

Challenging Online Radicalisation: A refutation of Counter-radicalisation strategies, Counter-narratives and a new approach.

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Abstract

This paper seeks to coherently articulate discourses concerning the complexity of web 2.0 alongside the 'constructed threat' posed by the usage of Web 2.0 and such technologies by radical or extremist groups such as Islamic state. A voluminous literature on the subject, discusses the facilitative role of the internet in promotion of radicalist ideology and recruitment, although fails to address the transformative role of Web 2.0 in traditional recruitment and training methods by extremist organisations, in addition to the utilisation of the internet and Web 2.0 for recruitment, communication, and fund-raising functions, among other purposes.

It is through such a premise that the internet, web 2.0 and new media have gained increasing recognition by politicians, counter-terrorism strategists and policymakers, with visible concomitants of this popular conceptual shift proposed or already executed in counter-radicalisation strategies such as internet censorship or filtering, , the closing down of certain social media platforms or accounts, or ultra-syndication of counter-narratives on the internet.

In response to increasing debate regarding the purpose, role and function of online radicalisation and the use of new media by extremist organisations and counter-radicalisation strategies, this paper offers a critical review and analysis of current issues such discourses. Therefore, current counter-radicalisation strategy will be reviewed, and the scope for translational implications, such as the use of counter-narratives, will be explored.

Keywords: online radicalisation, radicalisation, counter-terrorism strategies, counter-narratives, Netizens, the Islamic State.

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Introduction

Radicalisation, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism belong to a group of hotly contested concepts or phenomena in the social sciences. Despite the highly contested nature of these and related concepts, a number of theoretical and analytical perspectives have been utilised in attempts to coherently understand the overall superstructure to which such concepts hold distinguishable membership. Included among prominent theoretical frameworks is the systematic and psychological perspective proposed by McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008, pp.415-419). This concedes that whilst precise efforts to demarcate and delineate definitions, roles and functions of radicalisation and terrorism prove somewhat problematic, a social-psychological pathway progression model might be useful in understanding the radicalisation process. Through this framework, it is argued that the examination of distinct behaviours, feelings, beliefs, and ultimate expression of group identification in unison fosters the progression of individuals from the bottom and middle of the radicalisation pyramid through to the pyramid's apex (terrorism). Therefore, composite concepts such as radicalisation and terrorism occur through a progressive pathway. This implies that radicalisation occurs within stages and via incremental spheres of influence. Hence, the tendency of 'radicalisation' to be regarded as a parlous conceptual edifice, wherein 'online radicalisation' is nested, is not surprising. Indeed, such an approach appears to be the general trend in the extent literature, owing perhaps to the complexity and interrelatedness of use of the internet and new media institutions in radicalisation.

At the time of writing this paper, there exists no widely cited definition of online radicalisation. In attempts to address this, one critical study focused on eight former German right-wing extremists (Koehler (2014, pp.116-120). Koehler (2014) re-emphasised the facilitative role of the internet, the anonymity it affords users, and the limitless and uncensored communication offered in its use, on the path to radicalisation. In a similar vein, Veilleux-Lepage(2016), Aly et al., (2016) and Aly &Zeiger(2015) further analysed the paradigmatic shift in activities of Jihadist online, reiterating Torok's (2013) work discussing the shift from traditional institutions of recruitment and training to online institutions with similar capabilities. Veilleux-Lepage (2016) identified three significant shifts. Notably, the emergence of Web 2.0 platforms and forums fostering online Jihadism in the social media milieu, the use of Web2.0 forums and social media as a means of spreading Jihadi Ideology and propaganda, and thirdly, the emergence of self-radicalisation, or 'lone wolf' terrorism.

The Homeland Security Institute (2009, pp.5-6) white paper similarly depicts 'online radicalisation' as a radicalisation accelerant: a virtual echo chamber through which radicalisation is attained. Omotoyinbo (2014) consider the suggested polarity of radicalisation, suggested by use or non-use of Web 2.0 and similar platforms. Herein, 'Online radicalisation' is discussed with reference to its variant type, 'Offline Radicalisation' occurring without use of the internet and through typical face to face communication channels. A similar definition of online radicalisation is discussed by McFarlane(2010,pp.1-4) as human communication via the internet, through email,

internet chat, bit torrents, the dark net, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), social networking sites, and online forums which incite an individual or group belief system contravening normative societal behaviour. This multi-faceted taxonomy of functions and channels of communication present the internet as a gateway or tool of communication in online radicalisation.

Whilst seemingly useful, this analogy and definition are argued as simplistic, and subject to an array of necessary underlying assumptions. The scrutiny of such underlying assumptions, whilst warranted, has proven problematic to the research community and policy makers. For instance, online radicalisation occurs only through the Internet. Attempts however to operationalize internet use in online radicalisation, whilst warranted and necessitated, prove undermined by the operational complexity of internet use as understood along procedural, social psychological developmental lines. This theory-practice gap works to greatly frustrate efforts in devising workable, valid empirical analogues of internet use in online radicalisation, as the dynamics and usage patterns of the internet, as evidenced in online radicalisation, currently lack a solid empirical base. Further, an internet-dependency model of online radicalisation precludes the possibility of alternative, relational theories between agents and Web 2.0 technologies. It seems unwarranted for instance to entirely rule out the possibility of a symbiotic relationship existing between agents and technologies in online radicalisation. Accordingly, there are translational implications if such relationships between agents and technologies in online radicalisation are considered. It appears problematic to attribute responsibility for policy initiatives in preventative or intervention efforts if the finer relational dynamics of Web 2.0 use are not given further research attention. Problems arise, for instance, on whether responsibility lies with policymakers with minimal technological expertise, or conversely whether this should be down to experts, professionals or academics with such expertise but little policy interest or legislative involvement.

While there is no widely accepted definition for 'online radicalisation', this paper argues that the negative blame attributed to the internet, Web 2.0 and social media platforms, rather than lying with the users (the Netizen), and webmasters of social media firms, is misguided. The foregoing position is buttressed by (Baym, 2010, pp.6-8, 44-45), which opines that the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) is a function of human interactivity. This implies that both societal and technological changes are dependent on a continuum of people utilising technology, as opposed to the contrary directionality of technology dictating human interaction and relations (Litt and Hargittai, 2016; Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, 2016; Torok, 2015). The issue of directionality in online radicalisation, with agents on the one hand and technology on the other, has similarly received little targeted research attention. However, there exist substantial implications for conception and discourse of online radicalisation raised by such attention, which ought to be addressed. When questioned, assumptions concerning such directionality open attitudinal corollaries, particularly whether the internet is best regarded as a suspect or as a victim. The implications of such a position are evident in aggressive counter-radicalisation strategy, such as the deleting of contents, banning certain users, profile or account

deletion and censoring of extremist contents online (Edwards & Gribbon, 2013,pp.41-42).²

Thus, the current paper questions the knowledge base of existing research and practices in line with existing counter-radicalisation strategies and counter-narratives, and seeks to bring to bear the implications of such considerations in best practice of counter-terrorism efforts .

Online radicalisation- constructed threat or real threat?

From Gates and Podder's (2015) and Veilleux-Lepage's (2016) submission concerning the internet as a recruitment tool for extremists in the prevalent community of over 20,000 foreign fighters, around 20 per cent of the foreign fighters were reported to have originated from the West fighting in Syria under the auspices of Islamic state. Several questions related to the threat posed by the internet as a facilitative tool remain unanswered. Threat assessment efforts concerning online radicalisation, although warranted, are practicably difficult. There exist issues with for instance in establishing the tangible threat level posed by online radicalisation. Research and empirical work in the area is still at an early stage, and seems insufficient in adequately bolstering such efforts. Whilst detailed and evidenced-based threat assessments may be a goal for research to work towards, current efforts have proved useful in indexing numbers of foreign fighters recruited through Web 2.0 and similar platforms and technologies. Qualitative work has made inroads into this area, utilising narrative approaches and discourse analysis, in situating the internet as a facilitating tool for online radicalisation (Torok, 2013; Von Behr, Reding, Edwards & Gribbon, 2013; Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, 2016, pp.51-55; Speed News Desk, 2016; Weimann, 2004). However, problems with definition remain unaddressed. This arguably leaves the issue of online radicalisation as a constructed and securitised political concept largely unaddressed. Notwithstanding, the lack of any real body of data in such work is indicative of the complexity of the internet, new media and communication portals, with the dynamism of these technologies and their use further presenting an especially difficult conceptual and empirical problem. Concordantly, there exist issues secondary to the use of such technologies, including human rights, freedom of speech, among others. These spheres of difficulty arise out of using Web 2.0 and comparable platforms chiefly in three different methods: messaging, content posting, and uploading and sharing.

From a general perspective, in an era of automated bots, RSS feeds, chatbots, and content syndication networks, the dissemination of syndicated contents or communication across different social media channels is increasingly difficult to curtail (Torok, 2015). This seems to be the resultant question brought to light by the active usage of social media platforms by extremist organisations to recruit, communicate and spread radicalist propaganda. In the absence of sufficient data or solid empirical research to predict the outcomes of online radicalisation, or to measure its outcome and contingencies, the degree to which extremist organisations use, rely, and successfully recruit foreign fighters is currently unknown. Given the

² This assumption reiterates the position of Torok(2013) about online radicalisation as an institution- informed by shifts in the use of traditional training grounds by terrorist or extremist groups. Today, you can learn how to build a dirty bomb on Youtube or by searching the internet. Asymmetry warfare has gone to another level.

nature of this empirical vacuum, oratory, narrative or predictive assumptions are currently the norm, versus empirical observations or data. Sageman (2008, pp.119) for instance suggests that the dynamic growth of the internet is responsible for the changing nature of terrorist's strategies shifting towards internet utilisation and the extension of the threat posed. Hoffman likewise claims that during a House of representative sub-committee hearing regarding the internet's role in online recruitment, the internet is and would play a huge role in Terrorist strategy (Committee of Homeland Security, 2010). In the course of the hearing, Hoffman referred to professionally produced videos posted online, promoting extremist views and propaganda with an American citizen-Omar Hammami, singing a song detailing extremist views. Further reference depicting the facilitative role of the internet in the United States of America was made to a detained extremist on counts of terrorism, based on the use of the internet in communicating their extremist views (Committee of Homeland Security, 2010). The foregoing claims and assumptions reiterate the woeful lack of concrete data or holistic evidence detailing how online radicalisation is indeed responsible for a considerable number of foreign fighters active in Syria., The French Minister of the Interior, Bernard Cazeneuve, was quoted thus: "90 per cent of those joining terrorist groups do so on the internet" (Järvinen, 2015). One crucial limitation to the reported figure of 90 per cent however was mainly derived from a study of 160 families affected by Islamic extremism. Such a study group has little external validity in terms of representing the French population; not to mention those involved in online radicalisation or, among such a group, those who further progress to the stage of violent terrorism.

In a related study based on constructing cyber-terrorism as a security threat, Jarvis, Macdonald and Whiting (2015) investigated international news media coverage. A considerable amount of cyber-terrorism news content was noted as available, with an average story making reference to cyber-terrorism published every 3.7days. Cyber-terrorism was further depicted as a potential security threat in the near future. This showcases to a large extent the media coverage of cyber crimes and in retrospect the dissemination of narratives and propaganda by extremist groups, classified not as cyber-terrorism but instead as terrorism, despite both online radicalisation and cyber-terrorism occurring within the same milieu or infrastructure. This observation is suggestive on how best to conceive of online radicalisation as primarily a contextual phenomenon, with debate ideally taking place with online radicalisation as a categorical, if not specific, definition. Pursuing such lines of thought, a case therefore accommodating the dynamism of radicalisation, and its tendency to manifest in either online or offline domains, is further necessitated.

Recent events in Europe however have intensified the call of unanswered questions whether online radicalisation should necessarily be viewed as a threat or not.

A recent case of a 16 year old Danish girl, who stabbed her mother to death after consuming several ISIS video several times beheading their hostages, proves relevant in such considerations. It was reported that prior to the beheading of her mother, Lisa Borch had watched several Youtube footage of beheadings and killings of ISIS hostage (Malm, 2016). While it may be argued that suspect did not commit the crime alone, a position stated in court, defence counsel argued that her 29 year old Iraqi born boyfriend, Bakhtiar Mohammed Abdulla, talked the suspect into stabbing her mother. This case specifies another trend; namely the likelihood and presence of a symbiotic relationship between consumers and providers of

radicalisation materials, combining offline and online radicalisation). Through such a relationship, individual recruitment and indoctrination may be followed up with consumption of online contents. Also of note, it was similarly established that Mohammed Abdulla was a radical Islamist, and planned eloping with Lisa Borch to Syria (Malm, 2016). The case cited here reflects individual differences on the path to radicalisation. It also reiterates the position of the internet functioning as a periscope of social interactivity, whereby use of Web 2.0 and comparable platforms function as a continuum to actualising interactions between individuals or groups.

Another path to online radicalisation in Germany for instance points at the pre-existence of a radicalisation terrain as exemplified by the Salafist movement, (Sydow, 2012; Steffen, 2015). Through sermons and video messages preaching hate and a call to Salafism, the internet was similarly utilised for extremist goals. A case of self-radicalisation through online radicalisation was witnessed in 2011, when the Kosovo Albanian Born Arid Uka watched extremist videos and launched an attack killing two United States Airmen in the process (Sydow, 2012; The Guardian, 2011). Thus, in reference to Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol (2016, pp.53-54) radicalisation ought to be examined from the contextual perspectives of reception of extremist content and discourses. This brings into perspective arguments of Edwards & Gribbon (2013, pp.41-43), whereby a great deal of focus and attention has been given to the supply of extremist content online, rather than the demand of such content and accordingly, how such content is consumed or utilised between individuals, alongside individual experiences.

With references to the foregoing cases, one may affirmatively suggest that online radicalisation is a constructed threat due to the reach and anonymity provided by the internet. However, the reach and conclusiveness of such claims remain significantly impeded given lack of quantified or documented data. Therefore, Web 2.0 can also be viewed as an alternative or potential gateway for exploitation by extremist groups. This claim is similarly evinced in work by Torok (2013) and Edwards & Gribbon, (2013), labelling online radicalisation as a shift from traditional training camps to radicalisation as an online institution in asymmetry warfare. This shift may help explain why most researchers have exaggerated the extent of the threat posed by online radicalisation.

While examples have been cited based on the experience of Western communities with the phenomenon, the reach of the internet extends beyond borders: both mental and individualistic, as well as national (Koehler, 2014, pp.116-122; Cohen-Almagor, 2013, pp.40-46). As such there is an urgent need for a holistic geographical response in efforts of informed threat assessment of online radicalisation in the global South versus the global North.

Whilst the importance and priority of informed threat assessment efforts of online radicalisation should not be entirely swayed by citation of a small number of cases and narratives, the matter currently stands that the security threat posed to States and users is difficult to isolate owing to a thin evidence base and dearth of unified research attention on the subject. Such efforts therefore will be greatly assisted in the formulation of a coherent, unifying working model situating the tangible role and function of internet use in online radicalisation, as well as a coherent relational model specifying how, if at all, this may translate to radicalisation overall.

The next section in line with the above submissions therefore examines the construction of counter-narratives and counter-radicalisation strategies currently

surrounding online radicalisation, as well as discussing potential limitations of such strategies.

Limitations of current counter-narratives, counter-radicalisation strategies and approach

This section seeks to examine current approaches in counter-narratives and counter-radicalisation strategy, and to this effect explore potential gaps in such approaches. Whilst specific national strategies or counter-narratives will not be addressed individually and in a serial fashion, this paper will seek to explore the general trend and scope of existing global strategies. This will be approached along the following paradigms: the complexity of social media and the counter-radicalisation strategy of deleting extremist contents, under which issues such as censorship and self-policing by users is discussed; counter –radicalisation strategies of integration, and promotion of multi-faith society; securitisation of terrorism or radicalization, namely the –‘war on terror,’ and counter-narratives informed by religious community.

The complexity of social media and the counter-radicalisation strategy of deleting extremist contents

The primary limitations of existing counter-strategies against online radicalisation stem from assuming that the internet and social media has a simplistic structure, or that linear boundaries of operation may be specified in its use. For instance, government efforts in partnership with social media firms towards countering online radicalisation include deleting contents or banning inappropriate or extremist users from the platform (Schmid, 2015; Gates and Podder, 2015; Greenberg, 2015; Archetti, 2015). The problem with such a strategy however is evidenced by the structural? complexity of social media and content syndication platforms. Even when pages or contents are otherwise- deleted, or users are banned, the return of such content is difficult, if not impossible, to rule out,. Practicably, this may be either the user themselves, or the content itself soon resurfacing (Wu, 2015, pp.285-299; Weimann, 2004, pp.1-7, UNODC, 2012; Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, 2016). After all, how might content existing across multiple platforms and search engines be sufficiently de-indexed or deleted appropriately? While several European countries have issued counter-radicalisation strategy compliance warnings to Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook among others, the problem still lies in the simple, linear association of the social media with countering extremist contents (Wu, 2015, pp.289-299; Winkler and Dauber, 2014, pp.1-10; Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, 2016, pp.57-58).

Content syndication is a replicable mechanism where web contents are secondarily distributed to associated Web 2.0 websites and social media platforms from their original point of origin (Sistrix, n.d).In this way, tracking multiple distributions of

contents and channels, and limiting further dissemination within a particular range of coverage, may potentially be achievable. However, such efforts do little to encompass syndication on a global scale, and fail to account for the cached properties, indexed contents or footprints left behind from use of such platforms. There exist legislative difficulties in response to the 'contagion' spread of online radicalisation when content is shared between countries. In order for counter-radicalisation efforts to be truly effective, regulations would have to be in place between different sovereign states, with co-operation authorised between such an agreement and the search engines and platforms themselves. This unified search for global cooperation in both developed and developing countries to fight such crime in the realm of international law in online radicalisation is an ambitious, if not intractable, aim.

From the foregoing, questions regarding other issues also emerge, such as the obligation of self-policing or flagging of contents by users on social media, and the locating of questionable, objectionable contents (Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, 2016, pp.57-58; Bertram, 2015). In addition, the ease of opening new user accounts, following the banning of an account, remains well-documented. (Broomfield, 2016). Thus, the vicious cycle of sharing extremist contents continues unabated, indicating the insufficiency of such an approach in countering online radicalisation. Concordantly, another issue of concern stemming from censorship or the deleting of contents in democratic states is the question of freedom of speech. The degree of compliance of democratic states, in the way of censorship and comparable autocratic approaches practiced in Asian countries like China, Indonesia or Turkey, remains unlikely, if not very difficult to envisage and mobilise. Therefore, if the freedom of opinion or speech is challenged both in theory and practice, what ought to be done to sustain freedom of opinion on the internet?

Furthermore, challenges remain for self-policing, such as ensuring privacy and encryption of messages. If an online community is thoroughly encrypted and self-policed, regulation and proper scrutiny of such a group, and that of its practices and content generated are again practically difficult to ensure. For instance, Facebook offers varied modes of visibility for groups and online communities, with groups set up as 'open, closed, secret, restricted, only for friends, for close friends, among other qualifications' (Sullivan, 2010). Such considerations prove indicative on the ability of self-policing of such groups, with the aftermath of such power relations potentially resulting in a gain or loss for both sides of the campaign. A crucial example about the power relations and secretive or closed group mode of Facebook is reiterated by a recent study by Gatehouse (2016), whereby a growing market for illegal trade of weapons and guns from Libya on social media platforms, was detailed. In this study, it was claimed that weapons offered for sale were either within secret or closed Facebook groups. Accordingly such considerations demonstrate the relevance of secondary, but largely related concerns, such as use of the internet in arms sales in asymmetric warfare.

Gatehouse (2016) similarly observed that groups with extremist views continue to utilise Facebook, using restrictive settings offered by Facebook and performing operational inner circle functions, such as dissemination of hate speech, counselling, and recruiting, among other functions. For instance, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) Skandinavien page (Scandinavia) is a political Islamist group exist on Facebook, albeit with a cunning twist to their operations (Hizb ut Tahrir, n.d). The 'cunning twist' here is the use of unique language limited to a particular geographical terrain

(Danish, Swedish) in disseminating political Islamist ideologue. The imminent question to bear in mind here is how Facebook might react to contents reported or flagged by an outsider or insider. In such cases, how might non-Swedish or Danish speaking self-policing users react to such contents? Whilst auto-translating programmes may be available for non-Swedish or Danish speaking users browsing the fan-page of HuT, the degree to which such a translation entirely retains the original meaning or context of language is questionable, thereby largely undermining self-policing efforts by others.

Furthermore, there remain additional psychological variables within self-policing obligations of social media users. For instance, whilst a page may have a number of non-sympathisers or a non-loyal fan base, the ratios of such users to more sympathetic or loyal fans remain unaddressed. If the number of sympathisers on the Facebook fan-page outnumbers the non-sympathisers, and a post or content is flagged as inappropriate, to whom do we confidently assign responsibility for mediating between either aggrieved party? In most cases, Facebook officials, anonymous to the user, may mediate. However, they do so anonymously, with variables including whether the mediator is necessarily a native speaker, to what degree their own views line up with that of the group they have been called upon to mediate, remaining uncontrolled. In such a way, the necessary authority of the mediating agent may be called into question. Are they fluent in the context of the flagged content, be it either political or religious motivated, and sufficiently informed as to adequately respond to the demands of the situation? There also exist further questions, for instance whether, or where, censorship ought to be localised and demarcated, sustained within the debate of how best to curtail extreme viewpoints on social media.

In light of the foregoing illustrations and points raised, a digression to real life situations and how they impact on whom precisely use social media versus those who do not, is crucial in efforts at comprehending the shortcomings of existing counter-radicalisation strategies. This brings to fore the dominance of right wing radicals in Europe, and how they have exploited social media in gaining audience and attaining their goals. For instance, the author observed during the refugee crisis in Europe how certain political party and right wing radical groups such as the Alternative for Germany (AFD), Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA), were permitted a social space on the social media to spread hate messages.³ From such action emerges the question whether is it unfair to ban or delete Jihadi or extremist content or messages, given surface similarities between the messaging of radical groups, versus those posed by political parties such as like PEGIDA and AFD. Thus, a double-standard approach appears demonstrated in questions of 'who gets to do what and who gets a permanent stay,' within the social media milieu. The logic behind the comparison of Islamist extremist groups and political parties or groups stem from the similar functions held. Namely, these include the promotion of hate or ideology, the incitement of others to violence, and use of hate speech, to mention but a few. The resultant effect can be evidenced in figures reported in 2015, where in Germany, more than 200 refugee homes were burned, and several attacks were made against refugees in Germany (Staufenberg, 2015). Within this premise are recent contributions of AFD or PEGIDA to the political

³ Authors' observation based on the ascension of Right wing political parties and groups in Germany due to the Refugee crisis. Of course, the right wing party dominance in places like Denmark, Netherlands among others should have been a warning note for Germany.

pressure on the political system in Germany, where reported cases of vandalism of properties and hatred towards anyone foreign or Muslim has been encouraged by such groups both on social media and in daily life relations (Friedemann, 2016; Sundemeyer, 2015). These illustrations beg the question of whom or which group of individuals or community should be allowed access to the online milieu?

Therefore, the idea of deleting content or banning users that display extremist views on social media milieu is arguably a futile quest; especially given the lost relevance of national borders in debates of online radicalisation. In this situation, there is no border dividing who or whom, nor what discourses are allowed or not, within the milieu of social media. However, in a bid to understand the dynamism and complexity of power relations in social media communication, any strategic communication response towards extremist content must be enacted through a socio-technological domain, rather than a political domain. . It is argued in this paper that the fundamental necessity of such a response comes from the comparably fundamental and deep-rooted nature of radicalisation in society. Radicalisation, be it offline or online, is a socially constructed threat embedded in the society. In this way, a socio-technological response is inherently warranted, with political and legislative difficulties, for instance regarding national borders and respective policy jurisdiction, ultimately artefactual considerations. In such a way, radicalisation is subject to a constellation of networks, be these either virtual or social. Where there is a narrative or phenomenon, there will always be a network (Latour, 1998, pp.6-8; Barabási, 2011, pp.1-5; Walther, et al., 2011,pp.18-20; Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol , 2016,p.51).

Counter –radicalisation strategies of integration and promotion of multi-faith society

Radicalisation, terrorism, and extremism have mostly been linked with the lack of integration or the failure of multiculturalism in most European societies (Schmid, 2014, pp.15-20; Kundnani, 2015, pp.28-33; Kristin et al., 2011; Kundnani, 2012; Vidino, 2013). However, there have been little or few studies able to evidence any causal link between failed integration or multiculturalism, and (successive) terrorism or radicalisation (Kristin et al., 2011; Rahimi & Graumans, 2015). Here, the case of failed integration in most counter-radicalisation strategies calls for a multi-faith society, alongside social cohesion, as a lasting solution. The problem with integration is outlined by the politicisation of the concept by public figures or public office holders. As discussed later, integration is synonymously connected with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism was depicted by the German Chancellor as a failure, while the United Kingdom government shares comparable notions. This paper however does not seek to be drawn into the debate of whether multiculturalism is synonymous to integration or not. Instead, this paper examines how these concepts affect counter-radicalisation strategies, in terms of integration efforts and policies in Western European countries- such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Netherlands. A succinct look at Germany's integration rule from a broad perspective will therefore be considered.

An examination of the integration rules and the execution thereof in Germany are crucial to undertaking this approach. From the perspective of Language as a

crucial tool for integration, how might levels of learning the local language improve integration?

The maximum language proficiency of B1 (intermediate level) is expected for both foreign students as well as those pursuing family reunion purposes (BAMF, 2015). Studying for a degree in which the language of instruction is English for a foreign student requires the basic A1 or A2 beginner level proficiency. For Asylum seekers, in most cases the opportunity of learning the language is offered, pending approval of their asylum request for living in Germany. This has been well-tested during the present refugee crisis, with Germany preparing a package to take care of learning the language and 'integration' (BAMF,n.d). From the humanitarian context of Asylum seekers or refugees however, other criteria are taken into consideration. However, in practice, going by the latest terrorist attacks in Europe one can suggest language proficiency does not necessarily foster integration as evidenced by the segregated communities in Molenbeek, where many terrorists were born and bred in Belgium. Often such fighters speak fluent Dutch and are of Belgian nationality. And yet, they were still radicalised and successfully carried out terrorist attacks.

By what moderating mechanism might such an outcome arise? This is simply a function of the existing integration policy. Whilst it can be argued that many of terrorists were of Arab descent, namely second generation or third generation, this does not exclude causation as represented by the debilitating milieu of radicalisation, which is mainly marginalisation and segregation. It was claimed that one of the attackers- "the Salah and Brahim Abdeslam brothers", owned an internet cafe which was closed down by the authorities due to drug offences. Over the course of the investigation, it was disclosed that- Brahim Abdeslam watched IS videos with a joint in one hand and a beer in another" (The Telegraph, 2016). Despite their radicalisation being a subject of different circumstances and reasons, segregation nonetheless played a crucial role. Thus, though Belgian by citizenship, the terrorist had no less sense of belonging to the Belgian state, nor a concrete nationalist identity to cherish. This is supported by the debilitating milieu in agents lived, reportedly filled with several criminal networks and ostracised from the Belgian community at large from the outset (Murray, 2016).

Furthermore, the foregoing illustration is grounded in the fact that many immigrant populations in Germany or elsewhere in Europe, either in big cities or small cities, have their own relatively close-knit communities (Murray, 2016; Müller, 2015). This implies that specific streets or neighbourhoods are highly populated with immigrants or immigrant populations; a geographical space in which a common identity, common plight, and common language had evolved. It is plausible that such a community contributes to a 'self and other' paradigm, institutionalised mainly by law enforcement agencies, media, social workers or public institutions and political elites. The foregoing assertion is backed by instances in Berlin where you have Neukölln, mainly populated by Turkish people and other Arab speaking people (generational cycle of immigrants and German citizens with generational links to Turkey or Arabic speaking countries). In a small city like Schleswig in Germany, you have Friedrichsberg: highly populated by Russians, sections of people from Arab countries and those from the Balkans. Northern Marseille, Roubaix, and Évry also boast of around 40 percent of Muslims living in a segregated community. In Britain, the situation in Birmingham is demonstrative of the segregated Muslim community and the propounded failure of Multiculturalism (Briggs & Birdwell, 2009, pp.112-117). Other similar cases are well-known in the Netherlands, where some parts of

Amsterdam are highly populated by Turkish, Moroccans or Dutch-Moroccans (Veldhuis & Bakker, 2009, pp.81-87). In Belgium, Molenbeek is tagged as the European headquarters of Jihadi Networks, with other largely segregated areas including Schaerbeek, and Laeken, to mention but a few. Marseille is also renowned for its Muslim population, said to be dangerous and tagged 'as a no go area' (Greenfield, 2014). Additional suburbs, such as Seine-Saint Denis and other Parisian suburbs have also segregated people and institutions, whereby Sharia law has displaced French civil law (Kern, 2015). Therefore, similar to comparable concepts such as democracy, multiculturalism, integration, federalism, or the internet, the problem is not the concept, but the prior understanding of certain milieus, sub-cultures, context and dependencies, as well as the execution of according policies.

In a bid to curtail the problem of radicalisation and 'failure of integration,' a call for multi-faith society and discourses has been widely promoted in countries like the United Kingdom and Germany. The former has a well developed framework for countering radicalisation or terrorism, represented by the four pillars of Pursue, Prevent, Prepare and Protect. This is represented by the *Prevent* strategy by the British government. This counter-radicalisation strategy seeks to harness communal faith institutions among others to prevent radicalisation. The forerunner of the strategy- *Contest*, established in 2009 to fight or prevent Al Q'aida, also sought to prevent radicalisation and bring together collaboration between the Home office, security services, the civil service, administrators and intelligence agencies (Grierson, 2015). In a speech by David Cameron, the prime minister of Great Britain about the counter-terrorism strategy in 2015, a five year strategy was outlined, anchored on multi-faith society and social cohesion. The strategy followed four steps, or spheres: confront the ideology, tackle the violent and non-violent, embolden the Muslim community, and building a cohesive society. Many of these policy attempts similarly reiterate the initial point of the author, in ignoring prior societal problems before the formulation and enactment of counter-radicalisation strategy (Grierson, 2015).

While the construction of a multi-faith society sounds plausible enough, questions must be asked about the execution of such a plan, considering the segregation of many communities in the United Kingdom and according policy responses to social cohesion and the sort of multi-faith society envisioned. One might ask for example if the securitisation of such issues above the social context, or the inadvertent or otherwise ignoring of the social context, is entirely warranted. A recent study looking at German citizen trends joining the fight in Syria, revealed that a total of 677 individuals were disclosed to have joined the fight in Syria either through offline or online recruitment (Bundeskriminalamt, 2015, p.13). Between the ages of 15-67, the mean age was identified as 27.5 years. Around 638 people were identified as lone fighters, amounting to 34 per cent, while 25 per cent were married and 32 per cent married through Islamic marriage ritual. A further 61 per cent those surveyed were born in Germany, with others born in Turkey (6 per cent), Syria (5 per cent), the Russian federation (5 per cent), and Afghanistan (3 per cent) (Bundeskriminalamt, 2015:13-16). Dual-citizenship was also identified as a prevalent trend, including German-Moroccan (18 per cent), German-Turkish (18 per cent), German-Tunisian (12 per cent), and German-Afghan (10 per cent). The foregoing reiterates the relationship between language proficiency, integration, and radicalisation and terrorism, with language proficiency discussed as playing a negligible role in successive radicalisation or terrorism incidences.

Bundeskriminalamt (2015, p. 13-16) further details that at the beginning of radicalisation, around 24 per cent utilised the Internet, while during the process of radicalisation this figure reduced to 20 per cent. In terms of social fostering conditions at the beginning of radicalisation, 35 percent mentioned affiliation with nearby Salafi movements, friends, family or contact in schools, with 38 per cent of respondents citing contact during the process of radicalisation. However, the percentage of those radicalised from the beginning by Salafi groups were 41 per cent, versus 42 per cent reporting contact throughout the process of radicalisation).

This study proves revealing in efforts at identifying the mechanism of recruitment, target group or audience in radicalisation. Whilst findings overall may not necessarily be representative of other countries, at best it demonstrates that multi-faith or social cohesion is best attained or executed when the proverbial cogs in the societal wheels are repaired. To illustrate, such cogs include segregation, identity issues of Muslim families or immigrants in their country of adoption or residence, and integration policies intended to work from the beginning of arrival, and not when it is too late.

Securitisation of terrorism or radicalisation labelled –‘war on terror’

The 9/11 attacks paved way not only for the platform on which the war on terror was subsequently securitised, but also in the provision of a fearful, threatened and beleaguered audience as well as policy makers. The psychosocial impact of 9/11 is multifaceted, with the aftermath delineated as a process of othering, the creation of outrageous and endemic stereotypes, re-traumatisation, Islamophobia, the rise of right wing radical political parties or populism, among many others (Sides & Gross, 2013, pp.583-589; Bowen, 2015; Kouser, 2012).

The recent attacks, including the Charlie Hebdo mass shootings (Paris) on 7th January 2015, alongside that of France (Paris) on 13th of November 2015 all strengthen arguments pointing towards the securitisation of terror within Europe. For example, the cancellation of a football match between the Netherlands and Germany was authorised 90 minutes prior to kick-off, with the inciting incident detailed as a bomb threat (Domin, 2015). The consequent result of such attacks, particularly in the latter case, was wide spread security alert in various parts of Europe, and a call for information sharing between national law enforcement agencies.

For Beck (2002, pp.39-42) the 9/11 events created a ‘collapse of language’- in which the feared subject and events gave shape to a milieu characterised and comprised by an ‘explosion of silence’, which led to securitisation fears and an audience left with a reportedly indelible scar. It is within this ‘explosion of silence that the war on terror’, was born, and the hybridisation of counter-terrorism strategies emerged with differing context and actions. Along these lines of thought adequate research attention addressing dynamics of power relations, as well as the nature of discourse between fearful audience and the impact of securitisation in differing global and national contexts appear conspicuous by absence (Chaudhri, 2013; Kellner, 2004; Staines, 2007; Lee 2016).

Thus, a review of the ‘war on terror’ as an institutionalised phrase in global polity as it affects counter-terrorism strategies, race profiling, Islamophobia among other stereotypes, must be reconsidered. This perspective is further clarified by Baker-Beall (2009:194-196), indicating that the construction of ‘the immigrant other’ even

before the 9/11 attacks as a potential threat to European society and European identity was amplified after 9/11, mobilising from a conscious thought by policy makers to a conscious threat through securitisation. The spiraling effect of the American war on terror is therefore a premise on which other European countries have formulated counter-terrorism strategies. A comparable approach applies to the concept of radicalisation, and how counter-radicalisation strategies have been formulated in both past and present. Radicalisation is also targeted as a phenomenon that is susceptible to the 'immigrant other, or those with generational or ancestral links to the immigrant other'. While there is exists a strong claim of segregated populations of certain European countries as susceptible to radicalisation, the 'others' who are not radicalised have been excluded. Such a claim is analogous to the truism that every Muslim or every citizen of Arab descent is susceptible to radicalisation, and does not accommodate the demonstrable possibility of individuals from other religions or other faiths, lest we forget the issue of home grown converts or radicals. The converse position is similarly relevant here, namely that not a single race or religion of individuals is immune to radicalisation. In such a way, the tendency of othering, profiling or categorisation in the delineating of individuals through the radicalisation strikes as unwarranted and unfounded.

Therefore, in a bid to formulate reliable counter-terrorism strategies or counter-radicalisation strategies, the construction of the 'other', 'self' or 'immigrant other' and similar stereotypes must be reviewed, with the goal of forging social cohesion, rather than division or segregation.

Counter-narratives informed by religious community

The need for adequate counter-narratives is borne out of by the urgency of countering extremist narratives and rising number of ideologues. Due to the failure of certain approaches towards countering terrorism and radicalisation, there have been calls for the inclusion of the religious community in the process of countering radicalisation. This call however has been critiqued, resulting in a strained, fractionalised involvement by the faith community in such efforts. For instance, in the United Kingdom, there was a boycott of Society of Mosques, which appealed to its membership of around 70,000 Muslims to ignore the governments' *Prevent* anti-terrorism programme, describing such an approach as racist and overtly aimed at targeting only Muslims (Taylor, 2015).

The boycott by the Society of Mosques however could be situated within the perspectives of the existence of a 'narrative and a plot against Muslims or claims and counter-arguments (Schmid 2015:4-7)'. The plot against Muslims is constructed primarily from a blame game, typically shifting pressure or wrongdoings and terrorist attacks by people with Islamic faith background back onto the political system. The narrative is anchored in the idea that European governments have launched a persecutory campaign against Muslims. This reiterates the division earlier mentioned between the immigrant Muslim community and the mechanism of 'othering' (Jensen, 2009). Again, the social construction of 'others'-in profiling, as construed and practiced in formulation of counter-terrorism strategies and counter-radicalisation efforts hinders any genuine means for social cohesion. This is simply explained by Jensen (2009:10-13), suggesting 'othering' as a form of institutionalised power

relations, -in which the powerful majority constructs the 'other' and reduces them to stereotypical characters.

Notwithstanding, current counter-radicalisation strategy has seen a swathe of online and offline counter-radicalisation programmes, both online and offline, catering for radicalised individuals. What remains unknown however is the efficacy of such programmes. A strength of the design of such programmes is in following a systematic and contextual perspective of radicalisation; for instance, in the concession that radicalisation occurs within a context (Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, 2016). As such, counter-radicalisation strategies or programmes are sufficiently equipped to respond to different situations on a case by case basis, in accordance with the demands of the situation and the respective context of a given case. As opined by Davies, Neudecker, Ouellet, Bouchard & Ducol, (2016, pp. 60-65) these programs identify the ideology within which an individual is radicalised, identify whom is at risk, and work to isolate the social processes involved in the radicalisation process as well as the drivers of such a process. They also look into the optimally yielding means of dissemination incurred, in terms of messengers and methods of counter-narratives' dissemination. While the systematic nature of such approaches may seem appealing, the effective implementation of such efforts remain arguably undermined and curtailed in a failure to control for contextual diversity of a given case, as well as the nature, degree and extent of radicalisation having taken hold. The argument here suggests that messaging or messengers themselves are not necessarily bound to deradicalise, and regain normalcy. Again, the assumption of bidirectionality of radicalisation for an individual proves problematic and empirically unfounded. Worst case scenarios have generally been those religiously indoctrinated. For the radicalisee, the veracity of their belief is anchored and deep-rooted within the claimed veracity of the religious ideology itself; a necessary precondition for a religion to hold purpose for an individual. Difficulties in demonstrating appropriate bidirectionality here in radicalisation are evidenced in considerations of, for instance, convincing a devout Christian that there is no God. The belief system is not amenable to refutation, its claims not evident, not quantifiable, and essentially invisible, dependent on the scope of faith (Dawkins, 2006).

Efforts at formulating precise counter-radicalisation strategies from the point of religious community intervention therefore are fraught with theological problems not easily addressed by the limited scope of online radicalisation research attention. In an effort to circumvent such difficulties, Schmid (2015) details several counter-messaging arguments which were deemed fit to curtail young Muslims from radicalisation. Arguments reiterated the role of the religious community, Imams, Clerics and the Muslim community, informed actors and academia in impeding narratives of the extremist (pp.4-6). In the same vein, Ashour (2011) emphasises the foregoing position by claiming that the strategy for counter-narratives should be built on three pillars. Namely: the message, the messenger, and the media. Among these three systems stems the messenger, regarded as a crucial part in disseminating the message. The messenger according to Ashour (2011) must be well known or respected figures in the religious circle, civil society actors or academia.

The foregoing underscores the importance of messengers in allaying the spread of extremist narratives. A practicable analogue might see the messenger being sought out in terms of the fame or respect accorded to them in building and disseminating opposing counter-narratives in European states. In the United Kingdom for instance,

the Quilliam foundation is formed from a number of civil actors and religious researchers, together comprising a well-informed staff group in the fight against extremism and radicalisation. In Germany, the German Institute for Radicalisation and de-radicalisation (GIRDS) is also known to have de-radicalisation programmes, gaining respectable policy-making audiences both within Germany and overseas.

From points discussed, it seems plausible that there is no single causality of radicalisation, amenable to isolation and prevention. There is also no single way of de-radicalising, as the milieu or cognitive processes of radicalisation differ from one individual to another (Archetti, 2015). Such is the flexibility of the phenomenon that employing the right messenger for the right message can prove a difficult task (Archetti, 2015). This is reiterated in Ashour's (2010) submission concerning the priority and dissemination of the message by the messenger:

"Hearing the [theological/moral/instrumental] arguments directly from the Sheikhs [IG leaders] was different....do you think I did not hear this before?!...we heard those arguments from the Salafis and from al-Azhar...we did not accept them...we accepted them from the Sheikhs because we knew them and we knew their history"

Thus, at the core of counter-narrative strategy is the need for an appropriate communication strategy. Governments and civil society actors have still yet to produce a broadly applicable, functional counter-narrative to curtail youths from straying towards radicalisation. This to some extent exemplifies the shift away from flawed assumptions about Jihadist or extremist plots prevalent in counter-terrorism strategies post 9/11, where in response to vulnerability and fear of the citizens, policy makers responded with securitisation of such issues, othering and other unconventional means (Aly, 2015:71-75).

In conclusion, while getting the right message or counter-message narratives across is crucial to developing an effective, workable counter-narrative against extremist views (Schmid, 2015), Archetti (2015) partially debunked this position, stating that consistency between Western government deeds and words is of paramount importance, in the production of a functional counter-narratives. For instance, an example of matching words with deeds highlights the hypocritical stance often assumed by Western governments- such as the narrative of Western governments upholding human rights, yet the use and operation of Guantanamo Bay prison, and the launching of drones deploying bombs in war zones without accounting for civilian lives. The problem between appearance and reality in Western government may similarly be evinced by current Islamophobia waves in Europe, in claims that the current refugee crisis was a deliberate attempt to destabilize Europe or facilitate the invasion of Islam. The entirety of the illustrations and cases cited and discussed in this paper therefore bring us to a conclusive statement. That is, until the root of the matter (Segregation, othering, stereotyping), is addressed holistically, all according counter-narratives and counter-radicalisation strategy will comparably yield minimal results.

New approach

With the current crop of counter-radicalisation strategies having a negligible impact on radicalisation or the terrorism milieu due to limitations discussed, a new approach is needed. This new approach must be preventative, seeking to curtail radicalisation before it starts. Therefore, this paper concludes in the suggestion of some crucial perspectives which have either been politicised or ignored by policy makers, politicians and counter-radicalisation strategies, in realising this aim.

First, a multi-layered deconstruction of the 'immigrant population or Muslims' in the Western society, informed by prevalent negative narratives offered by Western media or political elites, must be undertaken. Notwithstanding the pitiable state of a workable evidence base in empirical radicalisation work, the main demographic of individuals radicalised through social media or offline recruitment are millennials or youths. Therefore, the preparation of a wilful and deliberate policy in targeting online radicalisation before it attracts the next victim is paramount. Identifying the main audiences or those prone to radicalisation comprises an insufficient effort, should nothing concrete be executed in terms of policy.

This brings us to the representation of the 'other' within much of Western society. Included from this perspective are people of immigrant backgrounds, Muslims or naturalised citizens from Islamic faith who have been tagged as the enemy or Anti-Western in global politics, through stereotype and generalisation. The foregoing has been politicised and several discourses such as the clash of civilisation, clash of perception, or Anti-Western sentiments viewing the 'Immigrant population or Muslims' as enemies of their country of settlement, likely terrorists, and prone to radicalisation. The practice and prevalence of anti-Westernism, along with the reach of according populist stereotypes, must be deconstructed in political speeches, announced in policy, and practiced in and everyday life. Recent comments from the Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump about Muslim and immigrant population help set the tone for the need to deconstruct such discourse within the public sphere. The same could be said of the spate of Islamophobia in Europe, where a stereotypical 'othering' has been attained based on the exploits of few criminal cases or terrorism.

Therefore, if Western societies do want to attain social cohesion, a multi-layered deconstruction of identity and 'othering' is crucial. This should be representative of each countries' immigrant population or Muslim community. The multi-layered deconstruction should similarly entail cognitive re-orientation elements, such as: social construction of Muslims as part of the Western community and not enemies; media campaigns constructing Muslims as part of the law abiding and cohesive community as the remaining resident population; more opportunities given to Muslim citizens to participate in social and political development of the Western countries; facilitating of identity re-engineering through the aforementioned, alongside a narrative meant to respect human rights within the Western states and external war or conflict zones, and the banning of hate speeches from public speeches or social media. Whilst the aforementioned points raise issues which have been politicised for decades, swift action is needed to grant the minority of Muslim communities within Western nations a chance for social cohesion and successful integration. It is envisioned that such an outcome may only be achieved when hypocritical promises or promotion of hate speech desist from public discourse.

Radicalisation should fundamentally be seen as a *social* problem emerging from the ills of society. The solution to such a problem therefore lies within the society and not the internet. Many people watch or see extremist videos, but are spared from

radicalisation taking hold As discussed, since the youth demographic are a major target in the recruitment agenda by terrorist or radical groups, Research attention should therefore focus on the Muslim communities, the socialisation process of certain communities, and respective family background of such a demographic. Addressing issues on parenting, and transitional stages, such as adolescent periods of youths, would in this way prove be a fertile research area. School curriculums ought to be redesigned to help facilitate the socialisation process, and render this more attractive for disaffected populations. In this vein, innovative, modern and visual technologies should be introduced to the educational system to augment traditional learning processes. Several ideas such as gamification in education have been a subject of discussion for a number of years. The family as a basic pillar of socialisation should not be ignored. Welfare aids for single parents, or flexible working periods for parents, should also be considered. Taken together, the introduction of such initiatives would go a long way in dealing with the pressures of parenting and socialising the at-risk demographic. A programme in which families of the Islamic faith engage in productive parenting work with social workers, psychologists and other outreach allied health professionals concerning their faith and parenting should also be introduced and institutionalised. Thorough and rigorous outcome measures of such a programme might similarly help add to the woeful evidence base and help generate a replicable solution for countering radicalisation. Of course, this requires greater government interest in certain communities, though this aim, and its corollaries seems a far better option than profiling or censorship, and the concomitants incurred therein. It must be noted that the author is not suggesting a clandestine or witch-hunting exercise. Here, I only opine that invariable differences in parenting, religious or cultural belief system incurred within the demographic of radicalisation-prone individuals should be attributed with the informed attention such differences merit. The following question explains the new approach in holistic terms. Are we really sure that parents are as close to their children as they should be? Do parents of other faiths have stringent or strict rules, instead of liberal and mature dialogue with their children, in the way of more secular or less dogmatically-practised, religions? These enquiries open up further inquisition about parenting, which should be the main focus of re-engineering the socialisation process for the goal of social cohesion in at-risk demographics for radicalisation.

It has been suggested that radicalisation is a societal problem. Instead of devoting resources to drones and bombings, internet censorship through deleting contents and suspension of accounts, and designing counter- narratives or counter-messages, the current paper highlights the appropriateness of instead engaging in a learning curve. Such engagement promotes the respecting of 'other', and seeks ways to actively listen in to hidden cries of marginalisation and redress socially-constructed stereotypes. As reiterated by Archetti (2015) a positive learning curve would entail Western governments discarding hypocritical scripts, and matching word with deeds. Public speech by political actors therefore should be devoid of categorisation of certain communities or hate speech, with external interventions in other countries subject to reasoned and engaged public discourse instead of politics, as exemplified by the War in Iraq and interventions in a number of other Middle Eastern countries. This position is informed by the call for counter-narratives or rhetorics that ignore the call for a stop to external interventions by Western countries from Jihadist regimes and countries. Ignoring such call would only hand more prosperity to the propaganda of such Jihadist or extremist groups and, unwittingly or otherwise, entrench greater radicalisation and ultimately violent, ideological conflict.

In a similar vein, Archetti (2015) debunked the counter-messaging position of anti-extremist perspectives, highlighting the futility of investing in a medium to get the 'right message' across in the way of counter-radicalisation strategy as ultimately there is no 'right message'. Instead, the focus should be aimed at extremist groups and formal or informal relationship networks. An example was cited in the way of a political campaigner attempting to convince knowledgeable or informed voters before an election about whom to vote for or not to vote for. Demonstrably, this is similarly a futile exercise, as informed voters know who to vote for (Archetti 2015). The same applies to a religious devotee who believes in Heaven and Hell and thus is set on literally and practically abstaining from any deterrent or obstruction to reach the end goal of eternal bliss. Such ideologues may prove hard to convince, unless you gain access to their network of relationships. Infiltrating the network of relationships of extremists and re-engineering their identity within is a much more feasible option than hoping for counter-messaging or designing counter-narratives to de-radicalise or stem the tide of radicalisation.

In conclusion, integration has largely been avoided in this paper owing to the generally politicised nature of the concept. However, issues such as how to develop social cohesion in European communities are critical to the defeat of terrorism and radicalisation.

Here, it is crucial to note that before social cohesion can function a foundation of respect, understanding the other, equal rights to citizens and immigrants or those of Islamic background must be negotiated within policies and law. It is not enough to pay lip service to questions of integration whenever there is a refugee surge, yet the failures of the past in cohesion can be evinced in a number of European cities. Therefore, the ignored, marginalised communities ought to be re-integrated into the society through re-orientation, proactive debates and discourse working to highlight and reveal why certain things do not work. Accordingly, such a policy would be feedback-matched with relevant and related policies, in ensuring the realisation of true and proper integration, versus integration as indicated by a civic test or language test. Suffice it to say, such integration assessments form part of the programme. However, such measures fail to adequately deal with and target questions of identity and belonging for an immigrant resident in a country between over 5-20 years.

Similarly, acquired citizenship does not rule out segregation, either perceived or experienced. These questions represent a classic problem which has generally been ignored by policymakers and ostensible integration champions. The issue of having naturalised citizens or the 'other' gain a sense of belonging is crucial to any form of social cohesion.

Conclusion

While exploratory in nature, findings of this paper have revealed the underlying challenges posed by certain assumptions regarding online radicalisation and counter-radicalisation strategies.

These challenges have also led to arguably dysfunctional solutions presented by policy makers. Instead of focusing on the rot within the society, a face value solution of attacking the superficial is instead prevalent.

Perhaps most significantly is that the category of people prone to radicalisation has been concurrently highlighted by a number of studies. And yet, a strong global or national policy addressing the issue of youth radicalisation is lacking. Instead, we have policies and speeches addressing integration, the failure of multiculturalism and on-going debates about social cohesion. Yet again the superficial constructs, debates and solutions dominate the political landscape. While counter-narratives and counter-radicalisation strategies bent on profiling or counter-messaging are generally discredited by this paper, the importance of right message as a function of different permutations is highlighted. Hopes for a generalist, preventionist formula in stopping or preventing radicalisation appear misguided and ill-informed. Rather, radicalisation is instead a societal problem which demands a societal solution.

Therefore we need to ask: how democratic are Western countries that politicise the 'others or immigrant communities or those of the Islamic faith'? How do we get across to youths or those prone to radicalisation the correct messages? And are we ready for social cohesion when constructs and stereotypes still dominate the political landscape? Yes, community based and inter-faith dialogue has been proposed as solutions but how might dialogue be achieved when workable solutions within our reach are ignored?

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