



EX POST PAPER

RAN CoE Research Seminar

Introduction

On 12-13 April 2016, the RAN CoE Research Seminar entitled “Research on radicalisation: From theory to practice” was organized in Vienna, Austria, and it brought together the RAN Editorial Board, leading academics and practitioners to discuss some of the latest research findings into violent extremism and relevant prevention measures, to identify insights from research; how these relate to practice and key knowledge gaps. This Research Seminar was organized around ten commissioned chapters corresponding to each of the nine RAN WG topics as well as an additional paper on the topic of evaluation methods and issues. These draft papers served as the basis for subsequent parallel breakout sessions where the participants contributed with their practitioner insights and academic reflections, combining practitioner insight, research and evidence-based findings. These guided discussions identified key issues and generated new insights and knowledge gaps that were, in turn, fed back into the revision process of these ten Research Papers (‘Chapters’). These ten papers provided also the basis for the commissioning of a Gap Analysis paper, identifying further practitioner-based insights and academic knowledge gaps. These ten Research ‘Chapters’ alongside the Gap Analysis paper is published together in a Research ‘Collection’ in autumn 2016. It is intended to be a ‘living’ document which will be continuously refined and changed according to the synthesis of the latest research findings and practitioner insights.

The Research Seminar provided an opportunity to think deeply about our knowledge assumptions across a range of different cross-cutting prevention issues. The RAN CoE Quality Manager outlined the key focal areas across the ten WG areas and summarized the key research findings of the 9+1 ‘Chapters’. Professor Kevin McDonald (Middlesex University) reflected on the prospects and limits of research into violent extremism, specifically focusing in on how social media, interaction and sensation, rather than actual meaning, influences radicalisation pathways. This approach has implications for how we approach prevention. According to



McDonald: “to understand radicalisation today we need to develop stronger focus on embodied experience, sensory sociality, modes of feeling.” The visual imagery of ISIL was explored to provide insights into modes of ‘lived experience’ and how this can be interpreted. A representative from SSCAT/RICU provided insight into what a counter-narrative is and the principles and techniques of the UK government communication approach which is both a means to deliver attitudinal and behavioral change in vulnerable audiences and a means to understand how extremists are radicalising and recruiting. As such, government communications aims to disrupt (and if possible reverse) the radicalisation process, using innovative private sector techniques and technology (such as online media analysis, mapping, etc) and effective delivery mechanisms. All RICU work is based on research methods and online technologies. Two UK campaigns, (UK Helps and Aid Awareness) illustrated the processes of how these campaigns are designed and delivered using research methods.

Alberto Contaretti provided a presentation on “Research FP7 and H2020 Research Into Prevention of Violent Extremism” which focused on the purpose, focus and research achievements of the four FP7-funded projects: SAFIRE; IMPACT Europe; VOX-POL; and PRIME. It also provided the key goals of H2020 which is an ambitious research program between 2016-2020. SEC-06-FCT-2016 is focused on: “Developing a comprehensive approach to violent radicalisation in the EU from early understanding to improving protection.” The expected outcome of this call is: set of policy-recommendations and tools for policy-makers & LEAs to timely prevent and detect radicalisation; policy comparative analysis; description of competencies and skills of practitioners; information exchange among different involved actors; field validation. In addition, there is mandatory participation of at least five law enforcement agencies from different Member States in the projects.

From an academic perspective Professor Alex Schmid outlined 12 research themes and topics that required further focus by the scholarly community. This paper is available on request through the EU RAN CoE.

This paper is produced by the RAN Centre of Excellence.





The Framework: Research Papers

Nine RAN Research papers have been commissioned across RAN CoE Working Group areas:

- Communication and Narratives (C&N)
- Education (EDU)
- Youth, Families and Communities (YF&C)
- Local (LOCAL)
- Prisons and Probation (P&P)
- Police and Law Enforcement (POL)
- Victims
- Health and Social Care (H&SC)
- Exit

In addition, there is a paper on Practices of Evaluation.

These ten papers served as the foundation for the Research Seminar and were discussed extensively in parallel breakout sessions. Each RAN Research Paper contain overarching research findings and issues specifically relating to the issues and methods of RAN working groups. What follows are some themes in the commissioned research papers alongside key findings in the breakout sessions.

RAN C&N

The RAN C&N focuses on the development of alternative narratives and counternarratives, focusing both on right-wing and religious extremism. A prerequisite for thinking about counternarratives is to deconstruct the constituent elements and attraction of these narratives in the first place. How are these narratives constructed, framed and projected? What is the role of emotions and ideology? What is the relationship between on- and offline behaviour?

Right-wing narrative contain three ideological features: nativism; authoritarianism & populism (Mudde, 2007). They often revolve around three main narratives:

- the narrative based on biological racism (including anti-Semitism),
- xenophobia (targeting migrants, Muslims, and the Roma), and
- anti-establishment populism (mainly directed at corrupt elites).

There is also a Eurosceptic discourse which have hardened after Eurozone crisis.

There is a lack of research on intersection between rightwing parties, movements, and extremist subcultural milieus. Focus is needed on transnational interaction between Soldiers of Odin and Pegida and extra-parliamentary extreme right groups. It is also important to remember the double helix/spiral of polarisation between opposing groups.

When it comes to Sunni extremism (“jihadist narrative) there are some important considerations:

Counternarratives need to offer a coherent worldview (ISIL rides off 30 years of jihadi corpus) and need to understand original Arab(ic) narratives and processes – deconstructing the theology of violence. This theology of violence revolves around three conditions: tawhid, muwahhidin (mushrikin), and tawba (repent).

Countering jihadist monopoly of truth – everyone outside is treading “path of falsehood (batil), is an apostate (murtadd), or excommunicated (takfir) as a disbeliever (kafir).

The fight for hegemony and identity: what does it mean, being a Sunni Muslim in times of war and sectarianism? Jihadists are also good at narrowcasting their propaganda.

There are five types of violent extremism narratives:



1. Feeding grievances-exclusion; strong sense of injustice; feeling of humiliation; rigid binary thinking; conspiracy theories; sense of victimhood

2. Feeding marginalisation-discrimination; limited social mobility; poor education; unemployment; criminality

3. Political narratives –mainly ‘West is at war with Islam’. Also ban on veil; Cartoon crises; Islamophobia

4. Claiming ideological and religious legitimacy-apocalyptic prophesy; violent interpretation of Jihad; sense that Islam is under siege and desire to protect ummah; view that West is immoral secularism

5. Feeding culture and identity crises-cultural marginalisation; lack of belonging to either home or parents’ society; reinforces religious solidarity with Muslims around the world

There are some practitioner lessons learned: specify target audience; match narrative with driver to radicalisation; use both counter and alternative narrative; credibility counts –teens do it better than government; emotions beat rationale –use humor, emotions and satire (target the heart instead of the head); user engagement –do not preach, but debate; sustainability –1 video is no video; combine online & offline – there is no (de)radicalisation online only.

Breakout Discussion

- Methodological problem: do we have a common understanding of counter narratives? When we talk about narratives, these can take many different forms.
- ISIL is offering a perfect world. Counter-narrative needs to puncture this myth and expose lies.
- We need to understand why some follows these narratives and some do not. For the

majority, ISIL propaganda does not work: why?

- Youngsters need to have a handle to hold when they do not have a feeling of belonging but everyone else around them does have it. For them radicalisation is not a problem, it is a solution.

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- Mind-set of young people: Interested in research on different mind-sets and real communication expertise, like about what one should do and not explained by communication experts and psychologists.
- Looking at those who do not become radicalised vis-à-vis the same factors; the very same narratives are not attractive for them;
- Research on internal Islamic counter-narratives: with the help of formers or/and insiders we have to find a way to promote the plurality of Islam and internal ideological narratives.
- Research should look into other discipline such as drugs and criminological field and draw lessons from there. No reinvent the wheel.

RAN EDU

The RAN EDU confronts the difficult challenge of addressing extremism issues in educational settings. How do you balance sensitive and controversial issues relating to extremism in schools with the duty to safeguard youths from extremism?

Educational institutions are expected to do a lot (sometimes conflictual things): signal deviant behaviour and arrange follow-up if someone flagged; schools respond to high-profile extremist



events and reassurance; teachers confront polarisation & conspiracies.

Davies argues that if education is to play a role in preventing radicalisation it must provide the environment and opportunities to question, critique, discuss and challenge thoughts, ideals and values. She proposes 'positive insecurity' as a goal for education – where ideas are challenged in a safe and non-violent manner.

There is problem with research in that often findings are not backed-up by hard empirical evidence. Often there is no distinction between primary & secondary level provisions. Nor is there distinction between schools with homogenous pupils vs. "super-diversity." Why are conspiracies difficult to resist and undermine? There is a missing pedagogy on radicalisation.

Breakout Discussion

- Study takes for granted that all the teachers are democrats, teachers have political views that could be on the extreme. How could the train the trainers, teach the teachers?
- Distinction between homogenous and superdiversity, however there are more distinctions to be made. Besides different students, you have different teachers, and different ways to teach. Teachers are not neutral, have to be trained.
- The forces working upon the youth are often too powerful and complex for individual parents and teachers to handle. Together, adults surrounding the youth may offer the moral authority that these youngsters need to successfully perform their rite of passage from childhood to adulthood.
- Little about the role in schools in engaging parents. Programmes that include parents in school activities, could they be evaluated? Existing preventive programmes, how to use them in prevention in radicalisation, like media literacy, and social communication programmes?

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- Research on providing a framework of tools to use for teachers to be confident. Focus on critical thinking. Responsible citizenship toolkit for teachers (via Agnes Tuna).
- Knowledge is needed about other cultures and religion.
- Facts and evidence based research. Less on assumptions, less on public opinions. Could feed in different areas, feed into practical toolkits for teachers.
- Clearly defined what does work, and what does not? Results until now? What should be in programmes, and what not? What indicators to use? What indicators should we have?
- What insights can be gained by studying other problematic issues that are handled at schools, different pedagogical formats?

RAN YF&C

The RAN YF&C explores the issue of identity formation, the role of families as well as subcultures. It also examines the role of communities in prevention of violent extremism. What are the casual mechanisms that attracts youths towards extremism?

Social processes such as belonging, identity formation and (missing) loyalty should be seen as normal processes of identity formation. Socialization into extremism occurs from family relations to schools to peer groups.

The idea of agency as opposed to structural determinism is featured in literature on radicalisation and subculture.

There is significance and relevance for practice: avoidance of the male Muslim stereotype is important to incorporate in prevention programmes in order to avoid stigmatisation and radicalisation; focus on more youth specific



aspects – countercultural elements; prevention programs need to pay attention to ways in which mainstream speaks about issues and about others; what are motivations of foreign fighters? Influence of counter-culture; what is role of communities, attitudes and stereotypes?

Breakout Discussion

- There is contradiction in research as to extent inclusion and belonging leads to radicalisation or not. There is influence of families and networks.
- Families as means of de-radicalise is important, but sometimes family is a driver for radicalisation.
- What does it mean to be resilient as a family? What does it mean, how can families make use of their roles?
- The role of women should be further explored. Could be a liberation from strict family rules, experienced as unfair and unjust.
- The word “values”, integration into what are we offering, are we clear about our own ideology and our own European values that we try to portray as important for the persons to integrate?

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- There is no study on comparative European level. Not even a big comparative research on foreign fighters. Why the difference between countries? Like number of converts different in Austria from Germany. Or number of woman. This could lead to prevention strategies, what does one country do well and others do less effectively?
- Studies into youth subcultures. How they function and why they are attractive?
- Understanding definitions of what does a healthy community and group look like, does it mean we share the same values?
- Compare communities as to what drives woman to join ISIL?

- The role of family socialisation in identity building into radicalisation.
- Exceptionalising the topic of violent extremism. Research into conflict management and experience from social work.
- Research into (youth) identity is key for practitioners.

RAN LOCAL

The RAN LOCAL examines the role of local authorities in preventing violent extremism. Why are there different focuses and local approaches between different states? What is the role of crime prevention and community safety or urban security?

There are few scholarly work on radicalisation in cities or role of local authorities in prevention. The role of nine local authorities in national strategies are examined closely in the paper. There is emphasis on crime prevention – primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Also the role and function of multiagency platforms are key. What governance models work? How does one overcome exchange of information and the issue of confidentiality/secrecy? How does one evaluate programs?

Breakout Discussion

- How to start building networks with people from different cultures? Gender aspect is important.
- Since 2011 there is a lot of evaluation on the British local approach. What is the outcome?
- Sometimes local level is just used for implementing national level without lot of freedom of policy as e.g. funds are determined by national level. In this sense the call for local position is superficial.
- On the local level it is difficult to raise funds for research which is needed for improving quality on the local level. Often politics



interfere to ensure policies are accepted at political levels.

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- Action studies on management: how does national police cope with local authorities?
- How to persuade people also to work on prevention and not stick to repression?
- Radicalisation will be less on FTF's and more about tensions within society and community violence.
- Is there any proof whether a national or decentralized (local) approach is more effective?
- Research on prejudices on radicalisation and polarisation inside local authorities.
- Are there differences between cities and villages (with stronger social ties)?
- How is voluntary work of youngsters used in this field to improve social cohesion. What indicator would be helpful here to have an idea what is happening, to construct an early warning system.
- Radicalisation tends to become an industry. How to avoid that or at least regulate that? There is a professionalisation going on. To what extent can quality control being organized across different practitioner fields. There is no benchmarks.
- Why does radicalisation occur in some neighborhoods and not others? What can we learn from crime prevention models and research?
- Effectiveness of local practices?
- Research into usage of cities, and local spaces within these, to prevent polarisation to community violence
- Research proving that multi agency cooperation is best done locally

- How do you best communicate to build trust with communities?

RAN P&P

The RAN P&P focuses on issues relating to the risks and dynamics behind prisoner radicalisation as well as technical challenges, such as risk assessment and classification, management strategies, and rehabilitation and reintegration approaches.

Past research focused on risks and dynamics of prisoner radicalisation. More recent on technical challenges such as risk assessment, management strategies and rehabilitation/reintegration approaches.

Religion has largely positive effect on inmates – religion as a protective factor. Causes and dynamics of radicalisation is often due to overcrowding and charismatic leadership.

In terms of management & allocation, a Dutch study found that no evidence exists that concentration was necessary. There are few studies of effectiveness of deradicalisation programs. There is also little empirical scrutiny of underlying social and psychological dynamics behind radicalisation. There is more research on dynamics behind violent extremist inmate gangs. It is also important to focus on juvenile extremist offenders and post-release period.

Breakout Discussion

- We should bridge the gap between doing risk assessment for pure risk assessment and risk assessment to drive actual policies.
- Every MS has its own problem, so responses need to be tailor-made in the first place. Probation? Take into consideration families as support network and involve them in the probation period.



- There are three pathways from criminal roots to radicalisation: isolation, justification of extremism and deprivation. Research found out that they did not convert to Islam because they believed in the ideology, but because it was anti-establishment thing to do. There are multi-layered reasons of why people do what they do.
- Narrative used by recruiters is that prison is like a watershed between the previous bad past (petty crimes) to a life as jihadist until martyrhood.
- Credibility of prison staff guards, despite the fact that what works in one context does not necessarily work in other contexts. What is needed is an overarching strategic overview of what has worked and what has not, learning from the failures and see what works in one context and not in another.
- Researchers have pretty good relationship with practitioners. What is missing is the level/connection with policy-makers.
- What's the difference between those just converted and those radicalised?

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- Better understanding of psychological dynamics of radicalisation is needed., especially the role of trust from prisoners.
- How do extremists recruit gang's member and intervene in prisons dynamics within gangs?
- How should radicalised prisoners be treated differently? What are the gender differences? Should one distribute radicalised prisoners?
- How would you use the probation phase to steer the former into de-radicalisation?

RAN POL

The RAN POL explores challenges of community policing within communities. What are relevant community policing strategies and what is the impact on communities and radicalisation? What

can be learned from policing experience dealing with youth crime and delinquency?

Policing is more likely to succeed if it is carried out as part of multi-agency approach that is firmly anchored in local communities.

Neighbourhood policing model is about operationalising 'soft power'. More research on police experience caused by gangs, gang culture, the way individuals join, operate and leave them & how they can be countered.

Also important with police engagement and youths (using social media). Research often risk being overtaken by events (techniques, etc).

Need trust of community in order to do community policing. However, could be used to spy on community. Suspect communities is a massive issue, too much focus on certain communities. Police leadership role in Prevent, now pushing more responsibilities to local authority partners.

Police agencies need and process information. Problems in access to certain sets of data for academics. Data from domestic intelligence and police, are not reviewed by academics. Academics would need access to raw data. Establish joint understanding that this research is beneficial for both government and police while within ethical boundaries for academia.

Trust is important and it is foundation in multi-agency cooperation. Use literature on trust, and get the answer what people perceive as source of legitimacy for police.

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- DG Home research on community policing could be used. Can it be tackled at the European level? Evidence that community policing works? Are all countries doing community policing?



- Comparative research on no-go areas in Europe and intersection between violent extremism and territorial criminal gangs.
- Empower police to do their own research, and support that. Or getting the academics in the police service. There are few evaluations.
- How should police handle vigilante groups who challenge monopoly on force?

RAN RVT

The RAN RVT focuses on victims and survivors in particular in relation to treating trauma, notions of restitution, victims' needs and memorialization. It also examines the narrative of victimisation and its impact and role for victim support and prevention of violence.

Narratives of victimisation is ignored and narrative of victimhood used by terrorists. This can be utilised in deradicalisation programs, restorative justice initiatives, issues of reconciliation and violence prevention initiatives. Connecting general victim research with those affected by extremism.

Breakout Discussion

- Transgenerational aspects: grandchildren looking for family history.
- Awareness that there can be political manipulation of victimhood. For example, Islamophobia is sometimes a theme for victimisation where it is fuelled by persons/organisations for strategic reasons. One should be well aware who is doing what with what purpose in this field.
- Lot of victims have come to Europe as refugees. Will they be recognised? Or become double victims.
- Forgotten groups: Muslims killed by jihadis, Catholics killed by IRA. Very often perpetrators are considering their acts as

acting on behalf of their community. Instead they are actually violating communities.

- Crucial for working with extremist youth is to know their biography and to see to what extent they do self-victimisation. Denying/Challenging victimisation is actually fuelling this feeling.
- One-on-one contacts between perpetrators and victims might work. In public it becomes difficult.
- Difference if you let victims and perpetrators speak or their families. You need a lot of preparation and counselling and to see if the time is right.

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- How to give a more nuanced narrative than black and white when it comes to perpetrators and victims.
- More comparative studies on reconciliation processes?
- How to get more from other disciplines: terrorism and victims of terrorism is not unique
- Public mourning (like statues), how to do this effectively? What roles should governments and victim groups and support bodies have in this process?
- How to manage victims who want to speak up when they are not ready yet?

RAN H&SC

The RAN H&SC focuses on the role of health and social care in key phases in the life of extremists – becoming involved, being involved and exiting (disengaging) from terrorism. Are there mental health issues or mental disorders and how does one deal with these issues?

There are different mental health and social issues before, during and after involvement in violent extremism.



There is little evidence between depressive symptoms or any valid proxy measure of violent radicalisation. Presence of criminogenic risk factors – about transition into terrorism.

There are Vulnerability Assessment Framework (on three levels):

- Cognitions and emotions
- Readiness to use violence
- Efficacy-building factors (capability to act - skills)

These are Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP); Safire project (guidance clusters 21 indicators); Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA) & Extremism Guidance 22+.

Breakout Discussion

- Trauma is relevant. How do we work with foreign fighters travelling?
- Other problems/challenges faced by foreign fighters in their life and how it related to their decision to be radicalised should be investigated. It would be interesting to know what the trajectory in their life is before they developed mental health disorder and how the system can cope with that.
- There are other issues to be considered. Often they have emotions-kind problems rather than mental illness problems. Problems with parents for example: juvenile have special emotional problems. Multi-agency approach in the end is really important.
- Other researchers focus on general violence and personality disorders. The latter should be studied more.
- Practitioners might say there is not causality between extremism and mental health but for sure there is a correlation.

In terms of future research what are some of the identified priorities?

- More research on the role of authority in extremist groups and how to get them out depending on their role in the group.
- Practitioners ask for evaluations of intervention models that they can use in their own environments.
- Young women acting as jihadist brides: are they mental ill or just vulnerable to human nature?
- More research focus on role of trauma within the family, what the family experienced in previous conflicts, such as Bosnia and Chechenya. It does play a role in violent extremism.
- Evaluations of risk assessment tools.

RAN EXIT/RAN EVALUATION

The RAN EXIT focus on key findings in disengagement and de-radicalisation methods. What works and in what setting? The paper was not produced in time and discussion points were therefore integrated into the paper.

The RAN Evaluation examines different methodologies for evaluating CVE programs. Why are CVE evaluations lacking? What are different evaluation forms and what are the indicators for success? This paper was not discussed extensively at the Research Seminar though the paper itself contained various models how to conduct evaluations.

Formulating indicators to assess if (violent) extremism has successfully been countered or prevented, is challenging. In the ideal situation, a baseline assessment or ex ante evaluation is undertaken, prior the commencing of the CVE program or intervention.

Barelle has developed a model for assessing the degree of 'disengagement', which can be particularly relevant for exit and mentoring programs. She identifies five different domains



along which three levels of (dis)engagement can occur. The maximum outcome is:

- 1) positive social engagement (disengagement) implies positive family relations (positive social relations);
- 2) able to address personal issues and function in society, e.g. work, education (positive coping)
- 3) no longer identifies with extremist group (identity);
- 4) is unlikely to hold violent extremist views (ideology);
- 5) does not consider violent and illegal methods as legitimate (action orientation).

It was also emphasized that EU-funded project IMPACT on evaluation could have tremendous prospects for all kinds of evaluation. IMPACT forces practitioners to reflect on the process of evaluation and what kind of evaluation mechanisms exist. This should be conducted during prevention program designs.

The themes in the Research Papers cover enormous ground where academic research and practitioner experience can create new synergies and insight into violent extremism and prevention. The Research 'Chapters' were revised integrating the comments from the Research Seminar and in a peer-review process. It will be published later during 2016 together with the Gap Analysis. It is a 'living' document which will be continuously revised and updated.
