2017 Policy Brief:

Rise of Extremism in Europe

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WHY RISE OF EXTREMISM IN EUROPE MATTER

In December of 2016 in Zurich, Switzerland, a man opened fire at the Islamic centre in Zurich injuring three people. In March of 2016, Belgium 32 people were killed and hundreds wounded in suicide bomb attacks. April 3, 2017: Saint Petersburg bombing a suicide bombing on the subway in Russia's second largest city killed more than a dozen passengers and injured dozens more. May 22, 2017: Outside Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England twenty two individuals were killed and a number of others were injured by a suicide bomber with apparent connections to an organized terror network[1]. The current status of extremism in Europe is unlike anything we have seen in European history. Part of this is largely due to how close Europe is to the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, Europe is known for its internal conflict with each of the states having political, social, and economic policy differences. In 1993, the EU was established to unify European states' social, political, and economic aspirations. Even so, the system has failed to maintain unity among member states. In 2016, Britain was the first member state to vote on leaving the EU. This initiative has inspired many other member states to criticize the EU and challenge its legitimacy. The situation of member states deciding to leave the EU in combination with their desire to influence the political sphere is another example of extremism. For these reasons, turning our attention to the effects of extremism in Europe is vitally important. A new approach must take into account that extremism has far-reaching economic and political consequences. As European states formulate their approaches to combating extremism, it must consider re-evaluating the current programs that are in place and which features are most effective at combating violent extremism.

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No country is spared from the scourge of violent extremism. But still far too few EU Member States are facing up to this rising threat. We need strong, preventive measures to counter extremism in all its forms. Our aim is to boost Member States efforts against radicalisation and extremist violence, and to provide a toolbox for preventive action in Europe

–Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs (2014)

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[1] Singman, Brooke. Fox News. 2017

RECENT EFFORTS TO COMBATING EXTREMISM

The attention to extremism in Europe correlates to extensive research on de-radicalisation programs. Since early 2001, European states have implemented programs to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism. The success of extremism prevention programs is deeply associated to a region's political, economic, and social framework. This means that each program's underlying methods for combating violent extremism may or may not be successful and/or transferrable to other regions. As a result, these programs work towards increasing diversity in communities. The idea here is that a more diverse society creates a society that is tolerant to new nationalities, religious groups, and mindsets. Even though some of these programs have been been criticised for their inconsistency to address the problems within their communities, it is still important to consider certain features of these programs when developing an alternative policy framework. [2]

Denmark: The Aarhus Model [3]

Background: This program's aim is to help de-radicalise individuals in the community. This program is not associated to religious or political entities.

Key Features

(1)**Rehabilitation services for foreign fighters:** The rehabilitation aspect of this program is reliant on a vast network of professionals, including social workers, professors, etc, and these individuals' efforts help foreign fighters 'de-radicalize'.

(2)**Community Intervention**: This model is extremely effective for maintaining order in the largest city of Denmark. In this city, citizens are engaged by hosting a number of events and workshops, where people can share their concerns with authorities. This open-dialogue is the proper form of inclusion.

Germany: 'Exit to Enter'[4]

Background: Extremism prevention programs in Germany specifically target right-wing political extremism groups. The program 'Exit to Enter' would help individuals leave right-wing political groups by offering them training and employment services.

Key Features

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[2] Countering Radicalization in Europe
http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ICSR-Report-Countering-Radicalization-in-Europe.pdf
[3] Schyns Camille, Mullerleile "How to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation" (2016)
http://www.eip.org/en/news-events/how-prevent-violent-extremism-and-radicalisation

[4] Schyns Camille, Mullerleile "How to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation" (2016)
http://www.eip.org/en/news-events/how-prevent-violent-extremism-and-radicalisation

(1)**Financial support from German government**: The program was able to help individuals find jobs because the government provided them with resources. If there is ever an economic benefit involved in a program, then there is more chance of the program being funded.

(2) **Reintegration to society**: This model is extremely effective in helping individuals live normal lifestyles and adapt to their new surroundings. Because they are treated as citizens instead of criminals, they are more likely to de radicalise. Reintegration to society has been a major success of the model.

Belgium: The Mechelen model [5]

Background: The city of Mechelen is notable in Belgium, for having no foreign fighters return to Syria or Iraq.

Key features

(1)**Policing & community dialogue**: This model was successful because it combined policing and community dialogue. The police play in an important role in security, but also in preventative measures. By having police participate in community dialogue, it helps reduce radicals need to attack the state.

Belgium: The Molenbeek- Saint-Jean Initiative [6] (developmental stages)

Background: The model for Molenbeek Saint Jean Initiative is based on community building; the program's main goal is to unite all of the different groups in the society and maintain peaceful coexistence.

Key Features

(1) **Need for credible dialogues**: The Molenbeek model seeks to implement more dialogues between community leaders and families. Dialogues help address controversial topics that cannot be discussed in other types of environments.

Recommendations to European extremist prevention programs

All of the program features listed above can be used in policy to assist in the recovery of communities impacted by terrorist activities. Using these features (community dialogue, financing, reintegration, and policing) the new policy framework will create a European system that is based on inclusion and peaceful coexistence between natives of the region and migrants. Thus, building upon a narrative of inclusion and peaceful coexistence can ensure that many could potentially de-radicalise.

Policy Options

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[5] Schyns Camille, Mullerleile "How to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation" (2016) http://www.eip.org/en/news-events/how-prevent-violent-extremism-and-radicalisation

[6] European Institute of Peace "Molenbeek and Violent Radicalisation ' a social mapping'(2017)

1.Set the standard for migrants active involvement in society (i.e. equal status to employment)

One of the key features of extremism prevention is the role of reintegration. Reintegration set as a standard will help newcomers feel more comfortable with expressing their religious beliefs. Along with personal development, these individuals can gain economic relevance. By giving these individuals opportunities to work, they can become a greater asset to society and are capable of adopting peaceful mindsets.

2.Increase financial assistance to extremism prevention groups in Europe.

A lot of the work that successful extremist prevention programs sponsor require a great amount of funding. If the government is able to support these programs, then they would have more success in helping individuals de-radicalise. Funding sources should be granted upon request for the training of professionals and staff and for establishing rehabilitation centers. These resources should be funded because community leaders are the ones who help facilitate peaceful dialogue; while, rehabilitation centers can help foreign fighters reintegrate into society.

3. Demand more opportunities for youth to join the conversation.

The youth are one of the most delicate sources that are exploited by extremist groups. A number of situations are responsible for children developing radical ideas or becoming violent. In these societies, children need to understand the consequences of such behavior. They need mentors, teachers, and social workers to guide them through the process. Often times, their parents need just as much help and cannot offer any guidance. Youth reintegration and intervention is an important aspect of the new policy framework.

4.Reinforce a zero tolerance for discrimination against minorities and religions.

With all these preventative measures, it is important that extremism prevention groups reiterate the importance of inclusion and peaceful coexistence. One of the features that can be used here is community dialogue. The dialogues would help individuals become knowledgeable about different religious mindsets. They would allow people to see past their differences, and try to understand each other.