Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review

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Executive Summary

Violent extremism is multi-factorial and extremely diverse: it cannot be predicted by one variable alone. For violent extremist movements to develop, and for individuals to join them, requires an alignment of situational, social/cultural, and individual factors. It is useful to conceptualise these factors in three levels, with situational factors working at the macro level (i.e. country or community-wide), social/cultural at the meso-level (i.e. affecting smaller communities or identity groups), and individual factors at the micro level. Interventions can also be conceptualised using a three-tier model, with development working at the macro level, countering violent extremism (CVE) at the meso-level, and law enforcement and specialist interventions at the micro level.

While the effect of political factors – governance deficit, state failure, and grievances – is significant, social/psychological factors concerning group and individual identity are also recognised as important. Although the evidence is mixed, on balance the literature shows that blocked participation can create grievances which may be harnessed to promote extremist violence. Civil society may be crucial in countering extremism. However, under oppression some organisations may also be drawn to violent responses.

Religion and ethnicity have been recognised as powerful expressions of individual and group identity. There is robust evidence that radicalisation is a social process and that identity is a key factor in why individuals become involved in violent movements. Psychological research is beginning to examine how identity formation can become 'maladaptive' and whether certain cognitive 'propensities' can combine to create a 'mindset' that presents a higher risk.

Although most violent extremists are young men, there is little convincing research to suggest that ideals of masculinity and honour play a significant role in causing violent extremism. More generally, gender issues do not appear to be significant. Education has a minor and/or largely unsubstantiated influence, and there is little evidence that certain types of education (e.g. faith-based) increase the risk of radicalisation, and research shows that the problem of madrassa-based radicalisation has been significantly overstated. Indeed, some research suggests that religious training can be a protective factor.

The findings on the relationship between education, employment, poverty and radicalisation are mixed. However, in a departure from earlier studies which identified the absence of any causal or statistical relationship between poverty and transnational terrorism, this study recognises the relevance of economic factors in the context of broad-based violent extremist groups. In conflict situations involving violent extremist groups (as opposed to terrorism directed against the West), socio-economic discrimination and marginalisation do appear to partly explain why extremist groups are able to recruit support in large numbers. However, because poverty may be a side-effect of some other cause, it is not possible to isolate it as a cause of violent extremism. In a number of

contexts, extremist groups have proven able to deliver services through which they gain support and legitimacy. While the failure of the state to provide security and justice may not be a necessary factor in the development of violent extremism, failed and failing states are often breeding grounds for extremist activity.

The perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims can be instrumentalised by leaders of Islamist violent extremist groups as a justification for extremist violence, although the use of a narrative of oppression to justify violence and recruit and motivate supporters is near-universal among violent extremist groups.

Summary Table

Hypothesis/ Factor	Evidence Strength	Brief Summary
Hypothesis 1: Ineffective or blocked political participation, widespread corruption of the political process, elite domination, and little hope of change, create frustration which is harnessed by extremist groups	Mixed	Although the evidence is mixed, on balance the research suggests that blocked participation does create grievances which can be harnessed to promote extremist violence – but it is neither a sufficient nor consistent factor. Econometric analyses show that lack of civil liberties is the most reliable predictor of terrorism identified so far (although such analyses are limited in showing statistical correlations rather than cause and effect).
Hypothesis 2: Organised civil society (and political society) groups which fail to achieve change despite attempting to engage with the state, are more likely to resort to extremist tactics and to have support from the wider population in doing so	Supported	Some examples exist of civil or political society turning to violence when faced with political failure or repression. However, civil society can also be crucial in countering extremism. It is therefore important to encourage inclusive and active engagement with civil society.
Hypothesis 3: The search for personal and group identities among those who feel this has been undermined by rapid social change can increase the vulnerability of the young to radicalisation	Strongly Supported	Identity-formation – a normal, universal and psychologically attested process – is important in radicalisation. Psychological research is beginning to examine how identity-formation can become 'maladaptive', and why some individuals are more vulnerable to radicalisation than others: one theory suggests that certain cognitive 'propensities' can combine to create a 'mindset' that presents a higher risk.
Hypothesis 4: The growth of religious and ethnic identities (particularly if they	Strongly Supported	There is robust evidence that radicalisation is a social process and that identity is a key factor in why individuals become involved in violent

compete with loyalties to the state) can be exploited by extremist ideologues		movements. There is substantial evidence for religion and ethnicity being among the most powerful expressions of individual and group identity. The role of charismatic individuals (peers as well as leaders) who can instrumentalise identity is also often widely acknowledged.
Hypothesis 5: Ideals of masculinity and honour (including the role of family breadwinner) are increasingly difficult to fulfil in some societies, and the loss of self-esteem can be considerable for young men. Other ways may be sought to achieve status, including extremist activity.	Not Supported	Although most violent extremists are young men, there is little convincing research to suggest that ideals of masculinity and honour play a significant role in causing violent extremism.
Hypothesis 6: Women generally play a moderating role against extremism, and if more empowered could do this more effectively .	Not Supported	There is little evidence that women have a moderating influence on militancy, but this does not mean they cannot, as active agents, play a significant role in countering violent extremism.
Hypothesis 7: Limited availability of information, low literacy, and a lack of diverse sources, lead to issues being seen in black-and-white terms with little understanding of context, and make people more vulnerable to extremist messages	Not Supported	There is no clear link between education levels and extremism: some extremists are highly educated, some are not, and countries with low and high provisions of education have experienced violent extremism. Nor is there evidence that certain types of education (e.g. faith-based) increase the risk of radicalisation. Although education in some scientific or technical disciplines has been proposed as a contributory factor in the radicalisation of Islamist terrorists, some research suggests religious training can be a protective factor.

Hypothesis 8: People with shared experiences of discrimination and exclusion are more susceptible to a legitimising 'single narrative' which binds together multiple sources of resentment and proposes a simple solution	Supported	There is a strong relationship between perceived grievances and violent extremism though there is some speculation about whether grievances are causative. Some suggest they are necessary but not sufficient to cause violent extremism – although in general the research seems speculative on this point. In conflicts involving violent extremism (as opposed to terrorism directed against the West), socio-economic discrimination and marginalisation do help to explain why extremist groups are able to recruit support in large numbers. However, while the use of a single narrative to justify, recruit and motivate is near universal among extremist groups, the research into how extremist narratives work is actually limited and we consider this to be an area for productive further research.
Hypothesis 9: Government failure to provide basic services (health, education, welfare) allows extremist groups to meet these needs and build support as a result	Strongly Supported	In a number of contexts, extremist groups have proven able to deliver services. The impact is two-fold: extremist groups gain support and legitimacy while the government and state structures lose credibility and support. This increases both the support for extremist groups and the potential for state failure. Some extremist groups want to improve the situation of the people. Other groups' primary interest is retaining resources and power for themselves.
Hypothesis 10: Failure of the state to provide security and justice, and people's experience of predatory and oppressive security sector institutions, are influential drivers towards extremism	Mixed	While the failure of the state to provide security and justice, and people's experience of predatory and oppressive security sector institutions, are influential factors in violent extremism, these are not necessary factors. Extremist groups also operate in strong and stable states with effective security and justice sectors.

Hypothesis 11: In the absence of peace and security, populations are often ready to accept <u>any entity that offers stability</u>	Strongly Supported	Evidence from a wide range of countries shows that in situations of conflict and insecurity, populations often accept any entity that offers stability, at least in the short-term. Anarchy and governance and state failure are breeding grounds for extremist activity. Ensuring that extremist groups do not have the monopoly over security provision can therefore help to reduce the support for extremist groups.
Hypothesis 12: *Madrassas* should be the primary focus of attention in education as their students are particularly vulnerable to extremist narratives	Not Supported	Madrassas can play a role in promoting extremist ideologies and in providing facilities for recruitment and training. However, the number of 'extremist' madrassas (in Pakistan especially) is small, and the problem of madrassa-based radicalisation has been significantly overstated.
Hypothesis 13: <u>(Income) poverty</u> and deprivation are major drivers of radicalisation	Mixed	Poverty and deprivation have been dismissed as drivers of Western-focused transnational terrorism. However, there is a correlation between poverty and civil war, and hence some broader-based forms of violent extremism. Because poverty may be a side-effect of some other cause, it is not possible to isolate it as a cause of violent extremism.
Hypothesis 14: <u>Underemployed</u> young men with frustrated aspirations and a limited stake in society are particularly susceptible to radicalisation	Mixed	The findings on the relationship between education, employment and radicalisation are mixed. There is, however, some limited evidence that militant groups recruit from the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed including those that are relatively well-educated.
Hypothesis 15: Where inequality and institutionalised <u>discrimination coincide with religious or ethnic fault-lines</u>, there is an increased likelihood of radicalisation and mobilisation	Strongly Supported	Religious and ethnic fault-lines do not always coincide, but the economic, social and political marginalisation of ethnic or religious groups is widely believed to increase the risk of violent extremism.

Hypothesis 16: <u>Migrants from rural to urban</u> areas are particularly susceptible to radicalisation	Not Supported	There is little evidence to suggest a causal link between urbanisation and violent extremism, although mega-cities in the developing world have been identified as permissive environments for some forms of violent extremism.
Hypothesis 17: <u>Events in Palestine, Iraq, etc, a perceived global attack on Islam</u>, and a belief that Muslim nations are less prosperous than they should be (as a result of Western policies), give rise to widespread indignation and resentment which encourage support for extremist action	Mixed	While the perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims can be instrumentalised by leaders of violent extremist groups, there is disagreement over whether this is a driver of extremism or merely used as justification to legitimise extremist activities. However, human rights violations and perceived overseas aggression can have a radicalising impact on diaspora communities.

Definitions

Strongly Supported: substantial, credible secondary-source material supports the hypothesis, with little or no contradictory evidence.

Supported: some credible secondary-source material supports the hypothesis, with little or no contradictory evidence.

Mixed: secondary-source material has evidence for both sides of the hypothesis.

Not Supported: credible secondary-source material contradicts the hypothesis.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this review is to offer a wide-ranging discussion of what causes violent extremism and how it develops and persists. Discussion of violent extremism is often fraught with assumptions and received wisdom that can potentially obscure underlying causes, with implications for government interventions and policy. This review therefore provides an independent critical analysis of the substantial academic literature on what causes violent extremism. The review examines the 17 hypotheses discussed in the 2008 DFID Paper titled 'Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Evidence' and discusses their validity. As the scope of these hypotheses is broad, each topic covers a significant quantity of literature. The review is therefore necessarily selective rather than exhaustive, but aims to summarises the most important and credible academic literature, both in support of and against the hypothesis. The review is structured in sections for each hypothesis, preceded by an overall analytical assessment. Following the structure of the 2008 paper, each section includes implications for DFID or HMG in general, but also indicates topics for further research.

Methodology

2. The source material has been selected from material published since 2000 (although it includes also some notable prior research). We identified material using keyword searches, from our own knowledge or that of other experts in RUSI, and through use of the 'snowball method' (i.e. following up citations in the literature we were reading). Through this process, we identified over 150 books and journal articles (listed in the bibliography). In order to maintain a degree of academic rigour, we focussed our attention to peer-reviewed journals and books from academic publishers, avoiding 'grey literature' and journalism where possible.

Caveats

3. We take a slightly different approach with respect to one of the assumptions of the 2008 paper. The secondary literature in this field contains in some cases empirical evidence, but this is rarely sufficient to determine a hypothesis. Secondary literature can yield hypotheses and strengthen them where there is consistency, but is no substitute for primary research. Therefore we have avoided stating that hypotheses are (or are not) confirmed. Instead, we suggest that some hypotheses are supported by the secondary literature, but they remain hypotheses.

4. This issue is especially pertinent here because literature on violent extremism and terrorism has numerous methodological and definitional issues. One issue is especially important: 'violent extremism' and 'terrorism' are very broad categories and research frequently aggregates diverse phenomena, such as guerrilla movements, sectarian militias, and cell-based terrorist organisations. Research which focuses on one manifestation of violent extremism, e.g. Western-oriented

transnational terrorist groups such as Al Qaida, should not be assumed to be applicable to other types. Violent extremist groups also have varying motives, targets, demands, structures and arenas of operations. Labels conceal this range and diversity.

5. The concept of radicalisation, which we use as it is widespread in the literature, deserves however its own caveat. Sedgwick (2010) argues that the concept risks over-emphasising the individual and, to some extent, the ideology and the group at the cost of the wider circumstances – the 'root causes.' This tends to lead to a conflation of groups and individuals "operating in disparate circumstances on the basis of what they have in common: Islam and violence". The range of activities of these groups also blurs the line between the understanding of the concepts of radicalisation and recruitment; and the question of whether they relate to different types of militancy. Radicalisation to terrorism or violent extremism is a recent conceptualisation and only became widespread after terrorist plots and attacks planned by 'home-grown', second-generation terrorists in Spain and the UK (Sedgwick, 2010): the term presupposes that individuals may develop extreme views and then seek to put them into practice, implying that they search for terrorist groups rather than vice versa. It quickly eclipsed the traditional notion of recruitment – that terrorist groups operate like other organisations and select and induct their operatives. However, research into militant groups which have broad, popular support such as Al Shabaab (Botha, 2014) and Boko Haram (Comolli, 2015) suggests that recruitment, whether voluntary or involuntary, may be a more accurate description of how individuals come to join them. Radicalisation may, then, be more applicable to diaspora communities in Western societies. Whilst terrorism research tends to emphasise the multiplicity of pathways (see for example Horgan, 2014), we have not found research which attempts to grapple with the conceptual differences between recruitment and radicalisation, or which then seeks to investigate them empirically. This may then be a productive area of further research.

Overall Assessment

6. Our assessment of the strength of the various factors is broadly in line with the conclusions of the 2008 paper. We differ substantially only on economic factors, where our reading of the literature suggests that some forms of violent extremism may be related to economic conditions. Elsewhere, we offer differences in nuance rather than in key points.

7. We propose that a more accurate term than 'drivers' is 'factors'. Factors (a term derived from mathematics) usefully suggests that more than one is required to produce a given result. The academic literature strongly suggests that violent extremism has many causes and cannot be predicted by one variable alone. Standing back from the 17 hypotheses, we believe that it is possible to sort the political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological factors into three levels (see Figure 1). At the macro level are situational factors, which affect a large number of people (large communities or even whole countries) and which, in USAID's influential 'push-pull' model, are described as 'push factors'. The literature suggests that, at this level, governance failures and political grievances are strong and may be necessary conditions for violent extremism.

8. The mixed evidence concerning economic factors places the role of economic development in addressing the drivers of radicalisation in doubt, especially considering the large numbers of people affected who do not join radical groups. However, while income poverty, deprivation and underemployment are not sufficient explanations in themselves for violent extremism, they can contribute to grievances and help create an environment conducive to violent extremist groups. Furthermore, there is some correlation between civil war and poverty and therefore some broader-based forms of violent extremism.

9. At the meso-level, affecting smaller communities and identity groups, social and cultural factors predominate. In the USAID model, these fall under the category of 'pull' factors. The literature suggests that the strongest social and cultural factors are those linked to identity – religious, ethnic, or group. One of the most robust findings of psychological research in this area is that appeals to identity are crucial in motivating, legitimising and sustaining involvement in violent extremist groups. But even at this level, many if not most people do not become involved, suggesting again that these factors may be necessary but are not sufficient. (We find little evidence that gender issues play much of a role, and the influence of education is limited.) Psychological research suggests that individuals joining violent extremist groups or movements either have a cognitive vulnerability or disposition (e.g. they have learned to think in a strongly dualistic way) and/or they have become socialised to accept the use of violence to achieve political objectives.
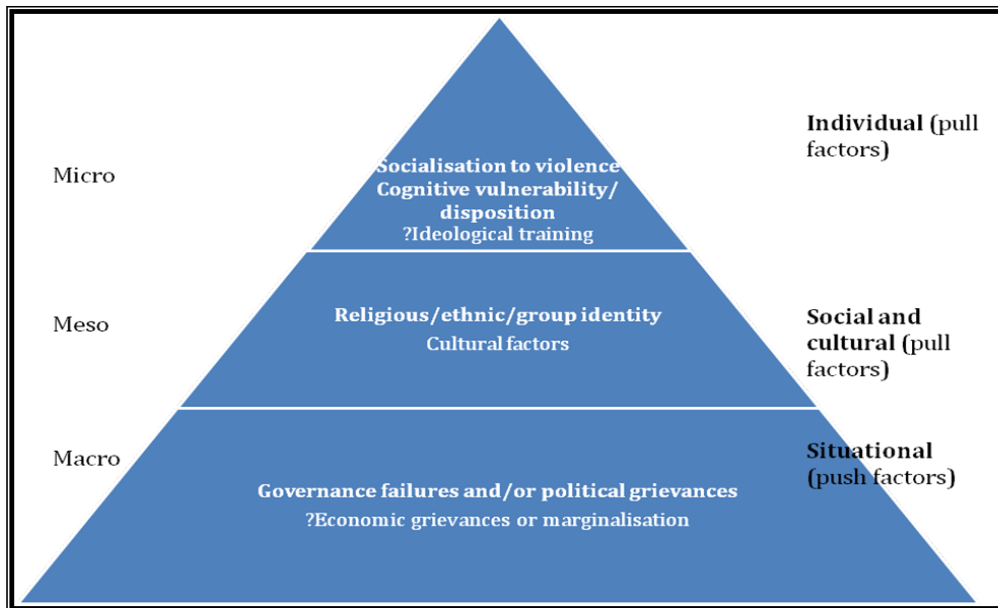
Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Drivers of Violent Extremism

10. While we accept that, like all models, this is a simplification, we offer Figure 1 as a way of aggregating the stronger hypotheses into a multi-factorial analysis. In this model, each factor is necessary but probably not sufficient for an individual to join a violent extremist cause, or for a movement to become violent. This model also maps onto a similarly shaped model advanced by the Danish intelligence service, the PET, in their CVE work (Figure 2). The Danish intervention model equally proposes a three-layered pyramid which assumes a large and potentially vulnerable population at the base and an actively violent minority at the apex, with a layer in-between of those at-risk of radicalisation. The purpose of the model is to allocate different types of intervention to each level, with development and humanitarian interventions being required at the macro level, preventative counter violent extremism (CVE) interventions at the meso-level, and counter-terrorist interventions at the micro level.
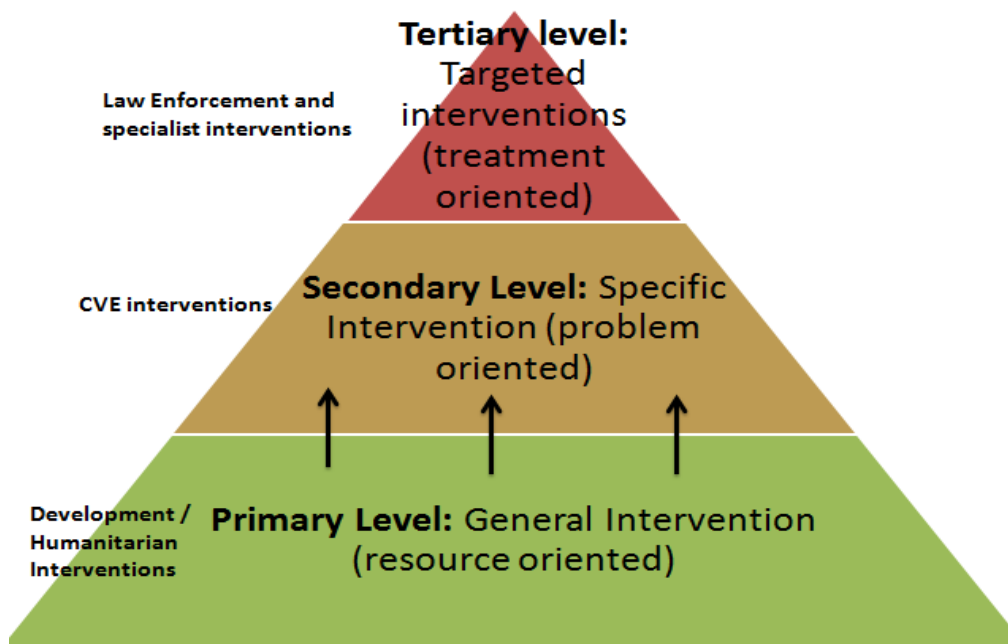
Figure 2: PET's Intervention Model (source: STRIVE Horn of Africa Programme)

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Hypothesis 1: Ineffective or <u>blocked political participation</u>, widespread corruption of the political process, elite domination, and little hope of change, create frustration which is harnessed by extremist groups

Conclusion:

- Although the evidence is mixed, on balance the research suggests that blocked participation does create grievances which can be harnessed to promote extremist violence – but it is neither a sufficient nor consistent factor.

- Econometric analyses claim that lack of civil liberties is the most reliable predictor of terrorism identified so far (although such analyses are limited in showing statistical correlations rather than cause and effect). (We also discuss grievances below.)

Discussion:

11. The political marginalisation or perceived marginalisation of ethnic or religious groups is believed to increase the risk of violent extremism. In Iraq, the failure to include Sunni Arabs in the post-2003 political settlement is frequently identified as a cause of the 2006-07 civil war and the later rise of ISIL (Tripp, 2007; Weiss and Hassan, 2015). There are certainly cases of extremist groups using political exclusion as justification for violence. But, equally, terrorist organisations can emerge and flourish in highly democratic countries (as with left-wing terrorism in Germany in the 1970s, the Provisional IRA in the UK, and ETA in Spain). Some research distinguishes transnational from domestic terrorism, and source countries from target countries.

12. Poor governance has long been assumed to be a driver for violent extremism. 'The underlying logic is that democratic institutions and procedures, by enabling the peaceful reconciliation of grievances and providing channels for participation in policymaking, can help to address those underlying conditions that have fuelled the recent rise of Islamist extremism' (Windsor, 2003: 43). Schmid (2006) argues that state weakness provides opportunities for revolt, while excessive strength and abuse of state power can foster resistance, providing opportunities for terrorist groups. He proposes two reasons for this: when unpopular rulers cannot be voted away in democratic procedures, advocates of political violence find a wide audience; when long-standing injustices in society are not resolved, desperate people are willing to die and to kill for causes they—and often also others—perceive as just. Schmid's thesis is intuitive, and some econometric studies such as Krueger and Laitin (2008) and Li (2005) show an inverse relationship between civil liberties and terrorism. Dowd and Lind (2015), in relation to sub-Saharan Africa, suggest that contemporary violence stems from historical grievances about the state's failure over time to address deeply-rooted marginalisation and insecurity, while its use of repressive machinery to respond to insurgencies causes violence to recur.

13.   Others, however, disagree. Freeman (2008) finds a more complex relationship between political participation and violence, Chenoweth (2010) finds that terrorist activity is actually more prevalent in democracies, and Dalacoura's (2006) analysis of Islamist terrorist groups across the Middle East shows that political exclusion and repression of Islamist movements contributed to the adoption of terrorist methods in some cases, but not in others. Several studies suggest that states which are partly free, or are in transition from authoritarianism to democracy are particularly vulnerable to violent extremism (e.g. Abadie, 2004). Newman (2007) argues that weak or failed states might provide an enabling environment for certain types of terrorist groups to operate. This is not a sufficient explanation as terrorist groups have also emerged from, and operated within countries which have strong, stable states and a variety of systems of government.

Implications for DFID:

- Terrorist and extremist groups have proven to be effective at exploiting ineffective or blocked political participation, widespread corruption of the political process, elite domination and little hope of change. Since DFID is most likely to encounter these groups in fragile states or in states where repressive states limit political participation, improving governance should be a focus of development interventions.

- It is crucial, however, to take into account that interventions have the potential to exacerbate the factors that encourage violent extremism. In particular, democracy promotion and economic liberalisation can exacerbate conflict and tensions that can be exploited by terrorist groups.

- Poor governance, state failure, and inadequate services (including security and justice) may be present in each context. Research will be required to determine the presence and strength of each, and analysis should examine the extent to which these are likely to lead to violent extremism.

Hypothesis 2: <u>Organised civil society (and political society) groups,</u> which fail to achieve change despite attempting to engage with the state are more likely to resort to extremist tactics if they have support from the wider population to do so.

Conclusion:

- Some examples exist of civil or political society turning to violence when faced with political failure or repression.

- However, civil society may also be effective in countering extremism. It is therefore important to encourage inclusive and active engagement with civil society.

Discussion:

14. Civil society has been proposed as effective in countering terrorism as it demonstrates the plurality of voices within, for example, what is often perceived as the monolithic 'West' or 'Islamic world' (Kaldor, 2007). However, there are numerous examples of non-violent political or civil society groups that resorted to violence in the face of political failure or repression: the most famous case in the African National Congress, which turned to violence in 1961 after it was banned as an 'unlawful organisation' and forced underground (Cronin, 2009: 85-88). More recent examples can be found in the attempt to eradicate Islamist parties in Syria in the early 1980s, Algeria from 1992 and currently in Egypt.

15. In fact, recent research (Piazza, 2015) demonstrates that blocking non-violent participation is one factor strongly correlated with an increased risk of terrorism. Civil society or faith-based organisations may be potential targets for suspicion and therefore repression. In extreme cases, this can lead to the organisation resorting to violence. Islamist parties in the MENA region, which are deeply-rooted social movements and civil society organisations providing services (akin to a 'mini-state') have been identified as 'particularly sensitive to repression' (Hamid 2014, 49-50). Other illustrations can also be found elsewhere. In Nigeria, for example, Boko Haram – originally a non-violent, faith-based group – became increasingly violent in the face of disproportionate violence on the part of the Nigerian authorities, and subsequently established itself as the protector of victimised populations against oppressive authorities (Pantucci and Jesperson 2015; Comolli, 2015).

Implications for DFID:

- Interventions should encourage governments to adopt an inclusive approach and to engage and consult a broad range of civil society, including traditional or tribal structures, religious leaders, trade unions, universities, women's groups, youth groups and NGOs.

- Development activities should equally include a broad range of civil society organisations to build their capacity to advocate for peaceful change.

Hypothesis 3: The search for <u>personal and group identities</u> among those who feel this has been undermined by rapid social change can increase the vulnerability of the young to radicalisation

Conclusion:

- Identity-formation – a normal, universal and psychologically attested process – is important in radicalisation. Psychological research is beginning to examine how identity-formation can become 'maladaptive', and why some individuals are more vulnerable to radicalisation than others: one theory suggests that certain cognitive 'propensities' can combine to create a 'mindset' that presents a higher risk.

Discussion:

16. There is substantial research, especially in psychology, showing that identity at the individual level — how an individual sees or describes him or herself — is highly significant in drawing individuals towards terrorism. Crenshaw (1983) suggested that many join terrorist groups as part of a search for meaning in their lives, while research drawn from mainstream psychology provided an increasingly strong theoretical basis for identity being an important factor. Baumeister (1991), for instance, identified four specific needs which drives individuals' search for meaning and identity — sense of purpose, efficacy, value, and self-worth. Where identity is as yet unformed (especially in adolescence) or complex (e.g. among second-generation immigrants) it can become a significant source of vulnerability. Causes which promote activism in the pursuit of high ideals, the reformation of society, or correcting grave injustices are potentially powerful solutions to these primal needs. To illustrate with one example, Venhaus (2010) concluded his study of over 2,000 foreign fighters in Al Qaida-linked movements with the observation that 'they all were looking for something […] they want to understand who they are, why they matter, and what their role in the world should be. They have an unfulfilled need to define themselves, which al-Qaida offers to fill'.

17. Given that the search for identity and personal meaning is, the research suggests, universal, why do some individuals find it in violent extremism? Psychologists like Borum (2004, 2014) and Horgan (2014) argue precisely that terrorists are in most senses 'normal' — but this very human need for identity combines with other basic needs and propensities in ways that increase the risk of 'maladaptive' behaviour. Borum (2014) provides a sophisticated psychological model of the terrorist 'mindset' and 'worldview' that combines vulnerabilities, such as the search for identity, with propensities (our socially-learned preferences or traits). A young man in search of identity who has a strong propensity to sense grievance and external threat may be a much higher risk than one whose identity has formed and who lacks those propensities. Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler's rational-choice model that focuses on spiritual incentives indicates the unique aspect of radicalisation open to IVE individuals or networks, which is based on the belief in eternal salvation. 'At individual levels, the primary objective is not the establishment of an Islamic state or the success of a demonstration. There are only ways of fulfilling obligations to God, which is the only way to achieve salvation. In

terms of personal calculations, 'the very act of participation produces the payoff in the hereafter' (Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler, 2006: 295).

18. The organisation, then, can provide that sense of identity while meeting other needs: as Borum puts it, '[I]n radical movements and extremist groups, many prospective terrorists find not only a sense of meaning, but also a sense of belonging, connectedness and affiliation' (Borum, 2014: 293). This is why 'radicalisation' itself is often regarded as a 'social process', not just an ideological one. How the individual and the organisation then come together is an explicit focus of the social movement theory approach to violent extremism. The best instance of this is Wikotorowicz's (2005) research into the (now-proscribed) British extremist group Al Muhajiroun, based on detailed empirical research from which he developed a model in which the individual, seeking a cause, presents a 'cognitive opening', while the group is active in promoting itself as an answer to societal aspirations or problems. The two will come together if there is 'frame alignment' — a match between the cognitive opening and the worldview offered by the group. The power of Wikotorowicz's model, and social movement theory more generally, lies in its wide applicability: it provides a potential explanation for why individuals join counter-cultural or radical groups in general, not just terrorist or violent extremist groups.

19. Psychologists focus on the individual and hence tend to identify vulnerabilities that are internal. Political science, sociological and historical approaches examine external factors, and there is a substantial body of work that supports the hypothesis that social change is a driver of individual and small-group vulnerability. Kaldor's celebrated 'new wars' thesis (2007) proposes that globalisation is changing the character of conflict, including by creating disenfranchised populations who enjoy few of the benefits of globalisation and yet are exposed to its stresses and strains. Neumann (2009) applies this thesis directly to terrorism and argues that terrorism is increasingly a 'particularist' response to the universalising tendencies of globalisation, such as mass communication and migration. Societies are changing more and faster than ever: we should therefore expect more violence as extremists seek to arrest that change or influence it to their advantage. Sandbrook and Romano (2004) also blame instability generated by forces of globalisation, as well as economic reforms demanded by donors, for causing violent extremism, and suggest that it is merely a historical accident that this phase of globalisation has coincided with the emergence of Islamism as the most common form of violent reaction. Their analysis owes much to Barber's prescient book (1995) which posits a clash not so much between civilisations as between a globalised, corporatist culture and traditionalist reactionary forces that may be nationalist, tribal or theocratic in character.

20. One robust finding of research into terrorism is that the processes we term radicalisation are usually social. There are exceptions — so-called 'lone actors', although those who commit violence without any involvement with an extremist organisation appear to be very rare — but most individuals who become violent extremists do so after a period of socialisation, whether in a peer group or an organised group. Socialisation involves well-attested psychological phenomena such as

'group shift' (where attitudes move towards the group's centre of gravity), the need for social approval (often called 'peer pressure'), in-group/out-group thinking, and the influence of charismatic individuals (often but not necessarily in a leadership role). But the importance of socialisation helps explain why otherwise 'normal' people join extremist movements: 'recruitment' and 'radicalisation' tend to follow existing social networks, so chance — in effect — becomes a major factor. Those who have violent extremists among their kinship or peer groups are, the research clearly shows, the most likely to become violent extremists themselves (Sageman 2004, 2007; Bakker 2006).

21. A major area of weakness in the research is lack of empirical validation that goes beyond the terrorism dataset (which is heavily biased towards transnational terrorist groups targeting the West). Field-based research into, for example, more localised but more popular militant movements such as Boko Haram and Al Shabaab is in its infancy, so we do not yet know to what extent these theories and models apply to other types of violent extremism. Hassan's (2012) empirical but narrowly-based study of Al Shabaab (based on just five interviews) suggests that they may do so: 'The main reasons these youth cite for joining Al Shabaab are not deeply held religious beliefs, but rather factors that revolve around their sense of identity and perceptions of neglect that stem from their frustration with clan politics, lack of opportunities to improve the quality of their lives, and other difficulties that come with war. A testament to this is the fact that most of them gave up violent extremism when given the chance of a better life, especially when trusted relatives were the ones presenting such opportunities.'

Implications for DFID:

- Development interventions should adopt a CVE-sensitive approach and, given that young people can be more vulnerable to radicalisation, they should be considered as a target group of interventions.

- The appetite for group identities is often strong and hard to counter, so the socialisation process involved in radicalisation needs to be explored further in order to identify access points for interventions.

- Development initiatives focused on activities such as life skills training and employment could help reduce vulnerability of young people.

Hypothesis 4: The growth of religious and ethnic identities (particularly if they compete with loyalties to the state) can be exploited by extremist ideologues

Conclusion:

- There is robust evidence that radicalisation is a social process and that identity is a key factor in why individuals become involved in violent movements. There is substantial evidence for religion and ethnicity being among the most powerful expressions of individual and group identity. The role of charismatic individuals (peers as well as leaders) who can instrumentalise identity is also widely acknowledged.

Discussion:

22. The extent to which ideology drives people to violence is controversial: study after study has shown the importance of social rather than ideological factors. However, there is substantial evidence for religion and ethnicity being among the most powerful expressions of individual and group identity. In the context of Islamist violent extremism, the emergence of the idea of a transnational Muslim identity in the 1980s that claimed to supersede specific ethnic, cultural or geographical notions of identity was mobilised initially for defensive purposes, but subsequently became developed by Al Qaida and others into a doctrine of global terrorism and revolution (Hegghammer, 2011; Gleave, 2014; Maher, 2015).

23. This is not unique, however, to Islamist violent extremism, and other equally significant identity markers such as ethno/nationalist identity can also be mobilised. The anthropologist Juergensmeyer (2003, 2006) insists that while religion is frequently blamed for causing conflict and terrorism, it is not so much a factor in and of itself as a medium through which grievances – 'the sense of alienation, marginalization, and social frustration' (2003: 141-3) – are articulated. Those who articulate grievances in this way — usually leaders — are thus able to instrumentalise religious identity. Politically-motivated ethnic elites also capitalise on shared identity or emotions and irrational beliefs by engendering insecurity through highly selective and often distorted narratives and representations to achieve their ends through violence (e.g. Kaldor, 2007; Yadav, 2010; Stern, 2003: 30-31).

24. However, while there is a strong correlation between ethnic fractionalisation and civil war, there is no such correlation to terrorism (Sambanis, 2008). There is some field-based evidence to support this conclusion. For example, Botha's research into Al Shabaab and the (largely non-violent) Kenyan secessionist group the Mombasa Republican Council found that while the latter is religiously diverse but ethnically narrow, the former is exclusively Muslim but comprises many different tribes. 87% of Al Shabaab members identified religion as their reason for joining the group, and 97% considered their religion to be under threat — suggesting that religious identity can be both a powerful

attraction and motivator. But Botha's study of the MRC suggests that ethnicity may be equally powerful, depending on the situation and the cause.

25. Most violent extremist groups are presumably in some sort of opposition to the state — except where the state is so weak that violent groups take on some of the functions of the state (such as forming armed militias). This can be seen, for example, in Iraq, where the Hashd Sha'abi — 'Popular Mobilisation Forces' — are aligned to and supported by the central government, but are also a violent expression of Shi'i Islamism. But assuming that violent extremists are oppositionists, how far is competition with the state a factor in their capacity to recruit and radicalise? Historical and political science analyses suggest that, in weak or failing states, religious or ethnic identity is easily instrumentalised by violent groups. Iraq again provides a powerful illustration: even an ultra-violent and socially repressive organisation such as ISIL can attract strong popular support as it is perceived as a defender of Sunni Arab privileges and even existence against a hostile state and its violent allies.

26. However, the major factor here may not so much be the competition between ethnic/religious groups and the state as the nature of the state and its power. Quantitative studies show that state instability is 'the most consistent predictor of country-level terrorist attacks' (Gelfand, LaFree, Fahey et al., 2013; see also Piazza 2007 and LaFree et al., 2008). Other studies suggest that highly repressive as well as liberal, democratic states suffer fewer terrorist attacks than states in transition between autocracy and democracy. While these studies focus on terrorism rather than violent extremism more generally, they point to the importance of taking into account the state's strength and its character. Taking a broader view, Tilly's classic study of civil war (2003) shows that 'high-capacity democracies' and 'high-capacity non-democracies' are much less likely to experience civil war (which may include violent extremist groups) than 'low-capacity non-democracies'.

Implications for DFID:

- Extremist groups will seek to exploit religious or ethnic identity but are likely to be most successful when grievances exist that can strengthen these identities. Promoting good governance can counter this to some extent, by minimising the marginalisation of identity-based groups.

- The sense of belonging which is crucial to the social processes of identifying with extremist groups can be countered by encouraging a vibrant civil society sector with charismatic leadership.

- Further research should identify the relevant identity groups in priority countries and their potential vulnerabilities.

Hypothesis 5: Ideals of <u>masculinity and honour</u> (including the role of family breadwinner) are increasingly difficult to fulfil in some societies, and the loss of self-esteem can be considerable for young men. Other ways may be sought to achieve status, including extremist activity.

Conclusion:

- Although most violent extremists are young men, there is little convincing research to suggest that ideals of masculinity and honour play a significant role in causing violent extremism.

Discussion:

27. Most individuals involved in violent extremist groups are young men (Bakker, 2007; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009; Groen, Kranenberg and Naborn, 2011). From this, it is often assumed that masculinity and extremism are linked, with the gang-like nature of some extremist groups being proposed as evidence (Burke, 2015). Further, Robinson (2009) argues that through socialisation, certain aggressive forms of masculinity embrace violence as occasional or common solutions to problems. In other words, those with a 'common socialised vision' of what masculinity is, may use 'a masculinised-appropriate form of action' in response to grievances.

28. However, such a line of reasoning is weak as it ignores other crucial predictors of terrorism (Robinson, 2009: 737). Apart from the absence of robust, empirical evidence, the highly cited work of Hofstede on cultural factors which explains masculinity-femininity as a distribution of emotional roles between the sexes, showed no significant relationship between terrorism and masculinity. The findings, however, are 'not straightforward' and are complicated by only partly supported predictions. More importantly, the observations showed 'no clear cultural profile' and instead spanned various cultural dimensions (Kluch and Vaux, 2015: 3-4, 12).

29. Archer, focusing on Muslims in the UK, suggests that status and honour are especially important in male Muslim society, and that a strong masculinity associated with Islam is what makes young men identify strongly with their religion, often emphasising it above their ethnic and national affiliations (Choudhry, 2007). This culture may be shared and internalised through socialisation and gain greater importance when experiencing grievances. Maleeha Aslam argues that among Muslim populations, where men 'continue to struggle globally subsequent to their racial vilification', the most visible form of masculinity is 'emasculated masculinity'. It is a means of protest in reaction to their marginalisation which has evolved to become a collective masculinity. Aslam, however, cautions against any notion that such masculinities are vulnerable to extremist influences due to lack of evidence (Al-Wazedi, 2014: 537).

Implications for DFID:

- While conceptions of masculinity and honour do not appear significant in radicalisation, the fact that men constitute the majority of violent extremists needs to be taken seriously. Men should therefore be a key target group in CVE interventions and efforts made to support the development of positive young male role models.

Hypothesis 6: <u>Women</u> generally play a moderating role against extremism, and if more empowered could do this more effectively

Conclusion:

- There is little evidence that women have a moderating influence on militancy, but this does not mean they cannot, as active agents, play a significant role in countering violent extremism.

Discussion:

30.   Although women tend to be presented as either victims of violence or peacemakers, many women become active participants in both violent extremism and terrorism across religious and political spectrums. Studies of female combatants in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland illustrate that women 'bear no essential relationship to peace and non-violence' (Alison, 2014: 460). The direct engagement of women in violent extremist acts, notably as suicide bombers in groups such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the PKK in Turkey, and the so-called 'Black Widows' in Chechnya, appear to confirm this argument (Bloom, 2011). Notably, PIRA and LTTE often emphasised the importance of women to the movement and called them 'freedom fighters'. O'Rourke (2009) is among those who argue that in fact women join violent extremist groups for much the same, complex reasons as men. Female combatants have tended to view themselves as defenders of the political, cultural, economic and military security of their nation or in other words, 'societal security' (Alison, 2014: 454, 458). Despite this, terrorism and counter-terrorism narratives have both mobilised and reinforced gender stereotypes such as the notion of the naïve, bored, non-political, out-of-touch-with-reality woman who turns to terrorism.

31.   Alison, in her study of loyalist paramilitary groups, finds that a significant number of women were introduced to such organisations through their male family members. The women in turn justify their membership in terms of protecting their families and communities (Alison, 2014: 454-5). Similarly, in Russian occupied Afghanistan in the 1980s one woman pleaded with her brothers to give her a bomb so that she could destroy a tank and become a 'martyr' (Dearing, 2010: 1088). In addition, a permissive security environment and a cultural acceptance to insurgent behaviours (such as financing insurgent activity, male suicide bombings) are conducive to female participation 'since the resources are [already] in place' (Dearing, 2010: 1084). Women have been numerous In some violent organisations, such as FARC in which over 30% were women, or in Maoist guerrilla groups in Nepal where women were estimated to make up between 30-40% of members (Butalia and Sharoni, 2001).

32. By providing a labour pool when there is a scarcity of men or in high intensity operations such as suicide missions which have low military value, women may be highly valuable, as with the FLN in Algeria in the 1960s which used women to transport weapons without detection (Sixta, 2008: 268;

Davis, 2006). In addition, operational imperatives mean that women can be highly effective in their organisations, inducing leaders toward 'actor innovation' to gain strategic advantage against their adversary (Cunningham, 2007). In Iraq, in the mid-2000s, Al Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi encouraged women to carry out suicide attacks, in order to subvert American security checks (Bloom, 2011).

33. The absence of women in some cases also needs attention. For example, in Afghanistan the absence of female suicide bombers may be due to fighters' relative ease of mobility and the strict cultural norms which restricted female participation to supporting the men on the frontline (Dearing, 2010: 1093). Women in Palestine have historically played a significant role in violence but even there participation shifted according to the dynamic nature of the conflict. Gentry, therefore, argues that there must not be a single explanation of how and when women engage in extremism (Gentry, 2009: 243).

34. Women's potential for terrorist support and involvement has tended to be underestimated, although the literature is beginning to recognize their importance (Mahan and Griset, 2013). Although groups such as Al Qaida may appear to oppress women, women themselves may feel a new sense of power or freedom as members or supporters (National Security Criminal Investigations, 2009). Ethno-nationalist political movements directed against perceived foreign oppressors are believed to exert a greater pull on women compared to other types of violent extremism. Parachar holds that such causes are 'political' as much as 'personal' propelling them to become 'perpetrators and patrons of violence' (Parachar, 2009: 239). Extremist ideology may present itself as an avenue for women to become publicly involved after having witnessed tragic events from the sidelines for long. Contextual pressures (e.g., domestic/international enforcement, conflict, social dislocation) create a mutually reinforcing process driving terrorist organisations to recruit women at the same time that women's motivation to join these groups increase.

35. In male dominated extremist organisations, female terrorists are 'much less hesitant to fight than men'. Unlike their male counterparts who are concerned with the self-image of masculinity and strength, women are more likely to 'put their group's mission first'. According to Sixta, this is because women have more to lose through the danger of rape and torture that awaits them in case they are caught (Sixta, 2008: 268). Although such threats exist even for men, the gendering of violence increases the risk to women. In addition, although women may become 'indispensable to the movement', their mobilisation does little towards their empowerment (Parachar, 2009: 241). As in conventional wars, women's involvement in conflict as combatants does not prevent their 'post-war re-marginalisation' or their 'return to traditional roles' (Alison, 2014: 458).

36. Turning to the potential for women to counter violent extremism, Fair and Shepherd, based on a data analysis of people from 14 different countries in Africa and Asia, note that statistically women are less likely to support terrorism than men. They concluded, however, that differences in

responses underscore the importance of the impact of various demographic variables within specific target audiences, not just gender (Fair and Shepherd, 2006: 70). The importance of community, family and partners is acknowledged in de-radicalisation processes (Pressman, 2009), and women are already widely engaged in both counter-extremism and de-radicalisation in schemes from Northern Ireland, to Indonesia, to Yemen (Horgan and Braddock, 2010). OSCE (2014) noted that including women as 'policy shapers, educators, community members and activists' is essential to prevent terrorism. There are, however, mixed messages on the desirability of using stereotypes (such as emphasising women's maternal role) in counter-terrorism narratives (Carter, 2013).

37. The direction and impact of any such initiatives would have to be discerned case by case. For example, consider the case of a women's organisation founded by Asiya Andrabi in Kashmir in 1981. At first, it began as a reform movement that educated Muslim women about 'Islam and their rights'. Soon, however, it took to moral policing and advocated support for Jihad in Kashmir. By 2004, under the name 'Dukhtarane-Millat' (Daughters of Faith) it began to covertly support militants in Kashmir (Parachar, 2009: 246). Sageman and Zahab also provide further case study evidence to show that in certain contexts wives and mothers play an influential role in encouraging men towards radical interpretations of Islam (Sageman, 2004; Zahab, 2008).

38. This is not to say that women cannot be a force against extremism. Women Without Borders and Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) have noted that the capacity of women to spot and react to extremism in their families varies according to education, local awareness, and geographic remoteness. They report that mothers, especially those with less formal education, struggle to recognise the warning signs, as they may perceive their children as merely becoming more religious and often consider the change to be positive (SAVE, 2010). Such studies reaffirm the crucial role played by women and the potential support they can provide to counter violent extremism through help from well-designed knowledge sharing and community level support programmes.

Implications for DFID:

- Interventions supporting the empowerment of women are undertaken for a range of good development reasons, and there is no reason to discontinue these. In certain cases, it is possible that gender-based interventions may help reduce violence, but this should not be assumed: empowering women does not necessarily increase resilience to violent extremism.

- Further research should seek to build credible evidence of how women may play positive roles in preventing or reducing violent extremism.

Hypothesis 7: Limited <u>availability of information</u>, low literacy, and a lack of diverse sources, lead to issues being seen in black-and-white terms with little understanding of context, and make people more vulnerable to extremist messages

Conclusion:

- There is no clear link between education levels and extremism: some extremists are highly educated, some are not; countries with low and high provisions of education have experienced violent extremism. Nor is there evidence that certain types of education (e.g. faith-based) increase the risk of radicalisation.

- Education in some scientific or technical disciplines has been proposed as a contributory factor in the radicalisation of Islamist terrorists.

Discussion:

39. The literature reflects a wide range of arguments for and against the existence of a causative link between education and extremism. Furthermore, there is a lack of any statistical correlation between levels of education and involvement in extremism. As a result, much of the literature tends to be speculative; where it is empirical, it tends to be qualitative and case specific. The following discussion summarises the main contributions, but overall the literature is inconclusive.

40. Limited access to education and low literacy levels may mean that individuals 'lack the ability to critically analyse and question the ideological narratives and doctrines espoused by the religious leaders' (Nwafor and Nwogu, 2015). Moreover, young people with little education are less likely to have read the passages of the Quran which undermine radical groups' ideologies. However, attempts to categorise extremism based on levels of education cannot ignore the fact that individuals involved in extremist behaviour have varied widely in age, socioeconomic status, literacy levels, occupation and past criminal records (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 805).

41. The educational backgrounds of extremists suggest that highly educated individuals can be radicalised. Most Western recruits are 'from middle class families with secular upbringing, and with high school education' (Nwafor and Nwogu, 2015). Sageman's (2004) investigation of transnational terrorists shows that 'over 60 percent had some higher or further-level education'. Sageman also found that 'the central staff/ leadership were well-educated (88% had finished college and 20% had doctorate degrees)'. Moreover, Sageman also found that, 'at the time of joining, the majority of Islamists had professional occupations (e.g. physicians, teachers) or semiskilled employment (e.g. police, civil service, students)'. Conventionally, education is expected to 'instil a sense of social responsibility' and regulate expressions (Panina, 2010: 10). Political knowledge gained through education can contribute to the degree of involvement in issues as an adult but Krueger and Malečková argue that educated individuals may find more scope to become opinion leaders within

extremist organisations compared to their less-educated or illiterate counterparts and they may identify more closely with the political goals of the organisation. Extremist organisations themselves may prefer such candidates who have the ability to 'fit into a foreign environment to be successful' and become willing to offer 'greater benefits' to such candidates (Krueger and Malečková 2003: 122, 142). Other research highlights an intriguing frequency of science and technology graduates (especially engineers) in Islamist terrorist organisations, which may suggest that technical disciplines can contribute to reductive styles of thinking (Gambetta and Hertog, 2009).

42. Davydov identifies expressions of extremism in young people through an outward disregard for society's norms and values which leads to them seeking those that are not generally acceptable. This, he argues creates hostile groups who may then become 'extremist gangs' (Davydov, 2015: 152). Further, a study of militant Islamism in Europe pointed that the pull of violent Islamism is rooted in the lack of belief in young people's ability to address grievances and bring change through legal and constitutional channels rather than education or socioeconomic opportunities (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 809).

43. There is an argument, however, that the importance of education in radicalisation is case-specific. For example, in contrast to the examples given above, 'most young ones who enlisted in Boko Haram are either unskilled or uneducated' (Onuoha, 2014). In the case of Al Shabaab, a 2012 interview-based study found that very few members even mentioned education, but did refer to missed career opportunities (Hassan, 2012: 19). A 2014 study of trends in student radicalisation focused on universities in Afghanistan found that most students 'denounce radical views and violence', and most students were more concerned about their job prospects. The study also suggests that the varying curriculum and practices across campuses contributed to the attitudinal differences amongst students (Mohammadi and Zaman, 2014: 10).

44. Vulnerability to extremism may then result not from low levels of education but from a lack of training in 'conflict-free interaction' (Davydov, 2015: 158). However, the direction such individuals take could be by way of participating in civil unrest as seen in Tunisia in 2011 or could be more reminiscent of the 1980s in Palestine where the expansion of universities and trade unions in the previous decade had broken down class barriers and replaced them with a national consciousness amongst the youth who then adopted the tactic of suicide bombing (Gunning 2008).

45. Extremist ideas are more likely to be adopted from 'peers and influential figures' rather than from schools and universities; most highly-educated known terrorists were unlikely to have been radicalised through the education system (Davies, 2014: 451). Davydov attributes the 'culture of violence' more to the family, peers and the mass media which shapes the image of the world (Davydov, 2015: 154). If so, the reasons for such ideas becoming acceptable need examination. Haavelsrud points to the importance of memories of violence in some societies which become commemorated through informal education within the family and close community. This

socialisation process may actually undermine formal education systems and media (Haavelsrud, 2009: 119).

Implications for DFID:

- Education is a problematic area for interventions. The relationship (if any) between levels of education and violent extremism is unclear. While the promotion of education may reduce the risk of uninformed participation, and thus the manipulation of the uneducated to become foot soldiers for violent extremist groups, educated individuals may still participate because of other factors.

- Given the preponderance of highly educated individuals in some violent extremist groups, educational interventions should not be assumed to be effective in countering violent extremism.

- Further research should examine the relationship not only between levels of education and violent extremism, but also types of education (e.g. subjects/disciplines, pedagogic techniques), controlling for other factors such as employment prospects.

Hypothesis 8: People with shared experiences of discrimination and exclusion are more susceptible to a legitimising '<u>single narrative</u>' which binds together multiple sources of resentment and proposes a simple solution,

Conclusion:

- There is a strong relationship between perceived grievances and violent extremism though there is some speculation about how far grievances are causative. In general the research seems speculative on this point.

- In conflict situations involving violent extremist groups (as opposed to terrorism directed against the West), socio-economic discrimination and marginalisation do help to explain why extremist groups are able to recruit support in large numbers. However, while the use of a 'single narrative' to justify, recruit and motivate is near-universal among extremist groups, the research into how extremist narratives work is actually limited and we consider this to be an area for productive further research.

Discussion:

46. The 'single narrative' is a term which originated in the British Government around 2004 as a description of Al Qaida's simplistic message that the West is at war with Islam, and that the West's hostility lies behind repression or conflict in Muslim lands; the solution, therefore is to take up arms against the West (the 'Far Enemy') to defend Islam and to inflict such damage on the oppressor that it withdraws (Schmid, 2014). This worldview is particularly associated with the ideology developed by Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri and their circle in exile in Afghanistan in the late 1990s: it superseded al-Zawahiri's earlier view that the problem lay with the Muslims themselves and the regimes they allowed to govern them (Gerges, 2009). The Al Qaida narrative does not, though, stop at grievances — important as these are in providing evidence of the West's hostility. It suggests that the West's project is the complete defeat and subjection of Islam and Muslims (see, for example, Usama bin Ladin's 'Message to the American People' in Kepel and Melelli, 2007). This message of 'existential threat' underlies Al Qaida's strategy of provocation – by which the 'prophecy' becomes self-fulfilling.

47. Narrative has taken on increasing importance in efforts to counter violent extremism, with large claims being made for the need to counter the narrative of Al Qaida and similar groups (Briggs and Feve, 2013; Schmid, 2014). Narrative here can be understood as storytelling, or less precisely, as verbal expressions of a group's ideology or worldview. Narrative in the latter sense is assumed to be crucial to justifications of violence against others and providing group members with a sense of self-importance (Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne et al., 2009). Gupta (2005) suggests that they need to be

articulated by charismatic individuals or 'political entrepreneurs' to be successful. However, research into how extremist narratives work is actually limited and we consider this to be an area for productive further research. One significant study (Saucier et al., 2009) takes a meta-analytical approach to the narratives set out in a wide range of extremist communications (including from right-wing, apocalyptic and secular, nationalist-separatist groups) and highlights their strong similarities, with common elements including messages of in-group identity, the need to address grievances, existential threat, the urgency of response, and the transformative potential of violence. This study suggests that the use of such simplified narratives to justify, recruit and motivate is near universal among extremist groups, but it tells us nothing about the effects of extremist narrative on potential or recruited supporters.

48. Are those who feel they are the victims of discrimination and injustice more susceptible to such narratives? Accounts of convicted or former terrorists certainly suggest that revenge for perceived humiliation is frequently offered as an explanation for acts of violence (Araj, 2008; Beg and Bokhari, 2009; Speckhard, 2006; Post et al., 2003), although retrospective justification does not necessarily reveal motivation or vulnerability. Also important is vicarious or 'proxy' humiliation, where group identity is sufficiently powerful to make individuals feel grievances without experiencing them directly (Silke, 2008; Khosrokhavar, 2005). This phenomenon has been extensively examined in (Sunni) Islamist extremism, some expressions of which imagine the global community of Muslims (the *umma*) to be under attack as a whole, and the same community to be bound by communal obligation to respond (Jansen, 1997).

49. In conflicts involving violent extremism (as opposed to terrorism directed against the West), discrimination and marginalisation do appear to explain why extremist groups are able to recruit support in large numbers. Iraq is becoming a classic case of a conflict where persistent marginalisation of one community (the Sunni Arab minority) is pushing large numbers into violent extremism (Weiss and Hassan, 2015). Other cases in which substantial socio-economic grievances feature include northern Nigeria (where the Hausa-speaking Muslim north has tended to experience political marginalisation and economic deprivation), Somalia (where Al Shabaab has been especially successful at recruiting from minority clans), and, in previous decades, Sri Lanka (where the Tamil population endured decades of marginalisation). More generally, grievances such as political marginalisation are often invoked in push-pull models of radicalisation and violent extremism (USAID, 2011; Zeuthen and Khalil, 2014).

Implications for DFID:

- While recognising that grievances stemming from discrimination and exclusion are an important component of violent extremism (whether or not they are causative), they are a potential entry point for interventions.

- Counter-narrative interventions are now being proposed and enacted. Further research, however is needed into how extremist narratives work and how they might be countered effectively.

SERVICE PROVISION

Hypothesis 9: Government failure to provide <u>basic services</u> (health, education, welfare) allows extremist groups to meet these needs and build support as a result

Conclusion:

- In a number of contexts, extremist groups have proven able to deliver services. The impact is two-fold: extremist groups gain support and legitimacy while the government and state structures lose credibility and support. This increases both the support for extremist groups and the potential for state failure. Some extremist groups want to improve the situation of the people. Other groups are more interested in retaining resources and power for themselves.

Discussion:

50. A governmental failure to provide basic services potentially creates a vacuum that extremist groups can fill to build support and legitimacy which might not otherwise have been forthcoming because of their violent tactics. Examples of violent groups which have built substantial support in this way include the LTTE, Hamas, Hezbollah, Jemaah Islamiya (Indonesia), the Gamaa Islamiyya (Egypt), and ETA. In Karachi, demand for water, electricity, transport, health and education services exceeds supply and government incapacity has left a void that private Islamist schools, clinics, hospitals and welfare agencies have filled (Richards, 2002). Some argue that this phenomenon appears to be aligned with Islam, possibly as an effect of charity being one of Islam's five pillars. However, these strategies are not exclusive to Islamist extremists, with the Nepalese Maoists and Uruguayan Tupamaros being prominent examples (Flanagan, 2008; Grynkewich, 2008; Magouirk, 2008).

51. Grynkewich (2008) outlines three main benefits of this strategy for extremist groups. First, the creation of a social welfare infrastructure highlights the failure of the state to fulfil its side of the social contract, thereby challenging the state's legitimacy. Second, non-state social welfare organizations offer the population an alternative entity in which to place their loyalty. Third, a group that gains the loyalty of the populace commands a steady stream of resources with which it can wage battle against the regime. These benefits are clear in the example of Hezbollah, which operates on three planes – the civilian plane of *da'wa* (proselytization), social welfare, and religious education; the military–resistance plane of jihad; and the political plane. In its drive to dominate Shi'a society, Hezbollah overcame its chief rival, Amal, and now plays a decisive role in Lebanon's political system and the Middle East (Azani 2013).

52. Magouirk (2008) developed a mathematical model to demonstrate how terrorist and extremist groups utilise social service provision to gain support. It is based on a simple dichotomy of 'resource'

groups, whose primary interest is retaining resources and power for itself, and 'social' groups, which aim to improve the lot of the people. Berman (2011) considers Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban as 'social' groups, in that they genuinely want to help their members.

53. While the focus has primarily been on the support and legitimacy gained by extremist groups, governments and existing state structures also lose credibility and support, as extremist groups attack the social contract between the state and the population, increasing the potential for state failure (Magouirk 2008, Grynkewich 2008). These groups also often provide critical support for a population, which means directly targeting them would increase poverty and alienation and risk further radicalising the population (ICG 2001).

Implications for DFID:

- It is important to demonstrate that extremist groups do not have a monopoly on providing security and services. Where the reach of the state is not felt or where its service provision fails, it may be necessary to invest in NGOs and other providers in the short term while also building state capacity to prevent extremist organisations from taking advantage.

- At the same time, it is important not to undermine the support extremist groups are providing to populations without providing an alternative.

Hypothesis 10: Failure of the state to provide <u>security and justice</u>, and people's experience of predatory and oppressive security sector institutions, are influential drivers towards extremism

Conclusion:

- While the failure of the state to provide security and justice, and people's experience of predatory and oppressive security sector institutions, are influential in violent extremism, it is not a necessary factor. Extremist groups also operate in strong and stable states with effective security and justice sectors.

Discussion:

54. Deficits in security and justice and the existence of predatory and oppressive security sector institutions not only create grievances but also delegitimise the state, presenting opportunities for extremist groups to enhance their legitimacy. In Afghanistan, for example, the Taliban rose to power after the state collapsed, and then aligned with Al Qaida (Verhoeven, 2009). Current terrorist threats in Kenya and Uganda have been attributed to the failure to modernise security agencies, lack of investment in intelligence and policing capabilities, corruption in security forces and poverty among their populations (Muhammed 2014). Security sector reform has been adopted in many countries in order to address this situation, (Tangen Page and Hamill, 2006).

55. However, the vacuum in security and justice functions can also be filled by non-state actors. Verhoeven (2009), for example, examines the establishment of indigenous security and justice capabilities in Somalia, including the Union of Islamic Courts, which resembled a national liberation movement, based on shari'a justice, security and welfare provision. Denney (2012) also notes the importance of non-state security and justice providers in Sierra Leone, including chiefs, secret societies, religious leaders, gangs or militias, paralegals, community reconciliation and trade organisations.

56. Individuals' experiences of unfair justice systems can contribute to a perception of exclusion, and human rights abuses by security forces can help extremist groups recruit new members and build sympathy within the wider community. Demos (2005) outline the persistence influence of powerlessness, exclusion, trauma and humiliation, which in many cases can be attributed to predatory and oppressive security sector institutions. This is not to say that extremism is not present in democracies with functioning security and justice systems. For example, PIRA in the UK, ETA in Spain and the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany emerged despite well-functioning systems of governance and justice and sustained themselves for several decades (English, 2006; Alonso, 2003; Moloney, 2002; Stefan, 2008). This suggests that extremist groups have the potential to operate in stable states despite effective infrastructures for security and justice.

Implications for DFID:

- While continuing and strengthening security and justice programming, DFID must ensure that they are driven by the concerns of the poor and excluded, rather than by those of elites and security institutions.

- Building confidence in the rule of law will be a lengthy undertaking when working with those who have suffered many years of abuse and exclusion so programmes need to be long-term and sustainable.

- Interventions should also support local initiatives that provide alternative mechanisms for security and justice, encourage them to adhere to the principles of security and justice programming. Denney (2012) provides useful guidance for this form of engagement.

Hypothesis 11: In the absence of peace and security, populations are often ready to accept <u>any entity that offers stability</u>

Conclusion:

- Evidence from a wide range of countries shows that in situations of conflict and insecurity, populations often accept any entity that offers stability, at least in the short-term. Anarchy and governance and state failure are breeding grounds for extremist activity. Ensuring that extremist groups do not have the monopoly over security provision can therefore help to reduce the support for extremist groups.

Discussion:

57. Evidence from a wide range of countries shows that in situations of conflict and insecurity, populations often accept any entity that offers stability, at least in the short-term. Ganiel argues that 'Religion is often a response to the failure of the state to deal with human security.' She points to the example of Boko Haram, arguing that Boko arises in a situation where the Nigerian state has spectacularly failed to provide for the human security of the Nigerian population (Wolffe and Moorhead, 2015).

58. Other prominent examples exist. ISIL enters areas afflicted by weak governance, an active war economy and ongoing conflict with the intention of changing this situation and imposing control (Weiss and Hassan, 2015). This is done not for the benefit of the people but as a means to ensure longevity of its rule. ISIL seeks to impose itself as the only legitimate actor ensuring that, like a state, it has a monopoly on the use of force. Its reputation for governance, centred on security provision and delivery of basic services, is a recruiting tool not only for fighters but also for civilians to move to or remain in their areas. The local populations in areas under ISIL control fear the consequences of rebellion– but see no urgent need, as they tend to be more secure under ISIL control (Turkmani, 2015). Support for ISIL demonstrates that security and governance are the primary concern of civilian populations which are impoverished and fear for their lives. Ideologically, ISIL has not been widely or fully embraced but as an organisation with state-like operations it provides short-term relief from suffering in Syria and Iraq (Turkmani, 2015).

59. Similarly, in Afghanistan, the stability maintained under the Taliban explains the willingness of many sections of the population to accept their regime, drawing favourable comparisons between the Taliban era and the lawlessness, corruption and collapse of the justice system experienced during the civil war period and during the current era (Rashid, 2010). Even women are reported to have been willing to accept harsh Taliban justice and restriction in freedom and movement in exchange for improved physical security and a decrease in crime (Winterbotham, 2012).

60. In the context of the collapse of state control, warlords represent an attempt to re-establish stability within anarchy, responding to the fraying of state power to the point where the central state becomes, at best, only partly in control. Warlords offer security, rewards, and stability (at least in the short-term) at the local level, but may not offer long-term stability beyond the life of the individual warlord, except when they are able to form a proto-state. The warlord's motives (whether greed, grievance or both) is irrelevant for the people living in areas where there is often no alternative (Thomson, 2010).

Implications for DFID:

- While activities focused on building and restoring the governance vacuum and the delivery of services (health, education, roads, etc) should be prioritised, the impact of delivery of services may be limited if security and peace are not also delivered.

- While early warning systems for conflict can greatly enhance the prevention of short-term violence and remain important, attention needs to be given to the long-term nature of building legitimacy.

Hypothesis 12: _Madrassas_ should be the primary focus of attention in education as their students are particularly vulnerable to extremist narratives

Conclusion:

- Madrassas can play a role in promoting extremist ideologies and in providing facilities for recruitment and training. However, the number of 'extremist' madrassas (in Pakistan especially) is small, and the problem of madrassa-based radicalisation has been significantly overstated.

- Some research suggests religious training can be a protective factor against violent extremism.

Discussion:

61. Madrassas are widely cited as an important contributor to extremism especially in Pakistan, where madrassas were responsible for educating the leadership of the Afghan Taliban during the 1980s. In recent years, these schools have been called 'factories of jihad' and are commonly believed to produce extremists in large numbers (Andrabi et al., 2005).

62. Two views predominate. One is that madrassas cater to 'radical' youth and promote extremism through their teaching. A second is that madrassas are often the only schooling option for children in an environment where government schools have broken down, and thus are part of a network of institutions that serve the under-privileged. The 9-11 Commission (2003), for example, stated that 'Pakistan's endemic poverty, widespread corruption, and often ineffective government create opportunities for Islamist recruitment. Poor education is a particular concern. Millions of families, especially those with little money, send their children to religious schools, or madrassas. Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as incubators for violent extremism'.

63. In contrast, recent studies argue persuasively against the 'madrassa myth'. Although there is evidence of links between madrassas and militant groups in some cases, these links have been over-emphasised: extremist madrassas are a small minority, terrorists who attacked the West have largely not been educated in them, and madrassas simply cannot provide the skills needed to carry out large-scale and complex attacks (Bergen and Pandey, 2006). Other studies demonstrate that there is a greater correlation between university education and terrorism than madrassa education (Sageman, 2004) and that the attitudes of madrassa students are only marginally more intolerant than students from state school system – and it should not be assumed that intolerant attitudes automatically result in militancy (Fair, 2012). Nor is there evidence that a madrassa curriculum makes students vulnerable to militancy (Ahmad, 2005; Yusuf, 2007). Indeed, such curricula have not changed for 150 years; and thus, cannot be the primary explanation for an increase in such activities in recent years (Ahmad, 2005).

64. The 'madrassa myth' relies, according to its critics, on a number of empirically flawed assumptions and assertions regarding the prevalence of madrassa enrolment, parental educational preferences, the relationship between madrassa and non-madrassa education, and the roles that madrassas play in fostering militancy. Empirical evidence suggests that madrassa enrolments account for less than 1% of Pakistani children attending school full time (Andrabi and others, 2005), and that they are not expanding dramatically in Pakistan (Fair, 2012), and students are not dissimilar from Christian children who go to Bible study or catechism classes, or Jewish children who attend Hebrew school (Fair, 2012). Critics also question the wisdom of a policy that makes its centrepiece a reform of the segment of the schooling system that does not educate the vast majority of Pakistani children (Andrabi and others, 2005).

65. However, although the importance of madrassas has been significantly overstated, they can still play a role in violent extremism. In Pakistan, the total number of madrassas is small in comparison to other types of school, but in the most isolated parts of the country they have a significant and sometimes negative impact: sectarian violence is more common where the concentration of madrassas is highest (Ali, 2009). Deobandi madrassas have been prominent in jihad recruitment and propaganda networks focused on Afghanistan and Kashmir since the 1980s (Fair, 2012; Grare, 2007). Madrassas can also act as meeting places where militant groups and potential recruits can interact while some offer safe havens or transit points for militants and operate as sites of recruitment – although some so-called madrassas are in reality militant training and recruitment centres using madrassa status as cover (Ali, 2009). Religious leaders of some issue edicts that justify the use of violence and a small number are used for militant training (Fair, 2007). Exposure to certain religious teachers and the social environment they provide may be more important than the nature of the education itself (Ladbury and Hussein 2008). Some madrassas are run by teachers who are more radical than most and who therefore attract or are linked to extremist mosque preachers. Therefore, 'it is this madrassa-mosque nexus that is of most concern […] i.e. the influence of the total social environment rather than just what happens in class' (Ladbury, 2008).

66. There is no evidence that the content of religious studies in the madrassas or public schools per se is radicalizing, although a review of madrassa newsletters found a strong tendency to claim victimisation of Muslims, often with erroneous information from spurious and prejudicial sources (Ali, 2009). Indeed, there is some research suggesting that a madrassa education can actually provide a safeguard against radicalisation. In Indonesia, notably, the religious curriculum of the country's madrassas (known as *pesantren*) may encourage resistance to extremism through teaching the complexities of Islam (Woodard et al, 2010), and empirical research in Kenya suggests that religious education may be a protective factor against violent extremism (Savage, Khan and Liht, 2014).

Implications for DFID:

- Evidence suggests that problems of violent extremism will not be solved by closing down or reforming a few vocal and prominent madrassas in Pakistan. DFID's policy of focussing principally on state systems should therefore be continued, including equitable access, quality of education, and overall sector monitoring.

ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Hypothesis 13: (Income) poverty and deprivation are major drivers of radicalisation

Conclusion:

- Poverty and deprivation have been dismissed as drivers of Western-focused transnational terrorism. However, there is a correlation between poverty and civil war, and hence some broader-based forms of violent extremism. Because poverty may be a side-effect of some other cause, it is not possible to isolate it as a cause of violent extremism.

Discussion:

67. The relationship between poverty/deprivation and terrorism/violent extremism/radicalisation has been extensively explored and the results are interestingly mixed. Studies which restrict themselves to terrorism (as opposed to broader-based violent movements) tend to conclude definitively that terrorists are not poor, deprived or even relatively deprived (e.g. Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). As Krueger and Laitin (2008) put it in a summary of the literature to date, 'studies at the individual level of analysis have failed to find any direct connection between education, poverty, and the propensity to participate in terrorism […] If anything, those who participate in terrorism tend to come from the ranks of the better off in society' (148). They conclude from an econometric analysis that economics explains the target, not the origin, of transnational terrorism: 'The data suggest that the national origins of terrorism are in countries that suffer from political oppression; the targets are countries that enjoy a measure of economic success' (150). Krueger and Malečková acknowledge that, on a simple view, poor countries produce more terrorists, but insist that GDP per capita becomes unrelated to number of terrorists when controlling for other factors, such as the extent of civil liberties. However, studies such as this (see also Abadie, 2004) tend to focus again on terrorists attacking the West and its allies (one of Krueger and Laitin's cases is Israel/Palestine, where attacks against Israel were negatively correlated with the performance of the Palestinian economy), ignoring more popular and local violent extremist movements. Opinion poll data in Pakistan suggests that support for militancy is higher among middle-class respondents than lower-class ones (Blair, Fair, Malhotra et al., 2012); In Central Asia, there is evidence that Islamic radicals 'have been drawn from the relatively well-off and educated urban populations as well as from among the poorer segments of the Central Asian societies' (Omelicheva, 2010). Within developing countries, however, Bird, Bloomberg and Hess (2008) find that terrorism is inversely proportionate to income, while Burgoon (2006) finds an inverse relationship between welfare spending as a proportion of GDP.

68. Looking beyond transnational terrorism targeting the West, a different picture emerges. There is a strong negative correlation between per capita income and civil war: 'The mean per capita GDP in countries affected by at least one civil war from 1960 to 1999 is less than half that of countries with

no civil war and countries with no wars grow much faster than war-affected countries' (Sambanis, 2008: 185-6). Fearon and Laitin (2003) identify poverty and the state weakness that tends to accompany it as one of the most salient conditions for the onset of civil war. More importantly, violent extremist groups operating in war-afflicted countries are frequently (but probably not consistently) representing economically deprived minorities. The emergence of Islamist violent extremism in Kenya (both locally recruited Al Shabaab fighters and the indigenous movement Al Muhajiroun) is consistent with the economic situation of Kenya's Muslims in general and the Muslim majority Coast and North-East provinces. Similarly, Boko Haram's strongholds of Borno and Kano are Nigeria's most deprived regions (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012). In Pakistan, the socio-economic profile of militants seems to vary according to group: while the Pakistani Taliban recruit largely from poor, illiterate communities, Lashkar Tayyaba's recruit are in general more highly educated and often come from middle-class backgrounds.

69. This suggests that poverty may in fact be a factor in extremist violence — but only of certain types, e.g. where violent extremism arises in a civil war situation, or in low-income but highly unequal countries. This topic, however, needs further research to examine popular militant movements, to adopt alternative approaches to econometrics, and to yield more qualitative, empirical data.

Implications for DFID:

▪ The mixed evidence concerning economic factors places the role of economic development in addressing the drivers of radicalisation in doubt, so interventions addressing poverty should not be claimed as automatically addressing radicalisation.

▪ Income poverty, deprivation and underemployment are not sufficient explanations for violent extremism. However, they can contribute to other factors, particularly grievances, and may therefore help to create an environment conducive to violent extremist groups. So, despite the mixed evidence, economic development can be adapted so as to be sensitive to these other factors.

▪ Further research should aim to go beyond econometric analyses, and develop case-specific evidence of the relationship (if any) between economic factors and violent extremism.

Hypothesis 14: <u>Underemployed</u> young men with frustrated aspirations and a limited stake in society are particularly susceptible to radicalisation

Conclusion:

- The findings on the relationship between education, employment and radicalisation are mixed. There is, however, some limited evidence that militant groups recruit from the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed including those that are relatively well-educated.

Discussion:

70. Underemployment occurs when individuals are not able to secure employment opportunities consistent with their levels of skill and education. It has been adduced as a factor in violent extremism following research in suggesting that a proportion of terrorists were relatively well-educated but either unemployed or employed in fairly menial roles. Looking at Chechen militants, for instance, Speckhard and Ahkmedova (2006) found 88% unemployment even though 32% had experienced post-graduate or further education. Studies focusing on Palestinian militants during the Second Intifada and Hizbollah in Lebanon reach similar conclusions. Even within the terrorist dataset, however, this is by no means consistent — there are plenty of examples of individuals who gave up a successful career, or combined it with terrorist activity (Sageman, 2004).

71. At the same time, while the relationship between education, employment and violent extremism in more popular and local militant groups needs further research, there is some limited evidence that militant groups recruit from the ranks of the unemployed. Hassan's (2012) small sample of Kenyan Al Shabaab recruits suggest that some were attracted by the wages offered, while Botha's larger sample showed around half were unemployed: with unemployment levels among those aged 15-34 in Kenya at 70% — and believed to be higher among Muslim youths — there is a healthy supply for the militant workforce (Miriti, Mugambi, and Ochieng, 2014). A different situation is evident in Iraq, where thousands of Baathists and military officers found themselves unemployed after the Coalition Provisional Authority's decision to remove them from their jobs, creating not only a pool of unemployed potential militants but also a serious grievance (Tripp, 2007). In Syria, ISIL's wealth allows it to offer highly competitive salaries not just to fighters but other specialists required to run the proto-state. At the same time, opposition-controlled areas are reported to have high levels of unemployment, ranging from 60% to 90%, which 'together with very high prices and lack of other sources of income, has left men of fighting age, who typically have to provide for their families, in a very exposed position and vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups'(Turkmani, 2015).

Implications for DFID:

- Development interventions to stimulate job creation should be prioritised including projects in opposition held areas focussing on men of fighting age.

- Civil society organisations and representatives can identify and design cash-for-work and job creation programmes to ensure conflict and CVE sensitivity.

Hypothesis 15: Where inequality and institutionalised <u>discrimination coincide with religious or ethnic fault-lines</u>, there is an increased likelihood of radicalisation and mobilisation

Conclusion:

- Religious and ethnic fault-lines do not always coincide, but the economic, social and political marginalisation of ethnic or religious groups is widely believed to increase the risk of violent extremism.

Discussion:

72. Given that grievances are widespread, but violent extremism is very unevenly distributed, why do some societies experience so much and others so little? The prevalence and persistence of violent extremism in Muslim-majority countries has prompted some commentators to propose that Islam itself promotes violence (Huntingdon, 2002; Pipes, 1998; Lewis, 2002). A somewhat more sophisticated analysis (Gelfand, LaFree, Fahey et al., 2013) identified from quantitative analysis that some cultural dimensions — gender inequality, fatalism, and cultural 'tightness' — were positively correlated with the number of terrorist incidents. Their speculative conclusion — that culture helps explain why some societies have recourse to terrorism and others do not — seems reasonable but requires empirical validation.

73. The economic, social and political marginalisation of ethnic or religious groups is widely believed to increase the risk of violent extremism. The perceived exclusion of Sunni Arabs from the pst-2003 political settlement in Iraq, for example, is widely cited as a cause of the 2006-08 civil war and the later rise of ISIL (Tripp 2007; Weiss and Hassan, 2015). In Liberia, individuals felt that 'the war was necessary as Muslims needed to remind Christians that the country belonged to them' (Alao and Jaye, 2013). Silke (2008) suggests that perceived discrimination against the Catholic population of Northern Ireland prompted a turn to violence: 'people on the margins have less to lose if the current social order is maintained and conceivably a great deal to gain if it is radically changed'. However, Silke adds that 'the religious and political dimensions are independent of each other', so religious discrimination does not mean that individuals will necessarily feel politically discriminated against or unrepresented. In other words, sectarian discrimination does not necessarily lead to violent extremism.

74. Religious and ethnic fault-lines do not, however, always coincide. In Nigeria, for example, individuals from different ethnicities may subscribe to the same religion, but they do not all give allegiance to their religion above their ethnicity (Aloa, 2013). Moreover, the pre-independence clashes between Islamic sects in Nigeria were due to doctrinal differences rather than discrimination and inequality. This would suggest that violent extremism can occur along religious fault-lines without inequality and discrimination.

Implications for DFID:

- Grievances stemming from discrimination are not only possible factors in violent extremism but are also potential entry points for interventions. Grievances may encourage a much broader membership base for extremist groups. Accordingly, interventions that seek to address grievances may discourage involvement or reduce vulnerability. However, addressing grievances are unlikely to have much impact on those already committed to violent extremist causes.

- Further research could examine why some countries/societies demonstrate grievances but do not appear to have generated violent extremism movements.

Hypothesis 16: <u>Migrants from rural to urban</u> areas are particularly susceptible to radicalisation

Conclusion:

- There is little evidence to suggest a causal link between urbanisation and violent extremism, although mega-cities in the developing world have been identified as permissive environments to some forms of violent extremism.

Discussion:

75. Some analysts argue that feelings of alienation on the part of young migrants – especially recent arrivals – can increase vulnerability to violent extremism, a factor which may be aggravated by unemployment or underemployment. Empirical research into Egypt's militant groups in the 1990s showed a high proportion of rural to urban migrants (Guenena, 1986). In rapidly urbanising developing countries under great economic stress, scarcity and poverty lead to a greater dependence on the cash economy. This, combined with a disintegration of social networks as a result of patterns of labour migration, is claimed to boost delinquency rates. As both cause and consequence, increasing social distance is crammed into decreasing physical space. Labels such as 'feral cities' and 'urban jungles' have surfaced to describe sprawling conurbations in which the state's control is limited and violence becomes a means of survival (Norton, 2003; Esser, 2004). Urban spaces in regional conflict zones can create, host and perpetuate social systems and structures that induce violent behaviour (Esser, 2004), or which provide a natural home for insurgents or guerrillas (Kilcullen, 2013). For example, 8,000 Taliban fighters are now believed to operate in Karachi, the largest city in Asia where sectarian violence became commonplace in the 1990s and terrorist violence became a major problem after 9/11 (Kugelman, 2013). The migration of militant groups to Pakistan's cities has been advanced as a contributing factor to violence (Hinds, 2014).

76. However, the literature on 'youth bulges' considers migration (whether rural to urban or South to North) to be a safety valve for youth discontent. In this view, if migration opportunities are increasingly restricted without domestic initiatives in place to provide opportunities for youth, developing countries that previously relied on exporting surplus youth may experience increased pressures from youth bulges accompanied by a higher risk of political violence (Urdal, 2007). Others argue that rural isolation and fear can fuel ethnic tensions, while urban living can reduce tensions by forcing the admixture of different populations, offering opportunities for coexistence and empowerment in cities (Sommers, 2003).

77. Some argue there is no correlation between urbanisation rates and levels of political violence; rather the significant predictor of urban riots is increasing urban inequality rather than urbanisation per se (Urdal, 2008), or experience of corruption (Shelley, 2015).

Implications for DFID:

- Given that migration can act as a safety valve and reduce, rather than exacerbate, the risk of radicalisation, further research is needed in this area to confront the challenge that the permissive environments in mega-cities in the developing world can pose.

EXTERNAL GRIEVANCES

Hypothesis 17: <u>Events in Palestine, Iraq, etc, a perceived global attack on Islam</u>, and a belief that Muslim nations are less prosperous than they should be (as a result of Western policies), give rise to widespread indignation and resentment which encourage support for extremist action

Conclusion:

- While the perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims around the world can be instrumentalised by leaders of violent extremist groups, there is disagreement over whether the perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims around the world is a driver of extremism or instead merely used as justification to legitimise extremist activities. However, human rights violations and perceived overseas aggression can have a radicalising impact on diaspora communities.

Discussion:

78. The perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims around the globe, repression or perpetration of human rights, and foreign occupation have long been identified as important drivers of Islamist violence (USAID, 2011). This is particularly the case among diaspora communities (Koinova, 2011). Events in far flung places such as Kashmir and Palestine, the Iraq War and Bosnia and Herzegovina have been a driving force in activating Muslim political engagement and recruitment by Islamist groups globally (Whine, 2009).

79. The ability of Islamist ideologues to project the message of a world of protracted conflict between incompatible civilisations defined by religious allegiance, cultural affinity and historical bonds has framed support for jihad in Muslim lands as an individual Muslim obligation (Hegghammer 2011). This mandated armed struggles against Russians in Chechnya, Americans in Afghanistan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia; Indians in Kashmir; and Israel (Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler, 2006). Examples of propaganda that utilises collective grievances as wither an explanation or as incitement to violence range from bin Ladin's claim that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 convinced him to attack the US (Kepel and Milelli, 2007), to Al Shabaab's justification of the Garissa massacre as being in response to Kenya's participation in AMISOM in Somalia (Al Shabaab statement, 4 April 2015).

80. The argument among researchers is over the nature of the relationship: are they causative, or merely used to justify and legitimise? Are they necessary and/or sufficient factors in violent extremism? Here opinion is divided. In her early study (1981), Crenshaw argues that terrorist groups are extreme forms of social movements which emerge in response to collective grievances. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) see a reaction to individual or collective grievance as an early stage in the radicalisation process. Gupta (2005) finds that grievances are necessary but not sufficient to cause terrorism — grievances need to be instrumentalised by charismatic individuals or

'political entrepreneurs' and social and psychological factors need to align as well. Hoffman (2008) goes further and warns us not to take terrorist communications at face value: the grievances may be real, but they are probably being used in a propaganda battle. They may therefore be instrumental rather than explanatory. In general, however, research in this area seems speculative: the influence of a grievance is assumed rather than proven.

Implications for DFID:

- Irrespective of whether perceived victimisation is a causal factor or a justification, public communication should be sensitive to extremists' capacity to exploit grievances.

- Further research could examine how perceptions of grievance may be mitigated or addressed through public diplomacy.

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