Radicalization and violent extremism.

General Overview

Barcelona

Summer School

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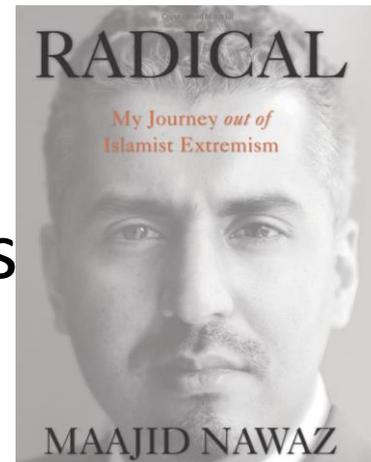
Approach

Evidence for the scientific literature

Consultations with experts and practitioners

and

Case studies – Maajid Nawaz – ex-islamis

Let us clarify the terms

- **Radicalisation** represents a dynamic process whereby an individual increasingly accepts and supports violent extremism. The reasons behind this process can be ideological, political, religious, social, economic or personal. (CoE)

- **Violent extremism** consists in promoting, supporting or committing acts which may lead to terrorism and which are aimed at defending an ideology advocating racial, national, ethnic or religious supremacy or opposing core democratic principles and values. (CoE)
  - Involves engagement in some action

- **Deradicalization** – interventions that seek to change and offender's ideological convictions, attitudes or ways of thinking that motivate/justify extremist offending.

- **Terrorism** – violent acts that have political, ideological or religious objectives

- **Disengagement** – 'involves a complete break with the social norms, values, attitudes, relationships and social networks' associated to terrorism (Horgan, 2009).
  - Interventions that seek to change offender's relationship or identification with the extremist group.
  - Less contact or restrain from action
  - Or changed their position or responsibilities in the group

Life-cycle of radicalization (Horgan, 2008)

- Becoming
  - Being
  - Leaving

Becoming

'They all were looking for something'...

Predispositions (but no distinguishing profile):

- Worldviews, mindsets or psychological propensities:
  - **Authoritarianism** - rigid, dual cognitive style, intolerance to ambiguity – submission to authority, staunch conventionalism and aggression towards out-groups
  - **Dogmatism** – closed cognitive system of beliefs about reality, intolerance towards others.
  - **Apocalypticism** – they think death will come and they know how and when.
  - **Fundamentalist mindset** – dualistic thinking, paranoid ideas and focus on a charismatic leader

Becoming

- Some argue for:

    - **Push factors**: need for meaning, identity, need for belonging, perceived injustice/humiliation

    - **Pull factors**: material or expressive incentives

Becoming
The '3Ns' (Webber and Kruglanski,)

- Needs
  - Loss of significance – discrimination, humiliation, injustice, dishonor, shame etc.
  - Terrorism as an opportunity to significance gain
  - Significance loss leads to a need for cognitive closure

- Narratives
  - To justify violence
  - Not only justifiable but necessary and laudable
  - Delegitimization of the target: dehumanization (stripping them of the human features – rats, serpents, cockroaches etc.), outcasting groups (infidels), defining them as enemies etc.

- Networks
  - Important for consensual validation of narratives – peer validation
  - Small groups endorse extreme values
  - Second family
  - 'fused' identities – strong in-group bonds – their identity as the one with the group identity
  - 'fused' individuals ready to sacrifice themselves for the group

Becoming (Precht, 2007)

- **Background factors**: personal issues with religion, identity, discrimination etc.

- **Trigger factors**: mentor or charismatic leader or dramatic events

- **Opportunity factors**: access to networks

Becoming

- Common elements **Integrated Model** (Borum, 2011):
    - **Predisposing life experiences** – exposure to discrimination – significance loss
    - **Activating situations** – e.g. state policy or action
    - **Predisposing vulnerabilities** – e.g. 'needs
    - **Social and group dynamics** – access to a network
    - **Ideology / Narrative** – collective narrative about the grievance and who is responsible

Becoming
Process models

Borum (2003) – four stages:

- – Experiencing some unsatisfying event/grievance (*it is not right/it is not fair*)
- – The injustice is targeted on something/somebody (*it is your fault*)
- – The responsible party is vilified or demonized (*you are evil*)
- – Which justifies the aggression

Becoming
Process models

Precht (2007) four-phases:

- – Pre-radicalization – frustrations.
- – Conversion and identification with radical Islam – meeting other like-minded
- – Indoctrination and increased group bonding
- – Acts of terrorism

Maajid Nawaz – becoming an Islamist

- He is a man born in Southend, Essex, UK in 1970

- With Pakistan origins, parents from Gujrad, Pakistan, with liberal or moderate views

- First experience of racism – in elementary school, 'this game is not for paki', eating pork sausages

- Second racism experience – in high school – Mickey and his gang ('whites') harassing and attacking the 'non-whites' – context Combat 18 – collective experience, knifes, one man killed while defending him.

- Young man looking for allies , friends and identity

- Joined Hizb al-Tahrir (HT) – an international organization of Muslims, set up in 1953, fighting for *khilafah*.

- Recruited by Nasim – 'a young man, bright, with good thinking and no beard'- charismatic, great speaker and good role model – use of friends and family networks

- Maajid transformation – no more 'hanging around' but visits to the mosque, study with friends, films with injustice, purpose in life – recruit as many people for the HT cause.

- Exposure to ideology - *halaqah* – 4-5 people, one topic, discussions to destroy all the prejudice and build up another one. Stories to support Islamism **– half truth**

- 'everything that I was hearing with my young mind seemed credible'
- 'who was I? HT managed to give me the identity that was missing'

Being

- Many report **personal damage**: anxiety, paranoia, trauma, poor physical health, drug/alcohol abuse, physical injuries, loss of relationships with family and friends, disrupted education and career, criminal charges, imprisonment – with all the consequences

Maajid Nawaz – Being

- Active in a *da'wah* – the house of the mission – first as *a daris* later as a leader
- All life governed by this identity – even the wife from the Islamists
- Recruitment in schools and universities
- A lot of violence – one man killed in front of him
- Dehumanized others – *kuffar*
- Distance from his mum – who opposed to his departure to Pakistan
- Left to Pakistan to set up a' nuclear caliphate'
- First disappointments – no support from HT, disappointed with people:

'I have observed that people are led by ordinary instincts and not by the noble cause. I have seen how Irfan was able to play all sorts of games to advance his career. .. It was the end of my political innocence '

- Arrested and tortured in Egypt – four years in prison as 'conscience prisoner'
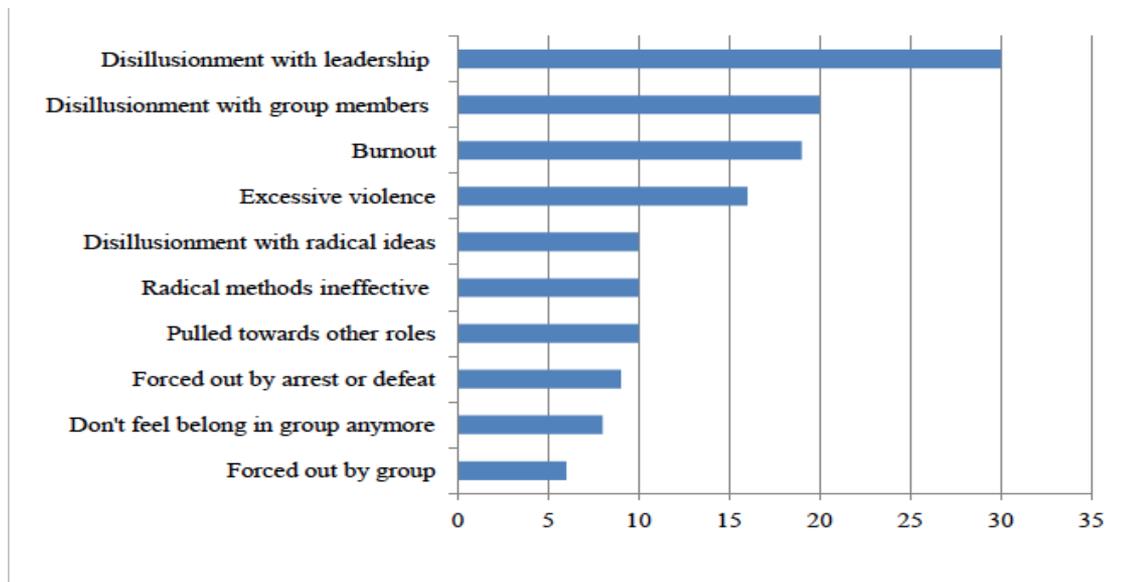- Distance from his wife and child

Leaving

- Most people who join extremist groups eventually leave
- Multiple and non-linear reasons for leaving
- Personal and individual pathway
- Hesitations, long process, distress, difficult readjustment
- Three identity processes:
  - Reduction in the intensity of connections with the extremist group
  - Emergence of the personal self
  - Finding something else to identify with

- DISENGAGEMENT IS ACTUALLY ABOUT ENGAGING SOMEWHERE ELESE !!!
  (BARRELLE, 2014)

Barrell (2014)

- Reasons to leave:

Reason	Value
Disillusionment with leadership	30
Disillusionment with group members	20
Burnout	19
Excessive violence	16
Disillusionment with radical ideas	10
Radical methods ineffective	10
Pulled towards other roles	10
Forced out by arrest or defeat	9
Don't feel belong in group anymore	8
Forced out by group	6

Once the push factors – the importance of the pull factors: e.g. family, career etc.

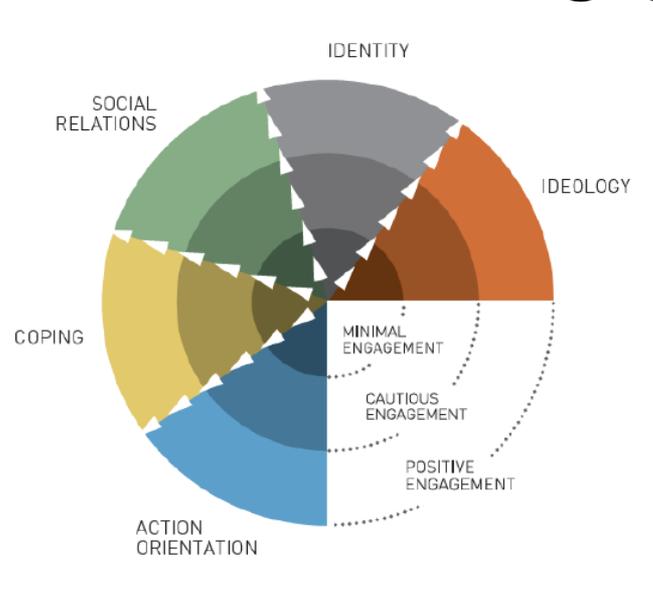- Insight – e.g. ineffectiveness of violence, all people are humans …

LEAVING
Pro-Integration Model

- Based empiric – 22 former terrorists
- Holistic

- Disengagement is an identity transition from being an outsider to belonging

- Five domains:
  - Social relations
  - Coping
  - Identity
  - Ideology
  - Action orientation

Leaving
Pro-Integration Model

- Is it about being connectedness and wellbeing in the mainstream society

- Three levels of societal engagement:

Minimum – not interested; Cautious – limited, hesitant; Positive level – full integration

LEAVING
Pro-Integration Model

1. ## Social relations
   1. Important push factor – disillusionment
   2. Having out-group relations – sign of pluralism and de-radicalization
2. ## Coping
   1. Many suffered traumas, depression, paranoia, burnout etc.
   2. Especially where they used violence and coercion in-group
   3. Need for robust personalities and string social support
3. ## Identity
   1. Readjusting personal and social identities as a member of the society
   2. Sometimes an incident triggered the transformation
   3. Contact with out-group
4. ## Ideology
   1. An important step – to accept pluralism – acceptance of difference
   2. Moderate views
5. ## Action Orientation
   1. No longer using radical methods/ prosocial engagement in the society

Maajid Nawaz – Leaving

- More disillusionment in the leaders – Abdul Wajid.
- More friends met in prison – who reformed themselves
- More time to reflect – more real study of Koran, re-interpretation with support of the new friends, but:

' It is important to understand that my vision did not change overnight. Ideologies are not like water taps that you can switch on or off. The HT cause was deep infiltrated into my identity. I needed more years to take it out '

- Help of people from outside HT – significant people from Amnesty International or Fair Trials International
- Maturation – 'I started to feel old in my soul and in my eyes' – doubts
- Re-humanization – after reading Animal Farm etc.
- Inner conflict – left HT and together with a friend set up the first organization to fight extremisms – Quilliam – and a political party in Pakistan – Khludi
- Attacked by the HT
- TV shows – hard Talk, TED, Newsnight etc.
- Active in collaborating with the UK Government

Change means replacing something old with something new !!!

Conclusions

- Disengagement is an identity transformation through social relations – important with whom you spend your time with !!! – and personal maturation / reflection

- Coping and social support is essential to facilitate re-engagement with the society

- Ideas and ideologies are important and people need to learn how to respectfully question or express them.

- Probation services could provide resources for new social relationships, reconnecting them to the society, provide new role models, enhance coping etc.

- See Maajid Nawaz on YouTube:
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHILj4raTcI
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlAw7qYLk5w

Thanks.

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