and an attempt to absolve religion from violence committed with reference to religious framings. But: Jihadists do not subscribe to this paradigm. There is a reason for it if we look at Eagleton's comparing remark below on ideology:

"The study of ideology is among other things an inquiry into the ways in which

people may come to invest in their own unhappiness. It is because being oppressed sometimes brings with it some slim bonuses that we are occasionally prepared to put up with it. The most efficient oppressor is the one who persuades his underlings to love, desire and identify with his power; and any practice of political emancipation thus involves that most difficult of all forms of liberation freeing ourselves from ourselves. The other side of the story, however, is equally important. For if such dominion fails to yield its victims sufficient gratification over an extended period of time, then it is certain that they will finally revolt against it." (Eagleton 1991: XIII-XIV)

Since the history of religions is full of cases of cognitive dissonance resulting in the reinforcement of the same behaviour, which led to the experience of dissonance, we may assume that the relation to the transcendent realm (see above) helped to sustain belief even if the gratification did not appear in this world. A paradigmatic case is the repeated experience of the end of the world not happening when announced by religious leaders, whereas the majority of followers still believe in the power and knowledge of its leaders regardless.

This conceptual discussion is not an exercise in academic nit-picking. It rather implies the assumption that without deconstructing the theology of violence inherent in jihadi communication and practice, these religious ideas will pop up even after an organized force like IS may be destroyed on the ground. This is not to deny the need for well-funded social work, interventions in families and institutions (schools, prisons) or even effective actions by the police.

Flatly denying the importance of religion will indeed overlook one crucial element of jihadi thought and actions. Assuming that religion is the reason for the positive behaviour of humans and refuting that there may be religiously legitimized negative behaviour does not hold up to closer scrutiny and the examples found in

"The study of ideology is among other things an inquiry into the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness"

the history of religions. Even if we abhor jihadis using Islamic religious concepts, we cannot deny the fact that they are trying to cut out their version of religion – a religion of violence.

The only way to deconstruct this violent variety of religion is to develop alternative forms of religion able to resist a theology of violence as characterized by the apology of violence, authoritarianism, homogeneity or the strict demarcation of boundaries, etc. (see below). This religion of violence is now spread in a complex dissemination structure. Said structure ranges from more or less elaborate theological tracts, smaller booklets, condensed forms (like four to six pages leaflets), public speeches, events, and propaganda meetings in mosques (*da'wa*), videos, posters in public space, issuing forms for somebody who has been accepted as not being an unbeliever (*kāfir*) to finally the face-to-face communication. All these acts of communication convey one message in a very coherent way: there is an Islamic entity, the organized form of *true* Islam.

A reaction that is quite understandable is that Muslims declare IS-Islam as not Islamic at all and alien to their religion. However, since IS and other jihadi propaganda is not aiming at persons who are anchored firmly in their belief, and is actually tapping into parts of Islamic heritage, such an approach is a reaction of believers who don't recognize what they believe when being confronted with the brutal crimes of terrorists committed in the name of their religion and so refrain to engage with the thoughts of the terrorists as religious thoughts. Still, this will not help to solve the general problem of religiously legitimized extremism and destroy the religious appeal of this extremism. Turning again to Eagleton, we might say that the critique of ideology mentioned by him may also apply to the critique of the theology of violence if we take specificity of religion into account:

"[...] only those interventions will work which make sense to the mystified sub-

ject itself. [...] 'Critique' is that form of discourse which seeks to inhabit the experience of the subject from inside, in order to elicit those 'valid' features of that experience which point beyond the subject's present condition." (Eagleton 1991: XIV)

But now we will turn to theology and religion, leaving ideology aside.

Religion and Theology

In this part, we will turn away from discussing ideology as an appropriate term, but will turn to theology as a concept, which is useful to understand what is often somewhat awkwardly called 'religiously motivated terrorism' in order to avoid any negative reaction from believers. Violence is a contingent possibility in religion(s) – history proves it indeed is – and acknowledging this fact and possibility does not violate beliefs but those who advocate violence. By acknowledging the contingency of a violent turn, the possibility of turning to non-violence is acknowledged as well.

Religion only exists through believers 'doing religion'. Alternatively, non-violent ways of 'doing religion' are what is needed – not only for Islam. Excluding religion and theology from the picture is an attempt to reproduce the emergence of political and religious fields in early modernity on a theoretical level. This, however, does not take into account that the configuration of these fields may be different in other regions of the world and outside Western Europe. It is not taking into account that what holds true on the level of governmental affairs, and to some extent for theoretical/academic discussions in Europe, may not hold true on the level of the ordinary members of societies. Hence, the surprising 'revival' of religions since the 1970s, is much more a revival in the realms of academic discussions. Even in Europe (or North America) the situation has changed:

"Researchers in the field of new Islamic movements talk about the emergence of

"Religion only exists through believers 'doing religion'. Alternatively, non-violent ways of 'doing religion' are what is needed – not only for Islam."

religious subcultures as the foundation of a lifestyle motivated by a certain religious ethos (Riesebrodt 2004: 27). Following James W. Jones we might say that the mingling of religion and politics in religiously motivated terrorism (and not only in jihadism) is one foremost challenge of the 21st century. The divine master plan claimed by these subcultures and movements gives them the mandate to act against societies at large.” (Lohlker 2012: 130)

As Jones puts it, “the issues of national liberation, resisting domination, and economic justice are often intertwined with and sacralized by religious and spiritual motivations that cannot be ignored if contemporary terrorism is to be understood.” (Jones 2008: 28)

“In other words: switching from religious language advocating violence to violent action depends on recoding conflicts in a religious language enabling the believers to perceive themselves as threatened by satanic forces, by apocalyptic powers, by Babylon, etc. and thus legitimizing violent resistance and changing the way these conflicts will go on. It depends on specific situations, but religious language and symbolism advocating violence is necessary for the process of recoding (Kippenberg 2010).” (Lohlker 2012: 131)

Conflicts being coded or recoded in theological terms leads to the practical logic (Bourdieu) of the actors acting in religious terms – even in the most superficial form. Claiming the *true* reason for their actions is political, psychological, criminal etc. privileges the academic-theoretical epistemology and ignores the practical logic of religious actors. Assessing the share and form of religion and theology in every individual case determines the best way of intervening and in this fashion it has to include religious elements. The text of the following illustration reads:

*“We will create supporters in your houses.
We will turn your sons into mujahidin.
We will raise them according to the*



telegram (accessed January 29, 2016)

*Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, the trustworthy.
We will revive in their hearts
honour, moral elevation, pride.”*

This illustration is a hybrid using a visual language that is easy to understand: The threat to the parents, the reference to military jihad (in the context of the IS the most important religious duty), the reference to the religious foundation of IS in the Sunna of the prophet, and the psychological element of reclaiming the honour and overcoming feelings of inferiority (Lohlker 2016c). Cutting religion out of the illustration would make it impossible to think – and feel – the connection of (re-) claiming superiority, communicating terror and threat, and the reference to religion.

The following lines read:

“O, God! This religion is Your religion, and we are thy soldiers. We fight in Your path. O God! Our victory depends on Your grace, on your favour and on Your kindness. Their polytheism will not defeat our monotheism. Our disobedience will not vanquish their unbelief. O, God! Forgive us our sins. We seek Your forgiveness and turn to You in repentance. We do believe in You and we trust in You. Don't blame us for what the shameless are making of us. Bless, o God, our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions. The last of our prayers is that praise may be alone for God, the Lord of the universes.”



telegram (accessed December 2, 2015)

The text is deeply imbued with religious emotions ingrained with hostility against everyone who is not part of the 'believing group'. The message conveyed by the text is stressed by the visual elements: one fighter on guard, one fighter reading presumably the Qur'an, and the flag of IS dominating the scenery. On page 5, we see violence and religion combined and the combination of 'fighter-reader' has become part of the iconography of IS.

We may find many examples for recoding conflicts in religious language and symbols (Kippenberg) – without saying what was first: religion or conflict. We can assume that the practical logic of the jihadi actors allows for just one code: religious violence.



telegram.me (accessed November 14, 2015)

This (re-)coding may be very simple:

"You will not enjoy peace unless we will live it in reality in the lands of the Muslims."

The above example shows a contextualization of the terrorist attacks in Paris with the bombings of French airplanes in Syria (left corner) and evokes an antagonism of Muslims and non-Muslims, adding religion as a code to interpret what is perceived and constructed by IS as a conflict between two states.

There is a very simple fact that needs to be stressed in order to avoid a misunderstanding that often results from a way of thinking in antitheses. Stressing the importance of religion does not mean that religion is the *only* reason for the existence of jihadism – or any form of religiously motivated terrorism. Jihadism is in fact a multi-determined, multifactorial phenomenon. This misunderstanding constitutes the basis of some of the positions that deny the importance of religion.

Case studies of misunderstandings

In a recent book titled *Jihad and Nihilism of the West* (Manemann 2016) we read that relating Islam to jihadism means to assume a causality between religion and violence and, especially, between Islam and violence (ibid.: 20). Later on, the author acknowledges that Islam may offer a set of symbols and ideas which may be used to legitimize violent conflict (ibid.: 21). The author then turns to his counter-argument as he refers to the undeniable fact that religion in most cases of Europeans turned jihadists was not the central element of the process of radicalization into violence of young Europeans. He is referring to some widely publicized cases showing that jihadists may indeed only have a superficial knowledge of Islam. Consequently, (IS-) Islam cannot be the cause of their radicalization. This often voiced opinion ignores the impregnation of certain parts of the Internet by jihadi propaganda that does not convey long theoretical-theological tracts but a very

“The second misunderstanding is that IS is really an attempt to re-enact the times of the early Islamic community. As scrutinizing the material produced by IS demonstrates, it is a conscious construction of an IS-Islam based on some kind of archaeology of the Islamic tradition.”

condensed slogan-like (IS-) Islam, which enables the articulation of a diverse opposition. The opposition articulated is, for example, against – if we refer to some elements of (IS-) propaganda – double standards of ‘Western’ politics, the persecution of Muslims, history ranging from colonialism to the present bombings in Iraq and Syria killing civilians, the discrimination/racism against Muslims (defined as a group discriminated against for religious reasons) and the creation of an ideal state based on (IS-) Islam. This kind of propaganda is embedded in a larger structure that intertwines with religious motivations and political, social, individual feelings of malaise (Löwenthal 1990).

Claiming that converts are doing something that may be against some rules of Islam (e. g., Manemann: 26), perceived as a non-contradictory system of thought, implicitly advocates the idea that only a religiously well-educated believer can be regarded as a representative of his/her religion. A recent convert cannot be called a true believer. Certainly we are overdrawing this idea. Yet, it may be justified to identify the absurdity of this way of reasoning. Setting benchmarks for being accepted as a believer and expecting believers to act in accordance with one set of normativity would consequently exclude the majority of believers throughout history. The basic assumption is that religion cannot be ambiguous or contradictory, which is in fact a quite modern idea (cf. Bauer 2011, Ahmed 2016). Here the author does not want to say that there is no role for Islam in jihadism but would rather prefer to argue against mono-causal explanations of radicalization (Manemann 2016: 28). The author, however, does not offer a solution of how to approach the compatibility of his claims: “religion plays no role” and “religions play a role”. We would expect him to answer the question, which role...

This conceptual uneasiness is borne out of a demarcation against other positions to be characterized by some misunderstandings; though being aware of the im-

portance of religion in jihadism. The first misunderstanding of writers like Graeme Wood (2015) is that a barbaric variety of Islam has to be “medieval”. It is a modern variety of religion, emerging as part of the dark side of modernity. But it is, in fact, a religious variety. To construct a distinction between a “medieval”, evil religion, that cannot be modern and an enlightened modernity, subscribes to the common normative misunderstanding of modernity being a homogenously positive force. The history of the 19th to 21st century bears witness to cruelties that were based on modern rationality. Even enlightenment is an idea much more difficult to understand than the - at best naive - defenders of the word “enlightenment” may think. *The Dialectics of Enlightenment* by Adorno and Horkheimer seems to have been forgotten.

The second misunderstanding (Wood 2015) is that IS is really an attempt to re-enact the times of the early Islamic community. As scrutinizing the material produced by IS demonstrates, it is a conscious construction of an IS-Islam based on some kind of archaeology of the Islamic tradition.

These one-sided arguments are rooted in a flawed approach to jihadism and IS, which is only referring to selected sources in the English language. However, knowledge of the bulk of jihadi discourses in Arabic remains missing and unexplored.

Reading their lips

Turning to jihadi Arabic language resources, we will for example find a blog called *A’iddū! (Prepare yourself!)*². The title refers to a Qur’anic imperative. The blog offers resources (documents, videos) enabling jihadis to fight the military jihad at different levels. As such, it is a predominantly jihadi military blog.

There are many files on explosives, weapons, anti-tank weapons, intelligence, but also a file about the spiritual preparation of fighters. Tactical aspects

are discussed, training of leaders, but also 'Alī b. a. Tālib, the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad, and Abū Dharr, a prominent companion of the prophet, as role models for cautious behaviour, and another one discussing security issues following the biography of the Prophet, find mentioning. We can even assess a special file extracting examples from the biography of the prophet whilst among other files, we will find the story of Abū Mahjan al-Thaqafi, another companion of the Prophet, as an example for those who have committed great sins and think they are not permitted to fight military jihad – quite the contrary, for sure.

The selected texts, files, and videos come from diverse sources: older al-Qā'ida files, HAMAS, Free Syrian Army documents, translations of Sun Tzu into Arabic, even a translation of an Israeli text; a very pragmatic selection indeed. All these technical, military resources are evidently embedded in religious traditions and understand themselves as the natural outflow of these traditions. When quoting the *basmala*, (the formula that there is no god other than God), etc., the texts are not using a culturally set phrase but subscribe to a religiously impregnated discursive formation and a history of jihadism going back to the Afghan Arab volunteers.

IS-Caliph

The core of the identity of IS consists of two elements: the caliphate and violence (Lohlker 2015 and 2016a). One of the prerequisites to proclaim a caliphate is to have a person who has the qualifications of being proclaimed as a caliph. Leaving aside other elements of the theory of proclaiming a caliphate, we see that IS argues for al-Baghdādī as a caliph by saying that he proved to be a successful fighter and a scholarly man based on him having authored some books. He additionally fulfils another one of the requirements of becoming a caliph as he has the appropriate genealogy. The following illustration published on a channel on *telegram*

connected to IS cites a genealogy going back to the Prophet Muhammad via his daughter Fātima:



telegram (accessed February 13, 2016)

A Video

A recent video entitled *Night Arrows (si-hām al-layl)*³ demonstrates the strong reference to religion and the appropriation of Muslim religiosity by a specific IS-Islam.

Showing a city by night and a minaret, which evokes the idea of the call to prayer to be heard from it, the setting of the video is contextualized as a Muslim city where the mosque is the most important structure. The clip cuts to a man slowly rising from his sleep, taking a candle, then proceeding to his ritual ablutions and taking water from a clay jug referring to the situation at the time of the prophet. Afterwards the man goes to another room in order to pray. An audio file can be heard featuring the voice of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqāwī, the founding father of a precursor organization of IS. It starts with the call of "the Muslims" in general having to pray for the fighters.

Some sparkling points are moving down into the hands of the praying man, sym-

bolizing al-Zarqāwī's speech calling "the Muslims" to pray for the jihadi fighters, and become part of the prayer. The candle slowly fades away and a landscape with two birds flying is shown at the sunset. A voice in the background is telling the viewers that "the Sunna," the obligatory example, has to be followed as "set by God for his creatures" and that this includes the fight against oppressors. Again, this is an example of religious amalgamation of a, at first glance, political statement.

"Another speaker tells the audience that the sky belongs to God, that the earth is his, and that the sea and rivers are his. High mountains are shown, forests, and a waterfall. The film cross-fades to airplanes and the speaker is telling his viewers that God will ultimately destroy all the tools of the attackers. This will be achieved through IS fighters who are shown recovering the corpses of killed fighters, which conveys the message that they will fight until they die."

Also the next sequence is a political statement, showing Obama, Putin, and Hollande speaking. In the background a voice is talking about the necessary retaliation for the "war against Islam and the Muslims". The crimes of these aggressors are, so the background voice continues, evident from the destruction caused by the bombing campaigns of the anti-Is coalition. The following sequences show ruins, people trying to help injured victims (especially children) and an enraged elderly man who summons the wrath of God. The film cross-fades between images from the Paris November 2016 attacks and the speaker continues to talk about retaliation, before a sequence shows fighters training for urban warfare. The calls for "those who stand up in sincere belief to fight the unbelief in the world" to take revenge for the Russians bombings – Putin's image is shown – of the "houses of the Muslims". The fighters, the speaker continues, prepare themselves trusting in God – IS-fighters are shown parading with their cars – with their first and foremost important equipment being "belief" (*īmān*). The viewers are told that they are aware of their sins for which they repented.

Then the film continues to show praying Muslims, whereas the overall orientation towards god in all aspects of life is stressed again and again. The prayer to god is considered "the most important weapon" and while showing an old man praying alone and a boy and an old man praying together, a short recitation of the

Qur'an closes this part of the video. A man appears elaborating on the virtue of prayers and again we experience a cross-fade to a congregation of men praying. In this regard, the speaker mentions that the praying men are asking for the support of God against their enemies.

Another speaker appears speaking in Turkish calling the Muslims, "the jihad-is", "to help the religion of God at least by praying"; the "help" that is asked for translates to fighting. The speaker is sitting in front of many rows of Arabic books, appearing to be religious literature, which is supposed to indicate his scholarly standing. Again, the praying men are shown and a song gets played about the people who stand in unity, which refers to the Muslims as confessors of the unity of god.

Another speaker tells the audience that the sky belongs to God, that the earth is his, and that the sea and rivers are his. High mountains are shown, forests, and a waterfall. The film cross-fades to airplanes and the speaker is telling his viewers that God will ultimately destroy all the tools of the attackers. This will be achieved through IS fighters who are shown recovering the corpses of killed fighters, which conveys the message that they will fight until they die. IS-Fighters in a city are cross-fading between images of an erupting volcano and a stream of lava. Footage is shown of catastrophes that happened in the US, and the speaker proclaims that God may punish America through earthquakes or other disasters. The video is a true amalgamation of religion, which manifests itself in prayer, the utilized religious formulae and allows for an identification of jihadis with Muslims in general, for a political message, and an equalization of nature and the power of God – and IS. To subtract religion from this analysis means to overlook an important part of the message conveyed.

Anti-Shiism

Anti-Shiism is a paradigmatic case for the religious dimension of jihadism. The en-

mity against Shiites often dehumanized as "filth" etc. (e. g., Lohlker 2016b) has been embedded into a centuries old discourse of marginalization and persecution, reinvigorated in modern times, with Saudi support.

It may be tempting to interpret his sectarianism as a mere ideological costume hiding geopolitical interests (Saudi-Arabia vs. Iran, IS vs. Iran, etc.) but a reconsideration. However, we may better understand the nature of the, now deepened, Sunni-Shii divide if we reconceptualise it as politics, amalgamating centuries-old religious traditions, and strengthening itself by tapping into these religious lines of force.

We may add the other elements of IS thought or IS theology of violence (Lohlker 2015, 2016a), such as the need to establish a caliphate based on violence, the prevailing apocalyptic mood, a thoroughly constructed set of gender rules based on religious sources, even the anti-smoking campaign IS argued on religious grounds, the internal structure of IS referring to institutions mentioned in the history of Muslim communities, police/market control (*hisba*), welfare (*zakāt*), and the introduction of new currency, called gold dinar, as in the early time of Islam. All this provides ample evidence of the religious foundation of jihadism, enabling jihadis to envision the overall strategic aims. As Scott Atran wrote:

"This is the purposeful plan of violence that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State's self-anointed Caliph, outlined in his call for 'volcanoes of jihad': to create a globe-spanning jihadi archipelago that will eventually unite to destroy the present world and create a new-old world of universal justice and peace under the Prophet's banner. A key tactic in this strategy is to inspire sympathisers abroad to violence: do what you can, with whatever you have, wherever you are, whenever possible. [...] While many in the West dismiss radical Islam as simply nihilistic, our work suggests something far more men-

acing: a profoundly alluring mission to change and save the world." (Atran 2015)

That is why religion and theology matters for jihadis: It is the fuel making the machine of destruction move. Cutting off the supply means offering alternative conceptions of religion – and many other things. Theology matters, but it is not the sole solution to the problem of jihadism. Hard power may be needed, but soft power (youth workers, teachers, community, and family empowering, etc.) is required, too. The political, social, and economic preconditions are the soil for the rise of jihadist entities, but religion – in fact, a specific construction of religion – is part of this problem.

We are in need to help the people affected by this theology of violence and in order to create another sense for themselves we must remind ourselves of Eagleton's remark: "only those interventions will work which make sense to the mystified subject itself" (Eagleton 1991: XIV).

And Islam?

This approach may not be understood as anti-Islamic since the argument starts from a re-conceptualization of thinking Islam saying:

"The proposed conceptualization of Islam [...] enable[s] us now to use the term *Islamic* in a clear and meaningful way: *something is Islamic to the extent that it is made meaningful in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muhammad as one or more of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text*. The exemplary problems with which we began [...] – namely, what is Islamic about Islamic philosophy? What is Islamic about Sufism? What is Islamic about a society perfused by the norms of the Sufi-philosophical amalgam? What is Islamic about the poetry of Hāfiz? What is Islamic about Islamic art? What is Islamic about wine-drinking? – now cease to be problems at all. It is evident that what is Islamic about philosophy and Sufism is that they are both

"That is why religion and theology matters for jihadis: It is the fuel making the machine of destruction move. Cutting off the supply means offering alternative conceptions of religion – and many other things."

“This re-conceptualization enables us to move away from the perennial question if an act is Islamic in its essence leading or not to a more meaningful question: Is an act made meaningful in terms of Islam for the actors?”

hermeneutical engagements with the Pre-Text of Revelation (the one identifying the Pre-Text with Reason, the other with Existence). A society perfused by the Sufi-philosophical amalgam – like the Balkans-to-Bengal complex – is a society in which the notion of the direct accessibility of the Pre-Text of Revelation is simply normative: that the Pre-Text is directly knowable is an idea that people in such a society carry around in their heads and with which they live. A society in which the idea of engagement with the Truth of the Pre-Text is a norm is a society in which people are conscious in their daily lives of the spatiality of Revelation as elaborated in discursive and social hierarchy, and in discursive and social interiority-exteriority. It is a society in which the Truth of Revelation/Islam is conceived as a limitless Reality whose meanings are susceptible to and available for exploration, and not merely as the limited and limiting reality of prescription. It is a society in which the enactment of the principle of meaning-making beyond the letter or beyond the form is found not only in modes of speaking, but in all variety of creative and explorative action; such as by the audience of a figural painting who ‘aspire to Meaning from the face of the Figure’ [...] It is a society in which the metaphorical truth of this world is conceived as the bridge to the Real-Truth: a bridge on which one is forever crossing back and forth in the act of meaning-making. The society of hermeneutical engagement with Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text is a society in which people explore and express the potential meanings of the Truth of Islam through communicative mechanisms and structures that support the coherent production and maintenance of inevitable tension and contradiction: namely, metaphor and paradox, as exemplified in (but not limited to) Hafizian literature and its definitive mode of speaking, the *ghazal*. It is also a society in which people explore and express the potential meanings of truth by means of social mechanisms and structures that support the coherent production and maintenance of inevitable tension and contradiction, such as the hierarchical differentiation of discursive space into elite and common, and into private and public. The respective subject of each of our diagnostic questions [...] now emerges not as an instance of a problem *anomalous* to Islam, but rather

as an expression of meaning *constitutive and definitive* of Islam.” (Ahmed 2016: 405-406)

This re-conceptualization enables us to move away from the perennial question if an act is Islamic in its essence leading or not to a more meaningful question: Is an act made meaningful in terms of Islam for the actors? Thus we are able to leave the discussion on the essence of true Islam turning to the process of making another meaning of Islam and any other variety of religion and theology advocating violence.

“This is probably as good a juncture as any at which to address the question from which there is no escape in this day and age: can one speak meaningfully of ‘Islamic violence’? As long as the Muslim actor is making his act of violence meaningful to himself in terms of Islam – in terms of Pre-Text, Text, or Con-Text of Revelation – then it is appropriate and meaningful to speak of that act of violence as Islamic violence. The point of the designation is not that Islam *causes* this violence; rather it is that the violence is made meaningful by the actor in terms of Islam – just as the prodigious violence undertaken by soldiers of democratic nation-states is *made meaningful* for them and by them in terms of the nation-state, and may, therefore, meaningfully be called ‘democratic violence’ or ‘national violence’ [...] In the case of violence, as with everything else, one Muslim may disagree with another Muslim over whether his mode of meaning-making is legitimate – that is to say, whether it is coherent with its source – and may on those terms of incoherence deem the professed Muslim actor a non-Muslim (all heresy is ultimately a dispute over coherence) but this is not the point here. The point here – as everywhere else – is whether the actor makes the act meaningful for himself in terms of Islam.” (Ahmed 2016: 452)

Breaking the deadlock of discussions about the violent or non-violent essence of Islam enables to think of Islam in a way countering jihadi meanings and creating a meaning of Islam fundamentally – and theologically – different from contemporary formalistic, prescriptive and restrictive Islam. To close with another quotation:

"For us to conceptualize Islam in terms of expansive registers of possible meaning is to do no more than Muslims themselves did." (Ahmed 2016: 310)

ISIS proves our assumption of its religious nature again and again. During the time of writing these lines, ISIS publishes a series devoted to short religious tracts (in Arabic: *maktabat al-himma*) and instructions about a proper understanding of the month of Sha'bān during which among other Muslims important days of religious importance are celebrated. The video criticizes these celebrations as unlawful innovations and stresses the importance of additional fasting during this month thus appropriating a religiously important period of the year. The same is done in a six pages leaflet; another leaflet discusses unlawful innovations in the month of Sha'bān. Other leaflets are devoted to the month of Ramadan, the month of fasting, and its rules. A special leaflet compiles the battles fought during Ramadan during Islamic history turning the month of contemplation – and festivities – into a month of fighting.

Other leaflets in the series *maktabat al-himma* discuss the proper way slaughtering animals as sacrifice, the proper way of doing ablutions, how to pray following the example of the prophet. An-

other leaflet discusses the profession of the oneness of god in a way excluding other Muslims from being true Muslims; this leaflet is based on the teachings of Muhammad b. 'Abdalwahrāb, the founding figure of the Wahhabi variety of Islam. These small selections of videos and tracts published during three months of 2016 may illustrate the conscious attempt of ISIS to appropriate all of the religious practice of Islam based on a coherent theological vision.

¹ Thanks to Ferdinand Haberl for having read one version of the text and his valuable contributions to improve this text.

² We do not give any URL for jihadi material. All the material discussed is archived and available.

³ The title refers to the raising of hands during prayers at night understood by some as the "night arrows" fired at the enemies. An armed group in Syria bears this name (Qabalan 2013, 13).

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FROM COUNTERING TO PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

BY HAMED EL-SAID

Few can argue today that whatever we have been doing since 9/11 has actually made things better in terms of either reducing the level of radicalization in our societies, preventing violent extremism, or even answering the long-standing question of 'what leads an individual to become a terrorist.' This frustration has been most felt by academics, whose lack of access to necessary data undermined their analytical potential and tools to improve our understanding for the phenomenon and to help promote more comprehensive theoretical, conceptual and operational programs to prevent violent extremism (PVE).

This frustration has recently been blatantly expressed by one of the leading academics in the field, namely, Professor Marc Sageman, the former CIA Operations Officer and psychologist in Pakistan and Afghanistan, who stated:

Despite over a decade of government funding and thousands of newcomers to the field of terrorist research, we are no closer to answering the simple question of 'What leads a person to turn to political violence?'¹

The available statistical evidence is also supportive of our failure. As the Institute For Economics and Peace in its latest 2015 report on Global Terror Index concluded;

Terrorism continues to rise... While terrorism is highly concentrated in a small number of countries, the number of countries which have had a terrorist attack is also increasing. In 2014 terrorism impacted more countries than ever before. Attacks were recorded in 93 countries, up from 88 in 2013. This continues the trend from 2011 with more countries experiencing terrorist attacks and deaths each year.²

There are several explanations behind our weak ability to deal with terrorism and to achieve major breakthroughs in the field. State security apparatuses' reluctance to strongly collaborate with academics and independent researchers is one of them.

Almost everywhere, with rare exceptions, states showed strong disinclination not only to share with academics and independent researchers primary information, but they have also been unwilling to provide them with access to necessary data, or to facilitate their empirical fieldwork, which required access to radicals, violent extremists, prisons, and first line prison officials. These were necessary to improve our understanding for the conditions conducive to the kind of radicalization and extremism that could lead to terrorism, as well as to provide academics and independent researchers with the opportunity to evaluate and assess the vitality and effectiveness of policies and programs being implemented to counter violent extremism (CVE). The upshot has been "an unbridgeable gap between academia and the intelligence community," a gap that has been translated into "an explosion of speculations with little empirical grounding in academia, which has the methodological skills but lacks data for a major breakthrough."³

In the West in general, secondly, a 'militarization' approach was favoured over 'soft' and arguably more effective approaches to prevent radicalization in the first place. Such an approach relied on drone attacks by unpiloted fighters in foreign countries and locations where terrorist groups are present, military campaigns and aerial bombardment in countries or parts of countries controlled by such groups, and assassination of senior leaders of terrorist organisations. At home, almost all states, Western or otherwise, ramped up security and repressive measures sometimes

with little regard for human rights and the rule of law. They also strengthened intelligence services, expanded legal procedures, and “increasingly adopt[ed] administrative measures, even if these measures do not specifically target [violent extremists]... incitement to and/or glorification of terrorism” have also been criminalized by most states⁴ in ways that were too open, so that human rights organizations worried that such procedures might, and have actually ended up in many instances violating human rights, undermining democracies and freedoms of expressions. Instead of undermining radicalization, such measures ended up increasing radicalization and extremism.

Prevention, which is better than cure, received little attention from state security officials and politicians in most cases. Worse, “Even though Member States often refer to the issues of prevention, law enforcement and security measures are still dominant issues.”⁵ A recent survey of the 28 European Union Member States, just before the British Brexit Referendum, by the ICCT in the Hague “Asked about whether Member States [MS] have a rehabilitation and/or reintegration programme in place for convicted and/or returning FF [foreign fighters], a few MS responded affirmatively.”⁶

Outside the Western Hemisphere, the effects of terrorism were felt most in countries with weak “respect for human rights,” widespread corruption, weak governance and bad policies, spread of political violence, and weakened “safety and security environments,” all of which are strongly theoretically and empirically “correlated with terrorism.”⁷

There are limits to the military-security-administrative approaches when it comes to PVE. Arresting an individual, or even assassinating him or her, might stop them from joining a terrorist group, travel to a war-zone, or even carry out a violent act. But it does not stop others

from doing the same thing. Nor does it improve our understanding for why he/she was radicalized in the first place. Drone attacking a group with the aim of killing one senior terrorist leader standing amongst innocent citizens ends up radicalizing more individuals than the ones we kill. A bullet, a rocket and a missile can kill a terrorist or two but does not kill or prevent terrorism. Education, integration, peaceful coexistence, prosperity for all, respect of human rights and the application of the rule of law can do and guarantee a better outcome. And a better understanding for the conditions conducive to the kind of radicalization and extremism that could lead to terrorism remains the key to developing successful policies and programs to PVE. This cannot be achieved by solely militaristic and security approaches, the kind of approaches most, but not all, states have been relying on since the 9/11 attacks with the obvious outcome: “terrorist attacks are happening more and more often... they [truly] are.”⁸ The recent attacks in Paris, Brussels, Florida, Jordan, Lebanon and Istanbul reinforce and confirm this statement, reveal globalised nature and reach of terror, and act yet as a further, painful example on the increased sophistication, brutality and human and physical costs of terrorism.

The United Nations have acknowledged these flaws in our approach to deal with terrorism. Early this year (2016), it launched a new Prevention of Violent Extremism Action Plan. It comes ten years after the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy was enacted in 2006. The new Action Plan calls for a new paradigm shift, one that would at least bring a more acceptable balance between countering and prevention.

The new Action Plan establishes four pillars as both causes and consequences of terrorism. Acknowledging and improving them would go a long way towards undermining the conditions conducive to the kind of radicalization and extremism

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that could lead to terrorism. These four pillars are:⁹

- Achieving sustainable development, including the creation of economic opportunities and decent employment for youth, the main target of terrorist organizations.
- Promotion of good governance and good policies that can maximize growth, prosperity, and hope for all, particularly for the youth, the fodder for terrorist organizations who are most attracted to radical ideologies and practices.
- Respect for human rights and dignity, as well as freedom of expression and choice, seen as necessary to promote critical thinking and creative and innovative processes to challenge the selected and simplistic terrorist narrative
- Finally, resolving long-standing and unresolved conflicts, that create a safe haven for terrorist organisations who exploit weak or falling states to create

a base for their nihilistic organizations, attract youth, establish centre points and training camps to graduate global terrorists. This is all done in a language camouflaged in appealing and selective religious arguments devoid of any legitimacy concern for the lives of the youth they pretend to care about and provide hope for.

One of the major recommendations of the new UN Plan of Action is the need for every country to design and implement a 'national' PVE Plan, the aim of which is to rely more on preventing, rather than simply the reactive approach of totally relying on countering VE. While there is no one size fits all, the national plan will be designed by the national and local authorities, and will take into consideration each country's priorities, level of threat, capabilities and resources. Realising the important role of civil society in PVE, the plan also calls for 'an all of society' approach, one that brings all stakeholders together to PVE. The Plan also recognizes the complementary and indivisible role of the state in this process, and thus also calls for an 'all of government' approach

to nip the kind of radicalization and extremism that could lead to terrorism in the pod.

There is no quick fix and there is no silver bullet. But the new United Nations PVE Action Plan provides not only the legal obligation (through Security Council Resolution 2178), but also the larger framework necessary to guide member State's officials and practitioners in their efforts to design and implement effective national PVE strategies. It is up to member States to make a difference now.

¹ Sageman, Marc. (2014). The Stagnation in Terrorism Research, in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26/4. Pp. 565-580. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09546553.2014.895649?redirect=1>.

² Institute of Economics and peace, Global Terrorism Index: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism, 2015. P. 9. <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>.

³ Sageman, Op cit, 2014, p 565.

⁴ All quotations from ICCT, (2016). The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union Profiles, Threats & Policies, April, The Hague, P. 6.

⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

⁷ Institute for Economics and Peace, op cit, p. 5.

⁸ Melissa Clarks (2015). Globally, terrorism is on the rise - but little of it occurs in Western countries, in ABC News, 17 November. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-17/global-terrorism-index-increase/6947200>.

⁹ United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism>.

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THE DEADLY CYCLE

The entangled Psycho-Social Dynamics of Ideologisation and Radicalisation

BY JAN BUSCHBOM

Part 1 of 2: „Individual in crisis‘: Biography and psychology of misery” & “Ideological interpretation regimes & the retreat of social competency”

Precisely in its especially contingent moments, but also simultaneously in its finality, there lies a notably intensive moment of attraction in the universal fascination with violence that emanates from radicalised groups and the violence and victim mythology they preach. For anybody emotionally and cognitively highly confused by such a victim interpretation, the indiscriminate nature of the shot into the crowd is an expression of the reified incomprehension of the social relationships they feel to be at the mercy of (Buschbom 2015).

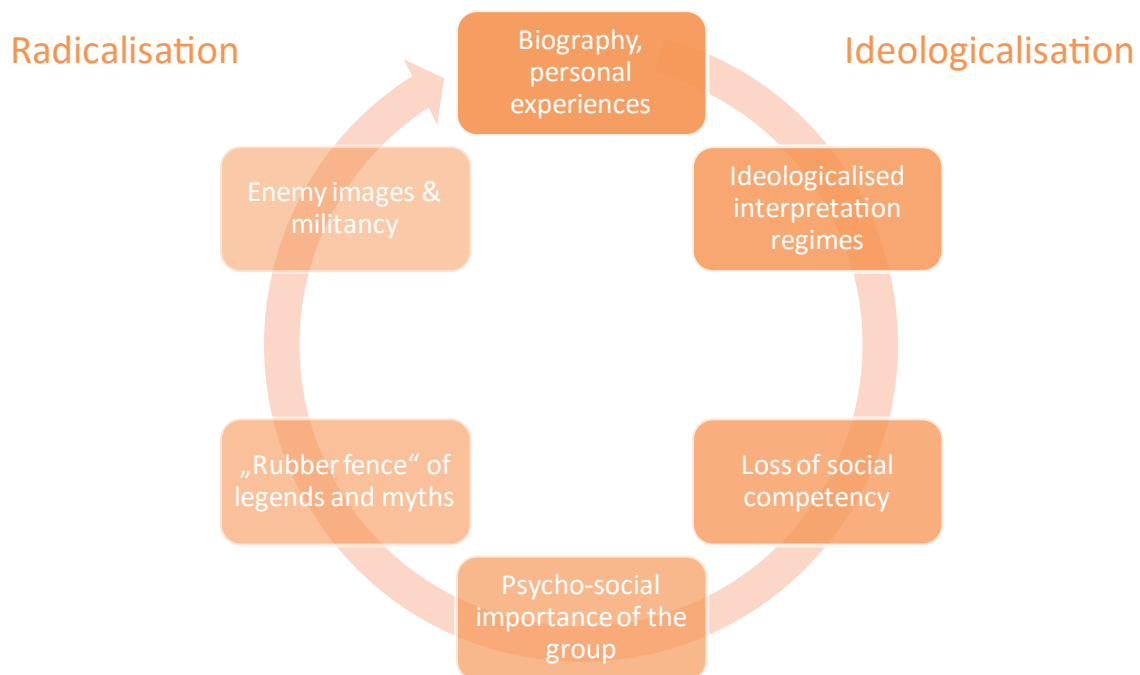
“Allahu akbar” – militant Islamists commit barbarous acts with the war cry “God is the greatest” - In the case of Islamic terrorism, the boundless world is shaking humanity to its core, so the superlative reaches down to Earth and acts through violence to realign the world back to bearable measures. If God is the greatest then everything else must be profane and unimportant and evidence is offered with violence. Those affected by force are mere mortals. “Fear is based upon the vacant horizon of possibilities surrounding what will be”,¹ wrote the philosopher Hans Blumenberg in his “Work on Myth”, and the role of myth is precisely to disempower that which is fearsome in its unfamiliarity. “That which is identifiable by name is lifted from unfamiliarity through metaphor, made available through the narration of stories in respect of what it



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means.” (Blumenberg 2006: 11f.).² That which shakes humans to the core must be rationalised, “not just in the history of humanity, but also in that of the individual.”³ “This does not primarily take place through experience and knowledge, but through trickery, such as the supposition of the familiar for the unfamiliar, in explanations for the inexplicable, through the naming of the nameless. Something is presented to make that which is out of our time the object of defensive, charming, softening and disempowering action. The identity of such factors are constrained and approached through names, an equivalence of (re)action produced.”⁴ Blumenberg describes thus the primal situation of mythical-religious relation and its stimuli; Ideology certainly falls behind the possibilities of knowledge as secondary myth, as Adorno lucidly noted in his “Theses against occultism”. Real myths are “the precipitate of the of the state of knowledge of successive epochs, each of which showed its consciousness to be some degrees more free of blind subservience to nature than the previous.” (Adorno 2005: 239). In this sense, ideology is secondary myth, namely a “symptom of the regression of the consciousness.” Whereas the “helmsman looking to the Dioscuri...” was “historically appropriate to the subject’s experience of the objects of his actions” (Adorno 2005: 239), secondary myth falls behind the possibilities for knowledge of the time. According to Adorno it is therefore more untrue than the first. The cause behind it has also switched: Whereas mythology drew its power from the fear of blind natural interrelations, in secondary myth it is opaque social interrelations that spread fear and horror. The psychoanalyst, Otto Rank, noted this switch back in 1929. For modern man it is no longer natural reality that is “the genuine external strong enemy [...],

The ideologicalising / radicalising spiral



but an artificial reality created by himself, which we term civilisation in its external and inner aspects". The "cultural man" no longer stands up "against any natural opponents, but essentially against himself, his own creation, as reflected especially in manners and customs, morality and conventions, as well as social and cultural institutions."⁵ (Rank 1929: 5).

The disempowerment of the so unspeakable as of the unnamable (i.e. inconceivable), which is attached to everything apart from knowledge, inevitably fails due to reality. Blumenberg therefore attributes the "myth-bearer" an "affinity to downfall" in an only just recently published chapter of "Work on Political Myth": "He does not die coincidentally and due to the unfavourable conditions of the earlier time, but his pretences overburden reality so much that he fails due to them. Precisely this is however not the collapse of his concept, but its birth from the contingency of facts and liberation of the time-independence of its validity. The mortality of the mortal first releases the immortality of him and through him."⁶ (Blumenberg 2014: 26) Violence is central to the events and the quintessential role of the deification of violence is the transformation of evil to good. As the religious scholar René Girard wrote,

"The metamorphosis of the maleficent into the beneficent is the major aspect of his mission, the aspect that elicits public veneration" (Girard 2013: 286). Hasan al-Basana, the founding father of modern Islamism, concluded that the blessedness of the slain lies in the sacrifice. "Each of them perished in achieving his goal, and was sacrificed in the path of his principle. He abandoned whatever he abandoned so that God's light might be shed over all humanity and so that the sun of the noble Qur'an might shine upon them. For in this lies the whole of their felicity and the perfection of their progress, if they but knew." (al-Banna 1975: 94).

But the metamorphosis, continues Girard, can take the opposite direction, transforming instead from good into evil. For "nothing of violence is alien to him."⁷ He can intervene at any stage and assume all roles, either simultaneously or in succession." (Girard 2013: 286). The difference between sacrifice and the sacrificer is inane at a religious level, writes Girard. Violence is the means with which the frightened man promises himself to become the human agent as opposed to the trembling animal (vgl. Becker 1997: 139), and to take fate into his own hands, like the Gods did before him; Sacrificial

violence is at the core of mythical-religious events, as René Girard lucidly demonstrated. Powerlessness transforms to omnipotence. When viewing individual violent histories, the violence researcher Ferdinand Sutterlüty speaks of epiphanic violent experiences, namely from "life course changing experiences with active violence, which have a lasting impact on those young people" (Sutterlüty 2003: 521). An example would be someone who was a long term victim of inner-family violence but then one day hit back against the tormentor, thus swapping the culprit and victim roles and marking the start of a violent path. Here, as there, the dramatic switch of victim and culprit roles gains a central meaning. Here, as there, against the background of deeply seated feelings of powerlessness, there comes an epiphanic realisation of experiencing ultimate potency through the violent act in the emergence of violent myths. (Sutterlüty 2003: 293ff.; Girard: 2013).

The ideologicalising / radicalising spiral

As man is not just a "social creator" but also simultaneously a "social creature", Ernest Becker describes fundamental loneliness as a moratorium on self-

acquaintance: “Loneliness is not only a suspension in action and stimulation, it is a moratorium on self-acquaintance. It is a suspension in the very fashioning of identity; cut off from one’s fellows, one cannot add his power to the enhancing of cultural meaning or derive his just share of it. Social ceremonial is a joint theatrical staging whose purpose it is to sustain and create meaning for all its members.” (Becker 1971: 100). What however when (and for whatever reason) such basic acts of finding meaning are left lacking in an individual?

If a human being can not develop the symbolic, linguistic and social resources to give life meaning then he has to seek sources that find a sense beyond the profane, and, because it originates from extra human spheres, such gained sense can only be executed by violence: To be Lord over life and death – to overcome death – self-deification.

Where ideological radicalising development differs from the development processes of other violent stances is in the central influence that group dynamics and group truths take upon perceptions, feelings and thoughts of the increasingly ideological individual. Rampage killers, for example, often tend to suffer from an inwardness, which lacks the capacity to interpret sense into the outside world, i.e. in their social environment. “The compulsively projecting self projects only its own unhappiness – from the very basis of which it is cut off by reason of its lack of reflective thought”, is how Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno described the fundamental vicious circle in “Elements of Anti-Semitism” (Horkheimer, Adorno 1997: 192). For the unhappiness of the subject lies in his inability for reflective thought: “The morbid aspect of anti-Semitism is not projective behavior as such, but the absence of reflection. When the subject is no longer able to return the object what he has received from it, he becomes poorer rather than richer. He loses the reflection in both directions: since he no longer reflects the object, he ceases to reflect upon himself, and loses the ability to differentiate. Instead of the voice of conscience, he hears other voices; instead of examining himself in order to decipher the protocol of its own lust for

power, it attributes the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ to others. It overflows and fades away at one and the same time.” (Horkheimer, Adorno 1997: 190-191).

If the intrinsic inability for reflective thought of the individual encounters group truths, which further seal him off from the emotional, theoretical and notional access to social reality, dynamics can develop that are described below as the text book ideological radicalisation cycle. This article is a preliminary and model-based look at this deadly cycle. In view of the explanation attempts by the national-socialist butchers, Adorno, in his deliberations on “Education after Auschwitz”, himself demurred that some people under the same conditions become so and that others in turn completely different, but nevertheless it is worth the effort (Adorno 1971: 99; see also Buschbom 2014).

I. „The Individual in Crisis“ (Löwenthal 1970: 14): Biography and psychology of misery

The initially significant biographical experiences are just as equally a result of unfinished individualisation processes as they are individual crises as a mirror of social malaise. The “emotional substratum” as an effusion of “social malaise” and of the “individual in crisis” had already been emphatically elaborated at the end of the 1940s by Leo Löwenthal in his study “Prophets of Deceit”, which quickly advanced to a classic of political psycho-

logy and has lost none of its relevance today (Löwenthal 1970: 13f.). Mistrust, dependency (helplessness and passivity), exclusion and fear form just some of the “diffuse grievances” upon which the agitator draws. But as the individual crisis is always an expression of society, and reliably easily perceptible precisely from the emotional and indefinite social being, Löwenthal claimed “These feelings cannot be dismissed as either accidental or imposed, they are basic to modern society”, (Löwenthal 1970: 14), “they are not simply pulled from thin air”: Isolation, so-called spiritual homelessness, bewilderment in the face of social complexities to which he feels victim, and a general weakening sense of value are found responsible for these feelings by Löwenthal (Löwenthal 1970: 15). In Löwenthal’s analysis, the dilemma of educational practice work with ideologicalised target groups is already hinted at. For the malaise leading to the crisis of the individual is, according to Löwenthal, neither an illusion nor just an invention of the agitator. “[I]t is a psychological symptom of an oppressive situation.” (Löwenthal 1970: 15).

Especially in its vagueness, indeterminacy and unspecific nature, the feeling of victimhood is the ideal gateway to ideological group narratives, which side the consolation of the victim community with the individual’s experience. The feeling of not being alone in one’s own life story and the emotion associated with it relieves frustration and helplessness, whilst



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uniting in rage and anger. The ideologue offers the simplest interpretations for experiences of deprivation, marginalisation or discrimination. These interpretations were previously cognitively inaccessible to the individual, but now, from his subjective point of view, what previously lay in the dark becomes glaringly illuminated by means of the ideological narrative. The relationship between life story, affect and the construction of ideological victim communities is exposed most clearly perhaps with themes such as racism and discrimination. In his enthronement speech on the 29th of June 2014, the self-proclaimed caliph and top terrorist al-Baghdadi sketched out the utopia of a racism free Muslim community that would be realised in the trenches of the fighting brotherhood of Jihad. He held up this utopian society free of racism and discrimination in contrast to the collectivised victimisation narratives. Muslims everywhere, but especially those in the Western world, were drowning in an “ocean of shame” and were nourished by the “milk of indignity” (only in the German edition, Dabiq 1, 2014: 7). The belief that Muslims all over the world are victims of a strategy aimed directly against them is a central impetus of international Islamism. Collective victimisation narratives also play a central role in historical as well as present day right-wing extremism. This can be retraced in the ideologue of “political soldiers” that still delivers an important impulse for right-wing violence today (see Buschbom 2012).

Both sides, Islamism as well as National-Socialism, significantly argue from the background of the anti-colonial grand narrative. Hasan al-Banna argued that the endeavours of the European colonial powers were directed towards destroying the faith community and in doing so against Islam itself (al-Banna 1975: 27-28); for Goebbels, for example, the First World War was part of the “international Jewry” plot aimed at colonising the German race, forcing it under the servitude of world capital, destroying it in this manner with the goal of creating “humanity as a

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uniform mish-mash” (Goebbels o. J.: 12-14). Both sides argue with elaborate conspiracy theories, both construe „dark plots“ as an assault on their imagined community, an ideal of community they could scarcely imagine outside of this victim role.

Social psychology research surrounding the Terror Management Theory (TMT) has provided evidence showing the close connection by which fear, prejudice and the inter group conflicts resulting from them interrelate. In the “Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination” Jeff Greenberg et al. draw a dismal summary from 25 years of research in more than 500 individual case studies:

“The theory and research reviewed in this chapter thus far generally paints a dark picture of humanity and its prospects. When reminded of death, people become more motivated to support and defend their social ingroups and related cultural worldviews. As a result they favor their ingroup, become more intolerant and aggressive toward outgroup members and those who criticize the ingroup, and support hostile actions toward outgroups. TMT traces these phenomena to a vital need to deny the awareness of one's inevitable death – an awareness that won't go away so long as we have the kinds of minds we do. And once intergroup aggression begins, the specter of mortality is likely to loom large, fueling more hostility, stereotypic depictions of the outgroup, and lethal conflict. Even images of destroyed buildings increase D[eath] T[hought] A[cce]ssibility, and as a consequence, support for military aggression [...]. Thus conflict tends to escalate in a cycle of death reminders, intergroup hostility, and violence.” (Greenberg et al. 2015: 134.)

In the face of this deep rooted fear for that which is misunderstood and inscrutable, the profoundly unsettled individual reacts by stereotyping and seeking protection within their own group. Social abstraction plays its role here too. Leo Löwenthal already described this relationship shortly

after the Second World War. “In a world where the individual’s sphere of action is increasingly restricted by anonymous social forces”, stereotypes are “tentative suspicions about the meaning of complex phenomena” (Löwenthal 1970: 24).

How deeply ideological processes root themselves in individual life stories and their turbulent phases is illustrated in an example from the work of the Violence Protection Network, which has been typecast due to German data protection laws: A fifteen year old girl suffered considerably from the separation of her parents, during which it often came to fierce arguments between the married couple. The violent outbursts, especially those of her father, devastated her entire scope of experience and perception. Self-doubt and isolation afflicted the girl during this period. Helpless and deeply saddened she looked at her own feelings towards her parents, at her hatred towards the people she loved. Uncertainty, feelings of guilt and shame nearly brought her to take her own life. After her parents’ divorce settlement she sought contact to a Salafist group. She noticeably increasingly interpreted the marital split of her parents through anti-Western narratives. As her new friends explained to her, it was the gender roles lived out in Western society, their attitude towards sexuality, their promiscuity, the role of women in public life, the increasingly effeminate ways of Western men and the cult of homosexuality in the Western culture, which had all caused her parents to quarrel so intensively that it resulted in them no longer being able to care for their family unit. Indeed the focus of her assignment of guilt lay with her mother, whom she quintessentially accused of leading a Western lifestyle and not embracing her assigned role as a woman. When viewing Western society, she argued that Western life was essentially directed towards threatening and destroying Muslim cohabitation in its core, namely the family. From her newly adopted narrative, the West is in all aspects not simply the complete opposite of Muslim life ideals but actively directed



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towards destroying Muslim communities – or Islam itself – with her own life story ultimately being the best proof of this. At the same time the radicalised group cushioned the psychological and social deficits of the girl. It delivered her an easily understood meaning to that which had befallen her in her life – and one that was now integrated seamlessly into a general view of enemy concept explanations and victimhood stories. That which before seemed completely incomprehensible to her finally made sense: the violent father, who before was so loving, and the mother that abandoned her family, despite previously caring so self-sacrificially for them all. Beyond these offers of meaning, the radicalised group monopolised the fulfilment of all her deficient requirements at a time when the girl was going through an extremely painful part of her life. The young girl received what she was missing at home from her new friends, namely warmth and security. The group also promised her a solution for her own life in the form of an utopian alternative. Only the so-called Islamic State would enable the girl to form her own family completely in accordance with the Qur’an and Sunna,

they argued. She would find a husband that would not only lovingly care for her beyond all Western egoism, but one who would even be willing to sacrifice his life for the ummah (the worldwide community of Muslims). If that transpired then she would be the widow of a hero – a martyr – and well provided for by the ummah for the rest of her life. As the young woman began to think out loud about the hidschra – travelling to IS territory – her desperate mother turned to the Violence Prevention Network team. Through close cooperation with many important figures in the life of the client it was possible to hinder the young woman’s planned journey and to reconnect her more strongly into a compassionate “normal” daily life, to roll back the psychological and social significance of the radicalised group, and to substitute these ideologemes with a more realistic view of her own life as well as social events as a whole.

In the practical experience of the Violence Prevention Network it is almost always such private, almost intimate life circumstances that serve as the gateway for ideology. Only rarely does the ideological grand narrative develop an attraction all by itself. Rather more, it provides a framework of meaning into which one’s own life can be arranged. In the case of the young woman, contradictory family experiences, the misunderstood, the incomprehensible and the unsettling, all led to deep-rooted helplessness and separation. For her it suddenly all made sense through the lens of the collectivising victim narrative. Furthermore, the I of biographical experience found comfort in the we of the victim collective: Not being alone with one’s own experiences and feelings, finding a starting point within the protection of a group from which assumed and actual experiences not only make sense, but from which, when viewed through the lens of clear fronts, the victims here and the culprits there, one can fight back, do something. The reduction of complexity by means of the in-group dominating ideologemes produces equivalence of (re)action.

II. Ideologicalised interpretation regimes & the retreat of social competency

In the measure to which the ideologeme gains evidence, so it structures perception and the interpretation of social reality. A dropout from a notorious neo-Nazi band described in interview the oppressive personal consequences when daily life is perceived and interpreted along the ideological lines of enemy and victim discourses:

“Looking back on it I can only consider these fantasy images of ‚political persecution‘, which basically extend into all aspects of daily life, as an unnatural and self-imposed burden. They are for a large part based around diverse conspiracy theories about the ‚complete control of an all-seeing machinery of state.‘ For an individual this means: Everyone phone call is made in fear that it is being listened to. Every parked car in front of the house is a homeland security surveillance van. The man waiting at the wheel of his car is a security agent there to observe you. Sounds in the hallway are police officers preparing to raid the flat in a few minutes. This is what the fantasies are like – and sometimes also the realities.” (Buschbom 2013: 17)

The ideologeme does not simply give meanings to past incidents *ex post*, but rather it strongly influences the everyday experience. Anyone who thinks they know they are surrounded by enemies lives in a permanently agitated state; anyone who almost compulsively checks everything that takes place in everyday life, who wonders whether or not this or that should already be judged as the work of an all powerful enemy acting behind the scenes, they have left peaceful territory and their everyday life has become a war zone. Such ideological scopes of perception encroach into all aspects of life.

That even everyday coincidental events, as described by the right-wing rocker, can have deadly consequences under the unhallowed power of ideological regimes of interpretation is illustrated by a typical hate crime from the practical work experiences of the Violence Prevention Network. Olcay S. (name changed) served a long prison sentence. As a youngster

he killed a pensioner. Olcay recounts: “I was on the way to a friend. Then some old Kraut come up to me and starts acting all faggy.” What did the man do exactly? “He looked at me all faggot like, so I told him he should stop being faggy towards me. But he didn’t stop this faggy behaviour...” What did the man do now then? “Like I said, he looked across all faggy, and as my knife had flicked open I stabbed him.” Does he feel guilty? “Acting all faggy is a hideous sin, as it says in the Qur’an.” Afterwards Olcay took the man’s wallet. There was only about 20 Euro in it, he says. The ideological package that Olcay’s crime is tied up with is made from a highly volatile mix of traditional concepts of honour, of hyper-masculine ideas of male identity and the resulting notions of male sexuality, of homophobic resentments and xenophobia (“old Kraut”), as well as religiously charged ideologemes.

“Honour,” Olcay would say later, “I just defended my honour”. The question as to

how his honour had been injured brought him close to a fit of rage. “I told you, so listen to what I am saying the whole time. He acted all faggy towards me, the faggy loser!” But the man didn’t even say a word, did he? “Does he have to look at me all faggy, dude? I fucked him up like, before he fucks me, that loser!” After the crime Olcay took the money because he was angry from his viewpoint to have been the victim of a gay sexual assault. “He still owed me, so I just took the money. Anyway, it wasn’t even 20 Euro.”

Cases, such as that of Olcay, illustrate the high explosiveness of exactly these fragmented ideologemes when they have taken control of the interpretation regime. Where ideologically stabilised people are able to view violence as instrumental, namely as a means to a sacred goal, the stimulative nature of Olcay’s homophobic resentment takes command. A single look perceived as unsuitable or uncomfortable is enough to be interpreted as



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a homosexual advance. That which the young man perceives as humiliation collides with half-digested myths of masculinity, honour and religious command, which for him have amalgamated unrecognisably into one. It is however the second glance that typically delivers the provocation to start hitting out. From Olcay's point of view the victim had the opportunity to correct and change his behaviour after being told to "stop being faggy". But the elderly man, who clearly did not know how to respond to the young man with a suitable reaction, remained silent. He "looked" according to Olcay. This silence was perceived as a confirmation of the homophobic interpretation regime to such an extent that even after his deed Olcay still believed the dead man owed him something and took the victim's wallet.

In its fundamental functionality as scope of perception and evaluation, which delivers the inner logic that the reactions of people to given situations are based upon, i.e. Blumenberg's "equivalence of (re)action" (*Äquivalente des Umgangs*), the concept discussed here of ideology as a secondary myth is surprisingly similar to a mechanism described by the violence researcher Ferdinand Sutterlüty under the terms 'violence affine interpretation regime' and 'violence mythology'. "Discussing interpretation regimes offers itself here, because the interpretation of an interactive situation leading to violence has a meaning – just as every action is based upon a meaning, a definition of the situation, and protagonists always act due to the meaning that objects have for them... these meanings can be designated as interpretation regimes [emphasis in the original], because they do not emanate from a conscious decision of these young people to view and assess given interactive situations in a certain way." (Sutterlüty 2003: 278)⁸ According to Sutterlüty, interpretation regimes develop alongside biographical experience. Situations in which they take effect are "biographically overly determined". Interpretation regimes become violence affine if those controlled by them perceive "certain situations through the lenses of patterns of meaning, which allow a violent answer to seem the most self-evident." (Sutterlüty 2003: 278). Such overly determined experiences from the particular life story and especially from the family

world are "carried into further social living environments. They recognise over and over again in the situations they encounter the animosity that had hit out at them in their family since their childhood. In the course of the expansion of their social relationships in adolescence, the area of hostility stretches with it [...]" (Sutterlüty 2003: 279)⁹

III. Increasing psycho-social importance of the ideologicalised group.

Where group truths take over the regime of the perception of everyday life, the individual loses contact to the (adult) society surrounding him, and that means he who is deeply entangled in the legends and myths of the ideologicalised group loses contact to the social reality around him, losing visibly in social competency. The significance of the ideologicalised group for fulfilling even the most banal of psycho-social needs increases until eventually only the ideologicalised group is a suitable social sphere. After his complete exit from the scene, the ex-right-wing rock musician described this mechanism as "voluntary imprisonment". As long as one is involved within the ideologised group, putting "political activities" behind "individual necessities of life" is seen as treachery and rejected. Only after his complete exit was his scope opened to how hermetically the individual is isolated from the social milieu: "After the liberation from the 'pressure of persecution' and the constant secrecy, with seemingly paranoid patterns, a completely other form of freedom awaits: The freedom to finally see oneself as part of society again, not standing on the fringe. The freedom to once again think and act independently rather than following political orders. The freedom to shape your own life instead of endorsing a political movement, whose only meaning consists of giving up precisely every freedom, whilst simultaneously holding up the political demand for more freedom." (Buschbom 2013: 18). He also describes the overwhelming character of the collectivising victim narrative that draws its incisiveness from the juxtaposition of actual experience and ideologicalised narrative. Even criminal prosecution is not seen as a consequence of one's own actions, but is read as a sign of the wickedness of "the system". Thus the ideologicalised interpretation regime con-

tinually confirms its own premises anew: "...'persecution' causes enormous stress and always new justification strategies for one's own behaviour." (Buschbom 2013: 17). The emotional vicious cycle of the ideologicalised group therefore combines with the argumentative vicious cycles of ideology (s. u. S. XX) in that it does not accept anything outside of it and perceives everything beyond it as adversarial.

Written in the 1920s and still unrivalled is Ernst Cassirer's portrayal of the connection between unconsciousness and group in mythical happening in his "The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms". According to Cassirer, mythical truth absolutely lacks the "meaning and value nuances, which emboss knowledge in their notion of object and enable a strict division between different types of object, to reach a border between the world of 'truth' and the world of 'make believe'". Myth remains exclusively in the presence of its object – in the intensity with which it captures consciousness at a certain moment and takes possession of it. [...] Consciousness [in myth] is self-conscious merely as existence – it possesses neither the impulsion nor the possibility to rectify, to criticise the pre-existing, to qualify it through its objectivity that it can be gauged by a non-existing, by a previous or a future alternative. If this indirect gauge continues to collapse, then all being, all 'truth' and reality unravels in to the mere presence of its content. Everything that has appeared thus inevitably concentrates on one single plain. Here there are no different levels of reality, no conflicting defined grades of objective certainty. The picture of reality that is thus created lacks thereby quasi the depth dimension – the division of foreground and background as they are implemented in such a characteristic way in the empirical-scientific term, in the separation of 'cause' and 'justification'." (Cassirer 2010: 43-44).¹⁰ Mythical thinking displaces consciousness from its conditionality – and that of its language. "Myth and language stand in constantly alternating contact – their contents support and condition one another", wrote Cassirer (Cassirer 2010: 49).¹¹ The religious philosopher Franz Rosenzweig describes the inner dwelling unconsciousness of the self-deification as the essence of myth. It is "a life that knows nothing above itself and nothing below

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itself". (Rosenzweig 1988: 37). Myth is an existence close to affect and its fate:

"The figures of myth are neither simply powers nor simply beings; neither as one nor the other would they be alive; only in the fluctuation between passion and the termination of fate do their highly vivid traits develop: unfounded in hate as in love, for there are no reasons beyond its existence, reckless, for there is no return to which it must watch for, its free outpourings not directed, only inhibited by the language of fate, its needs not solved through the free power of its passion, and nevertheless both, freedom and being, at one in the mysterious unity of the living – that is the world of the myth." (Rosenzweig 1988: 37-38)¹²

As Hans Blumenberg also quotes, myth is "affect transformed in imagination and action." (Blumenberg 2006: 27). It lies in the nature of affect to perceive itself as the effect par excellence. "[T]he word and the name do not identify and imply, they are and they take effect. Already in just the sensual material from which language is formed, already in every expression of the human voice as such there resides within a specific power over things." (Cassirer 2010: 49-50)¹³

This remark from Cassirer about the specific power of language – namely the entanglement of affect and language to perception – is already relevant from the viewpoint of educational practice for the reason that it points to its reality-forming quality. Language and the content it expresses are not quasi an appendage that can be disregarded. They are at the central point of events, and anyone that thinks they can ignore the content of the mythical-ideological narrative, when dealing with corresponding clients, completely misjudges the underlying dynamics of mythical-ideological thought.

Mythical truth creates a rubber wall (for more on the metaphor of the "rubber fence" see part two of this article in the next edition of Interventionen), which

surrounds mythical thought and shields it from the impertinence of the outside world. Myth has a "level of truth" as "subjective evidence", which does not necessarily mean "empirical evidence", as Hans Blumenberg asserts; "implicitness, familiarity, archaic world affiliation can be held up in its place" (Blumenberg 2006: 77). However, Blumenberg's remark goes beyond the significance of mythical truth for each individual alone, for subjective evidence forms along the mechanisms of spoken word and is therefore always a phenomenon that forms within the community. Mythical truth is the truth of the archaic group – the "clan" (in order to use the appropriate jargon), the tribe, the clique etc. The core function of mythical truth is to stabilise the personality in the face of "opaque power" (Blumenberg) by bridging the gap between life and death.

"[The sphere of life and the sphere of death] do not behave as being and not being, but as similar, homogeneous parts of one and the same being. In mythical thought there is no specific, clearly defined moment at which life crosses over to death or death to life." (Cassirer 2010: 45)¹⁴

In this sense, mythical truth overcomes death. However, the archaic man is dependent upon the group for survival, so myth therefore creates a "community of the living", as Cassirer names it, and at the same moment its result, in a similar specific entanglement as he describes with language. Behind the communal purpose and the larger than life goal of the archaic community, namely survival itself, every partial interest must regress and the individual has to simultaneously unravel into the group:

"The ego feels and knows itself only as far as it perceives itself as a member of a community, as far as it sees itself linked together with others in the union of a clan, a tribe, a social collective. Only in it and through it can it own its self; its own personal existence and life is bound in every one of its expressions to the life of the

encircling whole, as if by invisible, magic ribbons.” (Cassirer 2010: 205).¹⁵

Ernst Cassirer’s description of the archaic mythical communitarianism, as developed in the second volume of his “The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms”, “Mythical Thought” from 1925, peculiarly resonates decades later in clinical schizophrenia research. Lyman Wynne et al. studied the relationship networks in pre-schizophrenic family constellations. Based upon these findings, they developed their concept of the pseudo-community (pseudo-mutuality) in 1958, in a pioneering paper whose implications went far beyond schizophrenia research. Whereas in an authentic community (genuine mutuality) divergence (divergence, non complementarity) resulting from individual experiences and needs are considered to be an asset, the personal development of members in the pseudo-community threatens to question the feeling of belonging (sense of togetherness, sense of relation) and is perceived as “not merely disrupting that particular transaction but as possibly demolishing the entire relation” (Wynne et al. 1958: 207):

“[...] pseudo-mutuality has led to the development of a particular variety of shared family mechanisms by which deviations from the family role structure are excluded from recognition or are delusionally reinterpreted. These shared mechanisms act at a primitive level in preventing the articulation and selection of any meanings that might enable the individual family member to differentiate his personal identity either within or outside of the family role structure. Those dawning perceptions and incipient communications which might lead to an articulation of divergent expectations, interests, or individuality are, instead, diffused, doubled, blurred, or distorted.” (Wynne et al. 1958: 210)

Two central common elements can be identified in these descriptions of community structures: The ego merges into the group, effectively bringing itself to dis-



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appear, and in doing so all purposes and intentions extending outside of the group disappear with it.

The value of ideology for the individual does not lie in the level of truth of its content but rather more in its function for the community towards which it is directed. Original mythical thought follows a function as developed by Blumenberg, in that it produces “significance” and “familiari-

ty”:

“The entanglement of significance and familiarity is superficial and displaces something that should not arise in its subjective-objective ambivalence: the equivalence to nothingness and fright. If meaning is the quality of the world, which it would not have originally been for man, it has thereby fought off a fear, which being pushed back in occultation is directly effected and validated in the process.

It is the form in which the background of the nothingness as that which frightens is held at a distance. In doing so, the function of the meaning remains present but misunderstood without its ‚original story‘. For the need for meaning is rooted in that we never completely raised ourselves out of fear consciously.” (Blumenberg 206: 125).¹⁶

Myth and with it ideology award sense to that which was previously contingent alone, filling it with meaning. Therein lies its magical, apotropaic, i.e. terror exorcising character that both myth and ideology have in common. Significance as the goal of mythical narration is the objective “expression of subjective evidence, therefore the incomparability of aesthetic determination. In significance, the subjective component may be larger than the objective, but the objective can never return to zero. [...] Significance must therefore have its own relation to reality, have a foundation of a level of reality. A level of reality does not mean empirical evidence; implicitness, familiarity, archaic affiliation can take its place.” (Blumenberg 2006: 77-78).¹⁷ In other words, significant is that which is subjectively evident. “For me, myself,” answered the ex-neo-Nazi, when asked about the significance of right-wing rock, “music was the ‚gateway drug‘ par excellence. Music was the medium that bound all ‚brothers‘ together, no matter what faction somebody came from.” The effect of the lyrics develops only then in the connection of the members of the scene with one another. This image is completed with the mantra-like repetition of the same thing over and over again. “The lyrics expressed what we thought and confirmed again and again our way of thinking.” When both elements are fulfilled, the constitution of a community through the sub-cultural world of experience and the confirmation of preconceived knowledge, or better still beliefs, only then does right-wing rock attain its full power. “The lyrics embossed themselves in such a way that political arguments could already be made in part with individual passages from them. That

means music also served to a certain extent as political schooling. [...] had the band ‚Landser‘, for example, claimed at some point in one of their songs that flowers were the historically proven evil of the world, then at least half of the right-wing extremist scene today would nurture an irrational hatred towards flowers – Bands such as ‚Landser‘ did not only set the tone, but moulded the thoughts of many of those present.” (Buschbom 2013: 20). In this sense, subjective evidence constitutes itself through ritualised speech in the group, therefore through the constant reciprocal confirmation of what is said within the ideologicalised in-group. The meaning is not decisive, but rather its function for the emotional stabilisation of the group members and in doing so for the maintaining of the group as such. Ideologicalised truths are formed and at the same time the group moral detaches itself completely from ethos (Cassirer 1985: 317).

The community supporting function of ideology is especially evident in the case of ideologicalised truths. The NS ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, for example, coined the phrase “organic truth”. In their form, organisms are oriented towards “functionality”, so “organic truth” rests inside them and in the “functionality of the living form.” Everything non-functional is a “sin against nature and a sin against aspirational inner strengths and values”: “Form and functionality are at the same time not the comprehensible standard of value of ‚a part of eternal truth‘, but they are truth itself...” (Rosenberg 1935: 683)¹⁸

Reason and rationality, but also ethics and forms of religion, are an expression of “organic truth”, “that means: they [stand] in service of the racially fixed national character. This is where they originate from and this is where they lead to. And their decisive criteria is to be found in whether they raise the form and inner values of the racial national character, cultivate it functionally, form it with more living strength or not.” (Rosenberg 1935: 684).¹⁹

Everything is subordinate to a “functionality” that serves “race” (Rasse), “people” (Volk) and “national character” (Volks-tum) - understood more as an “organic entity”: That which is factually true becomes “untrue” if it is “inconvenient” for the purpose of the “nation”; that which is factually “untrue” becomes “truth” if it is “convenient” for the purpose of the “nation” - even if it has previously been recognised as “untrue”. For that which is inconvenient is a sin against the “organic truth”, therefore against the “functionality” of the biological concept of “nation”. In other words: What serves the nation is true and what does not serve the nation is false.

This “organic truth” of Rosenberg, which is not orientated towards that which is the case but towards that which should be, must be read as exemplary for the ideologically formed concept of truth. It is utilitarian, where it is orientated towards function, and nihilistic to the extent that it denies empirical evidence and logic. It is also barbaric, in as far as it is nothing other than the truth of the stronger. From Goebbels, for instance, one can read: “Moral legal rights are not applicable in politics, but power is. If a movement seizes power then it also has the right to form the state itself. [...] It is not about whether I have recognised something as correct, that it is correct in all theoretical aspects, but far more about whether I find people who are willing to fight with me for this world-view that is recognised as correct.” (Goebbels 1940: 39-40).²⁰

Islamism also knows such “forbidden” truths, which are able to shock the ideological community to its core simply by being (in the world). The so-called “memoirs” of the religious convert, member of the “Sauerland-Gruppe” terror cell and German Taliban mujahideen Eric Breiniger appeared posthumously, after he was killed in a fire fight in Wasiristan at the end of April 2010. The authenticity of Breiniger’s written efforts was initially questioned, but in the meantime it is generally accepted that this is an authen-

tic, albeit edited original text. Aside from the question of the author, the text has a high value as a source when considering its function as propaganda. For the first time it provides a wide-ranging German-language view into the highly explosive ideas with which young Muslims in the German-speaking world are being wooed. Drawing upon Sure 59, 23, Sure 59, 24 and Sure 30, 27, in “My way to Jan-nah” – “My way to Paradise” it reads: “We are also not looking for a false path in the name of our Lord and of his attributes. Rather more, we believe in everything with which Allah described himself and with which his Prophet described him. We actually believe, and not ‘figuratively’, without changes or distortion and without question or compromise.

...

We deny nothing of him from all that with which he described himself. We move no word from its original position and we expand upon nothing (by way of interpretations) in order to bring our opinions or our absurd ideas into it under the pretence of Tanziih. Only he will find salvation from religion who devotes himself to Allah and his prophet as a God-fearing Muslim and looks to those that decree knowledge of such things for solutions to circumstances he is unclear about. Firm ground in Islam is only achieved through devotion and submission. He who therefore craves any knowledge that is forbidden to him and is not satisfied to subordinate his apprehension (to Islam) will obstruct his desire of true belief and pure Tawhid. (Breininger 2010: 11).

It is initially notable how much the literal (“we actually believe”) is defended against the figurative and the metaphorical. As a footnote in the text explains, Tanziih is “the absolution of Allah from all imperfection and shortcomings. However we do not misuse this principle for false interpretations” (Breininger 2010: 11, FN 1). Tanziih refers to a classical figure of thought in theological hermeneutics, which is also known in Islam: If a formulation or an argument in the holy text seems incompre-



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hensible or even false then this is not due to a flaw in the text itself (as God’s word can not be incorrect) but the fault of the reader, who plainly has a wrong understanding of the text; it comes down to reading the text differently, namely interpreting the text correctly in accordance with the known facts.

The alternative solution that Breininger’s text offers is therefore that of the authoritarian personality. Contradictions, inconsistencies, or even recognised falsehoods are not to be questioned but delegated to those that “decree knowledge”, because “firm ground in Islam is only achieved through devotion and submission.” Anything that cannot be brought into accordance with the religious texts and their reading by religious authorities is interpreted as “forbidden knowledge”.

In turn, such concepts go directly back to the source of Islamist thinking. Thus Sayyid Qutb went to great efforts to not only show that the Qur’an is in accordance with all modern natural sciences (as long as the metaphysical level was left untouched) but furthermore that they trace their beginnings from it. All sciences however that are dedicated towards “the interpretation of human endeavour”, the “explanation of the origin of the universe,” and “the origin of the life of man” can be learnt by Muslims, according to Qutb, only when taught by a “God-fearing and pious Muslim” (Qutb 1993: 109-110).

The catalogues of forbidden knowledge are long. Especially “philosophy, interpretation of history, psychology (with the exception of observations and experimental results, which are not part of the view of anyone in particular), ethics, theology and comparative religious studies, sociology (apart from statistics and observations)” are “influenced by Jāhiliyya convictions and traditions” and therefore to be rejected, as long as they are not taught by a religious and pious Muslim (Qutb 1993: 148). Western culture and sciences as a whole are “one of the tricks played by world Jewry” (Qutb 1993: 111). Even the slightest influence of Western philosophy could “pollute the clear spring of Islam” (Qutb 1993: 116):

“The Western ways of thought and all the sciences started on the foundation of these poisonous influences with an enmity toward all religion, and in particular with greater hostility toward Islam. This enmity toward Islam is especially pronounced and many times is the result of a well-thought-out scheme, the object of which is first to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs and then gradually to demolish the structure of Muslim society.” (Qutb 1993: 116)

A further typical element arises with beliefs that are hostile towards understanding and anti-intellectual, namely that understanding and intellect are positioned against religion, tradition and faith. From this viewpoint

it is Western knowledge and intellectuality that are destroying the Islamic community.

The ideologeme provides the interpretation regime and with it the equivalence of social (re)action, in that it eliminates deep insecurities by the reduction of social complexities and the individual gains confidence of action. But the ideologeme simultaneously stands in the service of the community, which initially provides the interpretation regime in the form of ideological truths. Ideology constitutes the pseudo-community and guards its preservation jealously. At the level in which the ideological community assumes dominance over the sense-making processes, it chains the individual to the pseudo-community; its significance in fulfilling the psycho-social needs of its members grows to block out all else, building a rubber wall of legends and myths around the community, which increasingly pushes the outer social environment towards insignificance. These mechanisms are outlined in the second part of this article.

Part 2 in the next edition discusses the meaning of the psychological research concept of "rubber fence", the "pseudo-community" (Lyman Wynne et al.) and the "double bind" (Gregory Bateson) for the understanding of ideological events.

Translated by Andrew Laight

¹ "Die Angst ist auf den unbesetzten Horizont der Möglichkeiten dessen, was kommen mag, bezogen."

² „Was durch den Namen identifizierbar geworden ist, wird aus seiner Unvertrautheit durch die Metapher herausgehoben, durch das Erzählen von Geschichten erschlossen in dem, was es mit ihm auf sich hat.“

³ „...sowohl in der Geschichte der Menschheit wie in der des Einzelnen“.

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⁴ „Das geschieht primär nicht durch Erfahrung und Erkenntnis, sondern durch Kunstgriffe, wie den der Supposition des Vertrauten für das Unvertraute, der Erklärungen für das Unerklärliche, der Benennung für das Unnennbare. Es wird eine Sache vorgeschoben, um das Ungegenwärtige zum Gegenstand der abwehrenden, beschwörenden, erweichenden oder depotenzierenden Handlung zu machen. Durch Namen wird die Identität solcher Faktoren belegt und angehebar gemacht, ein Äquivalent des Umgangs erzeugt.“

⁵ „... der wirklich äußere starke Gegner [...], sondern eine von ihm selbst geschaffene künstliche Realität, die wir in ihren äußeren und inneren Aspekten als Zivilisation bezeichnen“. Der „Kulturmensch“ stehe nunmehr keinem „natürlichen“ Gegner gegenüber, sondern im Grunde genommen sich selbst, seiner eigenen Schöpfung, wie sie sich insbesondere in Sitten und Gebräuchen, Moral und Konvention, sozialen und kulturellen Institutionen spiegelt.“

⁶ „Er stirbt nicht zufällig und durch die Ungunst der Umstände früh, sondern sein Anspruch überfordert die Wirklichkeit derart, dass er an ihr scheitert. Gerade dies aber ist nicht das Scheitern seines Konzeptes, sondern dessen Entbindung von der Kontingenz der Fakten und Freisetzung für die Zeitunabhängigkeit seiner Geltung. Die Sterblichkeit des Sterblichen setzt das Unsterbliche an ihm und durch ihn erst frei.“

⁷ Only in the German edition, see René Girard: Das Heilige und die Gewalt. Düsseldorf & Zürich 2006, p. 368: „Nichts, was Gewalt betrifft, ist ihm fremd; ...“

⁸ „Von Interpretationsregimes zu sprechen, bietet sich hier an, weil die Wahrnehmung einer Interaktionssituation, die zu Gewalt führt, eine Deutung ist – so wie jede Handlung auf einer Deutung, einer Situationsdefinition beruht und Akteure immer aufgrund der Bedeutung handeln, die Objekte für sie besitzen ... Als Interpretationsregimes [Hervorhebung im Original] können diese Deutungen bezeichnet werden, weil sie keiner bewussten Entscheidung der Jugendlichen entspringen, gewisse Interaktionssituationen auf eine bestimmte Weise zu betrachten und zu werten.“

⁹ Das Konzept steht auch dafür, dass die Gewalt zu einer wahrscheinlichen Handlungsoption wird, wenn die Jugendlichen die feindselige Welt ihrer Familie in weitere soziale Lebensräume hineingetragen. Sie erkennen in den Situationen, denen sie begegnen, immer wieder jene Feindseligkeit, die ihnen in ihrer Familie seit Kindheitstagen entgegen schlug. Im Zuge der Erweiterung ihrer sozialen Beziehungen im Jugendalter dehnt sich damit der Bereich des Feindlichen aus [...].“

¹⁰ „Die Bedeutungs- und Wertnuancen, die die Erkenntnis in ihrem Objektbegriff ausprägt und vermöge deren sie zur strengen Auseinanderhaltung verschiedener Objektkreise, zu einer Grenzscheide zwischen der Welt der ‚Wahrheit‘ und der des ‚Scheins‘ gelangt, fehlen noch völlig. Der Mythos hält sich ausschließlich in der Gegenwart seines Objektes – in der Intensität, mit der es in einem bestimmten Augenblick das Bewusstsein ergreift und von ihm Besitz nimmt. [...] Das Bewusstsein ist [im Mythos] als einem einfach Daseienden befangen – es besitzt weder den Antrieb noch die Möglichkeit, das hier und jetzt Gegebene zu berichtigen, zu kritisieren, es in seiner Objektivität dadurch einzuschränken, dass es an einem Nichtgegebenen, an einem Vergangenen oder Zukünftigen gemessen wird. Fällt aber dieser mittelbare Maßstab fort, geht alles Sein, alle ‚Wahrheit‘ und Wirklichkeit in die bloße Präsenz des Inhalts auf, so drängt sich damit notwendig alles überhaupt Erscheinende in eine einzige Ebene zusammen. Es gibt hier keine verschiedenen Realitätsstufen, keine gegeneinander abgegrenzten Grade objektiver Gewissheit. Dem Bilde der Realität, das auf diese Weise entsteht, fehlt somit gleichsam die Tiefendimension – die Trennung von Vordergrund und Hintergrund, wie sie sich im empirisch-wissenschaftlichen Begriff, in der Scheidung des ‚Grundes‘ vom ‚Begründeten‘, in so charakteristischer Weise vollzieht.“

¹¹ „Mythos und Sprache stehen in ständiger wechselseitiger Berührung – ihre Inhalte tragen und bedingen einander.“

¹² „Die Gestalten des Mythos sind weder bloß Mächte noch bloße Wesen; weder als das eine, noch als das andre wären sie lebendig; erst in dem Wechselstrom von Leidenschaft und Schicksalsschluss entstehen ihre höchst lebendigen Züge: grundlos im Hass wie in der Liebe, denn es gibt keine Gründe unter ihrem Leben, rücksichtslos, denn es gibt kein Zurück, nach dem sie sehen müssten, ihr freier Erguss nicht geleitet, nur gehemmt vom Spruch des Schicksals, ihr Müssen nicht gelöst durch die freie Kraft ihrer Leidenschaft, und dennoch beides, Freiheit und Wesen, eins in der rätselhaften

Einheit des Lebendigen – das ist die Welt des Mythos.“

¹³ „Auch das Wort und der Name bezeichnen und bedeuten nicht, sondern sie sind und wirken. Schon der bloßen sinnlichen Materie, aus der die Sprache sich bildet, schon jeder Äußerung der menschlichen Stimme als solcher wohnt eine eigentümliche Macht über die Dinge inne.“

¹⁴ „[Die Sphäre des Lebens und die Sphäre des Todes] verhalten sich nicht wie Sein und Nichtsein, sondern wie gleichartige, homogene Teile ein und desselben Seins. Es gibt für das mythische Denken keinen bestimmten, klar abgegrenzten Moment, bei dem das Leben in den Tod oder der Tod in das Leben übergeht.“

¹⁵ „Das Ich fühlt und weiß sich nur, sofern es sich als Glied einer Gemeinschaft fasst, sofern es sich mit anderen zur Einheit einer Sippe, eines Stammes, eines sozialen Verbandes zusammengeschlossen sieht. Nur in ihr und durch sie besitzt es sich selbst; sein eigenes persönliches Dasein und Leben ist in jeder seiner Äußerungen wie mit unsichtbaren magischen Banden an das Leben des umschließenden Ganzen gebunden.“

¹⁶ „Die Verschränkung von Bedeutsamkeit und Vertrautheit ist vordergründig und verstellt etwas, was in seiner subjektiv-objektiven Ambivalenz nicht aufkommen soll: die Entsprechung zu Nichtigkeit und Ängstigung. Wenn Bedeutsamkeit die Qualität der Welt ist, wie sie ursprünglich für den Menschen nicht wäre, so ist sie einer Ängstigung abgerungen, deren Abdrängung in die Verdeckung gerade durch sie bewirkt und bestätigt wird. Sie ist die Form, in der der Hintergrund des Nichts als dessen, was ängstigt, auf Distanz gebracht worden ist, wobei die Funktion des Bedeutsamen ohne diese ‚Urgeschichte‘ unverstanden, obwohl gegenwärtig, bleibt. Denn das Bedürfnis nach Bedeutsamkeit wurzelt darin, dass wir uns als der Ängstigung nie endgültig entziehen bewusst sind.“

¹⁷ „Diese Art der Objektivität ist Ausdruck der subjektiven Evidenz, also der Unüberbietbarkeit der ästhetischen Festlegung. In der Bedeutsamkeit kann die subjektive Komponente zwar größer sein als die objektive, die objektive aber nie auf Null zurück gehen. [...] Bedeutsamkeit muss also einen eigenen Wirklichkeitsbezug, ein Fundament von Wirklichkeitsrang, haben. Wirklichkeitsrang bedeutet nicht den empirischen Nachweis; an seine Stelle kann Selbstverständlichkeit, Vertrautheit, archaische Weltzugehörigkeit treten.“

¹⁸ „Gestalt und Zweckmäßigkeit sind dabei die fassbaren Wertmesser nicht ‚eines Teils der ewigen Wahrheit‘, sondern sind die Wahrheit selbst.“

¹⁹ „... das heißt: sie [stehen] im Dienst des rassegebundenen Volkstums. Von da kommen sie her, da gehen sie wieder hin. Und ihr entscheidendes Kriterium finden sie alle darin, ob sie Gestalt und innere Werte dieses Rasse-Volkstums steigern, es zweckmäßiger ausbilden, es lebenskräftiger gestalten oder nicht.“ (Rosenberg 1935: 684).

²⁰ „In der Politik gelten nicht moralische Rechtsansprüche, sondern die Macht. Erobert eine Bewegung die Macht, dann hat sie auch das Recht, von sich aus den Staat zu gestalten. [...] Es kommt, wenn ich etwas als richtig erkannt habe nicht darauf an, dass es in aller Theoretisiererei richtig sei, sondern vielmehr darauf, dass ich Menschen finde, die mit mir für diese als richtig erkannte Weltanschauung zu kämpfen bereit sind.“

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EMPOWERING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TO RESPOND TO RADICALIZATION

Lessons Learned from the work of the Canadian Muslim Resource Centre

BY MOHAMMED BAQBAID,
ABIR AL JAMAL AND
BRENDA McQUAID

This paper seeks to explore the complexities of the risk factors associated with the earliest signs of radicalization at the community level, particularly among immigrant communities. It discusses the limitations imposed on government agencies to limit their prevention work to individuals involved with extreme violence. Academics understand that the attraction to a more rigid ideology is a response chosen by youth experiencing issues with their sense of belonging and identity; the literature indicates that problematic social factors indicate early risk potential. One case study from the Muslim Resource Center for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI), demonstrates how local experience tracks closely to the research outcomes, demonstrating how communities also need tools and working models to help identify and intervene with the vulnerable. The MRCSSI has successfully developed a strength-based model - the Culturally Integrative Family Response (CIFSR) – to focus on engaging families, communities, and mainstream organizations as partners in addressing indicators of family violence that could be used to address radicalization as well. The program uses a special screening tool - Four Aspects Screening Tool (FAST) – to assess the risk factors when radicalization, usually among youth, is indicated as a response to family dysfunction. The CIFSR creates a specific structured, and a culturally integrative intervention through the coordinated organizational response team (CORT) to intensively support the individual whose is starting to shift the

normal family, peer, and faith bonds to an external group. This paper seeks to re-orient our ideas of how radicalization can emerge from lack of social integration, which often affects migrant families and converts. The CIFSR bridges the 'responsibility gap' for early intervention at the municipal and community level by employing a successful community based model for early identification and appropriate intervention responses for the vulnerable; the model can be adapted and adopted by community agencies to suit their unique community profiles.

Understanding radicalization

After the 9/11 and London bombings, academia, media, and policy makers have come to increasingly define 'radicalism' as it aggregates with the concepts of religious extremism and violence. The operational concept of radicalization places the word firmly into the current socio-political, cultural and religious context, most closely associating it with Islam (Edward, 2015; Sedgwick, 2010). As a result, 'radicalization' has also come to mean "home-grown Islamic terrorism" (Edward, 2015). The 'state-oriented' meanings combine a radical religious belief system with violent behaviour which imputes direct, and indirect, negative implications upon all Muslim communities in Western countries. Working with Sedgwick's (2010) "relative" and "absolute" realms of definitions and arguments, governments and agencies seem to operate mainly within the "absolute" definition of radicalization, where radical

is a term that equates to 'extremist', and is perceived to be highly problematic and threatening, whether or not there are indicators of violence. Yet states know that 'radicalization' is an inculcation process on a recruitment continuum to which they have limited access. While we now have some idea of how the suppression of migrant cultures has helped to create a vulnerable target group for recruitment, there are still large gaps in any state's ability to identify and perform early interventions at the community level, where there is a clear intersection between the vulnerable and the social issues arising from racism, migration stressors, and lack of integration. Another issue that complicates dealing with the early recruitment spectrum is the wide diversity of the "Islamic radical groups" (Herbert, 2009) and, to date, there has been no readily understood "profile" of those in the 'at risk' group. That gap – the ability to identify a vulnerable individual who is attracted, recruited and put through a radicalization process – shocked the city of London, Ontario in 2013. After the terror attack, the city discovered that three young classmates – from diverse ethnic and religious origins, and a 'well off' neighbourhood high school – were recruited to participate in an Al-Qaeda bombing of an Algerian gas plant. Two of the young men died, at least one as a suicide bomber. Interestingly, one of the young men abandoned his role and has since become "de-radicalized", showing the process is not irreversible. Such invisible and unpredictable processes challenge national agencies, such as The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), because radi-

cal thoughts are not themselves a threat. The force's mandate is to deal with those whose 'radical thoughts' are clearly leading to violence (RCMP, 2011). Recently, new legislation increased the Canadian government's capacity to "effectively deter, disable, identify, prosecute, convict and punish terrorists, thereby protecting Canadians from terrorist acts before they occur" (Public Safety Canada, 2015, p.40). While these powers are becoming more important, and allow national agencies greater screening of communications to intercept the 'violent radical', without active community programs, it will remain difficult for national agencies to find the earliest markers of the at-risk cohort before vulnerable individuals are closer to the last stages of radicalization.

The question is whether community agencies can identify potential radicalization more successfully at the community level. With the right screening tools, outreach and support programs, the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration has been successfully adapting and extending its Culturally Integrative Family Safety Response (CIFSR) program to identify families and youth at risk from violence including extremist recruiters. In London Ontario, the "responsibility gap" for working with the earliest stages of extremist attraction is being addressed as part of the overall community health and safety. The MRCSSI believes - with the active engagement of city agencies, religious and cultural institutions - that there is an important intersection between vulnerable individuals and families that are 'at risk' for breakdowns or violence.

Religion, culture, migration and radicalization challenges

Because the term 'radicalization' increasingly targets 'Islamic' cultures, both abroad and at home, the term becomes problematic for intertwining religiosity and politics (Herbert, 2009; Mavelli, 2013) and in danger of generating prejudiced measures aimed at a "criminalization of the Other" (Garland, 1996, as cited in Monaghan,



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2015). Still, the diverse circumstances and backgrounds of those that become extremists -- such as Daryl Jones and Chris Harvard of New Zealand, or Aaron Yoon, Ali Medlej, and Xristos Katsiroubas of London, Ontario -- indicate that the core issues related to the pull of over religiosity and politics follow after difficult personal circumstances and mental health factors 'push' them into the self-worth promises of extremism. What we know about "homegrown" radicals are that they are most often young individuals who are pulled to adopt rigid ideologies which have the potential to shift a mindset from passive beliefs into violent actions in their residential countries and/or countries of origin (Public Safety Canada, 2011).

To complicate matters, another important large gap exists between state and community responses, because communities and cities distance themselves from the idea of homegrown terrorists by clinging to the idea that "radicalization" is a secret and

unstoppable process. Such stances impede our actions to deal with radicalization as part of a paradigm. In contrast, a review of existing theories reinforces the need for community screening tools to identify and address the complex interplay of the (Universal) the social determinants of health, the pre-and post-migration experiences, the ethno-cultural aspects, and the religious or faith aspects of each individual's experiences as risk factors. From the research, we can see that such indicators are much better identifiers of social issues experienced by the 'at-risk' individual; from MRCSSI's experiences in the community, these factors are important flags to future problems.

Scholars, policy-makers, and professionals agree that no specific factor drives individuals into extreme radicalization. Factors that can change attitudes include problematic family relationships and intergenerational conflicts, traumatic pre-and-post migration experiences, economic stressors, social exclusion, isolation from ethno-cultural and religious communities, and alienation from the larger society (Butt & Tuck, 2014). Any combination of these factors enhance an individual's vulnerability to recruitment; the easy availability of attractive sites online -- one of the most utilized recruitment tools by violent groups (Neumann, 2014, as cited in Mink, 2015) -- gives the recruiters an easy screening tool for identifying potential members. It is not clear if the at-risk self-identify, or are slowly attracted into a specific group, or how recruiters solidify the radicalization process in person. However, the research shows that the various recruitment strategies do not start with religious faith as a starting point, instead, they look for a common denominator: the problem of social "belonging" and integration.

Mink's (2015) research on the influence of social determinants as a 'push factor' has demonstrated that those who are seeking self-satisfaction and a sense of belonging among their families, faith, cultural community, and larger society are most often

the targets for recruitment. The vulnerable are usually seeking new means of defining their own self-worth and may join a violent group to acquire a higher sense of purpose or to be part of an important cause that allows them to fulfill self-worth goals. They also seem to seek importance, closeness, and the bonds that are missing to their families and communities. During the recruitment process, they transfer their “normal bonds” and sense of worth to the violent group membership. By adopting the violent group’s aims and ideals as their own, their sense of belonging to a greater cause is fulfilled, and their ‘belonging’ is a powerful influence that can over-ride all the other personal relationships (Mink, 2015).

The Risk Factors among Migrant Families from collectivist background

Canada receives 250,000 newcomers from around the world each year (Statistics Canada, 2011). Muslims now make up about 3.2% of the overall Canadian population; in London Ontario, the Muslim population is the third largest in Canada, makes up about 4% of the total, and is represented by diverse ethnicities. While the national government concentrates on the issues newcomer settlement, the immigrant communities remain challenged by barriers to “belonging”. Those challenges directly impact the personal cluster of social issues that ‘push’ the vulnerable into recruitment options. In London, the MRCSSI is focussed on helping the Muslim community develop “belonging” for both individuals and families - for individuals to their families; for families to their faith, cultural and social communities; and eventually, to their adopted society. MRCSSI believes that tackling family integration issues is key to identifying and understanding how to combat the lure of radicalization by the socially disaffected from among diverse communities.

The pre-migration experiences, settlement issues, integration challenges, changes in the family dynamic, and inter-generational conflicts can combine to trig-

Migration itself is a difficult undertaking whose ramifications can challenge a successful integration into the community. At its worst, migrants may have experienced pre-migration trauma relating to civil wars, disruption to economic survival, deaths of family and friends, torture, rape, or the impoverished difficulties of living in refugee camps for extended time periods. Upon their resettlement, such families face post-migration problems of racism, culture shock, and language, education and employment barriers. Undoubtedly, the migration stressors continue to impact these individuals and families long after permanent settlement.

ger stressors that may exploit vulnerable individuals for recruitment - experiences that must be common among migrant communities worldwide. The experience of the MRCSSI indicates that the risk factors for an individual’s radicalization stem from problems associated with family isolation, social and economic integration, and family violence as a result of difficult migrant integration or from integration challenges and religious conversion.

Migration itself is a difficult undertaking whose ramifications can challenge a successful integration into the community. At its worst, migrants may have experienced pre-migration trauma relating to civil wars, disruption to economic survival, deaths of family and friends, torture, rape, or the impoverished difficulties of living in refugee camps for extended time periods (Riley, 2011). Upon their resettlement, such families face post-migration problems of racism, culture shock, and language, education and employment barriers (Riley, 2011). Undoubtedly, the migration stressors continue to impact these individuals and families long after permanent settlement, which is a community problem that the MRCSSI is organized to identify and mitigate.

Both the adults and children face long term personal challenges if they have experienced such trauma. The youth, already at risk at such a vulnerable time for their identity development, may have had traumatic experiences that influence their “mental health, developmental process, social adjustment, and integration” (Ahmed, Patel, & Hashem, 2015, p.14). As a result, this group may encounter identity-related issues within the ethno-cultural and religious context that develops into social exclusion during their early adulthood years (Berman et al., 2001 as cited in Ahmed, Patel & Hashem, 2015). Ahmed and Ezzeddine (2009) found that approximately 24% of Muslim youth in America have reported they do not feel supported by their parents, peers, educational institutions, religious communities, or by the greater

society. As a result they suffer social isolation and exclusion. Furthermore, many young convert Muslims experience new difficulties, such as isolation from losing their familial and peer social supports, and also become at-risk (Ahmed, Patel, & Hashem, 2015; Bowen, 2009).

Generational gaps between Muslim youth and their parents has been found to result in challenges to the identity and sense of belonging among the MRCSSI's young clientele. Parents often exert pressure on their children to conform to the family's original ethnic cultural norms and values, while the children, who face other social expectations from their adopted cultures, may rebel or submit (Whittaker et al., 2005 as cited in Ahmed, Patel, & Hashem, 2015). The competing claims to identity development between the two cultures can create intergenerational disconnection that enhances the populations of young people who become vulnerable to "dual identities". The children are expected to function very differently within competing social, cultural and religious expectations. Consequently, research finds that the young feel alienated from their Muslim communities, and from their larger societies (McDonald, 2011). There is also an underemployment dynamic at work among these families, who do not have the kinds of extended family and community support at work in their homelands. Their economic lives also associate with loss of class and social status (Galabuzi, 2008). Such multi-generational economic exclusion of these migrant groups creates a cycle that jeopardizes "the social cohesion of society; decreases the sense of belonging, dignity and self-esteem; [and] increases the risk of racialization and their problematic encounter with the laws" (Galabuzi, 2008, p.86-87).

When we examine the research done on radicalization, it is clear that such processes begin when there are issues within the home, family and community. Successful early counter-radicalization programming relies on intervening at the



point where family and individual issues appear. The diverse nature of multi-cultural communities need to guide the specific intervention plans of individuals who are at-risk, and need to set the path for effective strength-based community interventions. While these risk factors seem socially invisible, they can be addressed by the very visible and accessible potential of protective social factors and strengths that stem from the specific cultural environments. With the right approach, the protective factors can be successfully employed to mitigate the risk factors for early radicalization threats.

Utilizing Protective Factors: Building a path of mutual understanding and trust

At the community level, MRCSSI believes that the indicators of family isolation, violence, and disaffection from their particular cultural, religious, and social communities may be an early sign of vulnerability to radicalization for some youth. The MRCSSI mandate helps support the individual to counter the push/pull factors that might shift these normal bonds from a family, religious practice, or cultural community to an extremist group. This is the 'responsibility gap' that London's MRCSSI addresses by utilizing

its successful strength-based Culturally Integrative Family Safety Response (CIFSR) approach. The organization has had a number of early radicalization cases emerge as part of its CIFSR program. Knowing it has been successful with culturally appropriate interventions, the MRCSSI has created an adaptable model to identify those most at risk of radicalization, and developed a model of cultural support and intervention.

To understand how the CIFSR program works, it is helpful to understand the mission and values of the MRCSSI. It plays a key role with individuals and families to help mitigate the differences and integration difficulties that immigrant from collectivist cultures face while trying to integrate into an individualist culture. The MRCSSI acts as a network partner among a wide variety of community agencies, such as the police, child protection, social and legal services. MRCSSI also partners with, or mobilizes medical and mental health services, education, religious and ethno-cultural community representatives in its collaborations. Together a community team works to reduce risk factors that lead to family conflict, family violence and children and youth who are in conflict with the law. The guiding principle of the CIFSR program is to enhance and

support the success of the collaborative responses among all the key stakeholders, so that accommodation, collaboration and trust is established through any response effort. The response plan to family issues, or a youth in crisis, relies on mutual respect for the beliefs and value systems that must be balanced among the individual, the family and the responding community representatives. When problems arise within Muslim families, referrals are made to the MRCSSI by formal social and legally mandated agencies, by the network of religious and social leaders within the community, or by a family member. To truly understand the complex issues at work for each case, MRCSSI has created a specialized screening tool for collective cultures called the Four Aspects Screening Tool – ‘FAST’. The outcomes of that analysis guides the creation and actions of a specifically developed Coordinated Organizational Response Team (CORT) for the family or the individual. In recent years, it has become clear that the incidence of early radicalization of a youth is one of the potential consequences of family breakdowns or disruptions, and not surprisingly, the family stressors are often related to the migration, settlement and integration experiences.

In one of these ‘early stage’ cases, a family’s migration history mirrors all the pre-and-post migration challenges, and social theories that suggest there are patterns to early radicalization. While dealing with outcomes of an incident of family violence, the MRCSSI worker identified the dual identity issues and attraction to radicalization of the family’s young teen. The family had to leave a conflict zone where they lost close family to violence, in addition to their means of livelihood and status. The father had been abducted and tortured many times; they lived in refugee camp for five years; the mother and daughters faced threats of violence if the father was away, leaving the young son to protect the female family members. In addition to the trauma suffered by the parents and their four children from

pre-migration issues, the post-migration issues mounted up. The mother was diagnosed with serious health issues, so that the father also had to switch traditional roles to become a main caregiver. His caregiver role competed with his need to work, which put further economic stress upon the family. They became isolated from their religious and cultural communities after settlement. As a reaction to these stressors, the young teen demonstrated erratic and isolating behaviours, ranging from soft drug use and excessive partying, to isolation from the family with undue time spent on his computer.

At this point MRCSSI conducts an in-depth family assessment using its Four Aspects Screening Tool – ‘FAST’. FAST uses the Universal, Migration experiences, Ethno-cultural, and Religion and Faith aspects in conjunction with standardized and procedural tools used by mainstream service providers when assessing risks. Evidence collected from MRCSSI work also measures community engagement, and in this case, the tools identified early indicators of radicalization for this young teen.

The case worker worked intensively with the youth, who questioned his worth, felt guilty for reporting his father to the authorities, felt guilty for being unable to protect his mother, and felt responsible for triggering the family separation. He voiced his disappointments and feelings of alienation within his peer group. Furthermore, the case worker assessed that the teen had an excessive tendency to read about extreme religious ideology and the war he left behind on the internet. The worker was able to track how the boy’s perceptions had become more rigid and more radical, as he suffered the trauma and isolation of his family’s problems. The complexity of these factors flagged him as vulnerable and attracted to extremist recruiters.

This youth received special support as part of the CORT intervention. He was given personal medical and psycholog-

ical care to deal with his pre-migration trauma, extra religious guidance to re-orient his faith through his mosque and Imam, special support from the school system and a peer support group. Ultimately he moved away from the recruitment internet sites and re-established his bonds to his family, faith and community. This particular case demonstrates the common relationship between family stressors that arise from complex factors including breakdown and the youthful attraction to radicalization as a response to the problems of dual identity and family challenges. It also demonstrates the CIFSR key strengths: its understanding of historical context of relationships between mandated services and immigrant communities; its ability to engage key players in Muslim communities to utilize their support and help; and its ability to create a shared vision to heal and help the family and its individual members to overcome their isolation and integration challenges. For families’ from collectivist cultures, the CIFSR strength based model assists them to achieve better social integration without giving up their own unique values. Those “ends” are an essential part of the solution to identify and intervene with individual’s divergence into radicalization as the answer to the central question of their “belonging”.

Conclusion

MRCSSI has experienced the visible and invisible challenges of radicalization. The experiences demonstrate a need to understand that a government’s mandate that starts when there is a stated interest in violence. Our public response and expectations for countering radicalization should be undertaken at a community level as well, and be driven by the literature and research outcomes, which suggest that the risk arises from a complex array of variables stemming from personal and family integration, isolation, and dysfunction. For youth in these situations, the factors may be compounded by the problems of ‘dual identity’ and the problems of ‘belonging’ rather than over religiosity

and full radicalization which comes at a later stage. The case study of early radicalization of a London youth confirms the theoretical basis for its claim that early vulnerability for radicalization intersects first with social and family issues. MRCS-SI has developed a CIFSR initiative that is a strength-based model to enhance community engagement throughout the intervention. It also facilitates preventive and early identification measures that can be adopted and adapted by other communities who are facing the critical threat of radicalization, as an additional measure of increasing community well-being.

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EUROPEAN PRACTICE EXCHANGE

Non-theoretical Peer-to-Peer learning aiming at the development, improvement and refinement of deradicalisation practice

BY JULIA REINELT

Why: Relevance and justification

The phenomenon of militant Islamist inspired radicalisation and recruitment of young European citizens leaving their countries to fight alongside various armed groups in the civil wars in Syria and Iraq has increased in numbers and severity since 2012. This will continue to pose a major challenge for the future of European societies.

Obtaining reliable figures in order to assess the extent of this problem poses a challenge: Current estimates for all European Member states (except Greece and Hungary) place the figure of those who travelled abroad to join the Syrian – and more lately Iraqi – combat zones between 3,922 and 4,294 individuals in total.¹

The perpetrators of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels or Copenhagen were born and/or socialised in Europe. All of them were known by the security services of the respective countries to be radicalised before they committed their attacks².

In the light of these two factors – the recruitment of European youths and the tragic killings – it becomes clear that there is an urgent necessity to establish as well as refine European approaches addressing individuals that have already undergone the process of radicalisation. There still is a lack of interventions and deradicalisation providers who are capable of conducting targeted measures for those who have been identified as radicalised or in the process of radicalisation.

Who and What: Stakeholders and Aims

The European Practice EXchange (EPEX) is funded by the Open Society Foundations, the Robert Bosch Foundation, the King Baudouin Foundation as well as the Fritt Ord Foundation and is hosted by the Network of European Foundations (NEF).

The transnational project has established a network of practitioners from 15 different organisations dealing with a range of challenges from ISIS inspired radicalisation and recruitment to militant Islamist extremism. Its aim is to organise a cross-border knowledge transfer in order to share experiences and lessons learned as well as enable activity-based peer-learning.

This project will examine the validity of the assertion that there is a lack of intervention providers. This will be implemented

by highlighting the extent to which there is an untapped resource within communities and by exploring the conditions to which this resource could become more visible to mainstream society. Furthermore, it aims at spreading know-how, innovative approaches and facilitate an exchange of participating practitioners.

All participating practitioners – from organisations in Germany, UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Kosovo and Tunisia – are either involved in one of the following activities:

- Conducting targeted and / or community based interventions for juveniles that have been identified to be vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment
- Counselling relatives or other reference persons who are worried about juveniles at risk of being recruited as “Foreign Fighters” respectively youths who already left to conflict zones



- Working on deradicalisation and rehabilitation within the prison context or in closed environments

Or are in the process of developing and implementing one of the above-mentioned measures.

The European Practice EXchange (EPEX) – originally designed to facilitate knowledge transfer between European practitioners exclusively – deliberately included practitioners from Tunisia, shortly before its official start.

Although a non-EU country, Tunisia is the only Arab spring country that has managed to refrain from both the chaotic violence that characterizes Libya and Syria, and the return to authoritarian governance that can be observed in Egypt. In fact, it still is engaged in a transition process towards becoming a democracy. Nevertheless Tunisia is the source of a disproportionate amount of “Foreign Fighters”³. The issue of youth radicalisation is particularly significant in the context of democratic transition in Tunisia, where the youth still struggles with high rates of unemployment and limited opportunities for the time being.

When: Kick-off meeting in April 2016

The practitioners who participated in the Kick-off meeting in Berlin, which took place in April 2016, represented a diverse range of organisations: From a public service background, to well-established organisations with links to statutory institutions to new initiatives and informal grassroots groups sustained by the commitment of voluntary activists.

The variety of the stakeholders participating and their different work approaches offers the opportunity of mutual learning and inspiration towards the refinement of the respective own practice. A comparison from similar approaches, developed in different contexts - considering the differences in ‘political’ (national peculiarities) and ‘organisational culture’

(different organisational settings) helps to identify deficiencies, unquestioned assumptions and exceptional procedures.

How: Job-shadowing visits

The EPEX project will organise the exchange via ‘job-shadowing visits’, which will offer practitioners the opportunity to assess each other’s practice by hosting or visiting other participating colleagues. Instead of theoretical input based on lecturing, these “Job-shadowing visits” enable first-line practitioners to get a very concrete and practice-based insight into the work approach and setting of a colleague. This allows for a deeper and interest-lead discussion as the usual exchange organised in conferences.

Observing the workflow of a similar practice approach and discussing similarities as well as differences with one or two colleagues on an interpersonal level, opens up the possibility to be inspired by the observed practice (visitor), to receive constructive feedback and to see one’s own working context from a new perspective (host).

In the aftermath of a job-shadowing visit, the practitioner(s) who visited an organisation which is conducting interventions similar to their own practice will document their visit and practical learning experience. This documentation will include analysing which specific aspects of the observed working context are especially inspiring or even suitable to be transferred to the own project design, focus of discussions as well as unresolved questions, perceived difficulties and obstacles to overcome.

The activity of Job-shadowing visits is based on the premise that knowledge and expertise are not something inert or fixed to be passed between individuals / organisations but something that is shaped and coproduced by interaction on a personal level.

The approach of activity-based learning by observing the actual work-flow of

colleagues exceeds the usual theoretical lectures about promising practice shared in conferences. This form of peer-education and ‘social learning’ in a non-theoretical set up is more palpable and more suitable to conciliate individual capacity-building and contextual learning experiences.

The European Practice EXchange (EPEX) will therefore enhance the dissemination of know-how for on the ground work, support practitioners in the process of designing and implementing new approaches and conduce as a starting point for further development and refinement of existing methodologies and programmes. Ideally the exchange and networking project will create sustainable links between participating organisations and trigger collaborative teamwork or project-cooperation in future.

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¹ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – the Hague (ICCT): The Foreign Fighter phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles, Threats & Policies, ICCT Research Paper April 2016, http://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf

² <http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzpolitik/sascha-lobo-ueber-is-terror-ueberwachung-ist-die-falsche-antwort-a-1084629.html>

³ According to official numbers, there are up to 6000 Tunisians who have joined the so-called Islamic state, Jabhat Al Nusra and other terrorist groups. Unofficial numbers are higher, estimated at roughly 7000 (The Soufan Group: „Foreign Fighters: An updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq, 2015; http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf)

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