

The logo for the International CVE Research Conference features a stylized circular graphic composed of numerous thin, white, vertical lines of varying lengths, creating a sunburst or ripple effect. The text "INTERNATIONAL CVE RESEARCH CONFERENCE" is positioned to the left of this graphic.

**INTERNATIONAL
CVE RESEARCH
CONFERENCE**

LOOKING AHEAD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR P/CVE POLICY, PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH

FEBRUARY 2020



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INTRODUCTION

The 6th International CVE Research Conference 2019 was held in Melbourne, Australia from the 8th to 10th of October 2019. The co-organizers of this conference were Hedayah, Deakin University's Alfred Deakin Institute, AVERT (Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism) Research Network, Deakin University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Spanish Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, European Union (EU) Commission, and the Victoria State Government were the sponsors of the event.

Strategic Partners for 2019 were Afrobarometer, Albany Associates, Conflict Management Consulting (CMC), DAI, Facebook, the Global Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), the George Washington University Program on Extremism, M&C Saatchi, Macquarie University, Monash University, Moonshot CVE, Multicultural New South Wales (NSW), RESOLVE Network, the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), SCCV Project, The Stabilisation Network (TSN), the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, the Canadian Network for Terrorism, Security & Society (TSAS), and Victoria University.

The Conference aimed to:

- Enhance and strengthen the network of P/CVE researchers and policy-makers, by sharing their most current research and best practices;
- Provide researchers and practitioners with a platform to exchange ideas, jointly identify trends and needs for on-the-ground implementation, prepare the ground for further research, and collaborate with each other on emerging areas of work;
- Identify existing gaps in research and encourage interdisciplinary collaborations;
- Explore new and innovative ways to address the issue of radicalization that leads to violent extremism;
- Produce recommendations on how to turn theoretical knowledge and research on P/CVE into coherent and practical implementation systems.

¹ A special thank you to the co-organizers and speakers that reviewed this document and provided essential comments. This report is a collation of the presentations, discussions and debates that took place during the International CVE Research Conference 2019. The Conference organizers are grateful for the speakers, moderators, facilitators, and note-takers that made this report possible.



The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview of the conference, as well as present the recommendations made for P/CVE policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. A more detailed description of the presentations will be provided through essays contributed to the annual edited volume expected to be published in 2020. The following sections will summarize key takeaways and recommendations made during presentations, discussions, and debates that took place throughout the separate sessions of the three-day conference. The sections are delineated by theme, in alignment with the panel topics of the Conference itself.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY, MEDIA, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN P/CVE

In the current information and data-driven age, technology, media and artificial intelligence are important tools to communicate with the world. Terrorist groups have leveraged these tools to spread their messages, both online and offline. In the same vein, these tools can be incredibly important in the efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism in all its forms. This panel explored ways in which terrorist groups use technologies and media strategies, as well as ways in which those groups and ideologies can be countered using innovative methods. First, the panel noted that terrorist groups adapt new technologies for recruitment and radicalization purposes—consistently finding new ways to leverage these for terrorist purposes. For example, Daesh has been experimenting with a number of niche and lesser-known platforms to find a viable, stable, and alternative to Telegram in case they get booted off that service.

At the same time, far-right violent extremist entities have been using more takedown resistant technologies to evade account and content removals. Similarly, disinformation and misinformation-driven campaigns have been used to mobilize populations to conduct violence—notably through elections processes in various locations. In certain cases, disinformation was able to mobilize individuals to participate in election violence, unbeknownst to those individuals that the information that catalyzed their actions was factually incorrect. Finally, communications strategies and tools, such as Social Network Analysis (SNA) can be influential in informing interventions in locations where the internet and social media are not as prevalent. Understanding who is trusted, and how trust is formed, is critical to determining effective entry points in communities.

The research and discussions from this panel resulted in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- As policies regarding content regulation, takedown and account removal are drafted, work with the private sector to develop smarter and more adaptive policies that reflect new and emerging technologies used by terrorist groups.
- Recognize that technology is a neutral tool—and that solutions to prevent the misuse of technology by terrorist groups involve technological solutions.
- Recognize that content takedown is not the only solution under the structure of a decentralized web, where content is not “hosted” or “owned” by one entity, meaning content takedown cannot be regulated by current methods.
- Ensure that freedom of speech and respect for human rights are protected under new policies related to technology and social media.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Develop strategies using new technology to identify violent extremist content on takedown-resistant platforms and provide alternative/counter-narratives where that content is located.
- Ensure interventions are informed by ongoing and current research; leverage research and communications methods to monitor and collect data on interventions as they develop and adapt accordingly.
- Build two-way communications strategies into programs that create opportunities to engage target populations for effectively.
- Find innovative ways to use current technologies or create new ones to overcome terrorist propaganda, disinformation, and other methods that can inspire and mobilize violence.
- Inform the public of methods used by various entities to spread disinformation and propaganda, and focus on digital and media literacy skill development.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Use open source intelligence gathering techniques to analyze how terrorist groups are leveraging the internet and social media to spread their messages. Data available online can be scrubbed and collected from any platform, and can provide a wealth of information that can transmit knowledge of how terrorist groups are adapting to new challenges.

- Utilize a quantitative approach to identify vulnerable individuals both online and offline; focus on developing a predictable “risk categorization” of how individuals are interacting online, rather than a certain “risk profile” of traits.
- Leverage traditional media tools, such as social network analysis (SNA), to understand focal points of communications networks; to understand whom potentially vulnerable individuals trust in their communities; and to identify physical and virtual locations where trust is built. SNA and data analysis can be supplemented by in-depth interviews to interrogate further certain research questions that remain unanswered.
- Analyze the ecosystem of terrorists’ use of technology, media strategies and the internet through a holistic approach that considers both content and technical strategies.
- Develop indicators of disinformation narratives that could potentially mobilize into violence, and monitor those narratives online.
- Understand how disinformation informs behavior through correlating narratives online and resulting offline decision-making by those users.

EMERGING TRENDS OF RELIGIOUS-BASED VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This panel explored new and emerging trends of religious-based violent extremism across many different contexts. For example, the panel explored how Bangladeshi Muslims understand their own identity as being a Muslim, and the relationship of this identity towards being a “bad Muslim” and being a “terrorist.” These different perceptions of being Muslim, particularly perceptions that draw upon a fear of cultural invasion and the need to protect Islam, have influenced motivations towards violence in Bangladesh. For instance, despite being a Muslim majority country, there is a fear that minority religions, while protected, are imposing certain cultural norms that are degrading Islam. In the Swiss context, profiles of incarcerated terrorist prisoners were analyzed in order to draw conclusions about the radicalization and recruitment processes. In this analysis, it was revealed that many of these individuals (80%) had contact with propaganda and terrorist content online, but it was access through social networks, partially through radical preachers in their communities, that ultimately catalyzed their radicalization and recruitment. There was also not consistency in terms of their migration background and their criminal background—thus reinforcing the idea that it is very difficult to develop a profile of a ‘vulnerable’ individual. In the context of the Western Balkans, panelists exposed a region that is consistently viewed as the crossroads where the Islamic world meets the Judeo-Christian world, and religious narratives are often blended with ethnic and political ones. Similar to the findings in Switzerland, the online propaganda is a common way for violent extremists to spread their messages in the Western Balkans. On one hand, Islamically-inspired violent extremist narratives emphasize a sense of trans-national (i.e. Muslim) identity, whereas far-right inspired violent extremist narratives focus on nationalism. Finally, this panel also looked at the

concept of trust in the context of East Africa, specifically underpinning that the fear of terrorism in the East Africa corridor had diminished trust in societies, communities and government. This, of course, has implications in developing effective prevention measures, which are largely built upon trust.

The research and conversations in this panel resulted in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Ensure policies and strategies should include milestones where research and feedback may influence the adaptation of the strategies as appropriate empirical research emerges. This is acknowledging the fact that developing initial strategies based on empirical research may be challenging due to small datasets and the need for research to take time.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Pay attention to the location where religiously-based violent extremists are recruiting in the online space and making connections, not just the source of the propaganda.
- Invest in education reform to promote digital literacy to help prevent the spread of disinformation in contexts where politics, ethnic identity and religious ideology are overlapping.
- Develop tools and interventions in regional and local languages and dialects; religiously-based violent extremist groups are using local languages to recruit online.
- Work with journalists to make sure that media exposure on terrorism is reflective of the actual threat, so as to not over-emphasize the problem and perpetuate fear.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Investigate further how individuals frame their own identities in relation to religiously-based violent extremism and terrorism.
- Examine how identity perceptions within one country also affect identity perceptions of diaspora communities globally and their relationship to violent extremism.
- Leverage regional expertise to investigate religiously-motivated violent extremism, particularly in areas such as the Western Balkans, where Western researchers may have an inherent bias towards their understanding of the region.

ADDRESSING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF FAR-RIGHT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This panel analyzed the evolving landscape of far-right violent extremism in Europe, North America, and Australasia. The panel mainly focused on the online and offline communication of these groups, with one of the presentations more specifically drawing on a comparison between the extreme right and Daesh women's only forums. Firstly, the panel deconstructed some of the existing narratives presented by the far-right violent extremist groups across several geographical locations. Following the analysis of the narratives, it was argued that there are some clear emerging trends or typologies these narratives can be categorized into. This included ethnic, cultural, racial threats; homophobic/gendered threats; victimhood; populist anti-globalization; eco-fascism; and anti-Islam. The research from the UK underlined the importance of analyzing not only the message, but also the audience targeted. Examples of simple every-day life changes could be leveraged by far-right movements in order to attract possible "empathizers," who may have grievances in common with the movement, but are not committed to it through action. An Australian example demonstrated far-right groups are highly adaptable, with the key themes in narratives shifting over time, strategically leveraging present political atmosphere to mobilize support. The study also picked up on the fact that at times, narratives put forward by far-right group leaders may diverge heavily from what their followers want to hear, hence, creating tensions within the group.

When analyzing the online and offline space, the speakers found that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two, with smaller offline mobilizations having a larger online effects. The results from the comparative study between women's only forums suggested that while conversations around ideology are present, whether explicitly or more weaved into the broader conversations, the platforms provided a "digital support group for like-minded individuals." Taking all of the above-mentioned points into consideration allows for an exploration of ways to utilize the research in developing better responses, as well as shedding of light on the existing gaps and challenges that continue to persist in research and more practical application.

The discussions and findings from this panel resulted in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Provide ways to open a dialogue with citizens, ensuring their participation and "active citizenship" in developing efficacy and voice, without turning to the far-right.
- Identify ways to discourage possible "empathizers" from leaning towards the existing far-right movements through assessing grievances, and addressing or responding in a manner that would make the extremist's movements' narrative less appealing.
- Assess how political environment may be leveraged by far-right extremist groups and seek to develop ways to mitigate it.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- As the field of far right counter narratives is still relatively underdeveloped, produce more creative online and offline counter narratives in order to have a more powerful effect on those engaged, or at danger of becoming engaged, in far-right violent extremist milieus.
- Assess carefully the best messenger or messengers for counter narratives or alternative narratives campaigns against the far-right. Counter narratives are often better delivered by 'everyday' individuals, local role models, or aspirational peers. Although there is a role for messaging from governments or elites, it should be appraised carefully as these messengers can also exacerbate grievances.
- Consider how online discussion forums for the far-right serve also as peer support networks to express frustrations not related to the violent extremist ideology. Identify potential strategies for off-ramping around those frustrations that emerge. This can be particularly the case on gender issues, where women are actively seeking support, for example on pregnancy or related topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Consider a multi-method approaches in data collection and analysis of far right movements. It may be useful to synthesize online activity (on social media) with corresponding offline activity, such as rallies or protests, to best assess the reach, scope and impact of far-right activities and messages online.
- Assess dynamics of sub-groups within movements and analyze how their interactions differ in and out of the group.
- Analyze the contents of online activity of followers of far-right accounts through their active participation (e.g. composed Tweets, active posts) versus their passive participation (e.g. Retweets, Likes). This can give some insights into what the group's leadership is directing the conversation about, versus what the followers want the conversation to be about.

DISENGAGEMENT, DERADICALIZATION, AND REHABILITATION: LESSONS FROM CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

This panel covered different approaches to disengagement, deradicalization and rehabilitation, drawing on lessons from criminology, sociology and psychology. Speakers looked at a number of topics, starting with examining the Tunisian approach to the threat of returning foreign terrorist fighters, particularly children. This approach included training psychologists and social workers that are working with vulnerable youth as well as those affected by violent extremism. The approach focused on several methods: improving digital literacy; improving identity, sense of belonging and social and emotional learning; and improving safe methods of expression of grievances. Preliminary results suggested that social and emotional learning techniques were identified as one of the most useful components in working with youth and children in detention centers.

This panel also looked at de-radicalization programs in Nigeria, both those run by the government and those run by civil society organizations. In particular, gender was heavily considered as a factor of evaluation, to see if there were gender differences or gender biases. Notably, in the government-led efforts, no women participated in the full program—many were screened out at the beginning or assumed that their participation had been “forced.” There were also challenges related to reintegration—participants expressed concern that they would not be accepted back into society once they were released. The final presentation also looked at how lessons can be learned from gang-related violence for the field of CVE. In some circumstances, the processes by which criminal groups and gangs recruit to their groups are similar to the recruitment and radicalization tactics utilized by violent extremist organizations. In the overall assessment, young people were identified as one of the vulnerable groups of people targeted by both groups. It is, hence, important to leverage the similarities known from research and build awareness and resilience to such tactics among young people. Some of the preventative approaches included awareness raising on the impact certain choices will have on young people’s lives, as well as practical information on how the grooming process works to help individuals identify it.

The proceedings from this session resulted in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Ensure formal de-radicalization programs meet basic needs first (e.g. appropriate facilities, place to sleep, sufficient food, basic education) before undertaking any further treatment.
- Even in government-led programs, involve as much as possible civil society organizations in rehabilitation and reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters, as they may be able to fill gaps in specialized expertise or knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Work to prepare communities to accept those individuals that have been through disengagement or de-radicalization programs in some sort of structured facility (detention center, prison). Community acceptance is critical to ensuring the reintegration of former violent extremists is successful.
- Ensure structured de-radicalization programs are addressing trauma that individuals may have faced during their experiences.
- Provide different facilities for different sorts of needs (e.g. children, women, more/less severe use of violence).
- Leverage topics such as gang violence, which may be more familiar in certain contexts, to open conversations around violent extremism and ensure the topic is relatable. However, avoid glamorizing violence around gang-related activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Conduct more research on effective rehabilitation for children and youth specifically, and how this might be different than adults. Conduct more research on the differences and/or similarities in processes of rehabilitation for men and women.
- Assessment of the quality and consistency of practices conducted during disengagement, de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration should be utilized to help inform future practices.
- Investigate how the processes of involvement in gang violence overlap with processes that drive radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism.

LESSONS FROM PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE FOR P/CVE

The panel on lessons from psychology and neuroscience for P/CVE presented findings from three projects. Two of the research projects were scientific studies investigating the role of sensation-seeking in political violence, as well as a neuroscientific analysis of sacred values. These two projects used experimental methods to test variables in relation to support for violence and violent extremism. The first researchers found sensation seeking to be an extension of the 3N model – need (personal significance), network, and narrative – which indicated to be important psychological mechanism linking people seeking for meaning and extreme behavior. In particular, it was found that those that rated high on the sensation-seeking scale were more likely to support active political violence—indicating that there is some evidence supporting the theory that a “sense of adventure” is one motivator for those joining violent extremism. In the neuroscience research, it was found that there was a neurological “switching off” of certain logical processes related to decision-making (e.g. cost-benefit analysis) in those individuals that expressed the “willingness to fight and die for a cause.” In addition, it was found that the perception of others’ opinions on what was acceptable in society had an effect on decision-making processes; those that thought their peers found certain violent ideas intolerable were more likely to “switch back on” their logical decision-making processes when prompted about violence under peer pressure. The third research presented on the good practices in mentorship programs, specifically those that interact with youth. Despite the strong assumption it was noted that mentorship programs were the most successful when they did not over-emphasize religious factors, but rather when they leveraged existing psycho-social mental health professionals and provided tailored support for the mentee.

The panel resulted in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Emphasize policies that support society to denounce violent actions. Changing perceptions of what individuals think are the “popular opinion” may influence positively the logical decision-making processes for deciding whether or not to participate in violence. The individuals’ beliefs may not change, but if the acceptable norms around them change, their behavior changes (by not participating in violence).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- For those looking for a “sense of adventure,” alternative messages that are perceived as supporting “boring” actions will not be effective. It is important to provide stimulating and exciting alternatives to violence, that still tap into the desire to seek thrills.
- Interventions should help individuals construct meaningful personal narratives and redirect violent action to peaceful action.
- Avoid unsubstantiated assumptions in youth mentorship programs such as: assuming working with high-risk individuals will have a higher chance of success; assuming religious education and religious ideology is an effective approach; assuming “at-risk” or “vulnerable” individuals are easily identified by the community.
- Avoid attempting to “moderate” Islam in a youth mentorship program, as it can have unintended consequences of alienating that person, or actually legitimizing some of their frustrations and concerns by dancing around key issues.
- Adopt an egalitarian approach to mentorship whereby the mentor and the mentee have equal authority in directing conversation and identifying appropriate course of action.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- There is a need for further research on the behavioral patterns of individuals in search of meaning, specifically related to violent extremism.
- Mentorship is over-emphasized as a potential programmatic intervention without appropriate evidence that it is effective. More research on the specific effectiveness of mentor programs for CVE purposes is needed.

EDUCATION AND P/CVE

This panel explored several examples of programs and policies related to preventing and countering violent extremism through education. One panelist looked at the foreign-funded P/CVE programs in the education sector in Pakistan, assessing the good practices and lessons learned from nine case studies. One key finding was that there is a lack of sustainability of these programs, both in terms of funding and in terms of local ownership. Donors often have limited funding for one-off projects, and the principles are not embedded into formal teaching curriculum, meaning they are only incorporated into ad hoc and after-school activities. Another speaker highlighted a series of programs related to P/CVE and education through several contexts. In particular, this speaker emphasized the need to work with families and teachers early on in the development of the program to ensure sustainability. In addition, this speaker reported that the research on his programs found that formal changes to curriculum were not always possible, and this created a tension between requirements for teachers and their desire to carry out P/CVE activities. Finally, the last presentation looked at the worldviews of Generation Z (teens) in Australia. The study found that 52% of Generation Z considered themselves non-religious, and even amongst those that considered themselves “religious”, there was a diverse spectrum of answers that suggested that formal religious practice varied as a central component to their lives. Moreover, representation from all world religions was present, indicating that the Australian Generation Z had a very diverse set of values and worldviews. This sort of research has critical implications on how worldviews are formed, and how students interact with each other in a classroom setting. The project also found that the Generation Z students who had participated in General Religious Education programs had more positive opinions of religious minorities.

This panel resulted in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Consider how exposure to history and diversity is important to the students’ experience and their ability to develop resilience to VE.
- Tailor policies to address challenges related to P/CVE at different ages. Indirect resilience-building skills are perhaps more effective at a younger age, whereas older cohorts may be able to discuss issues related to radicalization, political grievances and peer pressure directly.
- Ensure educational programs are sustainable: both in terms of long-term funding as well as local buy-in to keep the program running.
- Implement educational programs about diverse religions and worldviews to improve interreligious understanding and social inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Emphasize teacher-training for how to build skillsets of addressing radicalization leading to violent extremism in schools. Building teachers' knowledge and confidence, as well as providing resources through semi-structured curriculum can be effective approaches.
- Develop programs that include all stakeholders from the beginning: to include education ministries, administrators, teachers, families and students.
- In circumstances where formal curriculum change is not possible, develop resources (quasi-curriculum) that aide teachers in implementing their formal curriculum through a PVE lens with guided activities. Informal education can also play a critical role in implementing "quasi-curriculum" with PVE aims.
- Develop lessons that encourage students to question worldviews that de-humanize the 'other' or 'out-group'. These lessons may best be taught through lived experiences of diversity and inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Investigate how students perceive their own identities, and how these identities contribute to the development of their worldviews.
- Conduct further research on identities of students at a local level to understand how they may be developing their worldviews and perspectives on identities such as ethnicity, religion, gender or politics.
- Identify specific case studies of P/CVE and education programs that have been effective, and why, and continue to evaluate new P/CVE and education programs.

GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND P/CVE

This session highlighted the ways in which gender has an effect on violent extremism and P/CVE. Along these lines, several speakers looked at how gender differences play out in radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism. For example, one speaker identified five key archetypes utilized by Daesh for potential followers to emulate or reject: 1) supporters (whom perform the hijrah); 2) relatives (mothers, sisters, wives); 3) fighters who physically fight for Daesh; 4) corruptors (recruiters of Daesh); and 5) victims whom are worthy of being saved. Before 2016, Daesh emphasized more the relatives' role (mother, sister, wife), but after 2016, there was a heavier emphasis on the role of a female fighter. Another speaker presented four main studies with several findings. Male-centric attitudes were found to be a prevalent factor within the composition of terrorist organizations. Subsequently, the rise of these attitudes may anticipate the rise of violent extremist groups and therefore should be monitored. However, it should be noted that another study found that the so-called concept of "toxic masculinity" is not a universal one, and the rise of male-centric attitudes, specifically towards violence, are highly localized. Patriarchal structures have a distinct relationship to support for violent extremism, and myths (stories) can help to reinforce these patriarchal structures and concepts of masculinity that place certain male figures at the center of violent extremist propaganda (such as religious leaders, "Caliph"). A third presentation looked at how women communicate online and the implications this might have for P/CVE interventions online. For example, the study found that women tend to communicate more in closed, structured groups due to fear of speaking out in public that could incite offline harassment. This means that the way in which women are engaged by CVE practitioners in the online space should take this into account. Finally, the panel discussed some efforts that were being made on CVE related to female religious leaders, and how women can be empowered in their communities, relative to their local context, to have an effect in terms of P/CVE.

This session made the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Approach the subject of gender with caution; sometimes governments working with women's groups or on gender issues can be perceived by local communities as problematic, given issues of mistrust.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Inform women in local communities of trends and understanding of violent propaganda and recruitment strategies by terrorist groups.
- In messaging campaigns, ensure there is a gender lens, and that men and women are working together to cohesively message about a particular topic. It should not be assumed that women only speak to women and men only speak to men. Moreover, all messages have the potential to be gendered depending on whom is speaking and receiving.
- Find ways to reach women in the online space that takes into account their realities. For example, women are less likely to speak in public or in non-private forums, and more likely to speak to their trusted networks. This has implications for how they are being recruited online, as well as how interventions online might take shape.
- Avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes, but also take into account how a program might be perceived by the local community, and ensure that it is not completely alien to the local context.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Investigate how gender-based violence and attitudes towards violent masculinity relates to the rise of violent extremist groups.
- More research is needed on which approaches to working with women's groups are effective in the P/CVE space.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR P/CVE IN SOUTH EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

This panel was constructed to reveal some of the key challenges and opportunities for P/CVE in South East Asia and the Pacific, taking perspectives from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand and Malaysia. One speaker gave an overview on the nuances of South East Asia when it comes to the differences between insurgency and violent extremism, particularly related to peace processes and political processes that had previously influenced the change in rationale of certain violent groups. The research found several trends: 1) that ethno-nationalist insurgencies that defined their struggle as local, rather than global, had a greater immunity to extremist groups; 2) associating with transnational terrorist organizations was seen as a liability by these local insurgencies as it undermined their ability to negotiate with governments or seek support from international partners; 3) countries such as Indonesia show how resilience to violent groups and conflict can be built by using peace and political processes to bring into mainstream politics those who wish to disengage from violence.

Another speaker discussed the history of New Zealand in the wake of the recent Christchurch attack, noting that radical right violence had been limited and underestimated by the government. The presentation outlined the response in the aftermath of the attack, underlining some critical changes to legislation and society as a result. A third study looked at the normative beliefs of youth in Malaysia about violent extremism. In particular, this study found that young Muslim adults that support VE are likely to be male with a history of delinquent behavior, and 'dark psychological traits' such as a history of manipulation. It was also noted by the research that the public debate on violent extremism is in some circumstances causing tension and polarization in Malaysian communities. The last presentation looked at the case of Thailand, particularly the conflict between certain ethnic groups. While the conflict has traditionally not been labeled as "violent extremism", the study has looked at certain drivers of this conflict. In particular, when groups want to express grievances, they initially opt for institutional channels, but resort to extra-institutional challenges when these channels not perceived to be legitimate. Similar to the findings of the first study, it was suggested that ensuring certain opposing groups are included in political processes and have peaceful ways of expressing grievances can undercut their tendency to use violence.

Some of the recommendations presented by the panelists included:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Do not completely shut out violent groups from political processes in South East Asia, as this may force them to take up transnational allies—including more violent terrorist groups.
- Demonstrate that violence is not the most effective way of achieving political aims in South East Asia, show how negotiated peace agreements can work, and that engaging in a political process is in the long-term a better option.
- Even in countries where violent extremism is not seemingly a threat, prepare appropriate responses to potential attacks, and begin to implement prevention strategies. Recent attacks in locations such as New Zealand and Sri Lanka are evidence that no country is immune to violent extremism and terrorism.
- In diverse communities, ensure policies around violent extremism are localized—national efforts may have the effect of further polarizing divided communities or increasing tension.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Focus on lessons of empathy when working with youth in South East Asia, as this is a critical skill to help overcome divided societies. This is especially important in diverse communities such as South East Asia.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Investigate further how violent extremism is perceived amongst young people, and what effect that has across different identity groups.
- Work to understand the origins of violence, local political grievances, and differentiate ethno-nationalist insurgencies from violent extremist groups.

IDENTITY, HATE SPEECH, AND DISCOURSE ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This panel explored possible links between hate speech, identity, and violent extremism in different contexts. On the role of hate speech, the speaker highlighted the importance of carefully assessing the concept deeper, looking into hate incidents and crime. As the given concepts remain to be under reported, there is insufficient empirical data and analysis provided on the topic and its relation to violent extremism. Hate incidents may serve as early warning signs of violent or extreme behavior. It was suggested that violent extremism may be seen as a fraction of hate crime or incidents at large. Hence, drawing on the existing dynamics between the two may result in development of more effective preventative measures.

According to other speakers, some specific identities and their relation to violent extremism remain to also be under-researched. Particular attention was drawn to the identity of “ego-centered sovereign citizens” or the German Reichburger and the idea of misogyny within violent extremist groups. Some of the key fundamental beliefs of these groups are conspiracy theories with some anarchist tendencies and non-acceptance of legal or constitutional governing systems, which, consequently, results in disobedience and protest against state authority. The main challenge identified are insufficient needs assessment, lack of theoretical foundation and appropriate tools, and unfitting response to the issue. Practitioners often utilize the same deradicalization techniques as those employed for radical right violent extremists, which has proven to be ineffective. There remains to be ground for improvement in understanding these groups, their modus operandi and ways to respond.

The last speaker drew on the role misogyny plays in violent extremist group dynamics and recruitment tactics. Women’s nature was often seen as a tool to be used to either recruit females and create a sense of belonging or alienate other females using the same traits. In addition to recruitment, misogynistic traits are seen as integral part of violent extremist narratives that are used to a reinforce certain key elements of a female identity within the group, establishing clear-cut gender roles and gendered utopian society. While there is an increasing interest in exploring the role of misogyny plays in violent extremist dynamics, it was highlighted that these traits, key identities, and violence are not always taken into full consideration in the development of deradicalization strategies.

Some of the recommendations made during this session were:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Develop policies directly targeted at “ego-centered sovereign citizens” group relying on close collaboration with researchers, who are equipped to carry out a more thorough study on individuals joining these groups.

- Provide clear definition what constitutes hate speech, crime, and incident and what legal repercussions each may lead to; develop policies deterring individuals to take up such actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Carry out clear needs assessment on those involved in the “ego-centered sovereign citizens” groups and develop necessary responses, moving away from placing them under the response to the radical right violent extremism.
- Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations to develop capacity building programs for civil society organizations and government agencies; provide government entities necessary advice and guidance; create “integrated third-party reporting systems and data sharing mechanisms.”
- Take into consideration misogynist hate and violence in development of deradicalization and rehabilitation processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Develop a cross-regional comparative study on different types of violent “ego-centered sovereignism” and assess how it differs from other forms of violent extremism.
- Identify best fitted tools and methods to study the phenomenon of “ego-centered sovereignism” and possible responses to it.
- Investigate the relation between hate and extremism and how it may benefit the development of practical preventative measures; create an online tool mapping relationship between hate and extremism in different geographical areas.
- Identify and research trends on how misogyny and violent extremism intersect.

EVALUATING NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

The given session focused on the evaluation and assessment of national strategies action plans on P/CVE in Pakistan, Finland, and Indonesia with one of the presentations developing a list of recommendations following an assessment of the national strategies of over 15 countries. The national action plan for Pakistan was developed by the civil-military nexus and enacted in 2014. Conclusions drawn from the assessment of the 20-point plan indicated that while there have been some improvements in the general state of deterrence of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, there are still certain elements that would require further development. While there has been a visible progress on the kinetic front of tackling terrorism in the country, the approach is not sustainable in the long run and requires further investment into non-coercive approaches. In the evaluation of Finland's national action plan, the two main areas of assessment were the roles and responsibilities of actors and the short term goals of the national action plan. The success highlighted in this case was the ability to encourage a multi-professional cooperation and involvement of different actors of the society, including the civil society organizations. The diversity of actors allowed for a wider and extensive reach into various parts of the society – especially to parts where the state actors had limited access to. Additionally, preventative activities developed within the scope of the national action plan remained flexible and strategically adapted per the changing context and were often drawn or based on the researched information that was provided. One of the identified challenges included the persisting gaps in roles and information sharing mechanisms between different actors. As a part of the assessment, recommendations such as including clarifications of definitions and goals were provided for the new version of the action plan. In the case of Indonesia, the country national action plan is still in the preparatory stages. Some of the challenges identified during the drafting process include the difficulty to maximize synergy among ministries and government bodies, especially where some ministries refuse to use the term “violent extremism.” Additionally, according to civil society organizations, the draft plan still misses the gender equality component, which is critical in development of a national document targeting violent extremism.

Recommendations made during this panel included:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Establish a well-developed working relationship with civil society organizations and practitioners when evaluating national action plans.
- Develop strategies and policies that take into account the ever-changing and evolving threat from violent extremism, potentially allowing for readjustment of certain aspects of the national action plans or strategies according to the threats and needs.
- Produce policies and procedures that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors allowing each of them to take ownership for the implementation of relevant activities.

- Develop effective strategic communications to inform the society on actions taken in relation to the national plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Provide policymakers with a well-developed monitoring, measurement, and evaluation mechanism for assessment of national action plans and strategies, allowing to share successes, lessons learned, and challenges faced.
- Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations to develop capacity building programs for civil society organizations and government agencies; provide government entities necessary advice and guidance; create “integrated third-party reporting systems and data sharing mechanisms.”
- Actively seek to establish a feedback mechanism between all relevant actors and the society during the development and implementation stages of the national action plan and strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- In the case a country is still in the development stages of a national action plan, provide thorough research on drivers of radicalization to develop a more effective state response.
- Inform relevant actors with an assessment of already existing national action plans and how local plans and strategies may benefit from them.
- Assess who are the main actors that need to be involved in implementation of activities on different levels of society to ensure an effectiveness.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF P/CVE PROGRAMS

The presentations from this panel introduced programs from different regions of the world and highlighted some of the key points identified in the evaluation process. One program in the Philippines focused on civil society P/CVE capacity building initiative as it was seen that this group could provide additional support in peace building. While the post-training assessment indicated an increase in improved understanding and knowledge retention, the empowerment of the civil society was not well received by the government which could increase tensions in internal settings. In the case of Kenya and Nigeria, it was important to develop and implement a program in accordance to the national action plan. While this helped in identifying the main actors in delivery of the program, there is a need to include community groups in identifying local issues as well as delivery the program. To evaluate the community-based program, the implementing organization adapted an existing community scorecard to help understand what obstacles and differences in perception existing among the actors involved in the program. However, the adaptation of the scorecard system proved to have certain limitation as it was created to evaluate development rather than relationships between community and religious leaders in implementation of P/CVE programs. In implementation of programs in countries like Iraq it was highlighted that all existing factors and influences need to be taken into consideration in development, implementation, and evaluation of programs. The question of identity is far more complex in such countries where the divide existing not only in ethnic and religious, but also perception of international influences. One way to overcome this was to look into single shared grievances, which were identified as ‘unmet expectations’ and to build on that. Other broader and common challenges to monitoring, measurement, and evaluation in P/CVE programs was in establishing baselines in certain contexts. Furthermore, there is also an ethical challenges related to monitoring ongoing progress of programs: should the participants always be informed on all aspects of the research and monitoring conducted, or are there some circumstances where full transparency is counter-productive to the aims of the program?

Recommendations shared during this panel were:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Support capacity building programs at government and grassroots level to facilitate effective implementation of P/CVE programs on the local level.
- Acknowledge the role of religious or other types of community leaders within societies and identify them to program developers to ensure they play an active role.
- Provide necessary support to civil society organizations in development of programs and monitoring, measurement, and evaluation (MM&E).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Ensure that government bodies are aware of the program being developed and provide their support to the work done with civil society organizations.
- Identify necessary gatekeepers in societies and involve them in establishing trust with local target audience for a more effective implementation and then evaluation of the program.
- Develop programs involving multiple community actors to increase an all-inclusive approach in identifying issue, designing a program, and implementation on the ground.
- Utilize innovative methods for real-time monitoring, which could help in understanding trends and developing early interventions within a community.
- Carry out MM&E on different stages to ensure and assess retention of knowledge by target audience. Adapt the program accordingly if any issues are identified during any of the stages of the program implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Assess how methods used in other contexts may be adapted for MM&E of P/CVE programs and develop recommendation for future programs.
- Carry out a thorough assessment of results from MM&E conducted on different stages of the program and develop recommendations.
- Identify ways to evaluate programs in contexts where baseline is weak or non-existent.

KEYNOTE SESSION: THE EVOLUTION OF RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM: A MULTI-SYSTEMIC APPROACH

The keynote speech was based on the assumption that both the threat and the impacts of violent extremism are examples of adversities that can be simultaneously individual and communal, with multi-system impacts at different levels that can create enormous strain, stress and disturbance for those who experience them. Living with terrorism's risks and consequences can create chronic and also acute forms of adversity that can, under the right conditions, call forth resilient responses. Multi-systemic resilience is a recent model that comes out of the conceptual framework of understanding resilience as social ecology - an active process of being able to identify, access and navigate culturally meaningful resources from different sources and levels in a society that can help individuals and communities cope successfully with challenges and adversities. Within this framework, building and sustaining resilience is dependent on how well multiple, interacting and interdependent systems are able to work together to support common principles of resilience as a multi-systemic process which demonstrates openness, dynamism, complexity, connectivity, experimentation and learning, and diversity, redundancy, and participation. Genuine multi-systemic resilience is achieved when a majority of relevant systems can demonstrate these key features. When it comes to CVE, it is critical to consider not only the interaction between multiple systems but also the presence and impacts of multiple and intersecting adversities. These adversities can be scaled up all the way from the erosion of individual mental health, social belonging, and the fraying of family and community security and cohesion, to community-level trauma, securitized social policies, information and communication unreliability, threats to human rights, and political instability. It can also involve systems compromises or failures in one or more areas such as health, education, the economy, emergency services, transport, communications, energy, border management, trust, democratic procedures, and the rule of law. Accordingly, the evolution of efforts to prevent or counter terrorist ideologies and the social harms they bring has seen the increasing development of complex, systems-based 'whole of society' approaches in tackling violent extremism that are distanced from the more securitized strategies commonly associated with law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

The session offered the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Develop ways to encourage and engage communities in developing, investigating and assessing resilience-based CVE policies and programs. While communities alone cannot be held responsible for resilience to violent extremism, there is no resilience to violent extremism without community participation and buy-in.

- Assess and build government resilience capacity for adaptivity, transformation, connectivity, experimentation, and risk-taking (because without risk there is nothing to be resilient to).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Define and map the various systems (e.g. health, social, political, economic, education), levels (e.g. individual, community, institutional) and scales (e.g. local, national, regional, global) through which multi-systemic resilience is built, demonstrated or eroded, and the specific adaptations and transformations that do or don't enable this to occur.
- Analyze not only how resilient systems cope with the risks and threats of violent extremism but also the multi-systemic resilience of violent extremist and terrorist movements themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Support longitudinal studies to understand and mobilize resilient capacities and behaviors linked to persistence, adaptation and transformation within and across systems. Short-term studies of resilience to violent extremism driven by policy and funding constraints are limiting.
- Continue to explore, declare, and contest the meaning of 'resilience to violent extremism.'
- Continue to design and validate measures of resilience to violent extremism. This effort has already begun, but more work is needed to support effective evaluation of CVE resilience policy and programming.

RESILIENCE AND THE FUTURE OF P/CVE

The panel on resilience and future of P/CVE programs covered three presentations that presented their findings and lessons learned from their programs on resilience that can be leveraged for future P/CVE initiatives. The program implemented in Tanzania identified gaps in how madrassahs and mosques operate within the local context, as well how these gaps are at times leveraged by violent extremists. There is a possibility that some madrassahs and mosques may harbour sympathy towards radical groups, and with a lack of any national religious syllabus for madrassahs and religious guidance or management in mosques this may create breeding grounds for radicalization and recruitment. As part of the program implemented in Tanzania, mosques and religious educational institutions were provided with a management support, trainings, required materials (such as management guides for mosques, and guides for curriculum development for madrassahs). What was highlighted in this case was that if there is more oversight on existing mosques and madrassahs as well as awareness of what is being preached and taught in these institutions, communities can help prevent them from becoming hubs for radicalization and instead become grounds for resilience building. Having a holistic approach in development of curriculum or management of mosques as well as assigning clearly roles and responsibilities of managers, Imams and other relevant actors may help in building “resilient faith institutions.”

The program implemented in Australia focuses on a “whole-of-society model of community resilience” which strives to have a sustainable social cohesion and community harmony within the society. While some communities still try to avoid the topic of CVE due to certain sensitivities, individuals are more likely to accept terminology such as “social cohesion,” which CVE is fundamentally about. Some of the key aspects of the community resilience model implemented in Australia include preparedness (building strong, secure and responsive communities); prevention (resilient communities acting as a shield or defence having the capacity to support preventative initiatives); response (a united mobilization against threats posed by violent extremists); and recovery (ability of communities to recuperate social cohesion following a terrorist incident or crises). Finally, the last panel presented a project that sought to develop an analytical framework that not only identified factors that may lead to violent extremism and polarisation, but also factors that may, on the contrary, promote resilience to polarisation and extremists’ narratives. Hence, the framework covered the intersection between socio-economic, cultural, historical, and communication-based at the macro and micro levels for indicators of polarization as well as for protective or resilience factors. The project aims to leverage this breakdown of protective factors to develop approaches necessary to building resilience to violent extremism and polarization.

Some of the recommendations made during this session were:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Develop working partnerships with multi-stakeholders (including youth) to identify ways to support social cohesion and build resilient communities.
- Provide necessary support for local initiatives that require resources (time and funding) to implement programs more effectively. Access to funding for programs aimed at social cohesion and resilience should be part of a long-term strategic partnerships between communities and governments.
- Support initiative and programs that respect inclusion, equality, and engagement of women and young people.
- Identify gaps that may be leveraged by radical groups and develop policies that could instead turn them into grounds for building resilient communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Involve national partners in development of materials for training purposes – in the case of curriculum development for madrassahs, local Imams and other community leaders need to be consulted to ensure curriculum encompasses not only modules on faith, but also key ideas on citizenship.
- Seek partnerships with local actors in not only development of materials, but also for communication strategies of certain initiatives to ensure broader outreach and engagement.
- As the topic of CVE still remains to be a sensitive one, sufficient amount of time should be dedicated to include establishment of relationships with local actors, training development and delivery, piloting, and thorough MM&E.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Research existing protective or factors of resilience within communities and advise policymakers and/or practitioners on how to best leverage this information to build resilient communities.
- Thoroughly research and assess existing resilience building practices and build a basic framework that could be adapted in different social and cultural contexts.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

As part of the Conference, participants convened into three breakout sessions to discuss in further detail several topics that were identified by the organizers as needing further conversation. The breakout sessions provided all participants the opportunity to discuss core issues in more depth, and in smaller groups. The recommendations that resulted from these breakout sessions are indicated below.

BREAKOUT SESSION A | ETHICS IN P/CVE RESEARCH

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Develop policies that protect projects funded through governments from being influenced by any political agendas and support and respect project's neutrality.
- Maintain transparency when funding research in foreign countries to avoid any question on the possible hidden agendas the project may have.
- Support ethical principles by reinforcing them in the selection for funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Develop an ethical checklist that will help keep checks and balances on all levels of the project development, starting from where the funding is coming from, ending with how the data gathered will be stored.
- Maintain a diverse team and support a feedback mechanism ensuring pre-existing biases and assumptions do not affect any of the processes.
- Seek to mainstream ethical approaches according to context.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Assess how, if at all, ethical principles differ from one context to another and what implications it may have for research and project implementation.
- Weigh risks and benefits in researching violent extremists' propaganda to assess how ethical it is to reproduce their work. When possible, mitigate the threat that it may create.
- Define all relevant concepts and existing assumptions when conducting research on violent extremism and seek to cross-check it with other researches to avoid any biases.

BREAKOUT SESSION B | P/CVE RESEARCH ON HATE CRIME

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Explore the need to develop policies against hate crime as it might relate to violent extremism.
- Provide a clear indication what repercussions will hate crime, incident, and/or speech may have for those committing them under the country's policies.
- Seek to develop policies leveraging democratic principles to prevent hate crime, incident, and speech.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- When developing projects countering hate, ensure to clearly identify whether it is only the crimes that the project is seeking to counter, or does this include incidents and speech.
- Develop a criterion to help assess whether an incident, such as an assault, but motivated by hate or not.
- Establish working relationship with policy makers and researcher to identify best practices on deterring hate crimes and assess best ways to address hate incidents and speech.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Maintain neutrality and objectivity when researching and reporting on hate crimes and incidents.
- Assess to what extent prejudices or biases influence the criminal codes related to hate crime.
- Compare and contrast different legislation on hate crime and incidents and assess the similarities and differences.
- Monitor and evaluate whether any causal links can be drawn between hate speech delivered by prominent figures and hate crimes and/or incidents.

BREAKOUT SESSION C | INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGIES IN P/CVE RESEARCH

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Dedicate funding for innovative methodologies in P/CVE research, providing not only sufficient funding, but also time.
- Recognize that developing new methods to research the topic more effectively and efficiently may require time and resources.
- Consider providing funds for proposals presented by researchers and practitioners, allowing them to decide what the grant should be spend on.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Share lessons learned from projects with policymakers and researchers to develop innovative methodologies.
- Provide concrete feedback to researchers to ensure the quality and standard of research conducted can translate and feed into programming.
- Continue to explore ways to bridge the persistent gap of sharing information between policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

- Assess, when needed, political analysis of related issues while conducting research on violent extremism.
- In the context when sharing information may be the problem and the solution – explore ways how information may be shared without causing further issues.
- Assess how Big Data research can feed into P/CVE projects and policies.
- Explore what other emerging trends and issues exist that may create future grievances and lead to violent extremism.