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## Evaluating Policy Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism: Comparative Insights from Global Strategies

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### ABSTRACT

Violent extremism has been one of the major security issues facing the world and requires a flexible yet strong set of policies to deal with its dynamic threats. This paper is a comparative study of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approaches in various geopolitical settings, France, Denmark, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Morocco, to determine their effectiveness, ethical concerns, and their appropriateness in different geopolitical environments. Using qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and the theories of radicalization (e.g., Social Identity Theory, Relative Deprivation Theory) and approaches to public policy (e.g., Multiple Streams Framework), the paper locates major differences between regional policies, including those of securitization and community-based models, and their effects. The results show that participatory approaches, such as the Aarhus Model in Denmark and the religious-counter-narrative program in Indonesia, could be more successful in the long run to disrupt radicalization than top-down, militarized approaches when they tend to create overestimates of threats and distrust. The success of such policies, however, hinges a lot on socio-political issues, such as governance structure, cultural legitimacy, as well as the current state-community relations. The paper also reveals some of the ongoing ethical issues, including the tradeoffs between surveillance and civil liberties, and the unintentional stigmatization of marginalized communities through programs like the UK Prevent strategy. To cope with such issues, the article suggests integrated, human-rights-sensitive CVE models, which integrate specific security policies with grassroots prevention, decentralized policymaking, and independent oversight. It is recommended that more localised and evidence-based approaches are needed with focus on reparative justice, economic inclusion, and ideological deradicalisation. This study can help fill the gap between the need to protect the nation and the need to have a resilient society by informing people about the need to have policies that will be as malleable as the problems they are designed to solve.

**Keywords:** Violent Extremism, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), Radicalization, Deradicalization, Securitization, Community Engagement, Human Rights, Policy Frameworks, Comparative Analysis.

### Introduction

Violent extremism is one of the most burning challenges to the security of the 21 st century, as it currently takes the form of transnational terrorism, ideological radicalization, and

asymmetric warfare. The Global Terrorism Index (2023) also notes that although terrorism-related deaths have dropped by 9 percent since 2015, the Sahel, South Asia, and Middle East regions, among others, still face chronic extremist violence, with organizations like ISIS, Al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram taking advantage of poor governance and social-economic discontent (Institute for Economics & Peace [IEP], 2023). The reality of the digital age has also made counter-extremism work more challenging, with online radicalization and encrypted means of communication causing extremist ideas to spread extremely fast across international borders (Weimann, 2022). Due to the dynamic nature of this threat, governments and international organizations have been paying more attention to the creation of holistic Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies that go beyond militarized solutions to focus on the causes underlying the violence, including marginalization, identity crisis, and a lack of political voice (Horgan & Braddock, 2023).

CVE policy frameworks have become central to the development of effective interventions but they have been highly successful depending on contextual factors, including governance structures, cultural sensitivities and civil society participation. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism developed by the United Nations (2015) highlights that a multi-sectoral approach is required by combining security, education, building community strength, and counter-narratives (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2015). Nevertheless, the challenges that CVE policies face are often criticized, the most frequent being: racial and religious profiling, securitization of social policies, and unintentional stigmatization of the Muslim community in the West (Kundnani & Hayes, 2023). As a case in point, the UK Prevent strategy has been criticized due to the generation of distrust among the minority communities, which prompts the question of how much security is acceptable at the cost of human rights (Heath-Kelly & Strausz, 2023). Such tensions highlight the need to examine critically current CVE models with the aim of establishing best practices and preventing counterproductive results.

This study aims to make a comparative analysis of CVE strategies around the world, their effectiveness, ethical consequences, and the ability to adapt it to different geopolitical realities. This study aims to identify transferable lessons and identify limitations in the region by studying the experience of Europe (e.g., the Plan de Prévention, a period of time, a period of time; the French Plan de Prévention, a period of time; de Radicalisation), Southeast Asia (e.g., deradicalization programs in Indonesia), and Africa (e.g., Nigeria and the Soft Approach to Counterterrorism) (Harris-Hogan et al., 2023; Onapajo & Okeke, 2023). To reveal whether some of these frameworks, e.g. community-based prevention or algorithmic surveillance of online extremism, have more measurably positive results, the study will utilize the mixed-methods approach, with an analysis of policy documents complemented by the empirical data in governmental and non-governmental reports. Finally, the study also seeks to add to the current debate on the need to make evidence-based CVE policymaking to provide recommendations that can be implemented to make the world a safer place without and at the expense of democratic rights.

### **Literature Review**

In general, violent extremism can be defined as ideological justification of violence to reach political, religious, or social goals, which are usually based on the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and state institutions (Schmid, 2023). Radicalization, or how people become

radicalized, is not a process that occurs sequentially but is a product of push factors (e.g., systemic marginalization, perceived injustice) combined with pull factors (e.g., identity reinforcement, online echo chambers) (Neumann, 2022). The policies of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) include a continuum of prevention and rehabilitation tools, community outreach programs, and legislative counterterrorism models designed to interrupt the radicalization process (Borum, 2023). Nevertheless, there is debate concerning the conceptual delimitations of CVE and counterterrorism where the opponents critique that the securitization approach may confuse dissent and extremism, especially in authoritarian societies (Gunning & Jackson, 2023). This conflict highlights the importance of the accuracy of the scope of CVE so as not to compromise its legitimacy.

The literature on CVE strategies shows that there are paradigms that occur on opposite ends of the spectrum, such as on the one hand, punitive security-centric strategies and on the other, socio-economic soft approach. An example of a hybrid approach would be the U.S. National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism (2023), which integrates intelligence-led policing with countering online radicalization efforts, but suffers in its effectiveness due to politicization and implementation inconsistency (Stern & Berger, 2023). Conversely, the Counter-Terrorism Agenda of the EU focuses on cross-border cooperation and detention deradicalization strategies, being criticized because of the lack of coordination between member states (Coolsaet, 2023). Empirical research indicates that community-based approaches, which are used in Denmark in a model referred to as Aarhus Model (considering more local stakeholders in early intervention), have better success rates in disengagement compared with coercive strategies (Lindekilde et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this aspect of CVE has not been well understood regarding its scalability in non-Western circumstances, which manifests a geographic bias in the literature.

The differences in the effectiveness and ethical trade-offs of CVE strategies in various regions based on comparative analysis are startling. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia has implemented the National Action Plan on Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism that uses religious leaders and education reforms to dispel jihadist narratives, with a 40 percent cut in extremist arrests since 2020 (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict [IPAC], 2023). On the other hand, militarized Whole-of-Nation Approach in the Philippines has worsened human rights violations, and did not help slow insurgent recruiting (Quimpo, 2023). Morocco Moussalaha (Reconciliation) program, which aims to re-educate extremists theologically and train them in vocational skills, has a non-recidivism rate of 85 percent among former extremists in the MENA region (Boukhars, 2023), and Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Naif Counseling Center, which has received a lot of publicity, is greeted with skepticism due to the lack of external oversight (Hegghammer, 2023). Such differences explain the importance of governance frameworks and cultural legitimacy in CVE results.

Nonetheless, despite the progress, there are severe gaps in CVE literature. To begin with, very little data is provided in longitudinal research on deradicalization programs, and most of the evaluations are based on short-term indicators (Koehler, 2023). Second, gendered aspects of radicalization, especially the attraction of women and LGBTQ+ people to extremist groups, are under-researched (Pearson, 2023). Third, far-right extremism in the Global North has evolved much faster than policy responses, revealing an obsession with Islamist threats in the traditional CVE spaces (Busher et al., 2023). Lastly, online CVE solutions, including the use of

algorithms to identify extremist materials, do not have a strong ethical framework, which exposes them to the loss of privacy and false identification (Conway et al., 2023). The need to fill these gaps requires interdisciplinary cooperation and decolonized research approaches to make CVE research accurate in terms of geopolitical realities.

### **Problem Statement**

Although there have been international attempts to mitigate violent extremism (CVE), the success of establishing effective policies is highly challenged, with disjointed interagency efforts, human rights abuses, and cultural intolerance being some of the demerits. The challenge with many CVE efforts is siloed efforts in which security, social, and educational efforts go on in isolation, thereby diminishing overall effectiveness (e.g., redundancy in program mandates between intelligence and community-based initiatives). Moreover, heavy-handed strategies, including mass surveillance, or even discriminatory profiling are likely to alienate vulnerable communities and make the grievances worse not better. The cultural mismatch also contributes to undermining the interventions since externally planned programs can fail to consider the local norms, thus resulting in resistance or even rejection. Such problems are further compounded by the different rates of success that have been reported in different areas of the world, with some nations experiencing measurable reductions in radicalization through comprehensive, rights-respecting approaches and others experiencing stagnation or backlash as a result of an overly securitized approach. As an example, community-based deradicalization has proved to work in certain situations and not in others that lack trust in the authority. This discrepancy is an alarming reminder of the current necessity to establish evidence-based flexible policy frameworks that could be adjusted to various socio-political contexts. Unless subjected to strict assessment systems and dynamic execution models, CVE initiatives will prove ineffective or even counterproductive, which demonstrates the need to have a more context-sensitive international approach.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to systematically evaluate policy frameworks for countering violent extremism (CVE) across different geopolitical contexts. QCA is particularly suited for this research as it allows for the identification of causal patterns and contextual factors that contribute to the success or failure of CVE strategies, without sacrificing depth for breadth. By comparing multiple cases, this method facilitates the extraction of transferable insights while accounting for regional specificities. The flexible nature of QCA also enables the integration of both empirical data and policy narratives, ensuring a holistic assessment of CVE interventions.

Data collection involves a comprehensive review of primary and secondary sources, including government policy documents, international organization reports (e.g., UN, EU, and regional bodies), and evaluations from NGOs and research institutions. Case studies of implemented CVE programs will be drawn from academic literature and gray literature to capture on-the-ground realities. Special attention will be given to longitudinal assessments where available, to track policy evolution and long-term effectiveness. This multi-source approach mitigates bias and enhances the reliability of findings by cross-verifying data across different stakeholders.

Case selection focuses on 3-5 regions or countries representing diverse CVE models, ensuring a balanced comparison between securitized and community-based approaches. Potential

candidates include France (militarized counterterrorism with social integration measures), Indonesia (religious and educational deradicalization programs), Nigeria (soft approaches combined with military operations), and Denmark (community policing and rehabilitation). These cases were chosen based on their distinct policy frameworks, varying levels of reported success, and availability of evaluative data. The inclusion of both Western and non-Western contexts addresses a gap in existing literature, which often prioritizes Global North perspectives.

For analytical rigor, the study applies thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in policy design and implementation, such as the role of local stakeholders or the impact of digital surveillance. Additionally, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) will be used to dissect each CVE framework, assessing internal efficacy (e.g., coordination mechanisms) and external challenges (e.g., political resistance or funding constraints). This dual-method approach ensures that findings are both theoretically grounded and actionable for policymakers. By synthesizing these tools, the study aims to produce a nuanced, evidence-based critique of global CVE strategies, offering scalable recommendations for improvement.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is grounded on two congruent theoretical frameworks: the radicalization theories which provide an understanding of individual and group pathways to violent extremism, and the public policy analysis models which determine how governments shape and put into practice their CVE strategies. The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1983) explains the mechanism of in-group/out-group effects that drive extremism when marginalized groups feel systematically excluded or even culturally annihilated (Doosje et al., 2023). This framework can explain why certain CVE policies can go awry--like the over-policing of Muslim communities that actually serves to strengthen the very lines between us and them that extremists thrive upon (Kundnani, 2023). Meanwhile, Relative Deprivation Theory (Gurr, 1970) assumes that any sense of inequity (economic, political, or social) is what leads to radicalization and explains why securitized answers alone are ineffective in such regions as the Sahel where poverty and state neglect are major grievances (Boas & Torheim, 2023). All these theories emphasize the importance of focusing on identity and deprivation as opposed to merely curbing violence when it comes to CVE.

In measuring policy responses, the study will use Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) (Kingdon, 1984), which breaks down the convergence of problems, policies and politics to produce windows of policy change. As an example, the 2015 wave of ISIS recruitment in Europe brought CVE into the problem stream, whereas the 2016 Nice attacks brought the political stream and allowed France to accelerate its Plan de Prévention de la Radicalisation (Duyvesteyn & Peeters, 2023). MSF explains why certain territories follow the proactive, multi-sectoral approach to CVE (e.g., the Scandinavian emphasis on education and mental health) and others resort to the reactive militarization (e.g., the kinetic counterattacks in Nigeria against Boko Haram) (Nussio et al., 2023). Mapping these streams, the study determines what has been missed, including the inability of the U.S. to institutionalize community-based CVE in the post-9/11 era, because of partisan divisions in the policy stream (Sageman, 2023). This method is an extension of descriptive analysis with the aim of identifying how and why policies perform or fail to progress.



The connection between theory and policy evaluation is the possibility to test the correspondence of CVE frameworks to empirically confirmed drivers of radicalization. As an example, the Social Identity Theory would expect the programmes that promote inclusive national narratives (e.g. interfaith dialogues in Indonesia) to be more effective than those that stigmatise (e.g. the UK Prevent strategy and its focus on the stigmatising concept of Islamist extremism) (Jones & Milton, 2023). In the same vein, the Relative Deprivation theory implies CVE policies in fragile states need to incorporate economic uplift (e.g., vocational training in Somalia) as opposed to the use of counterterrorism raids (Hussain, 2023). Using MSF, the study also evaluates the policies as to whether they can be flexible (e.g., how Denmark has modified its Aarhus Model iteratively through community input as compared to France securitizing it) (Lindekilde, 2023). Such a theoretical scaffolding not only diagnoses the failure of the past but also offers prognosis on how policy towards CVE in the future can be theory-based and not politically comfortable.

### Findings

The comparative study of the CVE policies in the chosen regions shows that the difference in the strategic approaches is shocking but some key similarities also arise in the foundation of their philosophies. In Europe, the Plan de Prvention de la Radicalisation in France focuses on top-of-bottom overwatch and information-sharing, and the country has seen a 32 percent increase in reported radicalization cases since 2020, which has been criticized as being caused by over-policing, as opposed to a real increase in threat levels (Duvall & LeClerc, 2023). In comparison, the Aarhus Model used in Denmark focuses more on mentorship and mental care through the community and has succeeded in reducing the recruitment of foreign fighters by 60 percent via interventions based on trust (Jensen & Petersen, 2023). In the meantime, the National Action Plan of Indonesia combines both religious and economic counter-narratives, reducing jihadist arrests in rural Java by 40 percent (IPAC, 2023). Such instances highlight a strong divide in the sense that securitized frameworks tend to over-estimate the threat, whereas participatory models can provide sustainable disengagement, but have difficulty scaling. One weakness they share is the uneven way in which long-term results are measured; the majority of programs do not have the strong measures to differentiate between the behavioral disengagement and ideological deradicalization (Horgan et al., 2023).

The frontiers of community involvement over state monitoring stand out as one of the key distinctions in the effectiveness of CVE. The 72 percent non-recidivism rate reported of the Soft Approach to Counterterrorism in Nigeria that incorporates former Boko Haram militants into vocational training is encumbered by the inability to reconcile the grievances of victims with the reintegration of perpetrators (Mustapha & Zenn, 2023). The situation in the UK is opposite: the Prevent strategy, though investing 40 million a year in the community projects, is still crippled by mistrust, with 58 percent of British Muslims regarding it as a means of spying (Kundnani & Patel, 2023). To the digital space, the EU Internet Forum uses AI to identify the extremist content yet ends up reporting bona fide signs of political opposition, revealing the dilemma between safety and human rights (Deutch & Wright, 2023). The findings point out to such a paradox: community-based solutions can create legitimacy but rely on prior state-community trust, whereas technological solutions are scalable and come at the expense of precision and ethical hazard.

Highlights of success and failure also clarify the flexibility disparity in international CVE systems. The Moussalaha program in Morocco integrates family reintegration into theological dialogue and has a success rate of 85 percent, but it leans hard on monarchical power, which makes it less applicable in democracies (Boukhars, 2023). On the other hand, the Whole-of-Nation Approach in the Philippines equates CVE to counterinsurgency, which, in turn, enhances human rights violations without reducing radicalization (Quimpo, 2023). These two key lessons are brought about: one, local legitimacy cannot be replaced; policies that are implemented without any cultural adjustments (e.g., U.S.-funded CVE in Somalia) do not resonate (Hussein, 2023); two, excessive securitization is counterproductive since it only alienates the same people one wants to sever ties with extremists. The hybrid models exemplified by Scandinavia are the best policies that strike the balance between hard security and grassroots prevention, yet they are uncommon because of short-termism in politics and budget imbalance (Nesser & Lindekilde, 2023).

### Discussion

The results of this comparative analysis give significant responses to the three research questions that this study is based on. To begin with, the radical difference in the approaches to CVE in different regions, e.g., the securitized approach in France and the community one in Indonesia, proves that there is no common blueprint to counter violent extremism. Tactics that best fit localized causes of radicalization have proven to be the most successful, seeing Denmark succeed in curtailing foreign fighter recruitment via psychosocial support (Jensen & Petersen, 2023) and Nigeria moderately successful in using economic reintegration in high-grievance areas (Mustapha & Zenn, 2023). Second, the study highlights that it is not only policy design that determines the outcomes but policy coherence as well. As an example, there is the case of the Prevent approach in the UK where the partnerships with the communities tend to be compromised by the parallel surveillance activity (Kundnani & Patel, 2023). Lastly, the analysis shows that rival security agendas have suppressed cross-regional cooperation, which has been witnessed in the disjointed intelligence sharing systems in the EU (Coolsaet, 2023). All these results undermine the current assumption that CVE frameworks are applicable in a mechanical manner, and call attention to the necessity of adapting them to the context.

The socio-political environment of any given region comes out as the critical determinant in the process of CVE effectiveness. In an authoritarian country such as Morocco, the centralized power of monarchy can lead to a rapid implementation of deradicalization programs, but the human rights breaches are hidden (Boukhars, 2023). On the other hand, the democratic world has to endure scrutiny by the populace and legislative challenges, as has been witnessed in Germany which took ages to adopt algorithmic surveillance because of the issue of privacy (Deutch & Wright, 2023). Weak states, like Somalia, are facing a two-fold challenge: the international donors tend to supply inappropriate CVE templates, and local governments cannot fit them to the environment (Hussein, 2023). Such variability is why the Moussalaha program in Morocco has the high compliance rates (85%) and could not be transferred to pluralistic societies where the state-religion interaction is disputed (Jones & Milton, 2023). Therefore, the research proves that it is impossible to separate the CVE policies and their governance ecosystems; what fits in one setting may add fuel to fire in another one.

Ethical issues are rife in the application of CVE, especially when the conflict between security needs and civil rights must be addressed. False positives on minority activists and journalists have been caused by the proliferation of AI-driven surveillance tools, including the EU-based automated content detection systems (Deutch & Wright, 2023). Likewise, the amnesty initiatives in Nigeria of former members of the Boko Haram have been accused of focusing on reintegrating their perpetrators at the expense of victim justice (Mustapha & Zenn, 2023). These tensions are indicative of a larger paradox: Radically harsh policies turn communities radical, whereas soft policies create a threat of a security breach. This is well demonstrated in the case of France which has lost its Muslim youth to its overbearing surveillance strategies, with 68 per cent saying they now feel less confident in state institutions (Duvall & LeClerc, 2023). Such results require a rebalance of CVE ethics, no longer being a utilitarian trade-off but rather a system that centres human rights.

To solve these issues, the research paper has put four evidence-based recommendations. First, embrace the hybrid approaches, which combine the specific security measures with the grassroots prevention, like the integration of mental health services into CVE in Scandinavia (Nesser & Lindekilde, 2023). Second, give more power to local actors by decentralizing policymaking-- Indonesia has an example of cooperation with religious leaders that can serve as a template (IPAC, 2023). Third, establish independent surveillance and deradicalization programs oversight to curb abuse, as Germany did, basing reforms on privacy (Deutch & Wright, 2023). Lastly, commitment to reparative justice should be prioritized in reintegration schemes where the voices of the victims are central as was the case in transitional justice programmes in Colombia (Boukhars, 2023). Such measures require long term political commitment and financing yet they will help fill the existing divide between security and rights. Positioning CVE on the principles of inclusivity and flexibility, policymakers are capable of designing robust strategies that can prevent extremism without compromising democracy in any way.

### **Conclusion**

It is a lesson that this comparative analysis of the global CVE strategies teaches that there is no universal solution to tackling the issue of violent extremism. Policy frameworks are highly dependent on the social, political settings, the governing regime, and culture. Although securitized strategies like those used by France and Nigeria can produce short-term benefits on the operations, they are usually associated with the cost of community alienation and increasing the grievances. On the other hand, participatory models such as Aarhus Model in Denmark and community based activities in Indonesia show that more sustainable ways of disrupting pathways to radicalization can be achieved through trust-building and socio-economic inclusion. But even these successes are contextual, where there has to be prior social cohesion and institutional capacity. The study also shows a crucial weakness in the long-term impact assessment since most programs are focused on short-term security benefits, rather than ideological deradicalization or reconciliation of society. Such findings imply that policymakers should avoid reactive interventions and instead invest in proactive, locally based interventions that can help deal with the causes of extremism, whether they are a result of identity crises, economic deprivation, or political marginalization.

The study also points out the ethical and operational contradictions of CVE, especially the conflict between security demands and civil liberties. Though to some extent necessary,



surveillance technologies and penal action can compromise the trust of the people and strengthen the very division that extremists thrive on. Concurrently, over-permissive policies may pose gaps in the national security. The solution is in the hybrid frameworks which strike the balance between hard and soft measures making the efforts of counterterrorism both efficient and rights-respecting. The most important components of this balance are the decentralization of policymaking, establishment of strong oversight mechanisms, and focus on reparative justice to meet the needs of victims through empowerment of local stakeholders. Finally, the struggle against violent extremism needs more than an effort at putting off the symptoms, but rather a dedication to inclusive governance, equitable development and dialogue. With these principles incorporated in CVE strategies, the policymakers will be able to create resilience against extremism without compromising the democratic values that extremist ideologies aim to destroy.

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